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Atiqa leaves behind Mercedes F1 juniors for pole position



SIT wraps up Ram temple probe

Final report may identify those directly involved while examining supervisory failures that allowed theft

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
■ New Delhi/Lucknow

The three-member Special Investigation Team (SIT), set up by the Uttar Pradesh Government to investigate the alleged theft and misuse of offerings at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple, is expected to submit its final report within the next two days.

Sources said Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath who called on Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday is understood to have briefed the latter on the entire fiasco.

According to sources, the SIT has almost finished the report, which will likely name those directly involved and highlight others who may have played a role in the lapses that allowed the theft of donations. The SIT was set up on June 13 after a request from the temple trust. It is led by Lucknow Commissioner Vijay Vishwas Pant (IAS), with IG Range Kiran S (IPS) and Finance Department Special Secretary Neelratan as members. Their job is to review how dona-



Police personnel escorting accused in connection with the alleged embezzlement of Ram Temple donation funds in Ayodhya early in June

tions are collected, counted, stored, and banked at the temple, which has received large offerings since its consecration in January 2024.

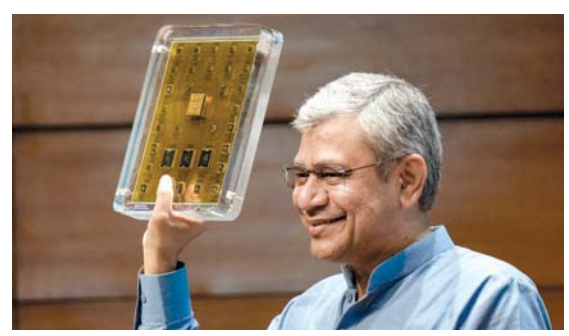
Sources said, while preparing its final report, the SIT has reviewed financial records, banking transactions, CCTV footage, electronic evidence, documents and statements from the witnesses and the accused. The investigation will go beyond just naming those directly involved in the alleged theft. The SIT is also looking at the broader chain of responsibility, including whether failures by supervisors or administrators allowed the alleged misuse of donations to go unnoticed.

Investigators are reviewing each step in how donations are handled, from storing and moving donation boxes to counting cash, banking, monitoring, and auditing. The investigation has already led to action.

temple to the trust office and banks.

The final report is expected to cover broader accountability issues, including failures by supervisors and administrators, and to examine the roles of others who have not yet been named or arrested. The SIT's term ends on Wednesday and has not been extended, so there is pressure to submit the final report soon.

At the same time, the Supreme Court is considering several petitions asking for a CBI investigation into the alleged embezzlement. On July 13, Chief Justice Surya Kant's bench told the UP SIT to submit a detailed status report, including the team members, within a week. The next hearing is expected around July 20-21. The court has also sent notices to the Union Government, the UP Government, and the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust. The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust will hold an important meeting on July 22 to discuss the SIT's final report.



Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw showcases Made in India semiconductor chips during Cabinet briefing in New Delhi on Wednesday

Govt bets big on mobiles, chips with ₹1.9 lakh crore

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

₹62,500 crore Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS) aimed at increasing domestic production, boosting exports and deepening local value addition in the mobile phone industry.

The semiconductor programme builds on the first phase of the India Semiconductor Mission and will focus on six key areas — chip design, semiconductor equipment and materials, fabrication facilities, advanced packaging and testing, research and development, and talent development.

India-UK CETA takes effect

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has welcomed the implementation of the India-United Kingdom Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) along with the India-UK Social Security Agreement, describing the development as a major milestone in the growing partnership between the two nations.



FILE PHOTO

Calling it a significant step forward, the Prime Minister said the agreements would transform the shared vision of India and the UK into real economic opportunities for businesses, professionals, farmers, and entrepreneurs. He noted that the strengthened partnership would deepen trade, investment, technology collaboration, and innovation while creating long-term benefits for both countries.

The Bystander

All those arrested were employees of IRE bank — Ram temple treasurer



MADAN MITRA LEAVES MAMATA CAMP FOR RIVAL TMC

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

The Mamata Banerjee faction of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) on Wednesday faced yet another loss on Wednesday with a senior party leader,



Madan Mitra

former minister and close aide of the former Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee switching sides to formally join the rival faction of the party led by Ritabrata Bhattacharya.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

US, Iran ceasefire unravels

JON GAMBRELL ■ Dubai

The US reimposed a naval blockade on Iran and intensified its airstrike campaign Wednesday in retaliation for Tehran's attacks on ships trying to pass through the Strait of Hormuz. The American strikes hit an Iranian army barracks, killing at least seven troops and wounding more than 260 people across the country, Iranian officials said.

Days of back-and-forth strikes by the US and Iran across the Middle East - and renewed threats to the waterway crucial to global energy supplies - have shredded the interim deal to end the conflict, and the region could tip back into all-out war.

The US first imposed a blockade in April and then lifted it last month after signing the interim deal that paused the fighting



A woman standing at the water's edge along the Strait of Hormuz as smoke from an explosion rises in the background on Monday

and set a 60-day period for negotiations over issues such as Iran's nuclear program. Those talks have stalled as fighting over the Strait of Hormuz has intensified.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

NCP-SP may back NDA over women's quota, delimitation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi/Mumbai

The BJP-led NDA is likely to get a boost for crucial Bills including the pending delimitation Bill scheduled to be introduced during the Monsoon Session of Parliament, which begins from Monday, with former Union Minister Sharad Pawar-led the Nationalist Congress Party — Sharadchandra Pawar (NCP-SP) in alliance to support for the ruling alliance. The NCP-SP has eight MPs in Lok Sabha while one in Rajya Sabha held by the party supremo himself.

The NDA has already



NCP-SP Chief Sharad Pawar

claimed support of break-away factions of major regional parties such as the Trinamool Congress (TMC), the Shiv Sena and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) into its fold. Sources said the DMK, which recently

broke ties with the Congress, may also extend their support to the Union Government in bringing the legislations.

The speculations of NCP-SP backing the NDA grew stronger following a meeting of leaders from the ruling NCP in Maharashtra and NCP-SP at the residence of Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on late Tuesday night.

NCP-SP Parliamentary wing leader Supriya Sule, however, said that her party has not taken any official position on the proposed delimitation Bill.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

CM Yadav woos textile investors to MP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav will participate in Bharat Tex 2026 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on Thursday to showcase Madhya Pradesh as a leading destination for investments in the textile, garment and footwear sectors.

During the event, the Chief Minister will meet leading investors, global brands and industry representatives from India and abroad to promote the state's industry-friendly policies, modern industrial infrastructure and investment opportunities. He will hold one-to-one meetings, participate in roundtable discussions and interact with investors to attract fresh



CM Yadav will hold meetings and interact with investors to attract fresh investments to the State

investments and strengthen industrial partnerships.

Yadav will also visit the Madhya Pradesh Pavilion, which will highlight the state's integrated textile value

chain, skill development initiatives and the PM MITRA Park being developed in Dhar district. The pavilion will also showcase the state's position as India's largest producer of

organic cotton and its "Farm to Fashion" ecosystem.

A roundtable discussion with more than 100 industrialists and industry representatives will focus on investment opportunities, exports, sustainable manufacturing, logistics, global competitiveness and skill development. Union Textiles Minister Giriraj Singh and senior industry leaders are expected to participate.

The Chief Minister will later address an interactive session on "Investment Opportunities in Madhya Pradesh" at Hotel The Leela, where the state will present opportunities in textiles, renewable energy, tourism and other emerging sectors.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

POJK under lockdown after deadly protests

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
■ New Delhi/Jammu

Cities and towns across Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK) are under razor-wire barricades and a heavy paramilitary presence. Rawalakot is under an undeclared media blackout ahead of a planned long march to Muzaffarabad on Wednesday. At least 12 people were killed, and dozens were injured in



Commuters ride past security personnel in Muzaffarabad

Tuesday's clashes as Pakistani security forces opened indiscriminate fire on protesters demanding relief from soaring prices and political reforms.

Violence broke out in Rawalakot after members of the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) ignored restrictions and began protesting.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Domestic worker crushed to death by SUV in Gurugram gated society

KHUSHI MEHROTRA
■ Gurugram

What began as a routine afternoon in Ansal Versalia, an upscale gated society in Sector 67, ended in tragedy on Wednesday when a 57-year-old domestic worker was crushed to death by a reversing SUV in the building's parking area.

Guddi, a domestic worker from Mahoba, Uttar Pradesh, had worked for a family on the fourth floor for several years. Many people in the building knew her. On Wednesday afternoon, after finishing her work, she took a break in the ground-floor parking area before heading to her next job.

Police said the incident happened between 2.00 pm and 2.30 pm. A resident who works as a private school teacher was parking her red Mahindra Thar and did not see Guddi resting near a pillar. The car reversed over Guddi, causing fatal injuries. Security staff and residents found Guddi unresponsive, and she was declared dead at the scene.

After the incident, domestic workers from Ansal Versalia and nearby areas gathered in the parking lot.



The SUV that crushed the domestic worker in Gurugram. An FIR was filed under sections of the BNS related to death by negligence

The group began protesting, calling for action against the driver and improved safety measures. Police from Sector 67 blocked off the area, took the vehicle, and held the driver for questioning. An FIR was filed under sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita related to death by negligence. Police are reviewing CCTV footage and speaking with eyewitnesses, security staff, and residents. The Joint Commissioner of Police, Sangeeta Kalra, said the body was sent for post-mortem, and Guddi's family in Mahoba was informed.

Authorities said they will investigate whether safety rules were followed in the parking area and if the driver was careful. The incident has shown that many high-rise buildings lack designated rest areas or adequate supervision in parking areas, even though domestic workers, drivers, and delivery staff often use these spaces during work hours.

Residents said that workers often rest in basement corners and still parking areas to escape the heat, but this issue had not been officially discussed before.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

DoPT withdraws recognition of CSC

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

The Union Government on Tuesday upheld its decision to withdraw recognition of Central Secretariat Club (CSC), one of Delhi's oldest clubs established in 1919, over years of administrative failures, governance lapses and the absence of a legally constituted management committee. The Govt has also directed the Directorate of Estates to initiate eviction proceedings from the Government premises.



VIA CSCCLUB.IN

Similar actions have been taken against the Delhi Gymkhana and the Jaipur Polo Ground in the Capital in recent weeks.

The decision follows a

review by a three-member committee following a Delhi High Court order directing that the club be given an opportunity to make their case against the decision.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

CM says model Anganwadi centres are foundation of child development

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ujjain

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Wednesday said model Anganwadi centres are the first schools for children and form the foundation of their holistic physical, mental and emotional development. He said the Madhya Pradesh government is strengthening Anganwadi centres across the state by providing modern infrastructure and better facilities to ensure quality early childhood care and education.

Addressing a programme after visiting the Saksham Model Anganwadi Centre at Svej Farm in Ujjain, the Chief Minister said the government is committed to ensuring that every child receives nutritious food, healthcare, immunisation and early education under one roof.

Yadav said the Sadawal Model Anganwadi Centre, developed through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funding, has been equipped with all essential facilities to support children's overall growth. He noted that the state government has been consistently working to improve the functioning and infrastructure of Anganwadi centres and is implementing several schemes focused on children's education, nutrition and welfare.

During his visit, the Chief Minister inspected the food zone, health screening room and medicine room and interacted with children at the centre. He appreciated the nutrition exhibition organised by the Women and Child Development Department as part of Poshan Aahar Saptah and reviewed the arrange-



ments made for children's health and learning.

He expressed satisfaction that children are now receiving services such as nutritious meals, regular health check-ups, immunisation, educational toys, furniture and early childhood education in a well-equipped permanent building. He said these facilities would contribute significantly to improving children's health and learning outcomes.

The Chief Minister also distributed assurance certificates under the Ladli Laxmi Yojana and benefits to eligible women under the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana. He interacted with beneficiary girls under the Ladli Laxmi Yojana and wished them success in their education and future careers.

Spending time with children at the Anganwadi centre, Yadav gave them rides on swings and distributed

packets of laddoos, roasted gram and peanuts as nutritious supplements. The children welcomed him with greetings and presented him with roses.

Highlighting Ujjain's religious and cultural importance, the Chief Minister said the city has a historic association with Lord Jagannath. Referring to ancient traditions, he said King Indrasen of Ujjain had built the grand Jagannath Temple in present-day Bhubaneswar, where the idols of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balram and Goddess Subhadra are worshipped. He described Jagannath Puri as one of the four sacred Char Dham pilgrimage sites of Sanatan culture.

Yadav said he would be able to participate in the Jagannath Rath Yatra in Ujjain on Thursday due to his scheduled visit to New Delhi. Before leaving, he offered prayers at the Lord Jagdish Temple in

Kartik Chowk.

The Chief Minister said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's global stature has continued to grow and Madhya Pradesh is contributing to the country's development through rapid industrial growth, infrastructure expansion and welfare initiatives. Referring to Ujjain, he said the city has witnessed remarkable transformation in recent years and preparations for Simhastha-2028 are progressing at a rapid pace.

As part of the Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam campaign, Yadav planted saplings of mango, peepal, banyan, neem, drumstick and guava at the Anganwadi centre and appealed to citizens to plant at least one tree to promote environmental conservation.

The Chief Minister also said the state government is ensuring long-pending promotions for government employees across departments.

BJP names poll team for Datia

Bhopal: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has appointed Gwalior MP Bharat Singh Kushwah as the party's in-charge for the upcoming Datia Assembly by-election in Madhya Pradesh.

The party has also named BJP state general secretary Rahul Kothari, considered a close aide of Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, as co-in-charge for the bypoll. Polling for the Datia Assembly by-election is scheduled for July 30.

The BJP has fielded former state organisation minister Ashutosh Tiwari as its candidate, replacing former Home Minister Narottam Mishra, who had represented the constituency earlier.

The Congress has nominated former MLA Ghanshyam Singh, while the Azad Samaj Party has fielded Damodar Yadav.

Two held in Bhopal elderly couple murder

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Bhopal Police have solved the murder of an elderly couple living in Sudama Nagar, nearly 20 days after the crime, by arresting two property dealers who allegedly plotted the killings to gain control of the victims' property.

Police Commissioner Sanjay Kumar said the accused, Srikant Chinchaliya, 40, and Shashikant Chinchaliya, 35, who are brothers, allegedly first secured a fraudulent gift deed in their favour before conspiring to kill Hemant Philemon and Shakuntala Barik Philemon to take possession of their property.

A Special Investigation Team (SIT), supported by around 20 police teams,

investigated the case by examining more than 1,500 CCTV footage, questioning over 100 suspects, and analysing mobile call records, location data and other scientific evidence. Police had announced a reward of Rs 50,000 for information leading to the arrest of the accused.

According to the investigation, the brothers had earned the trust of the elderly couple over several years by managing their property transactions. During the sale of one of the couple's plots in Itarsi, the accused allegedly manipulated the documentation process and prepared a gift deed stating that the couple's Sudama Nagar property, worth several crores of rupees, would be transferred to them after

the owners' death.

Police said the accused expected to inherit the property after the couple's natural death. However, their alleged plan was disrupted when the couple recently decided to sell the Sudama Nagar house and had almost finalised a deal. Investigators believe the accused feared the gift deed would become worthless if the property was sold, prompting them to allegedly hatch a conspiracy to murder the couple by shooting them.

The investigation has also expanded to examine the possible involvement of a close relative of the deceased, Shivani Barik. Police said she was reportedly burdened with debts exceeding Rs 20 lakh, including bank loans and private borrowings.

MP reviews arrangements for July 19 Cabinet meet

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Preparations have gathered pace for the Madhya Pradesh Cabinet meeting scheduled to be held at Jagdishpur on July 19, with senior officials reviewing security, logistical and technical arrangements ahead of the event.

Additional Chief Secretary Shiv Shekhar Shukla, Bhopal Divisional Commissioner Karmveer Sharma and Collector Priyank Mishra on Wednesday inspected the venue and directed officials to ensure flawless execution of all arrangements.

The Cabinet is expected to discuss the proposed Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has described the proposed legis-

lation as an important step towards the principle of "One Nation, One Law."

During the inspection, Shukla reviewed preparations for the e-Cabinet meeting and stressed that, considering the significance of the event, all administrative arrangements should be completed with utmost precision.

He also visited the historic Rani Mahal and Chaman Mahal inside the Jagdishpur Palace complex to assess seating arrangements, security measures, beautification works and the technological infrastructure required for the digital Cabinet meeting.

Officials were instructed to execute their responsibilities according to the approved action plan and ensure close coordination among all departments.

MP preparing to implement Uniform Civil Code: CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Indore

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Wednesday said the Madhya Pradesh government is moving towards implementing a Uniform Civil Code (UCC), asserting that one nation should have one set of laws for all citizens.

Speaking at the inauguration of a new 300-bed district hospital in Indore, Yadav said personal laws should be uniform across communities. "If Ramchandra is expected to have one marriage, the same expectation can be placed on Rahim. Muslim women are also our sisters. They too face hardships. How can they be treated differently?" the Chief Minister said.

He said the idea of "one nation, one flag, one head and one law", advocated by Jana Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee, had been strength-



ened after the abrogation of Article 370 by the Narendra Modi government. Madhya Pradesh, he added, was now moving in the same direction by preparing to introduce a Uniform Civil Code.

Yadav said the government had deliberately avoided rushing the legislation through the Assembly and instead constituted a committee headed by a former Supreme Court judge. The panel visited all 55 districts and 10 divisions, held public consultations and gathered suggestions. The government is now preparing to intro-

duce the proposed law in the Assembly after compiling the committee's recommendations.

The Chief Minister was addressing the gathering after inaugurating the newly constructed four-storey, 300-bed district hospital built at a cost of Rs 83.16 crore. The facility is expected to improve healthcare access for residents of western Indore.

However, only a 34-bed maternity wing will become operational in the first phase. The remaining 266 beds and major departments, including medicine, general surgery, orthopaedics and cardiology, will be opened later.

The district hospital had been functioning from an old Dairy Federation building on Dhar Road since 1988. Although a proposal for a new hospital was first sent to the government in 2005, approval came only in 2017, after which construction

began. The project was completed after several delays.

The project's estimated cost rose sharply from the initial Rs 18 crore to Rs 83.16 crore due to delays, revised approvals and additional works.

The Health Department has deployed 166 officers and staff members, including specialist doctors, nursing officers, pharmacists, radiographers and laboratory technicians, for the hospital's operations. Officials said the hospital would be made fully operational in phases after all administrative arrangements are completed.

The maternity services are expected to benefit pregnant women from Chandan Nagar, Noorani Nagar, Dwarkapuri, Sirpur, Rajendra Nagar and more than two dozen nearby villages. Patients requiring specialised treatment, however, will continue to depend on MY Hospital until all departments at the new facility become functional.



Renowned vocalist Indrani Mukherjee from Kolkata during a four-day national training workshop on Thumri-Dadra at Sarojini Naidu Government Girls Post Graduate Autonomous College, in Bhopal on Wednesday.

Lakhan Patel removed from animal husbandry department

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has withdrawn the Animal Husbandry and Dairy Development portfolio from Minister of State (Independent Charge) Lakhan Patel, who will now oversee only the Happiness Department.

The General Administration Department issued a notification implementing the change after the Chief Minister's decision. According to sources, Patel met the Chief Minister at the State Hangar before Yadav left for Ujjain with Cabinet Minister Gautam Tetwal.

With the latest reshuffle, Yadav now holds 11 departments, including General Administration, Home, Jails, Industrial Policy and Investment Promotion, Public Relations, Narmada Valley Development, Aviation, Mineral Resources, Public Service Management, Non-Resident Indians, and Animal Husbandry and Dairy Development, besides departments not allocated to any other minister. The notification, however, does not

mention the Forest Department.

Sources said the decision is linked to the proposed establishment of self-reliant gaushalas in Madhya Pradesh. The government was reportedly dissatisfied with the credentials of several organisations selected for the project, but the department was allegedly preparing to award them work with the approval of the minister and officials.

The issue, particularly the proposed allotment of land to these organisations, is understood to have reached the RSS and the BJP's national leadership. Sources said the development prompted the government to take corrective action.

Sudhir Nayak, president of the Mantralaya Officers and Employees Association, said on social media that Madhya Pradesh was the first and only state to create a separate Happiness Department in 2016. He noted that for the first time since its formation, the department would function as the sole responsibility of a minister, describing it as a sign of the department's growing importance in governance.

MP expands smart meter network

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Madhya Kshetra Vidut Vitran Company has installed 11.42 lakh smart meters across 16 districts in the Bhopal, Narmadapuram, Gwalior and Chambal divisions as part of its drive to provide transparent, modern and digital power services.

The utility said the rollout has reached 11,42,773 consumers. Bhopal City recorded the highest installations with 469,964, followed by Sehore with 84,473, Vidisha 80,633, Gwalior City 79,071 and Narmadapuram 75,704. Other districts covered include Raisen, Betul, Bhopal O&M, Guna, Shivpuri, Rajgarh, Harda, Bhind, Gwalior O&M, Morena, Datia, Ashoknagar and Sheopur.

The company said smart meters enable accurate billing, real-time electricity consumption monitoring, improved online services and greater operational efficiency. Consumers can track usage instantly, receive transparent bills, detect consumption patterns, and access digital support more conveniently.

Bhopal youth held over fake AI-generated temple pass

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ujjain

An alleged attempt to misuse artificial intelligence to gain unauthorised access to the Mahakaleshwar Temple has raised fresh concerns over digital security at one of the country's most prominent religious sites.

Police said a 19-year-old youth from Bhopal, accompanied by two minors, allegedly created a fake VIP pass resembling an official temple entry pass using an AI tool. The three managed to enter the temple premises before the document was detected as fraudulent during a routine security check.

Mahakal police station in-charge Gagan Badal said security personnel became suspicious after noticing the words "Garbhagriha Darshan" printed on the pass. Devotees have not been allowed to enter the sanctum sanctorum for nearly two-and-a-half years, prompting officials to verify the barcode and other details. The verification confirmed that the pass was fake.

The trio was immediately detained by temple security staff and police. After complet-

ing legal formalities, they were allowed to offer prayers through the general queue in accordance with temple regulations.

Police identified the main accused as Bharat Uikey, 19, a resident of Kolar Road in Bhopal. Two minors accompanying him are also under investigation. During questioning, the accused allegedly admitted that the fake pass format was generated on Tuesday afternoon with the help of an AI tool.

Police have initiated preventive action against Bharat Uikey, while proceedings involving the two minors are being conducted under the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act.

The incident has triggered concerns over the security and verification mechanism for entry passes at the Mahakaleshwar Temple. Experts believe the growing misuse of AI-powered tools highlights the need for stronger digital authentication systems and more robust verification protocols at sensitive religious and public places to prevent similar incidents in the future across the country.

Excise raid nets illegal liquor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mhow

Excise officials seized 50 quarter-bottles of illegally transported country liquor and confiscated a Hero Splendor motorcycle during a patrol on the Mhow-Pithampur Road on Wednesday.

Acting on suspicion, the enforcement team stopped an unregistered two-wheeler and recovered the liquor allegedly being transported without valid authorisation. The motorcycle and seized liquor were taken into official custody. Hariom Rajak, son of Purushottam Rajak, a resident of Pithampur, was booked under Section 34(1)(a) of the Madhya Pradesh Excise Act, 1915, as amended in 2000.

The estimated market value of the seized liquor and vehicle is Rs 13,500. Officials said the action was part of the department's ongoing drive against the illegal transportation and sale of liquor across the district. The investigation is continuing to ascertain the source and intended destination of the consignment. Further investigation will determine whether additional suspects were involved.

Man held for daughter's ritual killing over buried treasure

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Bhopal Rural Police have arrested a man for allegedly murdering his minor daughter as part of a ritual believed to help recover buried gold and silver, exposing a shocking case of superstition-driven crime. Two alleged accomplices are absconding.

Superintendent of Police Pankaj Kumar Pandey said the girl's mother had lodged a complaint at Sukhiesvania police station on April 3, 2026, stating that her daughter had gone missing while the family was sleeping at a farm. A case was registered and an investigation was launched.

On May 7, police recovered a human skeleton from a field about 200 metres from the spot where the girl had disappeared. Scientific and technical evidence was collected to identify the victim and reconstruct the sequence of events.

Investigators later found the girl's father missing, further raising suspicion. Acting on technical evidence, intelligence inputs and police investigation, police traced him to Ganj Basoda in

Vidisha district on July 14 and took him into custody.

During interrogation, the accused allegedly confessed that he, along with two associates, planned to sacrifice his daughter under the belief that the ritual would help them obtain buried gold and silver.

Police said the accused allegedly assaulted the girl with a wooden stick, strangled her to ensure she was dead, checked her pulse to confirm death and buried the body in a nearby field to destroy evidence.

Based on the confession and supporting evidence, police have replaced the initial kidnapping charge and registered offences under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, including murder, destruction of evidence and criminal conspiracy.

The wooden stick allegedly used in the crime has been recovered at the accused's instance. Police said efforts are underway to arrest the two remaining accused, and further investigation is expected to reveal additional details about the alleged conspiracy and the role of each suspect.

Balram Krishi Mahotsav begins across Madhya Pradesh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Indore

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Wednesday declared 2026 as "Farmer Welfare Year" in Madhya Pradesh and launched the state-level Balram Krishi Mahotsav in Indore, unveiling a comprehensive roadmap to enhance farmers' income through technology, value addition, irrigation, dairy development and agro-based industries.

Addressing the inaugural programme, Yadav said the state government has brought together 16 departments, including Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, Cooperation, MSME, Revenue and Energy, to implement an integrated strategy for the holistic development of farmers.

Describing the festival as more than a ceremonial event, he said it would serve as a statewide campaign to connect farmers with modern agricultural technologies, processing facilities, marketing opportunities and employment. Similar programmes will be organised in all 55 districts until November 13 under the Farmer Welfare Year initiative.

The Chief Minister said the government is committed to the overall development of farmers, women, youth and the poor in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision. He noted that after observing 2025 as the "Industry and Employment Year", which attracted investment proposals exceeding Rs 10 lakh crore, the government has now shifted its focus to transforming the agriculture sector.

Highlighting Madhya Pradesh's agricultural

strengths, Yadav said the state is endowed with abundant natural resources and more than 250 rivers. He said irrigation coverage has increased from 7.5 lakh hectares in 2003 to nearly 65 lakh hectares, with further expansion planned in the coming years.

He said water, electricity and roads are the three pillars of agricultural prosperity. The government is working to provide daytime electricity for agriculture instead of night supply to improve convenience and reduce accidents.

Yadav said farmers are receiving better returns for their produce through improved procurement policies. Wheat was procured this year at Rs 2,625 per quintal, while soybean growers received assistance under the Bhavantar scheme. He also announced that farmers availing zero-interest crop loans

would no longer be required to renew their loans every six months, allowing repayment after one year instead.

The Chief Minister said the Ken-Betwa River Linking Project and the Parvati-Kalisindh-Chambal (PKC) River Link Project would transform irrigation and drinking water availability across 13 districts, including Sheopur, Morena, Bhind, Gwalior, Rajgarh, Shajapur, Dewas, Ujjain, Neemuch and Mandasaur. Together, the projects involve investments of nearly Rs 1 lakh crore.

Emphasising value addition in agriculture, Yadav said the government is promoting a complete "farm-to-factory-to-market" ecosystem. He highlighted a recently established potato processing unit in Ujjain, built at a cost of Rs 1,250 crore, which will procure potatoes from 32 districts, ensuring a stable market for growers.

Similar agro-processing industries are being developed in Indore, Agar, Ujjain and other districts.

The Chief Minister also announced the launch of the Mukhyamantri Sugam Parivahan Bus Yojana to improve transport connectivity in rural areas.

Stressing the importance of dairy farming, Yadav said Madhya Pradesh currently contributes around 12 per cent of India's milk production and aims to raise the share to 20 per cent. He announced a subsidy of Rs 10 lakh for establishing dairy units costing up to Rs 40 lakh to encourage farmers and young entrepreneurs.

He said the government would provide Rs 40 per day for every cow housed in registered gaushalas and implement a special plan to manage nilgai and other wild animals that damage crops.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav being garlanded at Balram Krishi Mahotsav-2026 in Indore, MP on Wednesday.



Police check illegal hooters, unauthorised nameplates and black film vehicles during a special enforcement drive by the Traffic Police, at ISBT in Bhopal on Wednesday.

Hamidia marks Plastic Surgery Day with awareness drive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Gandhi Medical College (GMC) and Hamidia Hospital on Wednesday observed Plastic Surgery Day with awareness programmes highlighting the role of reconstructive surgery in treating burns, birth defects, trauma and cancer-related deformities.

The Department of Burns and Plastic Surgery organised street plays to educate the public that plastic surgery is not limited to cosmetic procedures but also helps restore normal function and appearance after serious injuries, congenital abnormalities and major illnesses.

MBBS students performed

skits explaining how plastic surgery can treat burn injuries, congenital deformities, severe road accident injuries and conditions requiring skin grafting. Doctors said a common misconception persists that plastic surgery is only meant for aesthetic enhancement.

On the occasion, GMC Dean Kavita N. Singh successfully performed two complex surgeries.

In the first case, a woman from Damoh had been suffering from a serious medical condition following a normal delivery. Despite undergoing treatment at multiple hospitals for four months, she did not recover. She was later admitted to Hamidia Hospital, where Dr Singh performed a successful surgery. Hospital officials

said the patient is now recovering well.

In another case, a 14-year-old girl approached the hospital after failing to attain menstruation. Medical investigations revealed an internal congenital abnormality. According to her family, a private hospital had advised removal of her uterus.

Doctors at Hamidia Hospital instead opted for reconstructive surgery. The operation was successful, and hospital authorities said the procedure not only resolved the medical condition but also preserved the girl's reproductive potential, allowing her the possibility of motherhood in the future.

Head of the Department of Burns and Plastic Surgery Arun Bhatnagar said the

department has been functioning since 2003 and offers comprehensive facilities, including a dedicated burns unit, a skin bank, advanced operation theatres and specialised plastic surgery services.

He added that the department also trains super-specialty doctors through three MCh seats, contributing to the development of skilled plastic surgeons while providing advanced reconstructive care to patients from across Madhya Pradesh.

Hospital officials said the awareness programme aimed to dispel myths surrounding plastic surgery and encourage patients with burns, congenital deformities and traumatic injuries to seek appropriate medical care without hesitation.

Promoted officers felicitated by CM

Indore: Police officers and personnel who recently received promotions felicitated Chief Minister Mohan Yadav in Indore on Wednesday, expressing gratitude for the state government's decision to grant long-pending promotions.

They said the move had boosted employee morale and infused fresh energy into the police force. The Chief Minister honoured the promoted officers by pinning badges on them and congratulated them. He urged them to discharge their new responsibilities with integrity, dedication and sensitivity, while reaffirming the government's commitment to police welfare, training and improved service conditions.



AICC General Secretary and State In-charge Harish Chaudhary with Congress State President Jitu Patwari and Leader of opposition Umang Singhar during a rally on the culmination of Gen Z cyclothon under a statewide youth movement to save education, in Bhopal on Wednesday.

HC hears PIL on MP school teacher shortage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jabalpur

The Madhya Pradesh High Court has issued notices to the state government and the School Education Department on a public interest litigation (PIL) highlighting an acute shortage of teachers in government schools across the state.

The PIL, filed by Indore resident Saurabh Tripathi, cites the 2025 report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), claiming that 1,895 government schools in Madhya Pradesh do not have a single teacher. The petition argues that the shortage is depriving lakhs of students of their fun-

damental right to education. The petitioner contended that despite an annual education budget exceeding Rs 7,000 crore, the state's government school system continues to suffer from serious administrative failures, with thousands of schools operating without adequate teaching staff.

A Division Bench comprising Acting Chief Justice Vivek Rusia and Justice Pradeep Mittal, while hearing the matter on Tuesday, observed that the issues raised appeared serious at first glance and issued notices to the state government and the concerned authorities.

The court has sought a

detailed response on teacher recruitment, utilisation of the education budget and the concerns highlighted in the CAG report.

The petition also pointed to a sharp decline in academic performance, stating that the Class 10 pass percentage dropped from 67.74 per cent in the 2018-19 academic session to 38.53 per cent in 2021-22.

Following the preliminary hearing, the High Court directed the state government to explain the steps taken to fill vacant teaching posts, utilise budgetary allocations effectively and improve the quality of education in government schools.

MP launches first direct international flight to Abu Dhabi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Indore

Madhya Pradesh entered a new chapter in international air connectivity on Wednesday with the launch of its first direct international flight between Indore and Abu Dhabi, a move the state government said would strengthen trade, tourism, investment and cultural ties with the United Arab Emirates.

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav flagged off the inaugural Air India Express flight from Devi Ahilyabai Holkar International Airport. The service, supported under the Madhya Pradesh Civil Aviation Policy-2025, will operate four days a week—Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

Addressing the inaugural



ceremony, Yadav said the direct service connects not only two cities but also two friendly nations, creating new opportunities for business, tourism, education, health-care and cultural exchange.

He said the new route would reduce travel time between Indore and Abu Dhabi from nearly eight hours to just three hours and 15 minutes. The Chief Minister

also handed over boarding passes to passengers travelling on the inaugural flight.

Yadav said the state government introduced the Civil Aviation Policy-2025 to improve domestic and international connectivity and is providing viability gap funding of nearly Rs 15 lakh per flight for the Indore-Abu Dhabi route. The financial support is expected to reduce

airfare for passengers by nearly half.

He said the policy also provides viability gap funding of up to Rs 10 lakh for new domestic air routes to improve regional connectivity across the state.

Highlighting recent initiatives, the Chief Minister said the government has expanded intra-state air connectivity with flights linking Rewa to Indore, Delhi and Raipur. New services connecting Jabalpur to Kolkata, Bhopal to Rewa, Bhopal to Patna and Rewa to Kolkata are also planned.

He added that the state has introduced the PM Shri Helicopter Service to promote religious tourism and launched the country's first PM Shri Air Ambulance service for economically weaker sections.

Yadav said Madhya Pradesh has inaugurated three new airports over the past two-and-a-half years, while airports at Ujjain and Shivpuri are under construction. The government aims to provide airport or airstrip connectivity within every 100 kilometres and establish a helipad every 45 kilometres across the state. Permanent helipads are also planned in all 230 Assembly constituencies.

Describing Indore as the state's economic capital and Abu Dhabi as the administrative capital of the UAE, the Chief Minister said the direct flight would boost exports, industrial investment, tourism, education, health-care and opportunities for the Indian diaspora while enhancing Madhya Pradesh's global profile.

Twisha probe, CBI tells court

The CBI in a sealed envelope on July 10. While the contents of the report have not been officially disclosed, sources associated with the investigation said it contains scientific findings that the CBI considers significant. These claims, however, have not been independently confirmed.

Twisha Sharma was found dead at her in-laws' residence in Bhopal's Katara Hills area on the night of May 12, 2026. Her in-laws claimed she died by suicide, while her family alleged she was murdered. After questions were raised over the initial post-mortem examination, the High Court directed that a second post-mortem be conducted by AIIMS New Delhi. The CBI is now continuing its investigation based on the fresh forensic findings.

virtual appearance, citing security concerns, media presence and crowd management inside the court premises. The court accepted the request.

The CBI took over the investigation on May 25, 2026, following directions from the High Court. The agency is expected to file its charge sheet before the expiry of the statutory 60-day investigation period. If the charge sheet is not filed within the prescribed time, the accused may become eligible to seek default bail under the law.

Meanwhile, the second post-mortem report prepared by a five-member medical board at AIIMS New Delhi has emerged as a crucial piece of evidence. According to sources, the board submitted its final forensic report to

Man forced to pull rickshaw, beaten

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mandla

A video showing a man tied to a cycle rickshaw and allegedly beaten while being forced to pull it to a police station has gone viral in Madhya Pradesh's Mandla district.

Police identified the rickshaw puller as Gyan Singh Dhurve, 50, and the passenger as Santosh Amon of Dindori. Officials said the two, both daily wage workers, had a dispute during which Gyan Singh allegedly hit Santosh with a stick, injuring him. In retaliation, Santosh allegedly tied Gyan Singh to the rickshaw and assaulted him on the way to Kotwali police station. Police are investigating the incident.

Neemuch hosts anti-drug awareness rally

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Neemuch

The Madhya Pradesh Police on Wednesday launched the statewide "Stay Away from Drugs 2.0" campaign in Neemuch with a public awareness cycle rally to promote a drug-free and healthy society.

The campaign will be conducted across the district from July 15 to July 30, featuring awareness drives, public outreach programmes and educational activities aimed at discouraging substance abuse, particularly among young people.

The rally was flagged off from the Police Control Room by Collector Himanshu Chandra and Superintendent of Police Rajesh Vyas. Before the event, they administered an anti-drug pledge to police personnel, members of the Indian Medical Association (IMA), school students and citizens, urging them to stay away from drugs and spread awareness in society.

Addressing the gathering, Collector Himanshu Chandra said drug addiction has a damaging impact on individ-

uals, families and society, and stressed the need for collective efforts to protect the younger generation from substance abuse.

Superintendent of Police Rajesh Vyas said the campaign aims to educate adolescents and youth about the harmful effects of illegal narcotic substances while encouraging them to adopt a healthy and drug-free lifestyle. He said active community participation would play a key role in making the campaign successful.

Collector Himanshu Chandra, SP Rajesh Vyas and Divisional Forest Officer S.K. Atode also participated in the rally, which passed through key locations across

the city before concluding at Government Excellence School No. 2.

The programme was attended by Additional Superintendent of Police Hemlata Agrawal, City Superintendent of Police Kiran Chaudhan, IMA President Manish Chamadia, senior police officials, IMA members, students and a large number of residents.

Officials said the campaign is part of the state's ongoing efforts to build a healthier, safer and drug-free society through sustained public awareness and community participation.

NAME CHANGE
I, **SABIYA ALI W/O MOIZ ALI**, Resident of D-34, BDA Colony, Kohefiza Bhopal (M.P.) 462001 declare that my name's spelling written in my Passport as **SABIAH ALI**. While my name's right spelling is **SABIYA ALI**. Written in My all present documents. Now I will be known by my new & correct name as **SABIYA ALI**.

NAME CHANGE
I, **Mitali Sakalle**, daughter of Mr. Ashok Dwivedi, residing at 149, Sector A, Shahpura, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh – 462039, have changed my name to **Mitali Dwivedi**. Henceforth, I shall be known and identified by the name **Mitali Dwivedi** for all purposes, and all Government, Semi-Government, Banking, Educational, Legal and other records shall stand in my new name. Any person having any objection to this change of name may intimate the undersigned, failing which my new name shall be treated as valid for all future purposes.
Mitali Dwivedi
(Formerly: Mitali Sakalle)

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E-AUCTION (SALE NOTICE)

Appendix-IV-A [See proviso to rule 8(6) & 9]
SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF MOVABLE & IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES
E-auction Sale Notice For Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provision to Rules 8(6) & 9 of The Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) & Guarantor (s) that the below described Immovable properties mortgaged / charged to the secured creditor, the **Possession** of which has been taken by the authorised officer the **Canara Bank (secured creditor)** will be sold on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS, AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" & WHAT EVER THERE IS" on **05/08/2026** for recovery of bank dues to the **Canara Bank (secured creditor)**

Name and address of the Borrower & Guarantors	Description of Property	Demand Notice Dt. Possession Dt. Outstanding Amt.	Reserve Price EMD Amt. Bid Increment Amt.
Borrower : M/s Golden Foods Prop. Shri Praveen Roadrey S/o Lt. Shri Nimbaji Patil House No. 125, Ward no. 03, Holi Mohalla Mandideep-462046	EMT of Residential House Situated at Ward No. 03, House No. 125 Holi Mohalla, Mandideep, Area- 950 Sq. Ft. Plinth Area: 765.47 sqft. Owned by Shri. Praveen Roadrey S/o Shri. Nimbaji Patil Boundaries: East- Warehouse, West- Road & House of Shri. Hukumsingh Pal, North-House of Badra malviya, South-House of Shalendra Shukla BAANKNET PROPERTY ID: CNRB114526803 COORDINATES: 23.100111, 77.513433	14/08/2024 04/01/2025 as on 15/07/2026	₹ 11,97,000/- ₹ ₹ 1,19,700/- ₹ ₹ 10,000/-
Borrower : M/s Meena Bakri Palan Kendra Proprietor: Suraj Singh Deshwali S/o Shri Gappu Lal Deshwali Gram Panchayat, Kham Kheda, Teh Huzur, Bhopal, 462038	EMT of Commercial Diverted Land of Khasra No. 659/2/1/1/2 (S) Admeasuring- 2020 sq.mtr. situated at Village-Khamkheda, Patwari Halka No 15, Tehsil-Huzur, District- Bhopal. Boundaries: East: Land of Suraj Singh, West: Rasta, North: Land of Karan Singh, South: Land of Suraj Singh BAANKNET PROPERTY ID- CNRBMEENA COORDINATES: 23.384973, 77.417666	03.03.2025 08.05.2025 as on 15/07/2026	₹ 35,00,000/- ₹ ₹ 3,50,000/- ₹ ₹ 10,000/-

Last date for submission of online bids is on or before 04/08/2026 upto 5.00 p.m.
Date and Time of e-auction : 05/08/2026, 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM (With unlimited extension of 5 minutes duration each)
1) The intending bidders shall deposit above mentioned Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) being 10% of the Reserve Price in E-Wallet of M/s PSB Alliance Private Limited (**baanknet.com**) portal directly or by generating the Challan therein to deposit the EMD through RTGS/NEFT in the account details as mentioned in the said challan, on above mentioned date of bid submission.
2) The successful bidder shall deposit 25% of the sale price (inclusive of EMD already paid), immediately on the sale being knocked down in his/her favour and the balance within 15 days from the date of confirmation of sale. If the successful bidder fails to pay the sale price as stated above, the deposit made by him shall be forfeited.
3) All charges for conveyance, stamp duty/GST registration charges etc, as applicable and any taxes, revenue/dues to any local authority etc shall be borne by the successful bidder only
For detailed terms and conditions of the sale please refer web portal : **http://BAANKNET.com** or may contact - Chief Manager, SPLSD ARM Bhopal, Canara Bank, Plot no. 4, PSP Area, Near AIIMS, Saket Nagar Bhopal. **Contact no. 8989014648, 8057766078, 9691096410, 9123403299 (BHOPAL), 7905027805 (JABALPUR AND BILASPUR), 7683068902 (RAIPUR), 9140476074 (GWALIOR), 9830130770 (INDORE), 8073562754 (BHOPAL)** during office hours on any working day.
Date: 15-07-2026, Place: Bhopal
AUTHORISED OFFICER, CANARA BANK

Bhupesh Baghel meets Venugopal, hands over report on Punjab rift

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Amid infighting in the Punjab Congress, party state in-charge Bhupesh Baghel on Wednesday met AICC general secretary, Organisation, K C Venugopal and handed over his report to him based on his discussions with state leaders, with the message: leadership change is not a "game of puppets."

Baghel's report is based on days of deliberations and one-on-one meetings with state leaders during his recent visit to Punjab.

Congress Legislature Party leader in the state assembly, Partap Singh Bajwa, also met Venugopal at his residence but did not disclose what transpired during the meeting. A section of the state leaders has revolted against the party high command's decision to continue with Amarinder Singh Raja Warring as the state Congress chief. The rebel group is led by



former Punjab chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi and former deputy chief minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa.

Baghel said that he was in Punjab for six days and met the fighting leaders and heard all of them.

"After meeting everyone and

having discussions with leaders of Punjab, I have submitted my report to AICC general secretary, Organisation, K C Venugopal," Baghel told reporters here.

Asked whether he has recommended a change in state leadership to end the infighting,

Baghel said, "How can I tell you what report I have given to the party leadership? This is not a game of puppets." Sources said the party leadership is keen to end the tussle for leadership in the Punjab Congress ahead of the assembly election next year. After returning from abroad, Rahul Gandhi held a crucial meeting with party president Mallikarjun Kharge here and is learnt to have discussed the leadership crisis.

According to sources, Gandhi is willing to listen to the views of Punjab leaders and is keen to quell the infighting within the state unit at the earliest.

The party leadership is concerned that Congress cannot head into the assembly polls with continuing infighting in the state unit.

The Congress high command's decision to retain Warring as the Punjab unit chief has triggered dissent within the state unit.

West Bengal Govt introduces uniform transfer policy for field officers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kolkata

The West Bengal government has introduced a uniform transfer policy for field-level officers across departments, making rotation mandatory after a fixed tenure and barring postings in home districts, according to a notification.

The Personnel and Administrative Reforms Department stated in the notification that the policy aims to improve administrative efficiency, enhance transparency and accountability in public administration, and strengthen public service delivery.

Under the new guidelines, an officer will ordinarily not be posted in his or her home district, except during the last two years before retirement, and that too only subject to administrative convenience.

The notification, issued on Monday, stipulates that officers should normally be transferred after completing three years of continuous service in a post and should not ordinarily remain in the



same post for more than four years. For officials handling revenue collection, tax collection and other sensitive field assignments, the tenure norms are stricter. They will ordinarily be transferred after two years in a post and will not normally continue in the same assignment beyond three years.

"The objective is to bring greater transparency and accountability in public administration while ensuring administrative efficiency through a structured transfer

policy applicable across departments," a senior state government official said.

The guidelines also provide that while effecting transfers, the convenience of officers in terms of district may be considered, subject to administrative convenience and public interest. The Personnel and Administrative Reforms Department may relax the provisions in exceptional cases involving administrative exigencies, hardship or other special circumstances, the notification said.

SIT wraps up Ram temple probe

The trust is expected to review the findings, consider major changes to its structure and administration, update its internal committees, and appoint additional trustees. In earlier meetings, they had already discussed the resignations of key people, including general secretary Champat Rai, whom the SIT questioned. The trust says it wants to improve governance and win back devotees' confidence.

The controversy has led to political reactions and demands for more transparency in how temple funds are managed. The UP Government and the trust say the SIT investigation is thorough and independent. Still, those petitioning the Supreme Court want a central agency to investigate to ensure fairness and to look into broad-er financial issues.

The final SIT report is likely to suggest ways to improve the management of donations to prevent future problems, sources said. As the Ram temple continues to attract millions of devotees, people will be watching the outcome of the investigation and the trust's July 22 meeting to see how they affect public trust and the temple's management.

Govt bets big on mobiles, chips with ₹1.9 lakh...

"We will be self-reliant in the production of indigenous chips by the end of this programme," Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw said at a news briefing.

Semicon 2.0 aims to encourage the development of semiconductor intellectual property, commercial and strategic chip designs, and manufacturing capabilities for critical components required across sectors. The programme will provide support to companies involved in semiconductor machinery, materials, chemicals and gases while seeking to attract additional fabrication plants to India.

The programme also seeks to expand Assembly, Testing, Marking and Packaging (ATMP) and Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test (OSAT) capabilities, while advancing research into more sophisticated chip technologies. India's semiconductor push has already resulted in approvals for 12 manufacturing projects with a combined investment of more than ₹1.64 lakh crore. These include a silicon fabrication plant, a silicon carbide facility, an integrated gallium nitride micro-LED display unit and nine packaging facilities, catering to sectors such as automobiles, telecommunications, consumer electronics, aerospace and industrial equipment.

Three approved projects by Micron, Kaynes and CG Semi have begun commercial production, while another facility is expected to start operations in 2026. The first phase has also supported 24 semiconductor design projects by startups and MSMEs, with 105 companies receiving access to industry-standard Electronic Design Automation tools.

The Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme will provide production-linked incentives to manufacturers over five years from fiscal year 2026-27 to 2030-31, Vaishnaw said. Incentives will range from 2.25 per cent to 5 per cent on eligible mobile phone sales, with additional support for domestic sourcing of key components and for Indian companies investing in product design and research. The Government expects the mobile phone scheme to drive cumulative production of around Rs 39 lakh crore during its tenure, significantly increase exports and generate about 60,000 direct jobs.

India has emerged as the world's second-largest mobile phone manufacturer by volume, with 99.2 per cent of mobile phones used domestically now manufactured within the country. Mobile phones became India's largest exported product category in 2025, overtaking traditional export segments such as diesel fuel and cut diamonds.

India-UK CETA takes effect

In a message shared on social media, PM Modi highlighted that the trade agreement would provide a fresh boost to India's farmers, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and exporters. He said the pact would improve access to the UK market for several Indian industries and encourage greater cooperation in areas such as technology, professional services, and

innovation. The agreement is also expected to support the mobility of skilled Indian professionals seeking temporary work opportunities in the UK. The Prime Minister further emphasized the importance of the Social Security Agreement, stating that it would provide meaningful relief to Indian professionals working in the UK on temporary assignments. By reducing the burden of dual social security contributions, the agreement is expected to improve the competitiveness of Indian businesses operating internationally.

The agreements officially came into force on Wednesday, creating a comprehensive framework for stronger economic cooperation between the two countries. Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal described the occasion as a defining chapter in India-UK relations. He said the trade pact provides zero-duty market access for nearly 99 per cent of India's exports, covering almost the entire value of bilateral trade.

According to the Commerce Ministry, the agreement removes tariffs on a wide range of products, including textiles, garments, leather goods, gems and jewellery, engineering products, chemicals, electronics, marine products, furniture, and sports equipment. These sectors are expected to gain improved competitiveness in the UK market. India's agricultural sector is also set to benefit significantly. Most agricultural products will receive duty-free access to the UK, with a few sensitive items such as chicken, pork, eggs, rice, and sugar excluded from the arrangement. In addition, more than 97 percent of tariff lines covering processed food products will enjoy duty-free entry, opening new opportunities in the UK's large agricultural import market.

Beyond merchandise trade, the agreement expands opportunities for India's services sector, including information technology, finance, education, consultancy, and other professional services. It also creates greater mobility for skilled Indian workers, enabling businesses to access new markets more efficiently.

A major feature of the Social Security Agreement is the exemption for Indian professionals and their employers from paying UK National Insurance contributions for up to five years during temporary assignments. The provision is expected to benefit more than 75,000 Indian professionals and around 900 companies operating across sectors such as IT, healthcare, finance, telecommunications, education, and consulting.

The agreements also introduce annual mobility quotas for 1,800 Indian professionals, including chefs, yoga instructors, and classical musicians, across numerous service categories, further strengthening cultural and professional exchanges between the two countries.

Minister Goyal thanked UK Secretary of State for Business and Trade Peter Kyle and the negotiating teams from both nations for successfully concluding the agreements. He expressed confidence that the partnership would promote higher trade, increased investment, innovation, and sustainable economic growth while delivering shared prosperity for India and the United Kingdom. The implementation of CETA and the Social Security Agreement marks a new phase in India-UK economic relations, with both Governments expecting the initiatives to boost bilateral trade, create employment opportunities, and strengthen long-term strategic cooperation.

US, Iran ceasefire unravels

When the US and Israel launched the war on Iran on Feb. 28, Tehran effectively closed the waterway to shipping traffic - a move that sent the price of oil, fertiliser, and many other goods soaring far beyond the region and gave Iran major leverage in negotiations. Those rising prices pose a particular challenge to US President Donald Trump and his Republican Party, which hopes to retain control of Congress in elections in November. But Washington has struggled to successfully reopen the waterway.

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard threatened on Wednesday to halt all energy exports from the Middle East over the blockade.

"The export of oil and gas from the region will be either for everyone or for no one," it said.

The US carried out a wave of strikes, hitting dozens of targets overnight, the military's Central Command said Wednesday, and then resumed striking Iran during daylight - an unusual move that further signalled the increasing tempo of the attacks.

Within 17 hours of reimposing the blockade on Iranian ports, Central Command said US forces had "redirected" two commercial vessels attempting to run the blockade.

"The US military remains vigilant and prepared

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to ensure full compliance," it said on social media. Among the US military's targets was Greater Tunb Island, which is viewed as a strategic point in the Strait of Hormuz. Central Command said the attack targeted Iranian defence and missile sites.

Iran took control of three islands - Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb - from what would become the United Arab Emirates in 1971. The UAE has sought to reclaim them.

Some analysts have suggested that if the US seized the islands, it could allow it to control the strait. Another strike targeted a barracks for Iran's 388th Mechanised Infantry Brigade, which operates tanks and armoured vehicles, in Sistan and Baluchestan province, Iranian state television reported. The report said the Americans fired at least 13 missiles in the attack and that the seven dead included conscripts and career soldiers. A number of troops were wounded.

Including those at the barracks, more than 30 people have been killed in recent days, Iranian Government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani said, without elaborating.

Hossein Kermanpour, a spokesperson for the Health Ministry, meanwhile, said over 260 people were wounded in overnight strikes alone - a figure far larger than for any other round of recent violence between Iran and the US. He did not say how many people were killed overnight. The army said it would make "a decisive response to this aggressive action by the American enemy," according to state TV.

Missile alert warnings sounded in Bahrain and Kuwait early Wednesday as they faced incoming Iranian fire - a daily occurrence in recent days. Jordan said it shot down three incoming Iranian missiles. Iran claimed attacks on the three nations, all of which host US forces.

US Navy Adm. Brad Cooper, who leads Central Command, said in a statement that Iran had launched dozens of missiles and drones at neighbouring Gulf Arab countries.

Trump told the Fox News Channel on Tuesday night that more US strikes against Iran would come over the next two days and that bridges and power plants could be targeted by next week unless negotiations resume. Already, the US has struck at least one bridge.

"You'd better make a deal, or you're not going to have anything left," Trump warned.

Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, Amir Saeid Iravani, criticised America's attacks.

"The US is the aggressor, not the victim," he wrote to the world body's leader, according to the state-run IRNA news agency.

The latest round of fighting is focused on the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the world's oil and natural gas trade passes during peacetime. How to reopen the strait has bedevilled the US since Iran choked it off in the early days of the war.

NCP-SP may back NDA over women's quota...

She said if the proposed legislation were based on a uniform 50 per cent increase in seats across all States, there would be little reason to oppose it. She, however, stressed that any decision on supporting such a proposal would be taken only after discussions within the INDIA bloc. Addressing a press conference, Sule said she was clarifying the matter after consulting NCP-SP top leadership, including party president Sharad Pawar and senior leader Jayant Patil, to avoid any misunderstanding among workers of the party and the Opposition bloc Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA). The NCP-SP leader said she had also spoken to Maharashtra Congress president Harshwardhan Sapkal, Congress leader Satej Patil and Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut on the issue.

She added that the party had not received any written proposal from the Centre regarding the delimitation exercise and, therefore, could not take a formal stand at this stage.

Recalling earlier discussions on the issue, Sule said that after Parliament passed the Women's Reservation Bill unanimously, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju had invited her, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Arvind Sawant and AIMIM Lok Sabha member Asaduddin Owaisi for consultations on delimitation. Union Home Minister Amit Shah was also present at the meeting, she said.

She said the Opposition had written to the Centre under the leadership of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge seeking a collective discussion on the proposal instead of holding separate consultations with individual parties.

The Union Government intends to bring the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill proposing to raise Lok Sabha seats to 850 and initiate delimitation in the Monsoon session of

Parliament starting July 20.

Meanwhile, NDA Parliamentary Party meeting has been scheduled on first day of Monsoon Session on Monday in the Parliament House. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the MPs. The meeting is called to discuss legislative strategies and floor management ahead of the Monsoon Session of Parliament, which spans from July 20 to August 13. The Government has also called an all party meeting on Sunday.

Madan Mitra leaves Mamata camp for rival...

Madan Mitra had been one of the oldest confidants of TMC chief and had been her companion in all the major movements even when she was the Youth Congress president.

Mitra, a popular leader who won from the Kamarhati Assembly seat even during the recent anti-TMC wave in the just concluded elections, resigned from all the party posts on Wednesday including the position of State general secretary and as the chief of all the trade union wings of the party. Curiously, Mitra, who had all these days been siding with the former CM, switched sides a day after his two sons and wife received summons from the Enforcement Directorate. Mitra was also the first TMC minister and senior to be jailed in the Sharada chit fund case.

Soon after quitting Mitra said that, he was doing so in order to breathe some fresh air. "It was quite stuffy inside. Now I am can breathe more easily," he said dumping all the responsibility of the party's debacle on TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee. "I had told him to quit from his post for the time being and let the others take charge but he would not. Such is his arrogance. So arrogant is he that soon after the electoral loss when we went to meet Mamata Banerjee at her residence we, including the old and senior leaders, were asked to give Abhishek a standing ovation for his effort in the elections. It was height of it all," Mitra said. When asked as to whether he felt bad about leaving Mamata Banerjee's hands the former TMC minister also said he didn't because he was in the TMC that was created by Mamata Banerjee. "It is the same TMC. I have just gone from one room to the other room," he said.

With Mitra changing sides the Mamata Banerjee faction is left with about 18 out of 80-MLAs in the Opposition ranks.

The former CM, however, downplayed the defections, stating that several leaders were switching camps out of fear of central agencies like the ED. "It is not ideology or anything else it is the fear of Central agencies that is causing the rift but don't worry we will rebuild things as more such defections are engineered the more sympathy we will get from the people," she said.

DoPT withdraws recognition of CSC

The CSC is a registered society that operates under the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) on Talkatora Road in New Delhi and was set up to promote the welfare and recreation of lower and middle-level Central Government employees. In an office memorandum issued on Tuesday by the DoPT also cited complaints of internal disputes, denial of CCTV access to DoPT nominees, unauthorised occupation of Government property, alleged gambling, unauthorised canteen, encroachments and discrimination against outsourced staff. It said these issues persisted despite the appointment of an ad hoc administrative committee in 2023 to streamline the club's functioning. The Government further said the club was no longer serving its intended purpose of staff welfare, alleging that membership had effectively become restricted and was no longer benefiting the wider community of Central Government employees.

Club officials disputed the allegations and accused the Government of seeking to take back the land on which the club stands. According to the DoPT, the club was first de-recognised in 1971 following complaints of irregularities, though recognition was restored in 1972. It was de-recognised again in 1983 after fresh complaints and was re-recognised in December 2005 following a review.

CM Yadav woos textile investors to MP

The Government also plans to sign Memorandums of Understanding with the Apparel Export Promotion Council, the Manmade

and Technical Textiles Export Promotion Council, the Cotton Textiles Export Promotion Council and other national and international industry bodies to promote investment, exports and skill development.

The state aims to leverage Bharat Tex 2026 to attract new investments, create employment and strengthen exports. Yadav will also invite investors to participate in the Global Investors Summit scheduled to be held in January 2027 in Madhya Pradesh.

Domestic worker crushed to death by SUV in...

After the protest, the Resident Welfare Association said it would hold an emergency meeting to talk about safety checks, adding speed breakers and mirrors at blind spots, and creating a special rest area for domestic workers.

"This is a wake-up call. We cannot claim to be a safe society if the people who keep it running are not safe here," said a senior RWA member. Guddi's coworkers felt her loss deeply. They remembered her sharing tiffin during festivals, helping new workers find jobs, and always being the first to arrive. Now, they are left wondering how, in a gated community with guards, cameras, and swipe-card access, a woman resting in a parking lot could go unnoticed. Guddi's death has once again highlighted the working conditions of domestic staff in Gurugram's urban villages and high-rises.

Police stated that the investigation is ongoing and further action will be taken. Police said the investigation is still going on and any further action will depend on forensic and CCTV evidence. The vehicle is still impounded, and the society has been asked to provide its parking layout and safety records.

POJK under lockdown after deadly protests

They say the Pakistani Government has ignored the region for years, kept wheat and electricity prices high, and denied them subsidies that people in other parts of the country receive.

The protests started over economic issues but quickly turned into open resistance against Islamabad's rule. Security forces used force in response. Several reports say that Rangers and police fired at the crowds, killing at least 12 civilians. Protest leaders believe the real number may be higher, as some bodies are still missing in the confusion. One Ranger was also reported killed during the clashes.

After the killings, authorities acted quickly to control the situation. Local reports say about 4,000 Rangers have been sent across PoJK, and Rawalakot is under strict lockdown. Major roads out of the town are blocked, entry and exit points are closed, and people's movement is tightly restricted. Journalists say they are not allowed into the area. Internet and mobile services have also been cut, leaving residents isolated. Despite the crackdown, activists say the protests continue. JAAC says it will continue with Wednesday's planned march to Muzaffarabad, the capital of PoJK. Organisers expect thousands to join, hoping to reach the city and push for talks. "We have been exploited for 78 years. This time, we will not go back," a JAAC coordinator told supporters in messages sent before communications were cut.

The unrest has caught the world's attention, especially in India. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) criticised the "excessive use of force" against civilians and pointed to what it described as years of exploitation, internet shutdowns, and blocked supplies in the disputed area. Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal called on the international community to hold Pakistan responsible for what is happening in PoJK.

People in Rawalakot are feeling both fear and determination. Reports say hospitals are full, and families have not been allowed to hold public funerals for those killed. Traders say essential goods are blocked, worsening the economic problems that sparked the protests. As Wednesday begins, PoK faces a critical moment.

"The Pakistani authorities seem set on stopping the march from reaching Muzaffarabad. But the protesters are not giving up. With security forces stationed in large numbers with clear instructions to open fire, a major confrontation could soon change the political situation in the disputed region", sources in security agencies said. In the next few hours, it will become clear whether the authorities can stop the uprising or if their actions will only increase the anger that has been building in PoJK for years, the sources added.

CCEA approves ₹25,445 crore elevated corridors for Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on Tuesday approved two major elevated corridor projects worth ₹25,445.96 crore for Varanasi, aimed at easing traffic congestion, improving multimodal connectivity and significantly reducing travel time.

The two projects will be implemented under the Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM) and form a key part of the Varanasi Decongestion Plan.

The first project approved by the CCEA is 46.039 km, comprising a six-lane elevated main carriageway, an iconic cable-stayed bridge, an extradosed Foot Over Bridge-cum-Major Bridge, loops, ramps, link roads and service roads, will be implemented under the Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM) at a total capital cost of ₹14,447.64 crore including a civil construction cost of ₹6,037.85 crore (including utility shifting, excluding GST) and a land acquisition cost of ₹541.11 crore under NH(O).

The project will provide seamless connectivity between NH-19 and the Varanasi Ring Road, significantly decongesting the city's road network and improving urban mobility.

Designed for an operating speed of 80–100 km/h, it is expected to reduce the average travel time across the project influence area from approximately 60 minutes to 20 minutes, representing a reduction of nearly 67 per cent.

Travel time between NH-19 and Kashi Railway Station will be reduced from approximately 50 minutes to about 25 minutes, resulting in a saving of about 25 minutes (nearly 50 per cent).

Aligned with the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan, the corridor will strengthen multimodal connectivity by



providing seamless access to major highways, railway stations, Lal Bahadur Shastri Airport and Ramnagar IWAJ Port, while significantly improving connectivity to key religious, educational and cultural landmarks, including the Kashi Vishwanath Temple, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Namoh Ghat, Ramnagar Fort and the Ghats of Varanasi.

By linking important economic, social and logistics nodes, the project will improve logistics efficiency, enhance road safety, facilitate tourism and pilgrimage, and support sustainable regional economic growth across eastern Uttar Pradesh.

The corridor has been conceived as a transformative urban mobility project to decongest the road network of Varanasi & Chandauli by providing a high-speed, access-controlled connection between NH-19, the Varanasi Ring Road (NH-135B), Ramnagar/ BHU and other major urban destinations.

With more than 15 crore tourists and pilgrims visiting Varanasi every year, the project will significantly improve connectivity to major religious, educational and cultural landmarks, including the Kashi Vishwanath Temple, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Namoh Ghat,

provide seamless connectivity between NH-31 and Kashi Railway Station, while substantially improving access to Varanasi Ring Road, Varanasi Airport, Kashi Railway Station, Varanasi City Railway Station, Varanasi Junction, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Junction, Ramnagar Port, Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, the ghats of Varanasi and the adjoining Chandauli region.

Designed for an operating speed of 80–100 km/h, the project will reduce travel time between NH-31 and Kashi Railway Station from approximately 40 minutes to 20 minutes, representing a reduction of nearly 50 per cent.

It will significantly decongest the city's road network, improve road safety, reduce vehicle operating costs and facilitate faster, uninterrupted movement of passenger and freight traffic.

The project will also strengthen regional connectivity by improving access to one Economic Node (Chandauli Social Economic Zone), one Social Node (Chandauli) and six major Logistics Nodes, thereby enhancing multimodal integration in line with the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan.

It will facilitate efficient movement of agricultural produce, industrial goods, construction materials and minerals, improving logistics efficiency and supporting sustainable economic growth across eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Overall, the project will create a modern, access-controlled urban transport corridor that enhances connectivity, strengthens multimodal transport integration, promotes tourism and economic development, and improves the quality of life for residents and visitors to Varanasi.

The corridor is a major component of the Varanasi Decongestion Plan and will

provide seamless connectivity between NH-31 and Kashi Railway Station, while substantially improving access to Varanasi Ring Road, Varanasi Airport, Kashi Railway Station, Varanasi City Railway Station, Varanasi Junction, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Junction, Ramnagar Port, Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, the ghats of Varanasi and the adjoining Chandauli region.

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Punjab: Farmers take out motorcycle marches against India-US trade deal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chandigarh/Hoshiarpur

Protesting against the proposed India-US trade deal, farmers took out motorcycle marches in Punjab on Wednesday, alleging that it would adversely impact the country's farming sector.

The marches were carried out on a call given by different farming bodies under the banner of 'Desh Bachao Morcha' in Punjab.

Several farmers' organisations, including Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, Samyukt Kisan Morcha (Non-Political), Azad Kisan Morcha, Bharatiya Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Organisation and BKU (Boka Singh Mansa), participated in the motorcycle marches.

Opposing the India-US trade deal, farmer leaders claimed that the pact is not limited to the import and export of a few products. Instead, it may cover several crucial sectors, including agriculture, dairy, digital trade, services, intellectual property rights, energy and investment.

Highlighting the United States' long demand for greater access to India's agriculture and dairy sectors, they said any reduction in import duties on agricultural and dairy products could adversely affect Indian farmers, dairy producers and

small industries.

The leaders pointed out that the complete text of the agreement has not yet been made public, leading to widespread concern among sections of society.

They emphasised that such a significant and sensitive agreement should be placed before the people and discussed thoroughly in Parliament.

As part of the call, a motorcycle march was taken out by the Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee (Pidhi Group) in Hoshiarpur. Led by the outfit's district president Paramjit Singh Bhulla and district general secretary Kuldip Singh Begowal, the march commenced after an 'ardas' (prayer) at Gurdwara Pull Pukhta Sahib near Tanda and passed through Tanda, Dasuya and Miani.

The protesters later reached the office of Dasuya Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Kanwaljit Singh and submitted a memorandum addressed to the prime minister, demanding the immediate withdrawal of the proposed India-US trade agreement.

In the memorandum, the protesters alleged that the proposed trade pact would adversely affect farmers, agricultural labourers, livestock rearers, small traders and micro industries.



Workers under the 'Desh Bachao Morcha' take out a motorcycle rally against the proposed India-US trade deal and Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), while heading to the Deputy Commissioner's office to submit a memorandum in Amritsar, Punjab on Wednesday

Nation Focus



PURI GEARS UP FOR RAINY RATH YATRA AMID TIGHT SECURITY

The three chariots of Lord Jagannath and his sibling deities are ready to roll along Puri's Grand Road on Thursday as the Odisha government braces for the attendance of lakhs of devotees for a possibly rain-soaked Rath Yatra.

The temple town has been blanketed by a multi-layered security cover with the deployment of personnel from state police, central forces, Indian Navy and Coast Guard, while special focus is on crowd control, traffic management and emergency response.

Puri received a staggering 143.8 mm of rain on the eve of the iconic chariot festival and has battered down the hatches for heavy showers on Thursday as the weather department issued a red warning for heavy showers and thunderstorms.



ED FILES CHARGESHEET IN ₹40 LAKH US VISA FRAUD CASE

Private immigration assistance agencies from some north Indian states allegedly used to deposit ₹40 lakh in the bank accounts of US visa aspirants for a "short duration" to create "false" financial credentials for them to obtain the vital travel authorisation, the ED has said in a latest chargesheet.

The federal agency filed a prosecution complaint (chargesheet) on Monday before a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court in Jalandhar in a case related to "organised" immigration and visa fraud.

The ED probe stems from multiple FIRs filed by the Delhi Police and the Punjab Police against this alleged racket that was prompted by a complaint filed by the US Embassy in Delhi, the agency said in a statement on Wednesday.

Ladakh flags off first 5 MT apricot consignment to UAE

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jammu

In a landmark initiative that would transform Ladakh's horticulture sector and expand international market access for local farmers, Lieutenant Governor, Vinai Kumar Saxena, Wednesday flagged off the first export consignment of 5 MT of Ladakh's premium apricots to the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The initiative marks the beginning of Ladakh's largest-ever fresh apricot export programme and is expected to significantly enhance farmers' incomes while establishing Ladakh as a global supplier of premium-quality organic apricots.

Speaking on the occasion, L-G Vinai Kumar Saxena said that the export of the first consignment marked the beginning of a new era for Ladakh's horticulture sector and reflected the Administration's commitment to connecting local farmers directly with global markets.



ment to connecting local farmers directly with global markets.

"This export initiative is a historic moment for Ladakh, its horticulture sector and, above all, our hardworking farmers. The flagging off of the first export consignment of Ladakh apricots to the UAE marks the beginning of Ladakh's journey towards becoming a global horticulture export hub.

This initiative will not

only provide our farmers with direct access to international markets but also ensure fair and remunerative prices for their produce, substantially improving their incomes and living conditions," said L-G Saxena.

The export has been facilitated under an MoU signed in April 2026 between the Ladakh Administration and the UAE-based global retail conglomerate Lulu Retail through APEDA, which

envisages the export of over 1,000 metric tonnes of fresh apricots during the current harvest season.

According to a statement of the DIPR, Ladakh, "This is a monumental leap from the mere 1,500 KG of apricots exported during the previous two years, making it one of the most significant milestones in Ladakh's horticultural history".

Apricots, being fragile and perishable, require to be stored and transported in temperatures from zero degrees to 4 degrees. Keeping this in view, the Ladakh Administration, with support from CONCOR, ensured the shipment of Apricots from Ladakh using cold-chain transportation so as to maintain the freshness of the fruits.

The flagship export initiative focuses on 'Raktsey Karpo' and 'Halman', Ladakh's indigenous apricot varieties, internationally recognised for their exceptional sweetness, rich

flavour, superior nutritional value and completely organic cultivation. Grown under Ladakh's unique high-altitude climatic conditions, abundant sunshine and pristine environment, the variety is regarded among the finest apricots in the world and has witnessed increasing demand in international markets.

Notably, the farmers had traditionally faced considerable challenges in harvesting, sorting, grading, cleaning, packaging and marketing their produce, often resulting in significant post-harvest losses and reduced returns. But under the new arrangement with Lulu Retail, farmers would simply hand over their orchards to the export agency at the time of harvest, following which the company would undertake the entire value chain – from plucking, sorting to grading, processing, packaging and transporting it to international markets.

HC grants relief for TMC martyrs' day rally

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

After days of tug-of-war between rival groups of the Trinamool Congress demanding police permission for the premium Victoria House venue near the busy Esplanade crossing to hold their respective version of the TMC Martyrs' Day rally the Mamata Banerjee faction of the party on Wednesday managed to receive a "face saving" relief from the Calcutta High which directed the administration to accommodate the former Chief Minister's rally near Birla Planetarium, some two km south of Victoria House where the former Chief Minister had been holding her rally every year for the past 15 years or so.

The Bench of Justice Saugata Bhattacharyya shifted the venue from Victoria House to Cathedral Road in front of Birla Planetarium after the State Government cited traffic disruption in the heart of Kolkata and law and order issues if the two rival



factions were allowed to hold rallies near each other.

After hearing senior advocate Kalyan Banerjee appearing for the Mamata Banerjee faction the Court granted permission allowed the group hold its rally but with not more than 3,000 people attending. The Court also restricted the rally timing between 12.30 and 3.30 pm asking the organisers to submit the names of at least 20 volunteers who would be responsible for maintaining order to the Kolkata Police.

The other faction led by State Opposition Leader

Ritabarta Bannerjee has already been given a permission by the Kolkata Police to hold its own version of rally on Mayo Road near the Mahatma Gandhi Statue little more than a km away Victoria House.

The Congress which also organizes its own version of Martyrs' Day rally was earlier allowed to hold the meeting at Shahid Minar not very far away from Victoria House crossing.

Incidentally, in a smart move apparently towards bringing the two outfits closer, particularly when Mamata Banerjee needed it the most the Pradesh Congress for the first time invited the former Chief Minister to attend its rally at Shahid Minar.

TMC Martyrs' Day rally is held every year since 1993 to commemorate 14 Youth Congress workers who died in a police firing on July 21 during a skirmish between a rally led by Mamata Banerjee then a Youth Congress leader and the police force.

Punjab Police foils a terror attack just before Prime Minister's visit

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
■ New Delhi/Amritsar

Amritsar Commissionerate Police foiled a cross-border terror plot, arresting one suspect and recovering a hand grenade, a 9 mm Glock pistol, and four live cartridges. The police action is believed to have averted potential violence and ensured public order in the sensitive border district.

The arrest happened just before Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Punjab on July 17.

He is slated to launch several railway infrastructure projects and other development programs.

Security agencies have heightened vigilance in Amritsar and nearby areas in preparation for the visit, which is expected to draw large crowds.

Punjab Police said the

recovery of weapons highlights the seriousness of the conspiracy.

"Preliminary investigation reveals that the accused was in contact with cross-border ISI handlers through Instagram and was being directed to target police establishments and public places to disturb peace and public order. Punjab Police remains vigilant and committed to dismantling terror networks," DGP Punjab Gaurav Yadav said.

Investigators think the goal was to spread fear and disrupt peace in the area. The hand grenade and loaded Glock pistol show a clear plan to use violence.

Police officials said the seizure happened just in time and was important in stopping a possible attack.

An FIR has been filed at Police Station Cantonment, Amritsar, under the laws



about terrorism and illegal weapons.

The suspect is in custody, and police are still questioning him to learn more about the plan.

They are also continuing to analyse the communication records.

Senior police officials said

they are still investigating to uncover the entire network, identify other people involved in India, and determine who the handlers are on the other side of the border.

Specialised agencies are analysing the suspect's phone, social media, and

other communication records. Social media is often used to radicalise and direct people inside India.

This case shows how handlers now use encrypted or seemingly harmless platforms to issue instructions while staying hidden.

Constant monitoring and quick response have helped neutralise several such conspiracies in recent times.

Amritsar, being a sensitive border district with significant religious and tourist footfall, remains under heightened security vigil.

Residents and security analysts alike have welcomed the successful bust as a timely intervention that has saved potential lives. Investigators are also examining whether the accused had any prior criminal record or links with other modules.

Police are looking into

the accused's finances and travel history.

Punjab Police have asked people to stay alert and report anything suspicious or strange messages on social media to the nearest police station.

Officials said that public help is key to keeping the state safe.

As the investigation continues, police are confident they will uncover the full plan and catch everyone involved.

This operation shows that the Punjab Police are committed to keeping people safe from cross-border threats.

Lok Sabha tells MPs to avoid smart watches, spectacles in Parliament

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Lok Sabha secretariat has advised the MPs not to use smart watches, or smart spectacles in ways that may compromise the security, privileges and privacy of members in the Parliament Estate during the upcoming Monsoon Session.

The Monsoon Session of Parliament is slated to begin July 20, and will continue till August 13.

"Members are aware that a large number of advanced devices such as smart spectacles/ pen cameras/ smart watches etc. are now widely available in the country. Some of these devices can be used in ways so as to compromise privacy of Members and



breach parliamentary privileges," a bulletin issued by the Lok Sabha secretariat on Wednesday said.

In view of this, MPs were requested to refrain from using such devices in any way that compromises security, privileges and privacy of members in any part of the Parliament Estate, the secretariat said.

■ States Focus ■



TN CM C Joseph Vijay and others pay tributes to former state chief minister K Kamaraj on his birth anniversary in Chennai, Tamil Nadu on Wednesday PTI

Top leaders pay tributes to K Kamaraj on his birth anniversary

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Tamil Nadu Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar and Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay on Wednesday paid rich tributes to the former TN CM K Kamaraj, remembering his contributions on his 124th birth anniversary. “Remembering Thiru K Kamaraj ji on his birth anniversary. A stalwart of India’s freedom movement and an exceptional public figure, he dedicated his life to nation-building. His unwavering commitment to areas like education, inclusive development and the welfare of the underprivileged continues to guide generations,” the PM said on his social media platform. In his message, Arlekar said, “On the occasion of the birth anniversary of the great leader Kamaraj, I pay my respectful tribute to the visionary leader who brought about the greatest transformation in the educational development of Tamil Nadu.” (PTI)



Right to question heart of rule of law: Former CJI Chandrachud

Former chief justice of India DY Chandrachud on Wednesday said press freedom holds the highest value in a democratic society and the right to question lies at the heart of the rule of law. Addressing the inauguration of a new studio of the digital news platform ‘Dynamite News’ in the national capital, Chandrachud said no democracy could exist without a free press. “Press freedom is the highest value in a democratic society. No democracy can exist in the absence of a free and absolutely free press,” he said. (PTI)

BJP slams Congress over Rahul Gandhi’s Dehradun venue row



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The BJP on Wednesday criticised the Congress over its claim that permission for party leader Rahul Gandhi’s July 17 event at Dehradun’s Parade Ground was revoked, alleging that several alternative venues have already been made available for the programme. The remarks came after the Congress staged a sit-in at Parade Ground in Dehradun on Tuesday after the district administration cancelled permission for Gandhi’s event, ‘Chhatron Ki Goonj’ (Voice of Students), saying another programme is being held at the venue. BJP national spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari alleged that the Congress is looking for an excuse as Gandhi is planning to go on another vacation. “Stop playing the false victim card. Several additional venues have already been made available. It seems Rahul Gandhi wants to go on a vacation and is looking for an excuse to cancel his programme. “The country’s Gen Z has already seen through the Congress party’s lies,” Bhandari said in a post on social media. The event will now be held at the Bannu School ground, Uttarakhand Congress president Ganesh Godiyal said on Tuesday night. Earlier in the day, Dehradun District Magistrate Ashish Chauhan said a central government programme at Parade Ground was scheduled to end on July 15 but has been extended till July 17.

ECI extends SIR schedule for three States, Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Wednesday extended the schedule for the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in four States — Karnataka, Punjab, Telangana and Delhi. In a letter to the chief electoral officer of Delhi, the poll authority said the draft electoral rolls will now be published on August 17 instead of August 5. Similarly, the house-to-house visits which were scheduled till July 29 will now continue till August 8. In a letter to the chief electoral officer Delhi, the poll authority said the draft electoral rolls will now be published on August 17 instead of August 5. Similarly, the house-to-house visits which were scheduled till July 29 will now continue till August 8. The SIR which was rolled out on May 14. Under the exercise so far, over 98 per cent of the total 1.45 crore voters in Delhi have been provided with enumeration forms to furnish the required details. Out of the distributed



A Booth Level Officer (BLO) verifies voter details during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls at Karad in Satara district, Maharashtra on Wednesday PTI

forms, 17,66,553 were completed and digitised by the booth level officers (BLOs). Over 13,000 BLOs in Delhi are associated with the door-to-door exercise. According to the revised SIR schedule for Delhi, draft electoral rolls will now be published on August 17 instead of August 5. Claims and objections by the voters will be filed from August 17 to September 16. The claims and objections will be disposed of by October 15 and the final electoral rolls will be published on October 19. Similarly, in Punjab, the house-to-house visits by booth level officers (BLOs) will continue till August 3. Earlier, the house-to-house visits were to conclude on July 24. The draft electoral rolls in the state will now be published on August 13 in place of July 31. The final rolls will

come out on October 12 in place of October 10. In Telangana, the draft rolls will be published on August 10 while the final rolls will be published on October 12. In Karnataka, the house-to-house visits by the BLOs will continue till August 8 in place of July 29. Draft rolls in the state will be published on August 17 in place of August 5. The final electoral rolls in the southern state were to be published on October 7 but according to the revised schedule, they will be published on October 19. On Tuesday, ECI extended the SIR schedule for Haryana and Andhra Pradesh. Delhi and the three States besides Haryana and Andhra Pradesh are part of Phase 3 of the SIR which was rolled out on May 14. Once Phase 3 is completed, the entire country, except for Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, will be covered under the SIR rollout. Due to a variety of reasons, the SIR in the previous phase has also seen frequent tweaking in schedules.

SIR PROCESS FOCUSSED ON EXCLUSION, HAS PLAYED HAVOC WITH DEMOCRACY: EX-CEC

New Delhi: Former chief election commissioner SY Quraishi has hit out at the Election Commission over the ongoing SIR exercise, saying the process is focussed more on “exclusion” and has “played havoc with democracy” with free and fair elections having been “disturbed”. The emphasis in the ongoing process of Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls is on how many to exclude as if the Election Commission (EC) would get good marks for “throwing out” as many as it can, Quraishi said in an exclusive interview with PTI Videos ahead of the launch of his new book “India and I: A Hundred Memories, Not a Memoir”. The book, published by Hachette India, throws light on 100 episodes from Quraishi’s life. Quraishi told PTI that being registered as a voter is a constitutional right but a situation is being created that it is a favour granted to people by the EC. The ongoing process of SIR is “unfair” because of the way this is being done, he said. The process is focusing more on “exclusion”, Quraishi said. “How many people can you throw out of the electoral roll, that seems to be the focus,” he said. “Whereas in our time it was a very clear policy – our instruction to the polling staff used to be that if somebody comes introducing himself or herself and there was some minor error in the spelling, age or address or something, but you know that the person is the right person, ignore all mistakes. So that no voter is excluded,” he asserted. (PTI)



Ex CEC SY Quraishi speaks during an interview with PTI in New Delhi on Tuesday PTI

Giribala’s counsel says voice samples were never refused

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Bhopal

In a significant development in the high-profile Twisha case, counsel for accused Giribala Singh has publicly responded to the ongoing controversy over the collection of voice samples, asserting that the accused never refused to provide them. Speaking to the mediapersons, advocate Enosh George Carlo said the court record would clearly show what transpired during the proceedings. He maintained that the issue was not a refusal to provide voice samples but

legal concerns regarding the transcript supplied by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for the recording process. According to Carlo, the accused sought legal advice before reading the transcript, a right available to every accused person, but were not given adequate opportunity to consult their lawyer. Despite this, he claimed Giribala Singh spent nearly three hours providing voice samples during the process. The counsel further said that on July 11, the defence had formally informed the CBI that the accused had no objection to reading the transcript and



providing voice samples. “We have nothing to hide and therefore no reason to fear. Our clients have cooperated with the investigation at every stage,” Carlo said.

President Murmu urges Ayurveda students to follow Sushruta, embrace science

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday urged young Ayurveda students and researchers to follow the path shown by Acharya Sushruta and remain steadfast in their commitment to medical ethics and compassionate patient care, while embracing scientific research and new technologies to strengthen the global acceptance of the traditional system of medicine. Addressing the inaugural session of the three-day international seminar ‘Saushrutam 2026’ at the All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) here on the occasion of Sushruta Jayanti, the president said the future of Ayurveda lies in the hands of the younger generation. She advised students and researchers embarking on their professional journeys to pursue practical research and generate high-quality scientific evidence with curiosity, integrity and a scientific temper. “Wherever appropriate, they should not hesitate to make use of new technologies,” the President said, urging them to follow the path shown by Acharya Sushruta and remain committed to medical ethics and compassionate service



President Droupadi Murmu during the inauguration of ‘Saushrutam 2026’ at the All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), New Delhi PTI

towards patients. The president also inaugurated the MRI section of AIIA during the event. Congratulating the Ayurveda fraternity on the birth anniversary of Acharya Sushruta, widely regarded as the father of surgery, Murmu said his pioneering work in surgery centuries ago was revolutionary for its time. She said Sushruta introduced several complex and innovative surgical techniques, including plastic surgery, cataract surgery, treatment of tumours and ENT procedures, while the Sushruta Samhita provided a new direction not only to the Indian subcontinent but to the world. Murmu said the knowledge embedded in India’s traditions should be carried

forward in harmony with changing times for the benefit of society. Describing Ayurveda’s holistic vision of life as a boon to humanity, she said efforts should be made to ensure that the ancient system remains relevant and effective in the present era. The president said the Government of India has worked to establish Ayurveda and Yoga on the global stage with renewed vigour and is making efforts to validate the ancient tradition of surgery through scientific benchmarks. She said standardised documentation, digital health integration and modern scientific research techniques would help enhance the global acceptance of Ayurveda.

IPC signs MoU with UP Pharma Council to strengthen drug quality

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Uttar Pradesh Promote Pharma Council to strengthen quality standards, regulatory compliance and innovation in the pharmaceutical and medical device sectors. The MoU was signed during the YEIDA MedTech Investors Meet and Site Visit 2026 held at India Expo Mart in Greater Noida on July 14. The partnership aims to promote quality standards, regulatory excellence, innovation and capacity building across the pharmaceutical and medical device ecosystem, the Health ministry said in a statement. Under the collaboration, the two organisations will work to strengthen quality standards and regulatory compliance in the pharmaceutical and medical device industries, while promoting awareness of the Indian Pharmacopoeia, pharmacovigilance and materiovigilance. The partnership also envisages organising joint training programmes, workshops and stakeholder awareness initia-



tives, besides fostering research, innovation and industry-academia collaborations, the statement said. The MoU will support micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) by providing digital tools for adverse event reporting and enhance patient safety through quality assurance and post-market surveillance initiatives, the statement said. It said the collaboration reflects the Commission’s commitment to advancing healthcare quality standards, supporting innovation and strengthening India’s regulatory framework, while contributing to the growth of Uttar Pradesh as a major hub for pharmaceuticals, medical devices and healthcare technologies. The partnership seeks to build a stronger ecosystem focused on quality, safety, innovation and global competitiveness, it added.

AIIMS successfully operate on infant with congenital lung malformation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Doctors at AIIMS Delhi have successfully performed a rare and technically demanding lung-preserving surgery on a four-month-old infant born with a congenital lung malformation affecting both lungs, hospital authorities said. The child was discharged just two days after the operation, they said. The procedure — a segment-level lung resection or segmentectomy in an infant — on one of the youngest patients is among the rarest reported cases of

its kind and highlights the advanced paediatric surgical care available at the premier institute, authorities added. The surgery was performed on the infant’s right lung, while another one on the left lung will be scheduled after a few months, according to doctors. The baby was diagnosed before birth with congenital pulmonary airway malformation (CPAM), a condition in which part of the lung develops abnormally during pregnancy, forming cyst-like tissue that cannot function like healthy lung tissue. Doctors said the case was



particularly challenging because the malformation involved both lungs, unlike the more common presentation affecting only one lung. Removing an entire lung lobe would have significantly reduced the child’s future lung capacity, they said. The surgical team therefore opted for a lung-preserving approach by removing only

the diseased segments from the right lung. Each lung is divided into smaller functional units called segments, each with its own airway and blood supply. While removal of an entire lobe is relatively straightforward, segmentectomy requires meticulous dissection of deeply placed blood vessels and airways while preserving the surrounding healthy lung tissue. In this case, surgeons removed segments 9 and 10 of the lower lobe of the right lung, considered among the most technically difficult lung segments to access because

of their deeply situated blood vessels, the hospital statement said. “Segments 9 and 10 are among the most difficult to remove in the entire lung, since their vessels and airway are buried deep within the tissue, far from the surface. Performing this safely through keyhole surgery in an infant just four months old is a significant technical achievement,” Dr Sandeep Agarwala, Head, Department of Pediatric Surgery, AIIMS Delhi, said. Outcomes like this are only possible because of teamwork, and because of the

dedicated healthcare workers at AIIMS, whose infrastructure and facilities are well suited to conducting this kind of complex, lung-preserving pediatric surgery,” he said. The surgery was led by Professor Dr Vishesh Jain of the Department of Pediatric Surgery. Doctors said a key factor behind its success was selective lung ventilation, in which the anaesthesia team ventilated one lung while allowing the other to remain still for surgery — a highly demanding technique in infants because of their tiny airways.

Flood situation in Arunachal worsens, over 1 lakh affected

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Itanagar

The flood situation in Arunachal Pradesh worsened on Wednesday, with 26 of the State's 28 districts affected and the number of people hit by the deluge crossing one lakh, an official bulletin said.

The rain-triggered floods and landslides have so far claimed seven lives and injured 29 people across the State, said the bulletin issued by the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC).

Upper Subansiri, Upper Siang, Kra Daadi, Kamle and Papum Pare were the districts that reported fresh flood and landslide incidents over the last 24 hours.

In Upper Subansiri, floods and landslides affected Limeking, Nacho, Siyum and Daporijo circles.

Upper Siang reported fresh damage in Mariyang, Yingkiong, Palling and Jengging circles. Fresh incidents were also reported from Tali circle in Kra Daadi district, Raga circle in Kamle district and Kimin circle in Papum Pare district.

During the last 24 hours, Upper Subansiri recorded three flood incidents and three landslides, while Upper Siang witnessed 15 land-



slides, seven heavy rainfall incidents and four floods.

Kra Daadi reported two landslides, while Kamle and Papum Pare recorded one flood incident each.

The SEOC said 250 more people were affected in Upper Subansiri, taking the cumulative number of flood-hit people in the state to 1,03,167 across 306 circles and 485 villages.

Upper Siang remained the worst-affected district with 49,259 people impacted, followed by Siang (25,365), Kra Daadi (13,731), East Kameng (6,146), Upper Subansiri (3,467) and Namsai (2,657).

According to the bulletin, 622 houses have been damaged across the State, including 454 kutcha houses, 100 pucca houses, 44 huts and 24 other structures.

Among the fresh losses reported, a kutcha house was completely destroyed in Kra Daadi due to a landslide, while another was severely damaged in Kamle following flooding.

Infrastructure damage was also reported in several districts. In Upper Subansiri, floods damaged a bridge in Limeking circle, besides roads, a flood protection wall and a retaining wall at Rapenrijo, while landslides damaged roads in Rakmi and Jingmuri villages.

In Upper Siang, floods and landslides damaged retaining walls, water supply systems, flood protection structures and minor irrigation infrastructure at several locations.

Kra Daadi reported damage to two schools, a

hostel and a boundary wall due to landslides, while floodwaters damaged a minor irrigation structure in Upper Sher village of Papum Pare district.

The cumulative damage to agriculture and horticulture has risen to 561.75 hectares, including 224 hectares of agricultural land and 337.75 hectares of horticulture plantations.

Meanwhile, the IMD has forecast thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and heavy to very heavy rainfall in parts of the state on Thursday, with isolated areas of Papum Pare likely to receive 12-20 cm of rainfall in 24 hours.

On Friday, East Kameng and Papum Pare districts are expected to receive very heavy rainfall, while Changlang is likely to witness heavy rain accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning.

Weather conditions are expected to improve from Saturday, though East Kameng, Kurung Kumey, Papum Pare and Changlang will remain under a heavy rainfall alert.

By Sunday, only Papum Pare is expected to remain under watch for heavy rain, while no significant weather warning has been issued for Monday.

Assam to draft SOP on human-wildlife conflict

TONY DAS
■ Guwahati

In a major bid to resolve the escalating ecological crisis, the Assam Government has initiated a comprehensive consultative process to develop a scientific and sustainable strategy for managing human-wildlife conflict across the State, with a particular focus on the human-elephant conflict and the rising monkey menace.

This was announced by Assam Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Jayanta Mallabaruah, following a high-level meeting with Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), senior forest officials, and key stakeholders at the Assam Legislative Assembly campus in Dispur. The discussions aimed to identify region-specific interventions, bolster inter-agency coordination, and draft a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).

Highlighting the gravity of the human-elephant conflict, Mallabaruah revealed that nearly 150 human lives are lost annually in the State due to encounters with elephants. Apart from the loss of life, wild herds cause extensive damage to agricultural crops and rural livelihoods.

According to the Minister, the long-term solution lies in massive afforestation drives to enhance forest cover and build natural habitats for ele-



(L to R) MK Yadava, IFS, Special Chief Secretary (Forest), Jayanta Mallabaruah, Minister for Finance, Forest & Environment, etc, L L to L Government of Assam, Atul Bora, Minister for P&RD, Excise, etc., Government of Assam during the meeting at Assam Legislative Assembly Conference Hall, Dispur

phants. The Government is exploring dedicated plantations of tree species that serve as natural food sources, reducing the animals' dependency on agricultural fields.

Under a new scientific mapping approach, the State has been divided into distinct "elephant management zones" based on herd populations and migratory patterns rather than administrative boundaries. Dedicated consultations will be held within each zone, involving local MLAs, wildlife experts, and forest officers to customise regional interventions, such as solar fencing and bio-fencing. The Minister cautioned that the indiscriminate installation of solar fences often merely diverts herds into adjacent localities without addressing the core crisis.

The State Government is

also exploring the use of aerial seeding in difficult, inaccessible terrains where conventional plantation drives are not feasible. Forest Battalions, the Armed Forces, and local institutions will be roped in for these afforestation programmes.

Addressing the monkey menace, which has severely hit agriculture and horticulture across several districts, Mallabaruah stated that the Government is examining humane, scientific interventions. Among these is a proposed animal sterilisation programme. Drawing on successful models from other States, the Government is assessing the feasibility of specialised veterinary mobile units, operating facilities, and dedicated transport. However, any sterilisation programme will only be

implemented after extensive public consultation and constituency-level assessments by local MLAs, the Minister added.

To ease the distress of the affected families, the Government is simultaneously streamlining the compensation mechanism. Dedicated funds will be placed with District Commissioners to facilitate immediate, hassle-free disbursement of financial relief following verification. This expedited process will cover crop damage and loss of life caused by elephants, tigers, and other wild animals.

All stakeholders have been requested to submit their written recommendations by 20 or 21 July. Based on these inputs, the Forest Department aims to ready the final comprehensive SOP by 22 July.

Mob attacks Assam Rifles camp in Manipur

TONY DAS
■ Imphal

An unruly mob targeted an Assam Rifles camp in Manipur's Senapati town on the night of 14-15 July, resorting to stone-pelting, arson, and vandalism, defence officials said on Wednesday.

The violence erupted following an area domination patrol and search operation launched by the Assam Rifles. The operation was initiated based on credible intelligence inputs regarding the presence of armed cadres in the Makuilongdi area, located about two kilometres west of a designated NSCN (IM) camp at Oklong.

Intelligence reports and social media updates had indicated that armed cadres were moving outside their designated camps, carrying weapons and wearing uniforms in blatant violation of the established Ceasefire Ground Rules. The Ceasefire Monitoring Group (CFMG) was formally apprised of the security concerns and rule violations.

During the security operation, Assam Rifles columns approaching Makuilongdi and Oklong villages were obstructed by local residents, including women. Maintaining maximum



restraint, the security personnel held discussions with local representatives, assuring them that the operation was aimed solely at maintaining peace and that forces would not enter any village without official consent.

However, tensions escalated by 9:00 pm as a large crowd gathered in Senapati town and began marching towards the Assam Rifles camp. Despite the withdrawal of the patrolling columns, the violent mob reached the camp around 9:30 pm, pelting stones, damaging property, and attempting arson.

Security forces, in coordination with the Manipur Police, deployed minimal force, firing blank rounds and tear-gas grenades to disperse the crowd and prevent further escalation. Senapati Police and the Central Reserve

Police Force (CRPF) were immediately deployed to restore law and order.

While retreating, sections of the mob vandalised security vehicles, setting a light vehicle ablaze and overturning two trucks. A civilian car was also reportedly burnt during the ruckus.

Coordinated efforts by the security forces, State police, and the CRPF brought the situation under control, fully dispersing the crowd by midnight.

Officials confirmed that the situation in Senapati is currently peaceful and under control, with no injuries or casualties reported on either side. Security forces and district authorities have initiated dialogues with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to maintain communal harmony and address local concerns.

Isha Gramotsavam sports fest expands to 10 States

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi/Coimbatore

In a major boost to grassroots sports, Isha Gramotsavam, India's largest annual rural sports festival, is set to expand its footprint to northern Indian States for its 18th edition. Organised by Sadhguru's Isha Outreach, the tournament will now span 10 States and one Union Territory, making this the largest-ever chapter of the rural sporting event.

For the first time, the tournament—historically a highly anticipated fixture across rural southern India—will be conducted in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, and Maharashtra, alongside Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Puducherry.

The mega-event is projected to bring together more than 80,000 players from over 40,000 villages, forming an estimated 7,000 teams. Notably, the edition will see the participation of nearly 15,000 women players.

The tournament boasts a total prize pool of over ₹1



crore, designed to keep grassroots players highly motivated. While men will compete in volleyball, women will face off in throwball. The winning teams in both categories at the Grand Finale will receive ₹5 lakh each, while the runners-up will be awarded ₹3 lakh. Third and fourth-place teams will walk away with ₹1 lakh and ₹50,000, respectively.

Cash prizes will also be handed out during the Cluster and Divisional stages. Furthermore, the festival features dedicated awards for the Paralympic category, reinforcing its commitment

to inclusive sports.

"With every edition, Isha Gramotsavam continues to grow not just in scale but in impact," said Swami Pulaka, Gramotsavam Coordinator. "By intentionally excluding professional athletes, the tournament creates a rare opportunity for village players to experience structured competition and showcase their abilities on a national platform."

The competition features a multi-stage format comprising cluster-level matches, divisional rounds, and the Grand Finale. The matches have already commenced.

Manipur CM promises normalcy



Manipur CM Y Khemchand Singh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Imphal

Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Wednesday asserted that his Government was committed to restoring normalcy, ensuring public safety and facilitating the free movement of all communities along the State's national highways.

He made the remarks during a visit to Kanto Sabal village in Imphal West district, where at least three houses were recently set ablaze by a mob.

Singh urged people of the area to uphold peace and harmony, saying those were the foundation for the State's progress.

During the visit, he also inspected the reconstruc-

tion of the houses damaged in the arson incident.

He said infrastructure, education and healthcare could flourish only in a peaceful environment, calling upon all sections of society to work together for the State's inclusive growth and prosperity.

Singh said the Government was making every effort to ensure the free movement of all communities along the national highways passing through Manipur.

The Village Development Committee of Kanto Sabal, along with local Meira Paibis and representatives of village clubs, submitted a memorandum to the chief minister highlighting local issues and security concerns.

BJP to hold protest on July 17 against Bidadi project



BJP State chief BY Vijayendra

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ballari (Karnataka)

The BJP on Wednesday said it would stage a day-long sit-in protest on July 17 against the proposed GBT project near Bidadi in Bengaluru South district.

The party also alleged that Karnataka Chief Minister DK Shivakumar was "prioritising real estate over the interests of farmers."

Addressing a press conference, BJP State chief BY Vijayendra said, "On July 17, BJP MLAs, MPs, former MLAs, and former MPs will stage a day-long sit-in protest at Freedom Park in Bengaluru. We demand the withdrawal of cases against agitating farmers and the scrapping of the Bidadi Township project."

ECI ready for One Nation One Election with 6-month notice, says Parliament panel chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Lucknow

The Election Commission, in its preliminary submission to the Joint Committee of Parliament on the proposed 'One Nation One Election', has said it would be ready to conduct simultaneous Lok Sabha and assembly elections if given six months' notice, panel chairman PP Chaudhary said on Wednesday.

Chaudhary was speaking to the media after the committee concluded its three-day consultations with academia.

Responding to a question, Chaudhary said that the committee would also hear the EC before finalising its recommendations on the proposed constitutional amendments.

"We will hear the Election Commission on how it plans to conduct 'One Nation One Election'. We will put our questions to it, and only after hearing its views will the committee recommend whether it is feasible or not," he said.

Referring to EC's submission, he said, "The poll body had indicated that simulta-



Parliament panel chairman PP Chaudhary

neous elections across the country would be feasible if it is given six months' advance notice."

"The Election Commission believes that if Parliament passes the law in 2028, it can conduct 'One Nation One Election' from 2029," he reiterated.

Describing the proposal as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision, Chaudhary said simultaneous Lok Sabha and assembly elections had been conducted in the country between 1954 and 1960 using ballot papers.

"We cannot underestimate our voters. They are politically aware and capable of deciding whom to vote for. That is why India's democracy enjoys a distinct

place in the world," he said.

Constitutional experts who appeared before the panel had opined that the proposal did not violate the basic structure of the Constitution, federalism or democracy, he said.

"It is only a timetable for holding Lok Sabha and assembly elections together. It does not curtail the powers or rights of the states," he quoted the experts.

Claiming broad public support for the proposal, Chaudhary said, "Almost 99 per cent of civil society and ordinary people are in favour of 'One Nation One Election'. This is the will of the people."

He said stakeholders had told the committee that fre-

quent elections disrupted governance as officials were repeatedly diverted for poll duty across states.

Earlier, the committee examining the Constitution (Amendment) Bills on the proposed One Nation One Election initiative held discussions with vice-chancellors, directors and heads of departments from leading universities and institutions in Uttar Pradesh, including Dr Ram Manohar Lohiya National Law University, Banaras Hindu University, Indian Institute of Information Technology, Kanpur, Indian Institute of Management Lucknow and the University of Allahabad.

According to an official statement, the participants made detailed presentations covering various provisions of the proposed constitutional amendment Bills.

The discussions focused on issues such as Centre-State relations, the implications of mid-term elections, the concept of an unexpired term, the long-term sustainability of simultaneous elections, the proposed powers of the Election Commission of India and other aspects of electoral reforms.

Wayanad landslide: Govt ensured quick relief, says CM Satheesan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

Kerala Chief Minister VD Satheesan on Wednesday said the State Government had effectively carried out rescue, relief and rehabilitation measures following the recent Wayanad landslide and praised the ministers and the district administration for their coordinated efforts.

Replying to questions at a press conference, Satheesan said all the work to be undertaken by the Government in the aftermath of the disaster had been carried out effectively.

He commended Revenue Minister AP Anil Kumar and Agriculture Minister T Siddique for their work in Wayanad following the landslide.

The CM said that, unlike in many disaster situations where search operations are wound up after some time, authorities in Wayanad continued the efforts until all eight bodies were recovered.

He said special arrangements were made for the relatives of victims who had come from outside the State, and the Government facili-



tated the transportation of the bodies, including by arranging a special aircraft. Satheesan said rehabilitation measures had been initiated in the affected area and all residents living in identified danger zones had been shifted to safer places.

He said ministers had held discussions with the Konkani Railway authorities and its subsidiary, which carried out work at the landslide site, to coordinate further measures related to the disaster.

The CM said the Government had also reached an understanding under which, in addition to the compensation announced by the State, the company concerned would

provide additional compensation to the victims.

"All these activities were carried out efficiently under the leadership of the ministers and the district administration," he said.

Asked why Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra had not visited the landslide site, Satheesan said both leaders were out of station and therefore could not travel to Wayanad.

Eight people were killed and several others injured in a landslide on July 7 at the site of the Anakkompoyil-Meppadi tunnel project, which is intended to improve connectivity between Wayanad and Kozhikode districts.



Editor's
TAKE

India and Britain’s trade deal finally gets real

The India–UK Trade Agreement came into force on July 15, and the real test of whether it lives up to its billing as a ‘gold standard’ pact now begins

Trade deals are easy to sign and hard to deliver. India and Britain took three years and more than fourteen negotiating rounds to reach an agreement in 2025; they now have to prove that the paperwork translates into shipments, jobs and investment. From Wednesday, roughly 99 per cent of India's tariff lines will enter the UK duty-free, while India begins dismantling tariffs on about 90 per cent of British goods. A parallel Double Contribution Convention will spare workers on short assignments from paying social security contributions twice – a small but real win for India's mobile professionals. The gains look genuine and impressive, but they have to be implemented in the right earnest.

Labour-intensive Indian sectors – textiles, leather, footwear, marine products, gems and jewellery – get immediate duty-free entry into a market where they previously paid tariffs of 4-16 per cent. That is meaningful for employment-heavy industries in states such as Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Punjab. Britain, in turn, gets a foothold for Scotch whisky, whose Indian duty falls from 150 per cent to 75 per cent immediately and to 40 per cent within a decade, along with phased openings for automobiles, machinery and financial services.

London's own estimates put the long-run boost to UK GDP at roughly £4.8 billion – modest in percentage terms, but the Government calls it Britain's most significant bilateral deal since Brexit. The nuances matter as much as the numbers. India's own tariff cuts are staggered over years, even as Indian exporters gain near-immediate access to the UK – a sequencing that favours Indian industry's adjustment window. Automobiles are capped by tight quotas, meaning the celebrated UK carmakers' win is really a boutique privilege for a handful of luxury brands rather than a mass-market opening. Sensitive items on both sides - dairy, apples, sugar, gold and smartphones – remain largely untouched, a reminder that “comprehensive” still leaves room for domestic politics.

The pitfalls deserve equal billing. Civil society groups under the Forum for Trade Justice have warned that CETA leans on voluntary rather than compulsory licensing for medicines, a shift that could complicate India's public health flexibilities under WTO rules. Digital trade provisions that limit India's ability to demand source code access for imported software have drawn similar unease over regulatory and security sovereignty. On the UK side, farm groups worry that Indian antimicrobial-use standards could undercut British livestock producers who have spent years reducing antibiotic use.

And non-tariff friction – Britain's tightening steel regime, its carbon border tax, and rules of origin that Indian MSMEs are still learning to navigate – could blunt gains that look impressive on paper. CETA's success, in other words, will be decided less by the signing euphoria than by the unglamorous machinery of implementation: customs registration, origin certification, and whether both governments actually help exporters use the access they have won. July 15 is a beginning, not a verdict.

Uttar Pradesh: Can the BJP hold its bastion?

With Uttar Pradesh once again emerging as the country’s principal political battleground, the contest is shaping up as a test not only of competing campaign strategies but also of contrasting visions for India’s future



KALYANI SHANKAR

With the UP elections drawing closer, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is rolling out a comprehensive, strategic plan aimed not only at retaining power in the state but also at solidifying its influence across India.

The strategy emphasises uniting the NDA and addressing local issues that resonate with voters. Still, it would benefit from detailing how the BJP plans to tailor its messages to specific caste and regional concerns to demonstrate a nuanced understanding of voter diversity.

The BJP has identified 100 constituencies as particularly important for electoral success, but including the criteria or process used to select them would clarify how these priorities were determined and their significance.

The party plans to appoint local organisers known as booth palaks, who will energise grass-roots engagement, making voters feel that their concerns are valued and understood, and booth pravasis, who will facilitate outreach and mobilisation efforts.

These local representatives will play a crucial role in liaising with residents, understanding their concerns, and ensuring that the party's messages resonate effectively within their communities.

The party plans to launch extensive social media campaigns and targeted advertisements to reach diverse demographics, with tailored digital strategies designed to inspire confidence in the campaign's effectiveness across regions and age groups.

The BJP is promoting a message of inclusive development. The party is committed to supporting various demographic groups, particularly farmers and women. The schemes launched would benefit farmers and women's self-help groups, uplifting these communities. Nationalism remains a cornerstone of the BJP's identity and messaging.

The party seeks to project itself as a guardian of national interests, particularly regarding national security. By emphasising robust defence policies and a strong stance on terrorism and internal security, the BJP aims to resonate with voters who favour a strong, secure government. This approach seeks to galvanise support by appealing to citizens' desire for protective leadership that adequately addresses threats.

The economy will also be a focal point of the BJP's campaign. The party intends to showcase its efforts to revive the economy, with particular emphasis on job creation initiatives.



Programmes such as the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, which aims to incentivise domestic manufacturing and attract investment, will be highlighted.

The messaging will aim to reassure voters, especially young people, that the BJP can stimulate economic growth and create employment opportunities.

In addition, the BJP is preparing to robustly counter any opposition criticism of its governance. The strategy includes demonstrating that the Opposition is fragmented and lacks a coherent governance plan. By drawing sharp contrasts between its own successes and the failures of opposing parties, the BJP seeks to bolster its image as an effective and reliable party.

While the BJP stands as a formidable national presence, it also recognises the importance of building local alliances. The party is likely to seek partnerships with regional and smaller political parties to enhance its electoral prospects, fostering hope that such cooperation will strengthen governance and community representation.

The BJP's strategy for the upcoming elections emphasises clear communication, community engagement, national security and economic recovery.

The party aims to address voters' concerns and has developed an "election-ready" framework that strengthens grassroots outreach and booth-level committees while incorporating more young people and women into its leadership.

Poll-bound states, including Uttar Pradesh, have been instructed to prepare for potential early elections.

The Opposition in Uttar Pradesh is gearing up for the upcoming elections with a concerted effort. Around 23 parties have united under the INDIA coalition, aiming to present a formidable challenge to the ruling Bharatiya

Janata Party (BJP).

The Opposition is preparing for the polls with a clear five-point strategy. This strategy focuses on important issues that matter to voters, such as unemployment, economic inequality and social justice. By emphasising these topics, the Opposition hopes to show that it cares about the needs of ordinary citizens and to set itself apart from the ruling party.

The Opposition emphasises grassroots engagement and is maximising its efforts. Local leaders and representatives from various parties are mobilising to connect with voters directly, understand their concerns, and present a united front against the BJP. This engagement strategy includes town hall meetings, rallies and community events to reinforce the coalition's message and build trust among constituents.

The coalition is working to counter the BJP's narratives on governance and development by presenting a clear plan that highlights the ruling party's shortcomings and persuades voters that it provides a viable alternative.

The coalition is focused on making Ayodhya central to its Assembly election campaign, seeking to use alleged donation irregularities to challenge the BJP's claim of being the sole defender of Hindu interests.

Social media and digital platforms are also integral to the Opposition's campaign efforts.

Overall, the Opposition's preparations indicate a focused attempt to consolidate its efforts, enhance community engagement, and present clear alternatives to the BJP's policies.

The Opposition has a well-defined strategy and collaboration among various political entities. The INDIA coalition hopes to repeat its 2024 success, but it has cracks.

Since Uttar Pradesh is politically important, it remains to be seen how both sides perform.

The writer is a popular columnist

Let us take shelter of God, not of human beings



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

2ND OPINION

Lord Krishna has very emphatically instructed us to treat all souls equally. Aren't we all parts of God? (The Bhagavad Gita 15.7) Let us see what these instructions are. In the verse #5.7, Lord Krishna states, "A karma Yogi considers souls of other persons similar to his. "Wise persons have equal vision in those who are blessed with knowledge and humility, in a Brahmin and even in an outcast." (5.18) "One who is equally disposed towards all beings attains the supreme devotion towards Me." (18.54) The Lord teaches us that external differences like status, etc. are just temporary garments. True wisdom lies in seeing the divine equality — the same eternal essence within everyone, with no exceptions.

Why then we don't have equal vision towards all souls? Why do we raise some of them to a higher level than us



to the point of taking their shelter, which position is strictly reserved for God? Lord Krishna is very emphatic about taking His shelter, not of anyone else. (18.66) Yes, we can take guidance from a learned person (4.34), help from a highly placed person, etc., but to take shelter of another person is not at all wise.

Let us see what do we lose by taking shelter of anyone other than God. "Worshippers of gods go up to gods, that is they can obtain what gods can give. Worshippers of God go up to Him, that is they can get God's mercy." (9.25) In another verse, Lord Krishna states, "Those People, bereft of knowledge, caused by passionate desires, take

shelter of other gods." (7.20) Just imagine taking shelter of human beings, who are placed lower than gods. This cannot be classed anything like intelligence.

Before I take up benefits of remaining in shelter of God, we must understand more as to why God is so strict about us not taking shelter of another human being. Such a relationship is extremely limited; it can be temporary only. Another is helplessness of all souls without any exceptions, all being small, intrinsically. All depend on God for whatever they need.

Now I come to some benefits of staying in shelter of God. The first one has to be guidance, because direction is all-important, and God is Omniscient. He knows exactly what will suit an individual. And God is there to help where we fall short, which is often, due to us being small, helpless and ignorant too. God does not stop there, if we remain in His shelter; He provides what we need and protects what we have. (9.22) We all have many desires; God fulfils them, the ones according to dharma (highest principles). Once God is in the loop, success is assured in whatever we take up. Forget fears, depression, etc; peace will be ours.

In order to gain all these benefits, we must stop looking for shelter where it is not, neither in human beings nor in material objects like wealth, fame, etc. Just remain in shelter of God now and forever.

The writer is a spiritual teacher

PIC TALK



People offer prayers to Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra, and Goddess Subhadra at a temple on the eve of Rath Yatra, in Ahmedabad. PHOTO: PTI

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TEACHERS HOLD THE KEY TO FUTURE-READY EDUCATION REFORM

Apropos the opinion piece, "Are Schools Preparing Children for the Future?" by Sakshi Sethi, published on July 15, 2026, the article rightly stresses that education must go beyond marks and memorisation and equip children with critical thinking, financial literacy, public speaking and AI awareness.

However, these reforms require teachers who themselves possess these competencies. Unfortunately, recruitment in most government schools and colleges continues to be largely subject-centric. A teacher may be proficient in a subject but lack the skills to nurture creativity, entrepreneurship, public speaking or problem-solving. Therefore, expecting such skills to flourish in children without preparing their teachers first is

unrealistic.

There is a growing gap in the education system between formal schooling and the skills future generations require, as many parents, apart from paying for schooling, also spend money on private tuition, coding classes and personality development courses.

While the NEP 2020 emphasises experiential and competency-based learning, its implementation also requires continuous teacher training, periodic upskilling, and recruitment policies that value creativity, innovation and practical exposure alongside academic qualifications.

Infrastructure alone cannot transform education. Hence, the quality of the teacher remains the most decisive factor.

SOURAV ASH I KOLKATA

Please send your letter to the info@dailypioneer.com. In not more than 250 words. We appreciate your feedback.

Transparent governance wins trust

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has, over the years, shown a consistent inclination towards data-backed governance, and his recent initiative to promote data-driven governance for real-time development fits that pattern. Linking AI-based governance tools to grievance redressal is also a sensible step, as technology works best when it is tied to citizen-facing outcomes rather than being used only for internal reporting. The push for zero pendency in the Public Grievance Redressal System, if implemented effectively, could significantly reduce delays faced by ordinary citizens in matters such as land records and other public services.

However, the success of this initiative will depend entirely on how transparently the data is shared. If the Monthly Economic Report remains confined to internal government circles, its purpose will be undermined. It would be beneficial if a simplified public version, with key indicators explained in plain language, were released alongside the official report.

This would enable citizens, researchers and independent economists to assess the State's progress objectively rather than relying solely on official claims, thereby strengthening transparency, accountability and public trust in governance.

A MYILSAMI I COIMBATURE

Power must not be wasted

Apropos the report on India's clean energy transition, the country has reached an unexpected milestone. The challenge now is not merely to generate renewable power but to use it efficiently. With solar power reportedly curtailed by around 750 GWh in May 2026, it is evident that inadequate storage capacity and limited grid flexibility are struggling to keep pace with the rapid expansion of renewable energy. Ideally, coal- and gas-fired power plants should reduce output when renewable generation is abundant, thereby conserving fuel and lowering emissions. However, many thermal plants cannot ramp production up and down quickly. Some also operate under contractual minimum-generation obligations, while grid stability still depends on their inertia and dispatchability. Battery Energy Storage Systems, pumped-hydro projects and time-of-day electricity pricing are gathering momentum. Emerging technologies such as sodium-ion batteries, flow batteries and green hydrogen also promise to expand storage options and strengthen energy security.

Simply adding more solar panels is no longer enough. India's clean energy transition will ultimately be judged not only by how much renewable power it generates, but also by how efficiently every unit is stored, managed and delivered to consumers.

R NARARYAN I NAVI MUMBAI

Peace ensures maritime safety

The tragic death of an Indian sailor and the injuries sustained by ten others in an Iranian strike have once again highlighted the dangers faced by civilian seafarers operating in volatile regions. This incident is yet another reminder of the need for stronger protection of maritime personnel. The increasing frequency of attacks on commercial vessels also threatens the stability of global trade and supply chains. Therefore, ensuring the safety of merchant ships must remain a shared responsibility of the international community. Diplomatic efforts should focus on preventing conflicts from spilling over into vital maritime routes.

India must continue to engage with affected countries and international maritime organisations to safeguard its citizens working overseas. Shipping companies, too, must enhance security measures, strengthen emergency response systems, and provide comprehensive insurance and welfare support to seafarers and their families.

This tragedy is a reminder that peace at sea is inseparable from peace on land. Greater international cooperation, respect for humanitarian principles, and sustained diplomatic dialogue are essential to prevent such incidents and ensure that innocent seafarers can carry out their duties safely.

RUKHMA SHARMA I JALANDHAR

India can be a trusted textile manufacturer the world is looking for

India’s textile moment has arrived. The world is looking for a trusted manufacturing partner. The question is not whether India can lead, but whether it can execute with the speed and certainty this moment demands



Global supply chains are being reconfigured at a pace not seen in decades. The world is no longer merely open to alternatives-it is actively searching for them. For the first time in modern textile history, major consumer markets are simultaneously seeking diversification, resilience and trusted manufacturing partners.

Few countries are better positioned than India to answer this call. Yet India accounts for only about USD 37 billion in textile and apparel exports today-far below its potential.

Opportunities of this scale do not emerge often. When they do, countries either build industries around them — or spend decades wondering what might have been.

India possesses a complete textile value chain, deep manufacturing capabilities, a large domestic market and a young workforce. Yet positioning alone does not win markets. Investment does. Execution does. Policy certainty does.

The next decade will not be won by the country that produces the cheapest T-shirt. It will be won by the country that global buyers trust the most.

If India is serious about achieving USD 100 billion in textile and apparel exports by 2030-31 and building a USD 350 billion textile economy, it must prepare for one of the largest investment cycles in the sector's history.

India's textile and apparel market today stands at approximately USD 194 billion, comprising exports of around USD 37 billion and a domestic market of nearly USD 157 billion. Reaching the 2030-31 vision requires the creation of almost USD 156 billion of additional market opportunity within the next five years. This is not incremental growth. It is structural transformation.

Industry assessments suggest that nearly USD 60 billion of fresh investment may be required across the value chain-from fibre and spinning to weaving, processing, garmenting and technical textiles. Beyond exports, this investment can create large-scale employment, strengthen rural economies, deepen manufacturing capabilities and reinforce India's position in global value chains. As one of India's largest employment-generating sectors, textiles can convert manufacturing growth into broad-based economic opportunity.

For decades, textile competitiveness was measured largely through labour costs and production efficiency. Today, the equation has changed. Global buyers increasingly evaluate sourcing destinations through a broader lens: reliability, compliance, sustainability, traceability, resilience and execution capability. The experience of leading exporting nations demonstrates that long-term success is built not only on cost competitiveness, but on buyer confidence. Trust has become a strategic asset.

India's opportunity, therefore, is not simply to become a larger textile producer. It is to become the world's most trusted textile manufacturing partner.

What makes this moment exceptional is not merely the global supply chain shift. It is the convergence of three conditions that rarely align simultaneously.

First, political intent is clear. Initiatives such as PM MITRA, Production Linked Incentive schemes and support for technical textiles demonstrate recognition of textiles as a strategic manufacturing sector.

Second, the administrative machinery is increasingly focused on enabling investment and competitiveness through compliance rationalisation, infrastructure development and ease-of-doing-business reforms.

Third, industry is ready to invest. Across the value chain, companies are evaluating capacity expansion, technology upgradation and sustainability initiatives.

When political leadership, effective governance and industry commitment move in the same direction, nations create industries that endure for generations.

Recent trade agreements and ongoing negotiations are helping address long-standing market-access disadvantages faced by Indian exporters. The India-UK



CHINA PLUS ONE IS NO LONGER A THEORY; IT IS INCREASINGLY REFLECTED IN SOURCING DECISIONS ACROSS GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS. BUYERS ARE ACTIVELY SEEKING RESILIENCE, DIVERSIFICATION AND TRUSTED PARTNERS. THE FUTURE WILL BELONG NOT MERELY TO THE LOWEST-COST PRODUCER, BUT TO THE MOST TRUSTED MANUFACTURING ECOSYSTEM

The writer is Chairman, ASSOCHAM National Council on Textiles and Technical Textiles

FTA, progress in negotiations with the European Union and agreements with key trading partners are steadily improving India's competitive position in global markets. However, market access alone is not enough. Preferential tariffs without competitive supply remain an unrealised opportunity. Trade agreements create openings. Competitiveness converts them into exports.

Raw material competitiveness remains critical. Manufacturers making decade-long investment decisions need confidence that internationally competitive fibre and raw materials will remain available throughout the life of those investments. Similarly, export remission frameworks such as RoSCTL and RoDTEP require continuity, predictability and appropriate upward revision to keep pace with rising domestic costs and unrebrated taxes. These mechanisms are not incentives; they are essential competitiveness tools that neutralise embedded taxes and levies and help maintain a level playing field for Indian exporters. Policy certainty is often the difference between investment announced and investment implemented.

India must also accelerate the development of a textile machinery manufacturing ecosystem. The country continues to import significant volumes of advanced machinery every year. India should not aspire only to manufacture textiles. It should aspire to manufacture the machinery that manufactures textiles. Targeted foreign direct investment, technology partnerships and phased localisation can build capabilities not only in textile production but in textile technology itself. Manufacturing competitiveness ultimately rests on technological competitiveness.

Technical textiles represent one of India's most promising growth frontiers. From medical textiles and geotextiles to filtration fabrics, defence applications and advanced industrial solutions, this segment combines strategic relevance with high-value manufacturing potential. It offers India an opportunity not merely to participate in global markets, but to build leadership positions in emerging applications where demand is expected to grow rapidly in the years ahead.

China Plus One is no longer a theory; it is increasingly reflected in sourcing decisions across global supply chains. Buyers are actively seeking resilience, diversification and trusted partners. The future will belong not merely to the lowest-cost producer, but to the most trusted manufacturing ecosystem.

India possesses the raw materials, entrepreneurial talent, manufacturing depth, domestic demand and demographic advantage required to emerge as a global textile powerhouse. The question is no longer whether India can achieve USD 100 billion in textile and apparel exports. The question is whether we are willing to make the investments, undertake the reforms and create the policy certainty required to get there.

India's textile moment has arrived. The world is looking for a trusted manufacturing partner. The question is not whether India can lead, but whether it can execute with the speed and certainty this moment demands.

Ram temple: India’s civilisational awakening



Indian civilisation, particularly Hinduism — better known culturally as Sanatan Dharma — thrived for thousands of years under the rule of Muslim invaders and the British. In spite of subjugation and tyranny, Indians did not convert en masse as happened in other civilizations of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The Indian psyche was deeply hurt when Babur, in 1528, demolished the temple at the birthplace of Lord Ram in Ayodhya, but the seething anger lingered for centuries as devotees continued to offer prayers at a raised mud platform known as the 'Ram Chabutara' within the precinct.

In November 1858 a group of 25 Nihang Sikhs, led by Baba Fakir Singh Khalsa, entered the complex and built a clay platform (Chabutara) inside the premises, placed a picture or symbol of Lord Ram and wrote "Ram Ram" in charcoal on the walls. They performed a Vedic havan and left. An FIR was later registered against them on November 30, 1858 by the mosque muezzin. This action by the Nihangs is a crucial document proving that Hindus had been worshipping here for a long time. Then again, in the night of December 22-23, 1949, a group led by Mahant Abhiram Das entered the locked Babri mosque and placed a nine-inch metal idol of Ram Lala beneath the central dome.

A large gathering of thousands thronged the site, and to prevent communal escalation the administration locked the outer gates but allowed a Hindu priest inside to perform limited daily puja and bhaj offerings to the idol. The then Prime Minister Nehru directed that the idol be removed, but the District Magistrate KK Nayar took a pragmatic decision to avoid communal tension by sealing the main building and allowing a lone priest to perform basic puja only; this continued until February 1986, when the locks were opened under a court order officially granting Hindus access to the inner section for worship. The rest is history until January 22, 2024, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the majestic temple constructed after the November 9, 2019 Supreme Court verdict.

Why write this article now, when the Ram Temple is in the news for the wrong reasons? The immediate cause is the public uproar regarding theft of donations and an alleged financial scam in which staff responsible for its safekeeping were siphoning off crores. Some quick action has been taken and things are on the right path, but baying for the blood of the people at the helm who trusted these thieves — due to lack of administrative acumen — and smearing the entire temple management is undesirable and suggests ulterior motives. Such things can happen in any religious institution.

For example, a massive Vatican financial scandal involving Cardinal Becciu began in 2019; he was stripped of his rights as a cardinal and, after trial, was convicted in December 2020. Similarly, the Caritas Luxembourg 61.2 million bank and donation fraud case began in 2014 and continued until 2026. In October 2024 former congregants filed a major financial fraud lawsuit against Gateway Church of Texas. These accusations were often directed at top management, whereas the Ram temple case appears to involve petty thieves and not the trustees. It is therefore highly undesirable to accuse senior management without evidence.

Likewise, in Islam the misuse and diversion of zakat — which is analogous to donations - has been a persistent issue. Investigations into the Bashir regime in Sudan revealed that funds intended for the poor were routinely diverted to entities linked to the regime. Similar inquiries have been reported against various charities in the Middle East. These incidents, including Ayodhya, underscore the global challenge of maintaining transparency and the need for continuous oversight over massive flows of donations and gifts, and they call for strict internal audit and modern accounting and management procedures.

It seems many people want to take advantage of this event politically, particularly those who opposed the Ram temple's construction and who pander to vote bank appeasement politics. In reality, portraying the issue as an attack on the Hindu religion — ostensibly at the behest of "woke" Western elites with double standards — misreads the situation. The global progressive movement vocally supports land-back movements, the return of sacred sites to Native Americans, and the decolonisation of African and Australian spaces. Yet when the same logic of decolonisation and the restoration of sacred indigenous geography was applied to Ayodhya — backed by an exhaustive, multi-decade legal process and conclusive archaeological evidence from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) - it was branded regressive by some of their Indian cohorts.

Thus, in global media, academic circles and certain domestic intellectual hubs, the event leading to the Ram temple's construction was frequently framed not as a moment of cultural healing but through the modern lens of hyper-nationalism and as an instance of majoritarianism. This globalised "woke" framework inherently struggles to accommodate non-Western civilisational icons. The Anglo American woke club views the world from an exclusive Western template. Christianity and whiteness are historically associated with institutional power and colonial expansion. But when it comes to India, any attempt to promote cultural renaissance is instantly mapped to Western imperialism, dismissively ignoring Hinduism's history as a victim of brutal, multi century colonial and imperial onslaughts, and viewing the assertiveness of Hinduism with suspicion.

Therefore, when Hindus pointed to archaeological and historical evidence of a temple being demolished to build a mosque, the narrative was systematically suppressed or downplayed by Marxist and progressive historians for decades. Lord Ram is not only a deity but an icon of righteousness and the soul of the foundations of Indian civilisation's core elements of governance. Unlike many ancient pagan or indigenous civilisations that were entirely erased by global colonial movements, India's indigenous civilisation survived. The reclamation of Ayodhya is a manifestation of that survival.

For global critical theorists, an indigenous majority asserting its historic rights and building a monument to its survival disrupts the standard post colonial narrative, which often prefers indigenous cultures to remain permanently oppressed. Thus the controversy surrounding the Ram Mandir is a clash between a globalised intellectual elite and an assertive India. The "woke" view sees the Ram Mandir as a fracture in secularism, whereas the vast majority of India views it as the healing of a historical wound. India is asserting its right to define its own modernity, its own secularism, and its own path towards justice.



The writer is a former IFS officer and Chairman of the Centre for Resource Management and Environment

The U-turn we all need: Rediscovering the life we forgot to live



There is a moment in every person's life when the noise around us becomes silent for a few seconds, and a difficult question appears: "Am I actually living the life I wanted, or simply the life I was expected to live?"

For many, this question arrives late — after years of chasing promotions, possessions, recognition, and approval. We spend our youth building a future, but sometimes forget to ask whether that future will truly make us happy.

The modern world has created an unusual paradox. We have more comfort, technology, and opportunities than previous generations, yet many people experience increasing stress, loneliness, and dissatisfaction. We are connected to everyone, but often disconnected from ourselves.

Perhaps the problem is not that we are moving too slowly. Perhaps the problem is that we are moving without checking the direction.

A meaningful life is not created by constantly adding more achievements. It is created by understanding what truly deserves our time, energy, and attention.

The cost of always moving forward
From childhood, we are trained to move ahead —

score better, earn more, achieve bigger goals. Ambition is valuable, but ambition without awareness can become a never-ending race.

Many people reach milestones they once dreamed about and still feel something is missing. The reason is simple: success achieved without personal meaning can feel surprisingly empty.

Modern studies on human well-being often emphasise that happiness is not determined only by external achievements. Our health, relationships, sense of purpose, and ability to make authentic choices play a much deeper role in creating a satisfying life.

The real question is not only: "How much have I achieved?" It is also: "What has my achievement turned me into?"

Health: The first responsibility we neglect
One of life's greatest ironies is that people often sacrifice their health while trying to build a better future, only to spend that future trying to regain their health.

Sleep is reduced, stress becomes normal, and the body is treated as if it has unlimited capacity. But the human body keeps a record of everything we ignore.

Health is not merely the absence of illness. It is the ability to wake up with energy, think clearly, and experience life fully.

A balanced life does not always demand dramatic changes or complete transformation. Often, the most meaningful improvements come from



simple and consistent choices — respecting the body's need for proper sleep, eating with awareness, staying physically active, and creating moments of silence away from the constant noise of modern life.

These small habits may appear ordinary, but over time they shape our energy, emotions, and overall quality of life. A peaceful mind is not a luxury reserved for those who have achieved success; it is the foundation that allows success to have real meaning.

Relationships: The people behind our purpose
At the end of our journey, we rarely remember only our achievements. We remember conversations, laughter, support, and the people who stood beside us.

Research on human happiness has consistently shown that meaningful relationships are among

the strongest contributors to long-term well-being. Yet modern life often creates a strange situation — we have countless online connections but fewer moments of genuine connection.

A relationship cannot survive on occasional messages and digital reactions. It needs presence.

Sometimes the most valuable thing we can give another person is not advice or solutions, but our undivided attention. A successful life becomes meaningful only when there are people with whom it can be shared.

Work: Achievement with purpose
Work occupies a significant part of our lives, but its purpose should extend beyond simply earning a living. True fulfillment comes when our efforts create value — not only for ourselves but also for the world around us.

Instead of measuring success only through income, positions, or recognition, we must ask deeper questions: Are we learning? Are we growing? Are we creating something meaningful? A person who finds purpose in their work does not avoid challenges; rather, they accept difficulties because they understand the reason behind them.

The aim is not to escape responsibility, but to ensure that our responsibilities are connected to a larger purpose, allowing our work to become a source of growth, contribution, and personal satisfaction.

The courage to choose your own path
Perhaps the hardest part of life is not working hard

— it is being honest about what we are working toward.

Society often provides ready-made definitions of success. It tells us what careers to admire, what lifestyles to follow, and what achievements to chase.

But a life designed only around expectations can become a life lived by someone else's rules.

Choosing your own path requires courage because it may not always receive immediate approval. Saying "no" to certain expectations may feel uncomfortable, but sometimes it is necessary to protect your peace.

You cannot build a meaningful life by constantly trying to satisfy everyone else.

The real meaning of a U-turn
A U-turn is usually seen as a mistake on the road. But in life, it can be a sign of maturity.

Changing direction does not mean losing everything you have built. Sometimes it means using your experience to choose better.

The wisest people are not those who never change their path. They are those who recognise when their current path no longer matches their values. Life is not a race where the fastest person wins. It is a journey where direction matters more than speed. A U-turn in life is not about starting over; it is about having the awareness to pause, the courage to change direction, and the wisdom to move toward a life that truly belongs to us.

The writer is a Nutritionist, Wellness Coach and Health Writer

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Order Order

Delhi HC to hear PIL over Sonam Wangchuk's deteriorating health



The Delhi High Court said it will hear on Thursday a public interest litigation raising concern over the health of activist Sonam Wangchuk, who is on an indefinite fast at Jantar Mantar here. The Cockroach Janta Party has been holding the protest for over 25 days demanding Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation over alleged irregularities in the NEET examination. Wangchuk joined the agitation on June 28 and has been on an indefinite fast since then. A bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia on Wednesday deferred hearing on the PIL after noting that none appeared for the authorities amid the ongoing work abstention called by the high court's bar association. "Having regard to urgency, list tomorrow," the bench said. The court ordered that a copy of the order be served to the Additional Solicitor General concerned and the Delhi government counsel. Petitioner Rakesh Kumar Saini said the situation was "sad" and "most unfortunate" as a protesting citizen was "virtually taking his life in front of the whole nation." In his PIL, Saini sought direction to the authorities to come to Wangchuk's aid and "discuss the issue" with him.

SC grants bail to man involved in district mineral fund 'scam'



The Supreme Court on Wednesday granted bail to an alleged kingpin in a corruption case involving "irregularities" in the District Mineral Fund (DMF) in Chhattisgarh. The DMF scam is a financial embezzlement case and revolves around the corruption and diversion of funds meant for the welfare of local mining-affected communities. A bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana took note of the submissions of senior advocate Shoen Alam, appearing for accused Satpal Singh Chhabra, that many co-accused, including retired Chhattisgarh-cadre IAS officer Anil Tuteja have been granted bail in the case. "Main accused Anil Tuteja was granted bail on May 18, 2026," the bench said and granted bail to Chhabra. The bench said the accused will have to submit bail to the satisfaction of the trial court which may also impose other conditions. Chhabra, the alleged kingpin, is accused of receiving '5 crore as illegal gratification in the award of contracts under the DMF. Earlier, the bench had granted bail to Tuteja after taking note of the fact that the former bureaucrat was in jail since January 24, 2024 in various corruption cases. Tuteja was arrested in the DMF case on February 23, 2026.

Delhi court restores Umar Khalid's two weekly e-mulakats with family

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A Delhi court has allowed jailed activist Umar Khalid to have two video meetings (e-mulakats) with his family every week after his counsel claimed it was reduced to one from May 2026 without any reason. Additional Sessions Judge Sameer Bajpai noted that he had been availing the facility for the past six years without violating prison rules. The court passed the order on an application moved by Khalid, who has been facing trial in the larger conspiracy case related to the 2020 northeast Delhi riots. In the order dated July 13, the court said, "Since the applicant has been using two e-mulakats in a week for the



last six years and has not violated any rule of the Delhi Prisons Rules, the applicant is allowed to have two e-mulakats per week for the purpose of talking to his mother and other family members" Khalid's counsel submit-



TMC's Abhishek gives voice sample to magistrate

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kolkata

Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee on Wednesday provided his voice sample to a magistrate at the Bidhannagar SDJM court near here in connection with an investigation into his alleged intimidatory speech during the West Bengal assembly election campaign. The Calcutta High Court had, on July 10, directed Banerjee to appear before the magistrate at noon on July 15 for the purpose. Banerjee was at the court for nearly one-and-a-half hours for providing the voice sample to the magistrate, for which an expert was present. He did not respond to queries from journalists



TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee being escorted by police and security personnel as he leaves after giving his voice sample before a magistrate in connection with an investigation into his alleged intimidatory speech during the West Bengal assembly election campaign, at the Bidhannagar court, in Kolkata

present at the venue and left the court premises soon after the process concluded. The TMC MP had not

appeared before the magistrate on two earlier dates, ordered by the Bidhannagar court, for giving his voice

sample on a prayer by the investigating agency. A huge posse of police personnel was deployed in

Criticism of govt, CM not 'war' against nation: Court

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Pune

A Pune court has granted bail to an NCP (SP) office-bearer, stating that criticism of the government or the chief minister, by itself, cannot be construed as "waging war" against the nation. Every citizen has the right to comment on, compliment and criticise the government's actions, Additional Sessions Judge B D Kulkarni said on Tuesday while allowing NCP (SP) functionary Mahadev Balgude's bail plea. Balgude, the state head of the social media wing of Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP), was arrested in April this



year on charges of circulating morphed photos of Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on social media platforms and also

posting content allegedly sympathetic to Naxalites. Among other sections, Balgude was booked under Section 152 of the Bharatiya

Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), which deals with purposely or knowingly endangering the sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India. The court noted that the case papers showed the applicant had questioned the investigation process in certain cases and the functioning of government schemes, which fell within the realm of public discourse. "Nothing on record suggests that the accused has declared or incited waging war against the State or committed any act endangering the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India," it observed.

HC cancels bail to female teacher in Janakpuri school rape case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday cancelled the bail granted to a female teacher in a case concerning the alleged rape of a three-year-old girl by a staff member inside a private school in west Delhi's Janakpuri area, and asked her to surrender in three days. On June 29, the high court had also set aside the bail granted to the main accused, the caretaker of the school, and asked him to surrender on July 1. Justice Saurabh Banerjee on Wednesday allowed the Delhi Police's plea challenging the trial court order that granted bail to the teacher on May 20 in the case registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual



Offences (POCSO) Act. "The respondent is directed to surrender in three days," Justice Banerjee said. The teacher was arrested for

allegedly concealing the incident from authorities and was remanded in one-day police custody by the trial court on May 14. The incident came to light on May 1 when the girl's mother filed a complaint at Janakpuri police station, alleging that her daughter was sexually assaulted during school hours by the caretaker. According to the complaint, the child had gone to the school on April 30, the second day after her admission. After returning home, she complained of pain. When questioned by her mother, the girl said that she was taken to an isolated area in the school, where the man allegedly assaulted her.

SC gives Odisha govt deadline to consider Dara Singh's remission plea

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court has given the Odisha government a month to decide on the remission plea of a "repenting" Ravindra Pal, alias Dara Singh, who is serving life sentence for the murders of Australian missionary Graham Stuart Staines and his two minor sons in Keonjhar district in 1999. A bench of Justices Manoj Misra and Vijay Bhishnoi posted the matter for hearing on August 19 after the state government sought time. "Let him also celebrate Independence Day. You must

take a decision by August 15," the court told the counsel for the Odisha government on Tuesday. The bench had earlier as well asked the state's sentence review committee to take a call on Singh's remission plea. "A request has been made on behalf of the state that the matter may be adjourned for a short period as the committee which was to take a decision has called for the records and those records are yet to be made available to them," it said while posting the matter for further hearing. "In the meantime, we expect that the committee



shall take its decision," it added. A mob led by Singh attacked Staines and his two sons — 11-year-old Philip and eight-year-old Timothy — while they slept in their

station wagon and set the vehicle on fire in Manoharpur village of Keonjhar district on the intervening night of January 22-23, 1999. Singh, the main accused in the triple murder, was con-

victed and sentenced to death by a CBI court in 2003. The Orissa High Court commuted his death sentence to life imprisonment in 2005 and it was upheld by the Supreme Court in 2011. During its hearing on Tuesday, the bench asked Odisha government counsel P V Yogeswaran about the status of proceedings on Singh's premature release. The counsel replied that the committee required certain documents from the district court, which are being called for. On March 19 last year, the apex court asked the Odisha government to decide on the remission plea.

Two Bangladeshi women get two-year imprisonment for illegal stay

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thane

A Thane court has sentenced two Bangladeshi women to two years' imprisonment for illegally entering India and residing here without valid documentation. Additional Sessions Judge VG Mohite passed the order on Tuesday after the two accused, identified as Shahna Bilal Saddar (43) and Hasina Jabbar Khan (45), pleaded guilty to the charges against them.



Pleading for leniency, the defence counsel argued that both women were from impoverished backgrounds, married, had no prior criminal record, and were the sole breadwinners for their respective families. Accepting the plea, the court convicted both individuals for violations under the Foreigners Act and the Passport Act. As the women had been incarcerated since their arrest on December 3, 2024, they were granted a set-off for the detention period already undergone.

SC to hear ED plea against transfer of Amrapali money laundering case to Ghaziabad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday agreed to hear the plea of Enforcement Directorate against the Allahabad High Court order transferring a money laundering case related to siphoning off homebuyers' money by the Amrapali group. The Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court on August 11, 2025, had ordered the transfer of a money laundering case filed by the ED against Ajay Kumar and two others from a special PMLA court in Lucknow to a designated court in Ghaziabad. A Supreme Court bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana took note of the



submissions of Additional Solicitor General S V Raju that the high court wrongly transferred the money laundering case. The bench also issued notices to former promoters of the real estate firm, Anil Kumar Sharma, Ajay Kumar, and Shiv Priya. The accused had contend-

The high court had allowed the application and held that the transfer was warranted in view of the Central government's notification dated October 7, 2022, issued under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002. The accused had contend-

ed that since the alleged offence pertains to Gautam Buddh Nagar district in Uttar Pradesh, the case should be tried by the Special Court, Anti-Corruption, CBI (West), Ghaziabad, as specified in the 2022 notification. The ED had opposed the plea, relying on the Supreme Court's decision. However, the high court rejected the ED's contention, observing that the arguments advanced by the agency were not in consonance with the statutory notification governing the territorial jurisdiction of designated PMLA courts. Allowing the application, the high court directed that the pending complaint case before the Special PMLA Court in Lucknow be transferred to the designated Special Court at Ghaziabad.

FROM THE WORLD

SINGAPORE

Indian jailed for \$21m fraud

An Indian National was sentenced to nearly 11 months in jail by a Singapore court for operating an unlicensed cross-border money transfer business involving over \$21 million in total, according to a local media report. Raju Krishnamoorthi, 45, pleaded guilty to one charge of conspiring with another person to operate a cross-border money transfer business and one charge of abetting someone to make a false statement for a work pass application, The Straits Times newspaper reported. Krishnamoorthi was sentenced to nine months and seven weeks' jail on two separate counts. He was also fined SGD 60,000, the paper said. Court documents stated that Krishnamoorthi allegedly operated as a self-employed foreigner without a valid work pass between March 2024 and April 2025. (PTI)

NEPAL

Bilateral power ties discussed

Officials from Nepal and India discussed bilateral power sector cooperation, power trade and transmission during energy cooperation meetings that concluded, according to the Indian mission. The 13th meeting of the Joint Steering Committee on Power Sector Cooperation took place on July 14 and 15 in Pokhara, according to a press release issued by the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu. "These meetings comprehensively reviewed the bilateral power sector cooperation between Nepal and India, including the development of hydropower projects, power trade and transmission infrastructure," said the embassy. During the meetings, both sides appreciated progress on the development of new transmission lines, including the 400 kV Gorakhpur-New Butwal line, it said. (PTI)



Protesters gathering near a US Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility Scarborough, Maine

Trump urges ICE to keep traffic stops despite new policy

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Washington

US President Donald Trump says Immigration and Customs Enforcement should continue traffic stops after recent fatal shootings, seeming to contradict a new policy to halt them. Trump wrote early Wednesday on his social media site ICE is "doing a GREAT job, one that has to be done." The Republican president says to remove criminals he says were let into the country under the previous Democratic administration "we must be strong, tough and smart and we CANNOT give up one of ICE's most important and effective Crime Fighting tools, THE TRAFFIC STOP!" Trump says, "Once we do, we are playing right into the criminal's hands." The policy change came after an ICE officer shot and killed a Colombian driver Monday in Maine and a week

WAFAA SHURAFU/SAMY MAGDY/
SAM METZ ■ Deir al-Balah

Israeli airstrikes have killed at least a dozen people in Gaza over the past two days, local health officials said on Wednesday, as strikes continue almost daily despite a months-old ceasefire with Hamas. On Wednesday, three members of a family were killed in central Gaza, Al Aqsa Hospital officials said. On Tuesday, a woman and six police officers were among those killed in an airstrike on a police station in the densely populated Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza, hospital officials said. A man died in the bombing of a tent camp in Khan Younis in the south, Nasser Hospital officials said. And Israeli forces shot and killed a child in the Muwasi area outside the southernmost city of



Rafah, according to hospital officials. The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the strikes in central and southern Gaza. In a statement on the attack in Jabaliya, it claimed that four of the slain police officers were

Hamas militants, without providing evidence on how those killed were involved in planning or carrying out attacks. One of the officers, Col. Mohamad Marwan Salem, was a senior police commander and

Indian tourists emerge among Sri Lanka's highest daily spenders, says tourism chief

ASHOKE RAJ ■ Colombo

Indian travellers are contributing more to Sri Lanka's tourism economy than previously believed, with their average daily spending now exceeding that of the overall international visitor average, according to the country's top tourism official. Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) Chairman Buddhika Hewawasam said Indian tourists currently spend an average of US\$154 per day, compared to the national average of US\$148 per foreign visitor. The figures challenge the long-held perception that Indian tourists are relatively low spenders. Addressing a media briefing, Hewawasam said the Indian market has evolved significantly, with visitors increasingly opting for premium travel experiences. He noted that Indian tourists now outspend travellers from several European countries on a daily basis. To build on this trend, Sri Lanka has expanded its promotional campaigns across India, moving beyond its traditional focus on southern states. Tourism authorities are now targeting emerging markets in Gujarat, including Ahmedabad and Rajkot, while maintaining outreach in Mumbai, New Delhi and southern India. The island nation is also strengthening its appeal among affluent Indian travellers by promoting luxury holidays, destination weddings and other high-value tourism segments. Officials believe these initiatives will help increase



SRI LANKA SHOULD LEVERAGE ITS UNIQUE ATTRACTIONS—INCLUDING ITS WILDLIFE, BEACHES, HILL COUNTRY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE—TO ATTRACT HIGHER-SPENDING TRAVELLERS

—FORMER SRI LANKAN MINISTER PATALI CHAMPIKA RANAWAKA



tourism revenue while diversifying the visitor base. The renewed focus on India comes as Sri Lanka seeks to position itself as a premium tourism destination in the Indian Ocean, capitalising on its cultural links, scenic diversity and proximity to the Indian market. Adding to the discussion on the country's tourism strategy, former Sri Lankan minister Patali Champika Ranawaka has advocated a shift from mass tourism to a high-value model that prioritises quality over visitor numbers. He argued that Sri Lanka should leverage its unique attractions—including its wildlife, beaches, hill country and cultural heritage—to attract higher-spending trav-

ellers while ensuring sustainable growth. Ranawaka also stressed the need for greater transparency in the tourism sector through digital payment systems to reduce the informal economy and improve revenue collection. He further highlighted the potential for increased investment by Indian private companies in infrastructure and tourism-related projects, saying stronger regulatory frameworks would help unlock long-term economic opportunities. Sri Lanka views India as one of its most important tourism source markets and expects premium offerings and expanded regional outreach to further strengthen arrivals and visitor spending in the coming years.

Israel's latest strikes kill dozen people in Gaza: Officials

head of the Jabaliya police station, the Hamas-run Interior Ministry said. Hamas, which ruled Gaza for years, maintains an armed wing as well as civilian police and security services that are overseen by its Interior Ministry. Throughout the war, Israel has targeted local police, including those guarding humanitarian aid convoys. Israel's military has claimed it considers police stations legitimate targets if they're "being used to advance military activities, or if those present are military operatives involved in advancing terrorist activities." It did not say what military activities it believed were taking place at the Jabaliya police station, nor did it provide evidence that attacks were being planned. Hamas says the police force is engaged in maintaining law and

order. Israeli attacks on Gaza's police have been condemned by the United Nations human rights office, which said last month that police personnel had been attacked at least a dozen times in 2026, including "during ordinary law enforcement operations, including directing traffic and patrolling streets and markets." "The pattern of attacks raises concerns that Israeli forces apply no distinction between police personnel and fighters belonging to armed groups in Gaza," it said in a June 3 statement. Ofer Guterman, a researcher at Israel's Institute for National Security Studies, said Israel's targeting suggests that it regards parts of Hamas' policing apparatus as closely integrated with its military infrastructure, including through dual-role personnel and the use of

facilities for weapons storage, operations and logistics. The fragile ceasefire deal in October attempted to halt a two-year-long war between Israel and Hamas. The heaviest fighting has subsided, but at least 1,123 people have been killed in Gaza since the ceasefire took effect, according to the territory's Health Ministry. The ministry, which has been part of the Hamas-led government, maintains detailed casualty records that are seen as generally reliable by UN agencies and independent experts. It does not give a breakdown of civilians and militants but says women and children make up most of the dead. Militants have carried out shooting attacks on troops, and Israel says its strikes are in response to that and other violations. Five Israeli soldiers have been killed since the ceasefire. (AP)

Indian sailor killed in MV GFS Galaxy attack: UAE Mission

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Dubai

An Indian sailor, who went missing after an attack on the MV GFS Galaxy cargo vessel off the coast of Oman, has died, the Indian Consulate in Dubai confirmed on Wednesday. It said the Indian officials are closely coordinating with the UAE authorities and the shipping company to provide all possible assistance to the deceased sailor's family. "We express our deepest condolences at the tragic demise of an Indian national due to an attack on the commercial vessel MV GFS Galaxy on 12 July 2026," the mission said in



Herambh Karmarkar

a post on X. The attack on the Cyprus-flagged MV GFS Galaxy on Sunday off the coast of Oman left one of its 11 Indian crew members missing. Ten Indian crew members of the vessel were rescued. The missing Indian national, identified as 30-year-old Herambh Karmarkar from Pune, was a third engineer

aboard the cargo vessel when it was attacked. According to Gulf News, Karmarkar's family was informed by the shipping company on Tuesday evening that Oman's coast guard had recovered his body, nearly 60 hours after he was reported missing. "The Consulate is in touch with the bereaved family and is closely coordinating with the relevant UAE authorities and the shipping company to provide all possible support and assistance to the family," the Indian mission said. "We are awaiting his mortal remains, which are currently with the Oman Navy. Herambh had been on the

vessel for the last five months and was due to sign off soon," his father-in-law Vivek Tandon said on Wednesday. Karmarkar is survived by his wife, mother and younger sister. He had completed his marine engineering from the City of Glasgow College in the UK and had joined the merchant navy, Tandon added. India had condemned the attack on the vessel and called for immediate de-escalation of tensions in the region. The attack came amid fresh hostilities between Iran and the US, with India reiterating that the targeting of commercial shipping and civilian infrastructure in the region must end.

UN has not been able to move the needle on security council reforms: India

YOSHITA SINGH ■ United Nations

The UNSC's 80-year-old structure, ill-equipped to address contemporary challenges, has been ineffective in ending human suffering due to raging conflicts across the globe, India has said, as it also called for the financial architecture to evolve to better serve the priorities of developing countries. India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Harish Parvathaneni, was addressing the informal meeting of the General Assembly, 'Taking Stock of the Pact for the Future - Ministerial Roundtable two: Making Multilateralism Fit for the Future', here Tuesday when he made the remarks regarding the effectiveness of the United Nation's Security Council (UNSC). "Public perception about the UN has changed adversely in the recent past, primarily due to the Security Council's inability to meaningfully intervene in raging conflicts across different parts of the globe," Parvathaneni said. The Security Council has



Ambassador Harish Parvathaneni

been ineffective in putting an end to human suffering among the affected populations, he added. "The foundational principle for the establishment of the United Nations - maintenance of international peace and security - has therefore, been called to question," he said. (PTI)

Jaishankar highlights growing trust in India-EU ties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Brussels

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday participated in the India-EU Business Roundtable in Brussels and underscored the growing trust in India-Europe ties, saying businesses must realise the full potential of the partnership. Jaishankar is on a visit to Belgium from July 14-15 to participate in the 3rd India-EU Trade and Technology Council meeting and interact with his EU and Belgian counterparts in Brussels. The European Union (EU) comprises 27 member states, including Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Belgium and Finland. "A pleasure to participate in the India-EU Business Roundtable today, alongside my ministerial colleagues, Minister-Presidents of Flanders and Wallonia, and business representatives from both countries," he said



EAM S Jaishankar during the India - EU Business Roundtable

in a post on X. Jaishankar said it was heartening to witness the energy and enthusiasm for deeper business, investment and research and devel-

opment collaborations. "Highlighted the growing trust and comfort in India's partnership with Europe, now taken further by the India-EU

FTA. And the importance for our businesses to meet the ambition and potential of this relationship," he said. Jaishankar is accompanied by Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal and Minister of State Jitin Prasada. Separately, Jaishankar also met EU Commissioner for Startups, Research and Innovation Ekaterina Zaharieva. "Discussed opportunities for research in clean and green energy technologies, innovation hubs, startups and association with Horizon Europe," he said in a social media post. Earlier, Jaishankar held a meeting with European Commissioner for International Partnerships Jozef Sikela, with whom he discussed advancing India-EU cooperation in connectivity, trilateral partnerships, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor and green shipping.

New malaria vaccine helps in Africa but faces a test: Completing all 4 doses

NGALA KILLIAN CHIMTOM
Yaounde

Rain had turned the dirt road into thick mud, but Mabel Djoumessi kept walking with her 9-month-old son, Kenfack, strapped to her back. His malaria vaccination appointment at a clinic in central Cameroon was too important to miss. For decades, millions of children across Africa have fallen sick from malaria, one of the continent's deadliest diseases for the young. But Kenfack has never had it, a feat his mother attributes to the recent arrival of a malaria vaccine. "My other children who have never



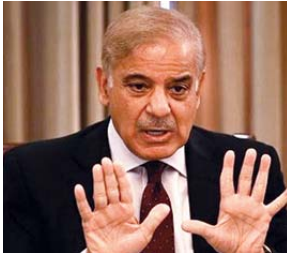
taken the vaccine frequently fall ill," Djoumessi said later, sitting with other women cradling babies at Soa District Hospital. More than two years after

Cameroon became the first country to incorporate the RTS, S malaria vaccine into its routine immunisation program, health workers say it is reducing severe

illness. But they worry that too few children return for the fourth and final shot, or booster dose, that the World Health Organisation says is essential to prolong immunity, as it is given months after the other doses. The challenge reflects a wider problem with multi-dose vaccines across Africa. Malaria kills one child younger than 5 years old every minute globally, the vast majority in Africa, according to the WHO and the United Nations children's agency. In a malaria vaccine pilot program across 158 districts in Ghana, Kenya and Malawi, coverage, or the share of

children eligible for each dose, reached about 80 per cent for the first shot, given at around six months of age. But it dropped to 46 per cent for the fourth dose, administered between 22 and 24 months, according to a study published last year in the peer-reviewed Malaria Journal. "When my son turns 2, I will make sure I come for the fourth dose," Djoumessi said. "I don't want him to suffer like the others." Malaria remains the leading cause of hospital consultations and admissions in Cameroon, one of 11 countries accounting for about 70 per cent of the global malaria burden,

according to the WHO. The country recorded an estimated 7.6 million malaria cases and 11,700 deaths in 2024. Data from Cameroon's National Malaria Control Program shows health facilities recorded a drop in cases in 2025, with 33,000 fewer cases than in 2024. However, some have cautioned against attributing the decline solely to the vaccine. "Isolating the specific impact of malaria interventions requires modelling, and we do not yet have a model to quantify the vaccine's sole contribution," said Dr Bomba Amougou, head of prevention at the National Malaria Control Program. (AP)



Ursula von der pledges EU support for Ukraine

HANNA ARHIROVA/BARRY HATTON
■ KYIV

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen went to Kyiv on Wednesday to mark Ukraine's annual Statehood Day, pledging continued military and financial support for the country's independence as it holds out against Russia's 4-year-old full-scale invasion.

Ukraine's sovereignty has been threatened since Russian forces occupied Ukraine's Crimea in 2014 and Moscow illegally annexed the peninsula, followed eight years later by the all-out invasion of February 2022. Statehood Day, celebrating the country's self-determination, is a public holiday in Ukraine.

The war has killed thousands of soldiers and civilians, forced mil-



Romania President Nicusor Dan, Moldova President Maia Sandu, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Olena Zelenska attend a ceremony in Kyiv

lions to flee their homes, reduced Ukrainian cities to rubble and fueled fears the confrontation could slide into an open conflict between Russia and NATO, whose member nations have supported Kyiv. No peace settlement is in

sight. Senior officials from south-eastern European countries were also expected in Kyiv on Wednesday for a periodic gathering focused on Black Sea and regional security. Last year's meeting in the southern Ukrainian

city of Odesa reaffirmed the countries' support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has recently won important pledges of further support, including from the Group of Seven leading industrialised nations and the so-called Coalition of the Willing countries.

Von der Leyen, the European Union's top official, said her trip to the Ukrainian capital was her 11th in wartime. Europe is watchful of Russia's broader intentions on the continent and has provided billions of euros (dollars) to Ukraine as well as diplomatic support.

Von der Leyen said she would announce new steps toward integrating the European and Ukrainian defence industries as well as providing new help to prepare Ukrainian air defences for

next winter, when Russia usually tries to knock out the power.

Her visit came as Western officials and analysts say Ukraine's increasingly frequent and accurate drone and missile attacks are hitting high-profile targets deep inside Russia, severely disrupting the Russian army's supply lines and causing civilian fuel shortages. "It's a special moment," Von der Leyen said of her visit on social media. "Ukraine has built a strong military momentum. The tide is turning." Meanwhile, Serbia's Moscow-friendly president, Aleksandar Vucic, was taking part in the Southeast Europe Summit in Kyiv.

Serbia, which relies almost fully on Russia for its energy supplies, has refused to join Western sanctions on Moscow that were imposed after its invasion,

although it officially supports Ukraine's territorial integrity.

Ukrainian officials said on Wednesday that at least eight civilians were killed and 11 others were injured in Russian aerial attacks. mRussian forces dropped six powerful glide bombs, mostly targeting infrastructure in Ukraine's northern Sumy region, killing three people and wounding seven, the head of the regional military administration, Oleh Hryhorov, said. Three people were killed and three others wounded in a Russian attack on Odesa, according to the head of the city's military administration, Serhiy Lysak.

Ukraine's northern Chernihiv region, Russian drone attacks killed two people and seriously wounded an 18-year-old, regional military administration head, Viacheslav Chaus said. (AP)

India conveys condolences to Qatar as Rijiju meets Amir Sheikh Tamim



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Doha

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju has conveyed condolences on behalf of the Government and people of India to Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani on the demise of his father, former Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani.

Rijiju, the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs, travelled to Doha on Tuesday to convey condolences on behalf of India on the demise of Father Amir, who ruled Qatar for 18 years before abdicating in 2013.

Rijiju also conveyed personal regards of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the Qatari Amir, the Indian Embassy in Qatar said in a post on X.

"Father Amir was instrumental in building modern Qatar and a great friend of India who will be remembered for his invaluable contribution to building our bilateral relationship," the Ministry of External Affairs said earlier in a post on X.

Ban on social media use by children under 16 sought in Pak's Punjab

M ZULQERNAIN ■ Lahore

A lawmaker in Pakistan's Punjab Assembly has sought a ban on social media accounts for children under the age of 16 without parental consent and also urged the provincial Government to recommend to the federal authorities a similar nationwide action.

Sarah Ahmad of the Isteqam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP), a partner in the ruling coalition, submitted a resolution in the Punjab Assembly on Tuesday urging the provincial Government to immediately place a ban on social media accounts for children under 16 without parental consent amid growing concerns over cyberbullying, online sexual abuse and digital addiction among the minors.

The resolution moved by the IPP lawmaker, who is also the chairperson of Child Protection Bureau Punjab, is the first of a kind at any provincial or federal legislature in Pakistan. The resolution has also recommended that the federal Government should introduce comprehensive legislation to regulate children's access to social media platforms and strengthen online safety measures.

"Protection of children's physical, mental, psychological and moral development is both a constitutional and moral responsibility of the state. Unrestricted access to social media has exposed minors to cyberbullying,



online sexual exploitation, inappropriate content, psychological distress, digital addiction and other serious online threats," it said.

The resolution further recommended "the federal Government enact legislation prohibiting children below the age of 16 from creating or maintaining social media accounts unless parental or legal guardian consent is obtained through a reliable age-verification mechanism." The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) should also enforce effective age-verification systems across all social media platforms operating in Pakistan to ensure compliance with the proposed restrictions, it demanded.

The resolution comes at a time when Governments around the world are considering stricter regulation in connection with the children's use of social media amid mounting evidence linking excessive online activity with mental health issues, cyber abuse and exposure to harmful content. (PTI)

Confirmed Ebola cases top 2,000 in Congo, including 754 deaths

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Bunia

Confirmed cases of Ebola in Congo have reached 2,011, including 754 deaths, according to Government data released overnight in what authorities say is the fastest-growing outbreak on record even as some health workers have gone on strike over payment issues. A total of 753 people remain in isolation or in hospitals, while 366 have so far recovered, according to data from Congo's Ministry of Health. Contact tracing remains a challenge, with coverage of those exposed still at 67 per cent.

The Central African nation has been battling the Ebola outbreak caused by the rare



Bundibugyo virus since May 15. Two months since the onset, the outbreak continues to spread faster than

health officials can track despite an expanding response. At least 80 per cent of new cases are emerging

British Sikh woman stabbed to death in London attack, man charged with murder

ADITI KHANNA ■ London

A 24-year-old British Sikh woman has been killed and a man in his 20s remains in hospital in a stabbing attack at a property in west London, the Metropolitan Police said.

Kirandeep Kaur was found with stab injuries when officers attended the property on Uxbridge Road in Hayes with the London Ambulance Service on Sunday and pronounced dead at the scene "despite the efforts of emergency services".

The Met Police arrested 44-year-old Daniel Sean James, who appeared before Willesden Magistrates' Court, charged with murder, attempted murder and possession of a bladed article. "This is a shocking incident which has tragically resulted in one woman losing her life and another



man in hospital with injuries," said Detective Chief Inspector Allam Bhangoo. "Our thoughts at this time are with both victims and

their loved ones, who are being supported by specialist officers. Our enquiries are in the early stages but we do not believe there to be any

wider threat to the public," he said.

Bhangoo appealed to anyone who may have witnessed anything or has information that could assist the murder investigation to contact the Met Police.

"We know this incident will have caused significant concern in the community and residents can expect to see an increased police presence in the area over the coming days," he said.

The police said Kaur's next-of-kin have been informed and are being supported by specialist officers.

The injured man, in his 20s, found outside the property in Hayes with stab injuries remains in hospital, but his injuries are not believed to be life-threatening.

The Met Police said officers had quickly located Daniel Sean James, who matched the suspect's description, nearby. He was arrested and

taken to the hospital with injuries believed to have been caused after jumping from a window.

Some groups have expressed concerns that the attack may have been an anti-Sikh hate crime, coming weeks after the conviction of a British Sikh man found guilty of the murder of a teenager in south-east England in May.

Vickrum Digwa, 23, was sentenced to life imprisonment over the fatal stabbing of 18-year-old Henry Nowak following a highly charged trial where Digwa attempted a religious defence for his murder weapon.

The Sikh Network is presenting findings of a "spot survey" in Parliament on Wednesday that claims 40 per cent of respondents have experienced or witnessed anti-Sikh hate crimes since the trial. (PTI)

Indian mission closely coordinating with UAE to provide support to deceased sailor's family

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Dubai

Indian officials are "closely coordinating" with the UAE authorities and the shipping company to provide all possible assistance to the family of an Indian national who died following an attack on a cargo vessel off the coast of Oman, the Indian Consulate in Dubai said on Wednesday.

"We express our deepest condolences at the tragic demise of an Indian national due to an attack on the commercial vessel MV. GFS Galaxy on 12 July 2026," the mission said in a post on X.



The attack on the Cyprus-flagged MV GFS Galaxy on Sunday off the coast of Oman left one of its 11 Indian crew members missing. Ten Indian crew members of the vessel were rescued.

The missing Indian national, identified as 30-year-old

Herambh Karmarkar from Pune, was a third engineer aboard the cargo vessel when it was attacked.

"The Consulate is in touch with the bereaved family and is closely coordinating with the relevant UAE authorities and the shipping company to provide all possible support and assistance to the family," the Indian mission said.

According to Gulf News, Karmarkar's family was informed by the shipping company on Tuesday evening that Oman's coast guard had recovered his body, nearly 60 hours after he was reported missing. "We are awaiting his

mortal remains, which are currently with the Oman Navy. Herambh had been on the vessel for the last five months and was due to sign off soon," his father-in-law Vivek Tandon said on Wednesday.

Karmarkar is survived by his wife, mother and younger sister. He had completed his marine engineering from the City of Glasgow College in the UK and had joined the merchant navy, Tandon added.

India had condemned the attack on the vessel and called for immediate de-escalation of tensions in the region.

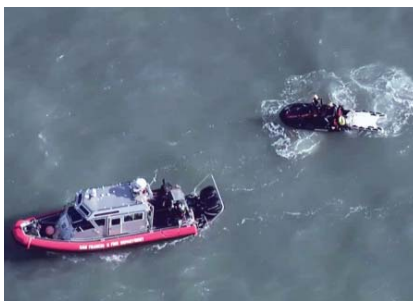
1 dead and 2 missing from pontoon boat near Alcatraz Island off San Francisco

OLGA R RODRIGUEZ ■ San Francisco

One person died, two people were missing and 16 others from a pontoon boat were rescued from the waters off San Francisco, authorities said.

San Francisco Fire Chief Dean Crispin reported the toll and said crews that arrived on the scene near Alcatraz Island found a three-deck pontoon vessel that was carrying 19 people afternoon. "It was a vessel that was capsized and mostly under the water," Crispin said. The boating mishap was initially reported as a fire, "but we now don't have any evidence of that", Crispin said.

Some of the people were injured from falling into the water, but there were no reports of burns, Crispin said. The person who died was plucked from the water



along with the 16 but died later.

Crews continued to search the water for the missing with divers, helicopters and 11 vessels, he added: "Right now we are in full rescue mode." All those rescued were taken to Gashouse Cove Marina, a small craft harbor in San Francisco. (AP)

SPANISH AUTHORITIES IDENTIFY ALL 13 VICTIMS OF DEADLY FIRE



ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Madrid

Five days after a fire ravaged a remote expat community in southern Spain, authorities identified all 13 fatalities using biological samples.

Meanwhile, French firefighters brought under control a forest fire in the historic and much-visited Fontainebleau area south of Paris as parts of the continent continued to face extremely hot temperatures.

All but one of the deceased in the Spanish wildfire, all of whom were adults, were foreign nationals. They include seven British citizens - including a 93-year-old woman who died in the hospital - three Belgian nationals, a French woman, an American and a Spanish national, judicial authorities said in a statement.

Of the 13 victims, eight were women, and five were men. Regional authorities initially believed 23 people were missing, but they all have been accounted for since investigators identified all of the fire's victims.

Leaving UK in better shape: Starmer at final Parliament session as PM

ADITI KHANNA ■ London

Keir Starmer wrapped up his final Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) session in the lower house of the UK Parliament on Wednesday with an emotional farewell and standing ovation from the Government benches.

The 63-year-old Labour MP, who announced his resignation last month and has been serving as caretaker until the party leader is elected, said he was leaving Britain in a better place than he found it and expressed "wholehearted support" for his successor.

Andy Burnham, the former mayor of Greater Manchester, is on course to take charge as the new British prime minister next week after being endorsed by a resounding 349 Labour MPs in the leadership race. "I'm proud to leave this country in a



better shape than I found it; I am proud of everything that we have achieved," Starmer told MPs in the House of Commons as he concluded PMQs with "goodbye."

"Every Prime Minister knows when they take up the torch that the day will come when they have to pass it on. That day has come for me. This is the end of my political journey. In six years, we went from historic defeat in 2019 to historic victory in 2024," he said.

During a largely good-natured final parliamentary clash across the despatch box, Starmer reflected upon his legacy as someone who had "picked up" the Labour Party from electoral oblivion to win a "landslide" general election in July 2024.

Alluding to the crucial England World Cup football semi-final fixture against Argentina later on

Wednesday, he said: "For my successor and for the England team, I won't give advice. I will simply give my wholehearted support.

"Just for the record, I don't care what the score is tonight, as long as we win."

Pressed by the Opposition Conservative Party leader, Kemi Badenoch, the outgoing PM said he would save any words of advice for private interactions with the incoming Labour leader.

"I will give my wholehearted support to my successor. I want this Labour Government to be a success, I want our country to be a success. I shall give my support privately if asked for, not publicly when not asked for," he said.

After an initial phase of popularity, Starmer was hit by some controversial decision-making and policy U-turns which intensified an internal rebellion within the

Labour ranks as MPs demanded speedier action on the country's cost-of-living crisis.

On June 22, he took to the steps of Downing Street to say that he accepted his party's demands "with good grace" and would resign to "ensure an orderly handover of power."

Burnham, who returned to the Parliament benches after contesting a by-election in Makerfield last month, emerged as the frontrunner for the top job ever and is all set to be elected as the new Labour leader unopposed after the nominations process formally closes on Thursday.

On Monday, Starmer is expected to formally tender his resignation during an audience with King Charles III at Buckingham Palace, followed by Burnham being invited by the monarch to form the new Government. (PTI)

Assam’s war on drugs: Taking the fight to Golden Triangle’s doorstep



SABIR NISHAT

With narcotic substances worth more than 73,253 crore seized since 2021, Assam has emerged as India’s frontline in the battle against transnational drug trafficking. The recent BRICS Heads of Anti-Drug Agencies meeting in Guwahati has further underscored the strategic importance of the Northeast in combating the illicit drug trade emanating from the notorious Golden Triangle. Yet, experts caution that seizures alone cannot win a battle that is as much about organised crime, border security and public health as it is about law enforcement.

When Assam Police intercepts a consignment of heroin or methamphetamine tablets on a highway or in a border district, the seizure represents far more than another successful police operation. It is one link in a much larger struggle against transnational criminal networks whose reach extends from clandestine laboratories in Myanmar to markets across South Asia.

The figures released by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma offer a glimpse into the scale of that battle.

Since 2021, Assam has registered 16,605 cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, arrested 26,537 persons and seized narcotic



Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma drives a road roller while attending the state level drugs disposal programme at 14th Assam Police Battalion, Daulasal, Nalbari

substances valued at more than 73,253 crore. Calling the campaign Mission Assam Against Drugs, Sarma described the results as evidence of a sustained offensive driven by intelligence-based policing and coordinated enforcement.

“Our relentless war against drugs is delivering decisive results,” the Chief Minister said, reiterating the government’s resolve to continue the crackdown until organised trafficking networks are dismantled. Geography has made Assam both strategically important and uniquely vulnerable. The Northeast shares nearly 1,900 kilometres of international border with Myanmar, while the region also connects with Bangladesh, Bhutan and China. This location has transformed the region into a crucial transit corridor linking South Asia with Southeast Asia. For decades, traffickers have exploited these routes to transport heroin, opium and, increasingly, synthetic narcotics.

Much of this illicit trade

originates in the Golden Triangle-the mountainous border region shared by Myanmar, Laos and Thailand. Once infamous primarily for opium cultivation, the region has in recent years evolved into one of the world’s largest production centres for methamphetamine and other synthetic drugs.

International agencies have repeatedly warned that organised criminal syndicates operating in the Golden Triangle have diversified production, expanded distribution networks and adopted increasingly sophisticated methods to evade law enforcement.

Political instability in Myanmar following the military takeover in 2021 has further aggravated the challenge. Police arrested 4,175 persons in drug-related cases in 2021. By 2025, annual arrests had risen to 4,901. During the same period, the value of narcotics seized increased from 7383.64 crore to 7473.46 crore.

The seizures include heroin, methamphetamine

tablets popularly known as Yaba, cannabis and other psychotropic substances.

The narcotics problem confronting the Northeast extends well beyond trafficking. States such as Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland have witnessed growing concerns over drug abuse, particularly among young people. Drug trafficking has also become intertwined with other forms of organised crime, including money laundering, arms smuggling and human trafficking. The recent BRICS Heads of Anti-Drug Agencies meeting held in Guwahati assumed particular significance.

The choice of Assam’s largest city as the venue reflected India’s recognition that the Northeast has become central to the regional fight against narcotics trafficking.

The meeting concluded with the adoption of the Guwahati Declaration, which calls for enhanced intelligence sharing, coordinated investigations, operational cooperation and stronger collective action against illicit drug trafficking, precursor chemicals, synthetic narcotics and transnational organised crime.

Sarma has expressed confidence that the Guwahati Declaration will complement Assam’s ongoing anti-drug campaign by strengthening cooperation against cross-border trafficking syndicates.

The writer is Deputy Director, Assam Information Centre, New Delhi. The views expressed are personal

REC Limited signs MoU with CPRI to strengthen quality assurance under RDSS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Gurugram

REC Limited, a ‘Maharatna’ company under the Ministry of Power, Government of India, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Central Power Research Institute (CPRI) on Tuesday at Corporate Office, Gurugram, to strengthen quality testing and assurance mechanisms for materials deployed under the



Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS).

The MoU was signed by Yogendra Singh, GM & HoD of

PMD Quality, REC and MG Anandakumar, Joint Director (BD & CBS Division), CPRI. The signing ceremony was accord-

ed by the presence of Prince Dhawan, IAS, Executive Director (PMS), REC, Dr Neha Adhikari, Joint Director, CPRI, and in the presence of officials from both organisations. Under the agreement, REC and CPRI will collaborate for third-party quality testing of RDSS project materials, technical support, capacity-building initiatives, and development of robust quality frameworks.

DAILY SUDOKU

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

HOW TO SOLVE IT

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

SOLUTION (15.7.26)

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

DOUBLE CROSSWORD

THURSDAY | JULY 16, 2026

ACROSS

1 Experimental new trail (5)
6 Leonard Nimoy looking eerie? (5)
9 Aggressive enough for marital disaster (7)
10 Food for the days of youth (5)
11 Wed a woman who's out to be a bit of a worry? (5)
12 Satisfied that it's very soft in the hay
13 Boge man? (7)
15 You can shoot one, blow it! (3)
17 On paper, an admission of ignorance (4)
18 He might glare wildly at a dunderhead

DOWN

2 Cause to argue? (6)
3 Female deadlier than the male (6)
4 Stable type? (3)
5 Take the wrong way (5)
6 Specimens current in a less unusual case (7)
7 Work is fun! (4)
8 Mount a camel outright! (6)
12 Erica's land (5)
13 One well held, sir? (5)
14 A professional stand-in (5)
15 Group of people in a plane crash! (5)
16 More in VAT (5)
18 Hugely distinguished (5)
19 Go and break a scraper (7)
21 Hardy associate (6)
22 Spirits of the chap with more about him (6)
23 Wild area in foreign parts (6)
25 Trimmed some of the drapes, possibly (5)
26 To reduce the gas, you need a mantle (4)
30 Extra decoration in a pub (3)

FICCI launches Family Office Forum to unlock \$30 billion in patient capital for start-ups

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ New Delhi

The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) on Wednesday launched the ‘Family Office Forum’ - a platform for family offices - with the aim of channelling a growing pool of family capital, estimated at over \$30 billion across roughly 300 family offices in India, into country’s start-up ecosystem. The launch, themed “Role of Family Offices in India’s Start-up Ecosystem,” brought together representatives from family offices, venture capital firms, industry to chart roadmap for closer collaboration between India’s capital pools and its start-up economy.

Sanjeev Bikhchandani, Chair, FICCI Start-up Committee & Founder and Executive Vice-Chairman, Info Edge, said, “Family offices represent a significant and growing segment of capital in India, but their needs have simply not been well served - they’ve historically been clubbed together with venture capital firms, even though their experience, regulations, investment strategies, and taxation issues are quite distinct. As India prospers, family offices are only going to get larger and more specialized, and that calls for a dedicated platform where they can exchange ideas and work together. Family offices are emerging as a serious, professional source of capital for the country’s economic growth - that’s the thinking behind this first dedicated Forum.”



Sanjeev Bikhchandani

During the session Forum’s vision, objectives, and roadmap were highlighted. Family offices in India are rapidly increasing in number and becoming crucial investors in start-ups and private markets, bringing patient capital and a strategic approach to innovation. Yet the members have consistently flagged the same challenges - limited co-investment opportunities, duplication of effort from separate due diligence, and no single platform for deal discovery, learning, or networking. The FICCI Family Office Forum is designed to address exactly this - a network, a marketplace, and a policy voice, all in one.

Bhaves K Jatania, Head - Start-up Banking, IDFC FIRST Bank, addressing the session, noted, “India has created substantial capital over the last two decades — an estimated \$30 billion sits with roughly 300 family offices today - but there hasn’t been an organised way to channel it into our innovation ecosystem. What’s been missing is the bridge: family offices struggle to find quality deals

and lack a unified voice, while start-ups struggle to reach the right investors and build credibility for patient, longer-gestation bets. At IDFC FIRST Bank, we see ourselves as a growth partner to start-ups at every stage, and platforms like this Forum are exactly the bridge this ecosystem needs.” Tripti Singhal Somani, Co-Chair, BRICS Women’s Business Alliance (WBA) - Innovative Development Group & Founder, Womeninnovator, said, “Family offices must see themselves not just as wealth creators, but as trustees for the nation’s future - India’s start-up ecosystem is entering a phase where it needs patient capital, strategic mentorship, and long-term partnership, not just funding. I want to thank FICCI for convening this gathering of visionaries who are committed to both wealth and value creation.”

The launch was followed by two panel discussions - ‘Family Offices’ Perspective - Investing in Indian Start-ups: Opportunities, Challenges & Expectations, moderated by Archana Jahagirdar, Founder and Managing Partner, Rukam Capital, with panellists from Artha Group, Bardia Family Office, Eraya Capital, Ashok Goyal Family Office, Berger Paints, DS Group, and SAR Group; and Raising Capital from Family Offices & Co-investment with VCs: Experience & Expectations, moderated by Amarjeet Singh Makhija, Partner, Market Lead Advisory - Startups and Unicorns, PwC, with panellists from Beconext VC, YourNest Venture Capital, Dallas Venture Capital, and RPSG Capital Ventures.

Harivansh unveils landmark book on 75 years of democracy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ New Delhi

Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha Harivansh, unveiled the book 75 Years of Indian Democracy: The Indian Election Story in Facts & Figures (1950-2025) at his official residence in New Delhi. He also released the inaugural issues of two peer-reviewed quarterly journals-the Indian Journal of Electoral Studies (IJES) and the Indian Journal of Socio-Economic Studies (IJSES).

Published by Indiatat Publications, the book presents a comprehensive chronicle of India’s electoral journey from 1950 to 2025, tracing the constitutional, institutional, and political evolution of the Republic. Harivansh appreciated initiatives that promote serious research, documenta-



tion and evidence-based scholarship. He observed that comprehensive works documenting India’s democratic evolution serve as valuable reference resources for researchers, policymakers and future generations.

Dr R K Thukral, Director, Indiatat Publications, and Editor of the book and both journals, said the initiative reflects Indiatat Publications’ commitment to making authentic electoral and socioeconomic data and research readily accessible to the research community, policymakers, academic institutions and the wider public.

CIABC welcomes India-UK trade deal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ New Delhi

Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) welcomed the historic trade agreement between India and the UK which came into effect from July 15. CIABC Director General Anant S lyer said that it is a huge opportunity for both nations. Anant S lyer said, “Alcoholic beverages is an important component in the India-UK trade. We hope that the FTA will lead to enhanced cooperation, sharing of technical knowhow and sharing of best practices that will help in the growth of the alcobev industry. We also hope that the FTA will drive investments into India and also help Indian companies which are looking for investments in the UK.

Lower import duty on



CONFEDERATION OF INDIAN ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE COMPANIES

Scotch whisky will help Indian alcobev manufacturers to balance their input costs especially in the light of escalation of costs of dry goods, higher cost of logistics and production as well as rupee devaluation due to the US-Iran conflict. Moreover, phased reduction in import duty over a period of 10 years will give ample time to the domestic industry to gear up to the challenges and dynamics of the evolving marketplace.”

He further said that it is for the individual companies to decide on whether prices will be reduced given the duty cut and benefit passed onto consumers.

Assam Minister Rai reviews progress of AMRUT projects

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

Assam Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Kaushik Rai on Wednesday held a high-level review meeting with contractors to assess the progress of projects being implemented across the State under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT).

The meeting was held at the Conference Hall in the first floor of the newly constructed Block B of Janata Bhawan and was attended by Commissioner & Secretary, Department of Housing and Urban Affairs, Kavita Padmanabhan; Managing Director, AMRUT Assam, Sampri Goswami; Additional Managing Director, Shantanu Sutradhar and senior officials of the concerned departments.

During the review, the Minister was informed that all three Water Supply Projects undertaken under AMRUT 1.0 in Nagaon, Dibrugarh and Silchar have been successfully completed and handed over to the respective Urban Local Bodies for operation and maintenance.

It was also informed that under AMRUT 2.0, works have commenced for 23 Water Supply Projects, one Decentralized Faecal Treatment (DFT) Project and two Sewage Treatment Plant-cum-Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant (STP-cum-FSTP) Projects across the State. Among the Water Supply Projects, the Lakhipur Water Supply Project in Cachar and the Tangla Phase-I and Phase-II Water Supply Projects have already become operational. Expressing satisfac-



tion over the successful completion and handover of the three Water Supply Projects under AMRUT 1.0, Minister Rai directed all concerned stakeholders to ensure efficient operation and maintenance of the completed projects and to discharge their responsibilities with utmost accountability.

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Tenders are hereby invited for the purchase and supply of following items:-		
Sr. No.	Name of Work/Item	Period/Tentative Qty
1.	For Verka Head Office, Chandigarh Providing and Fixing of interlocking paving tiles alongwith construction of sewer lines at Verka Sangrur Dairy.	Eight Months
2.	For Verka Bathinda Dairy a) Supply of equipment's for 6TPD powder installed (including design, supply, installation, testing, commissioning & integration with exiting setup complete in all respects). b) Rate Contract of advertisement material.	One complete job One year and extended upto three months
3.	For Verka Hoshiarpur Dairy i. Mahindra Pickup/Maxi Pickup/ Tata Ace etc. to lift the milk from various societies/ farms to Milk Chilling Centre, Bhikhi, Sardulgarh and Talwandi Sabo Annual rate contract basis. ii. Passenger Cars (Swift Dzire or equivalent).	14 No's 04 No's
4.	For Verka Sangrur Dairy Disposal off the scrap material on annual basis.	Annual
5.	For Verka Ludhiana Dairy a) Pest control service at Verka Ludhiana Dairy including DIET project GADVASU, Milk chilling centres and Godowns. b) Labour contract for loading/ unloading of SMP/WMP bags, WMP Tins, Ghee and butter cartons etc. c) Supply of flex banners, flex boards, glow sign boards, vinyl stickers, vinyl with eco solvent printing, sun board and one way vision, shop/wall/vehicle painting etc. d) Hiring of vehicles (Tempoo/ Trucks) for supply of Verka Milk Products/Ghee/SMP etc. between Verka Ludhiana Dairy and Stations. e) Job contract for filling, packing and shifting of powder into 25 kg bags, ½ kg and 1 kg SMP and WMP packets, packing of Ghee (All Variants), packing and shifting of White Butter box, packing of Dahi (All Variants) and shifting to incubation room/ cold store. (including DIET, GADVASU).	Annual One year with extension upto 1 year One year with extension upto 3 months One Year with extension upto 1 year Annual
6.	For Verka Jalandhar Dairy Supply, installation and commissioning of Automatic 4 head and PLC based 5/15 kg Jars/Tin Ghee Filling Machine.	One Job
7.	For Verka Amritsar Dairy a) Replacement of tubes and side plate of shell and tubes of economizer of 5 TPH boiler installed. b) Press Notice for outsourcing of Verka Milk Bar at MCC Fg.Churrian.	Complete Job Five Years
8.	For Verka Cattle Feed Plant, Bhattian (Khanna) Purchase of Steam Coal.	Annual/ 400 MTs(+/- 10%)
NOTE: 1. For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e. www.verka.coop & e Tendering portal i.e. eproc.punjab.gov.in. 2. Corrigendum, if any, will be uploaded on website only.		
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General Manager (Purchase)		

Climax Lawrence backs Spain to win World Cup

SANSKRITI GAUBA
■ New Delhi

Former India captain Climax Lawrence has tipped Spain to lift the FIFA World Cup after their commanding semifinal win over France, while backing Lionel Messi to steer defending champions Argentina past England in a hard-fought last-four clash.

La Furia Roja reminded everyone why they are the reigning European Champions as they produced a masterclass in control to defeat France 2-0 and book their place in the final.

“For me, Spain is going to



win the World Cup. Whoever comes, England or Argentina, Spain will win,” Lawrence told PTI Videos in an exclusive interaction. The former midfielder praised Spain's tactical discipline, fitness and possession-based football, saying the European champions have looked the most complete side in the tournament. (PTI)

Mbappe denied 3rd straight World Cup final

SCHUYLER DIXON
■ Arlington (US)

Kylian Mbappe saw it for himself on the field: France simply didn't play well enough to reach a third consecutive World Cup final.

The France striker will have to settle for a third-place match and the continuing chase for another Golden Boot award in a tight race with Argentina superstar Lionel Messi. Mbappe, one of the biggest stars of this year's World Cup and one of the game's greatest scorers, just couldn't generate many chances in his team's 2-0 loss to Spain in the semifinals on Tuesday.

Mbappe and Messi have

eight goals each so far at this year's tournament. Mbappe, who won the Golden Boot at the last World Cup four years ago in Qatar, holds the first tiebreaker with a 3-2 lead on assists. Messi and defending champion Argentina will play again on Wednesday in the other semifinal match against England.

Both players will then have one more match before the award is decided. France will play the loser of the other semifinal match in the third-place game on Saturday in Miami Gardens, Florida. Spain will take on the winner in East Rutherford, New Jersey, in the final. “At the end of the day, you take all the glory when you



win,” Mbappe said. “When you don't win ... it's part of the game. As the captain, I have to take all the responsibility, and I have no problem with that. We wanted to go to the final.

We didn't go.”

Mbappe had the fewest touches of any forward in the first half with 15. Perhaps his most prominent moment was trying to persuade referee Ivan

Barton that the penalty resulting in Spain's first goal shouldn't have been called. The foul by Lucas Digne on teenager Lamine Yamal stood, and Mikel Oyarzabal's penalty kick in the 22nd minute, put Spain ahead for good. Mbappe's best chance came in the 67th minute when his shot deflected off Spain defender Marc Cucurella and went just wide. La Roja already had a two-goal lead at that point.

“It's a team who loves to have control of the game, control of the ball,” Mbappe said. “That's what we let them do. We let the midfield too much time to play, and at the end of the day they had quality to play. It's difficult when you

don't change the play of Spain. We weren't at the level to go to the final.”

The 27-year-old Mbappe was issued a yellow card in the 86th minute when he rushed toward Unai Simon just as the Spain goalkeeper was bending over to pick up the ball. The two collided, sending Simon to the grass.

Mbappe started the match against Spain after exiting in the 77th minute of his team's 2-0 quarterfinal win over Morocco, when he scored his eighth goal of the tournament. Mbappe also scored eight goals four years ago in Qatar, where France lost to Messi and Argentina in a penalty shootout in the final. (AP)

Atiqa leaves behind Mercedes F1 juniors for pole position

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Viterbo (Italy)

India's 11-year-old racing prodigy Atiqa Mir gave another compelling example of her precocious talent by out-qualifying two Mercedes F1 junior drivers for pole position in the Champions of the Future Academy Program Round 3 in Viterbo.

Despite not testing on a rather technical Leopard Circuit, Atiqa, the first Indian to be backed by Formula 1 Academy, set sizzling pace in qualifying of the karting series. She beat established Mercedes F1 junior drivers like Niccolò Perico of Italy and Devin Titz of Germany for pole



position besides setting an event record, earning the plaudits from one and all in the paddock.

Atiqa's special performance in qualifying came after she swept Round 2 of the COTFA series in Greece last month.

Post the stellar pole position, Atiqa secured P2 and P3 in the Heats after engrossing battles.

In the final, Atiqa started P2 and passed Niccolo for the lead. However, due to an engine mis-fire, she couldn't hold on to the lead and lost places finally before recovering to finish P6.

The results don't reflect Atiqa's sensational speed but she did make a mark with the audacious move for the lead on Lap 1 against Niccolo after outpacing him in qualifying.

On Day 2, Atiqa was hit by engine trouble and qualified 27th. The organisers were quick to change her engine but the damage was done by then.

Spain title favourite for World Cup



HIMANK NEGI/ HARDIK SHARMA
■ New Delhi

Spain's tactical discipline, defensive solidity, and ability to adapt during matches have made them the team to beat at the FIFA World Cup, according to former India internationals, while opinion remains divided over who will join them in the final from Wednesday's blockbuster

clash between England and Argentina.

Spain booked their place in the title clash with a commanding 2-0 victory over France, extending their tournament-best defensive record to six clean sheets while conceding just one goal in seven matches.

Kylian Mbappe and Ousmane Dembele were largely neutralised as Luis de la Fuente's side con-

trolled proceedings with a blend of compact defending and fluid attacking play.

Former India captain and Khel Ratna awardee Shabbir Ali said Spain's ability to disrupt France's rhythm from the outset proved decisive. “They completely cut down the supply line. They didn't allow the French midfield to create chances for Dembele and Mbappe. Once they controlled midfield, Spain had upper hand throughout,” Ali told. The former striker was impressed by Spain's tactical flexibility. (PTI)

Public Notice

The public is informed that my son Kuldeep Kumar Sitole . The original Transfer Certificate (TC) for Class 11, 2023, has been lost.It is therefore notified through this public notice that if any person misuses or makes unauthorized use of the lost TC, the entire responsibility for the same will be borne by the person concerned. I, Sachin Sitole (F/O Kuldeep Kumar Sitole), or my family will not be responsible for this in any way.

Informant: Sachin Sitole
F/O Kuldeep Kumar Sitole
Address: Address F 2 NVDA colony
KhandwaMobile No.: 9425089594

कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, रायगढ़ (छगग)
क्रमांक 1722/न.पा.नि./2026 रायगढ़ दिनांक 15/07/26

|| ई-प्रोक्वोरमेन्ट निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना ||
नगर पालिक निगम, रायगढ़ द्वारा निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु ऑनलाइन (Online) निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है :-

क्र.	सि.क्र.	कार्य का विवरण	अनु.लागत राशि रु. (लाख में)	निविदा डाउनलोड करने की अंतिम तिथि
1	2	3	4	5
1	195478	रायगढ़ स्टेडियम में हार्ड मास्ट लाइट स्थापना कार्य।	189.15	06.08.2026

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नगर पालिक निगम रायगढ़

कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, भोपाल
यांत्रिक विभाग (मुख्यालय) अटल भवन लिंक नम्बर 02 तुलसी नगर

क्रमांक 15/चौ.वि./26

निविदा आमंत्रण घोषणा पत्र

भोपाल, दिनांक 15/7/2026

निम्न कार्य हेतु म.प्र. लोक निर्माण विभाग में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से ऑनलाईन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। विस्तृत विवरण website <https://www.mptenders.gov.in> पर है।

क्र.	निविदा क्र.	कार्य का संक्षिप्त विवरण	अनुमानित लागत (रु.में)	निविदा क्रय करने का अंतिम दिनांक	समय
1.	2026_UAD_521502_1	CONSTRUCTION OF CC ROAD BETWEEN 16 ACRE SQUIRE TO PEBBLE BAY W-55 Z-13	1,36,53,129/-	17-Aug-2026	05:30 PM

नोट- संशोधन वेबसाइट पर ही देखें जा सकेंगे समाचार पत्रों में प्रकाशित नहीं होंगे ।

नि.क्र. 0444/026/027

कार्यपालन संजी (सिविल)
नगर निगम भोपाल

कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, भोपाल
यांत्रिक विभाग (मुख्यालय) अटल भवन लिंक नम्बर 02 तुलसी नगर

क्रमांक 98/चौ.वि./26

निविदा आमंत्रण घोषणा पत्र

भोपाल, दिनांक 15/7/2026

निम्न कार्य हेतु म.प्र. लोक निर्माण विभाग में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से ऑनलाईन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। विस्तृत विवरण website <https://www.mptenders.gov.in> पर है।

क्र.	निविदा क्र.	कार्य का संक्षिप्त विवरण	अनुमानित लागत (रु.में)	निविदा क्रय करने का अंतिम दिनांक	समय
1.	2026_UAD_514628_2	Providing and Fixing Paver Block, Tiranga Grill and Other Beautification Work Parallel to Kolar Six Lane from Bhoj University to Sarvadharm Bridge, Ward No. 80, Zone No. 18 second call	3,17,17,913/-	03-Aug-2026	05:30 PM

नोट- संशोधन वेबसाइट पर ही देखें जा सकेंगे समाचार पत्रों में प्रकाशित नहीं होंगे ।

नि.क्र. 0437/026/027

कार्यपालन संजी (सिविल)
नगर निगम भोपाल

बैंक ऑफ महाराष्ट्र
Bank of Maharashtra
भारत सरकार का उद्यम

JABALPUR ZONAL OFFICE, WRIGHT TOWN, JABALPUR PH: 076 1-2480065,67,68

PUBLIC NOTICE FOR SALE

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower/s and Guarantor/s that the below described immovable properties mortgaged/charged to the Bank of Maharashtra, the possession of which have been taken by the Authorised Officer of Bank of Maharashtra, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" & "WITHOUT RECOURSE BASIS" on 18.08.2026, for recovery of the balance due to the Bank of Maharashtra from the Borrower (s) and Guarantor(s) as mentioned in the table. Details of the Borrower/s and Guarantor/s, amount due, Short description of the immovable property and encumbrances known thereon, possession type, reserve price and the earnest money deposit are also given as under-

Name & Address of Borrower/Guarantor	Outstanding Dues for Recovery of which Property are being sold	Description of properties	Type of Possession	Reserve Price EMD Amount Bid Increase Amount
1) Branch- Shahdol, Borrower: M/s Jahnvi Buildcon Prop. Shri Shiva Pandey, Borrower: M/s Jahnvi Buildcon, Prop- Mr. Shiva Pandey , MIG 607, New Housing Board Colony, By Pass Road, Shahdol, MP 484001, Guarantor: Shri Prakash Narayan Pandey, MIG 608, New Housing Board Colony, By Pass Road, Shahdol, MP 484001	Rs.3599505/- (Ledger balance Rs.3492769/- + plus unapplied interest Rs.106306/-@11.00 % p.a at monthly rest and penal interest thereon + Others Charge w.e.f. 03.10.2024	All those pieces and parcel of land & property with construction & Fixtures there being and lying at -MIG 607, New Housing Board Colony, By Pass Road, Taluka Sohagpur, Dist Shahdol, Area admeasuring 38.50 Sq. Mtr.,	Symbolic	Rs.2460000 EMD:246000 Rs.10000
2) Branch- Shahdol, Borrower: M/s Jahnvi Buildcon Prop. Shri Shiva Pandey, Borrower: M/s Jahnvi Buildcon, Prop- Mr. Shiva Pandey , MIG 607, New Housing Board Colony, By Pass Road, Shahdol, MP 484001, Guarantor: Shri Prakash Narayan Pandey, MIG 608, New Housing Board Colony, By Pass Road, Shahdol, MP 484001	Rs.3599505/- (Ledger balance Rs.3492769/- + plus unapplied interest Rs.106306/-@11.00 % p.a at monthly rest and penal interest thereon + Others Charge w.e.f. 03.10.2024	All those pieces and parcel of land & property with construction & Fixtures there being and lying at -MIG 608, New Housing Board Colony, By Pass Road, Taluka Sohagpur, Dist Shahdol, Area admeasuring 38.50 Sq. Mtr.,	Symbolic	Rs.2460000 EMD:246000 Rs.10000
3) Branch- Jabalpur, Borrower: M/S Mahi Earth Movers, Prop. Mr. Arshad Khan, Borrower: M/S Mahi Earth Movers, Prop. Mr. Arshad Khan, Address: Jawahar Ward, Saray Mohalla, Sihora, Jabalpur, 483225 Madhya Pradesh, Guarantor: Mr.Arshad Khan, Address: Ward No 5, Saray Mohalla, sihora, jabalpur, M.P. 483225	Rs.2064064/-(Rupees Twenty Lakh Sixty Four Thousand Sixty Four only)/Ledger balance Rs.1984805/- plus unapplied interest Rs.66524/- and penal interest + Others Charge w.e.f.13.06.2024	All those pieces and parcel of land situate being and lying at village Mouza Mansakra, (1)Ph no- 06 admeasuring 2360 sq.ft and bearing CTS/Survey no. Khasra No. 408/2/1/2, (2) Ph no- 73/06, admeasuring 1800 sq.ft bearing CTS/survey no, Khasra no.408/2/2, (3) Ph. no.06, admeasuring 2812.5 sq.ft bearing CTS/survey no, Khasra no-408/2/2. Combined all khasra 6972 sq.ft in the Registration Dist. Jabalpur, Sub dist. Sihora,	Physical	Rs.2667000 EMD:266700 Rs.10000
4) Branch- ARB Borrower : Ashutosh Upadhyay, Borrowers Mr. Ashutosh Upadhyay, Add: H.No.2014, Kiran Kutli, Vijaynagar, Jabalpur-482001	Rs.18618136/-(Rupees One Crore Eighty Six Lakh Eighteen Thousand One hundred Thirty Six only plus applicable interest and penal interest thereon Others Charge w.e.f. 30.05.2024	Residential building at JDA Property Plot 2014,JDA Scheme 5 Mouza Lamti , Maharaja Agrasen ward 35 Vijay Nagar, Jabalpur admeasuring 2400 sq.ft.	Physical	Rs. 20831000 EMD: Rs.2083100 Rs.10000
5) Branch- ARB Borrower : Mr Ankur Gupta, Mr. Rajendra kumar Gupta, Mr Anshul Gupta, Guarantor: 1.Mr Ankur Gupta s/o Rajendra Kumar Gupta Residence : 293 1st floor 7th A Main, 1st Stage Hebbal Mysore, Musuru , Karnataka 570016, 2. Mr.Rajendra kumar Gupta s/o Shri Krishna Gupta , 3.Mr Anshul Gupta s/o Rajendra Kumar Gupta, 634/1 RAM NAGAR, Chaitranjan Ward Adhartal near Nawambey School Jabalpur 482004	Rs.4865907/- (Rupees Fourty Eight Lakh Sixty Five thousand Nine Hundred Seven Only) plus applicable unapplied interest + penal interest thereon and other charges and expenses w.e.f.21.10.2024	All the piece and parcel of land and Constructed house at 634/1 RAM NAGAR Chitrnagar Ward, Adhartal on Plot No 88/A Kh No 42, 43, 44, 48, 85/2 Mouza: Betta NB No 52/4 P H No 22 at Mahakaushal Grah Nirman Sahkari Samiti Chitrnagar Ward (old) New ward 38 Motilal Nehru Ward, Adhartal Jabalpur	Physical	Rs.6656000/- EMD:Rs.665600/- Rs.10000
6) Branch- ARB Borrower : Mr. Sheikh Alim, Mr. Sheikh Alim, Ward no.28, Panchgaon Road, Purani Basti, Sohagpur, Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh	Rs.1698488/-(Rupees Sixteen Lakh Ninety Eight Thousand Four Hundred Eighty eight only) (Ledger balance Rs.1629533/- plus unapplied interest Rs.68729/-@ 11.30% p.a at monthly rest and penal interest thereon + Others Charge w.e.f. 13..11.2024	all the piece and parcel of land and construction thereon at Kh no. 78/3/2 admeasuring area 2520 sq.ft.(0.023 hectare) Situated at village: Bhubandh, Municipal area ward no. 25(1) shahdol, The- Sohagpur, Dist Shahdol	Symbolic	Rs.4455000/- EMD:Rs.445500/- Rs.10000
7) Branch- ARB Borrower : Mr. Vinod Sahu, Mrs. Sapna Sahu, Mr.Vinod Sahu S/O Ramgopal Sahu ,Mrs.Sapna sahu W/O Vinod Sahu,House No 2741, Tripuri Chowk ,Garha ward,Purwa Jabalpur-482003	Rs. 2865850/- (Rupees Twenty Eight Lakh Sixty Five Thousand Eight Hundred Fifty only) plus applicable unapplied interest + penal interest thereon and other charges and expenses w.e.f.01.10.2024	Single Story Residential house situated at Mouza Soortalai, N.B 419,P.H no. 75,Kh.No.41, Sanskar City, Plot no. 276, RNM Baroda, Tah: Panagar Dist. Jabalpur	Physical	Rs.2612000/- EMD:Rs.261200/- Rs.10000
8) Branch- KATNI Borrower : M/s Rajesh Trading Company, Prop:- Mr. Rajesh Mishra, M/s Rajesh Trading Company, Prop:- Mr. Rajesh Mishra S/o Vishnu Prashad Mishra,H.No. 300, Indira Gandhi Ward, Shiv Nagar Katni-483501	Rs.2079086/-(Rupees Twenty Lakh Seventy Nine Thousand Eighty Six Only)/Ledger Bal: Rs.1998909/- +Unapplied interest Rs.75410/-@11.05% p.a at monthly rest + penal interest thereon and other charges and expenses w.e.f.10.02.2025	All those pieces and parcels of land situated being and lying at village Chaka in the Registration dist. Katni Sub-dist. Katni, admeasuring 3000 sq.ft and bearing CTS/Survey Nos. 1801/06, 182/106, 190/106, 194/106, Ph No40, NB 234 plot no.8 & 9	Symbolic	Rs.2430000/-, EMD:Rs.243000/- Rs.10000
9) Branch- ARB Borrower : M/s Rudraksh Restaurent Prop. Shri Sunderlal Mehra, M/s Rudraksh Restaurent Prop. Shri Sunderlal Mehra, Mouza Sagda, Near Garha Railway Station, NH-30, Tripuri Ward, Gorakhpur, 482001	1) Rs.24,68,079.00+plus interest thereon @13.05 thereon @ contractual rate + w.e.f. 14.01.2025, 2) Rs.300232/- plus interest thereon @13.30 thereon @ contractual rate + w.e.f. 14.01.2025, 3) Rs.19,04,856/- plus interest thereon @10.95 thereon @ contractual rate + w.e.f. 14.01.2025	Commercial property at Mouza Sagda, NB253, PH No- 33/07, RNM Purwa Jabalpur-1, Diverted khasra No-43/4, Tripuri Ward, Near Garha railway Station, Tehsil- Gorakhpur, Dist- Jabalpur, Area Admeasuring 1680 Sq.Ft.-	Physical	Rs.7150000/- EMD: 715000 Rs.10000
10) Branch- ARB Borrower: Sundarlal Mehra, Sundarlal Mehra,Mrs. Indra Mehra, H.No.-28/3, Bhulan Basti, Kachhpura, Malgodam Ke aage, Kamla Nehru ward, Garha Purwa, Jabalpur-482003	1) Rs.24,68,079.00+plus interest thereon @13.05 thereon @ contractual rate + w.e.f. 14.01.2025, 2) Rs.300232/- plus interest thereon @13.30 thereon @ contractual rate + w.e.f. 14.01.2025, 3) Rs.19,04,856/- plus interest thereon @10.95 thereon @ contractual rate + w.e.f. 14.01.2025	All those piece and parcel of property and construction on at Muza Kachhpura, NB no.501, PH no. 25/31, Khasra no. 127/2, Situated at Bhulan Basti Area,Near JDA Scheme no.41, Kamla Nehru Nagar, Ward no. 19, Teh & Dist.Jabalpur.	Physical	Rs.3800000/- EMD:Rs.380000/- Rs.10000
11) Branch- Satna, Borrower: Mr. Sahid Khan & Mrs. Saishta Khan, Borrower: Mr. Mohammad Shahid Khan, S/o Mr. Suleman Khan, Mrs. Saishta Khan, W/o Mr. Mohammad Shahid Khan, S/o: Mr. Suleman Khan, Ward no. 29, Gali no.1, Pateri road, Jawahar Nagar, Satna-485001	Rs.7189614/(LB Rs.6958726/- + unapplied interest Rs.230888 and other charges and expenses w.e.f.02.05.2024	Residential Property, area admeasuring 1200 sq.ft. with construction thereon situated at Mouza Umrahi Mathuriyan, Circle AMarpatan, Land bearing Khasara no. 129/9, Ward no.1, Krishna Nagar Colony , Tehsil-Amarpatan, Dist:Satna	Symbolic	Rs.3215000/-, EMD:Rs.321500/- Rs.10000
12) Branch- Tilhari, Borrower: Ramakant Satnami & M/s Woodland Industries, Mr. Ramakant Satnami,M18, Station Road, Bum Compound, Near Hanuman Mandir, Civil Line, Bangoli Mohalla, Jabalpur-482001	Rs.3519786/-(Rupees Thirty Five Lakh Nineteen Thousand Seven Hundred Eighty Six Only) plus applicable unapplied interest for TL(Housing): 60435600064 @ 8.25% p.a, and for TL: 60508925648 @10.05 % p.a at monthly rest + penal interest and other charges / expenses till realization w.e.f.02.12.2025	Flat no. C-501 at 4th floor, Naval Utkarsh Apartment, PH no. 28/23, Khata no. 117/1,117/7 & 117/12,Veerangana Awantibai Ward, Mouza: Tilhari, Jabalpur Built up area 1008 sq.ft. and Super built up area 1260 sq.ft	Symbolic	Rs.3969000/-, EMD:396900/- Rs.10000
13) Branch- Tilhari, Borrower : Ramakant Satnami, Mr. Ramakant Satnami,M18, Station Road, Bum Compound, Near Hanuman Mandir,Civil Line, Bangoli Mohalla, Jabalpur-482001	Rs.3519786/-(Rupees Thirty Five Lakh Nineteen Thousand Seven Hundred Eighty Six Only) plus applicable unapplied interest for TL(Housing): 60435600064 @ 8.25% p.a, and for TL:60508925648 @10.05 % p.a at monthly rest + penal interest and other charges / expenses till realization w.e.f.02.12.2025	Commercial Shop no S-10, 2nd floor Narayan Tower, Nazul Khasra no.10/3,11/1,12/2, Ward no. 33, North Civil Line, Tehsil & Dist: Jabalpur area admeasuring Built up area 308.60 sq.ft.	Symbolic	Rs.5555000/- EMD: Rs.555500/- Rs.10000
14) Branch - ARB, Borrower: Shrimati Jewellery House Pvt.Ltd., Office Address:- E-5/17 Bittan Market, Arera Colony, Tehsil- Huzur, District Bhopal Guarantors, 1. Smt. Sundari Lilwani, 2.Shri Ramesh Lilwani, 3.Shri Dinesh Lilwani, 4. Vijay Lilwani, 5.Shri Manish Lilwani All resident of : 70, Amarnath Colony, Kolar Road, Tehsil-Huzur, District Bhopal.	Rs.17,87,22,777 (Rupees Seventeen Crore Eighty seven lakh twenty two thousand seven hundred and seventy seven) plus unapplied interest + penal interest and other charges/expenses till realization w.e.f.12/08/2015	Commercial building " Shrimati Jewellery House Pvt.Ltd" on lease hold Plot no. E-5/17,Opposite Habibganj, Petrol Pump, Bittan Market, Arera Colony, Dr. Ravi Shankar Shukla Ward No. 46, Tehsil: Huzur, Dist: Bhopal area admeasuring: Plot area 2880 sq.ft built up area 13752 sq.ft.	Physical	Rs.190293000/- EMD:Rs.19029300/- Rs.10000
15) Branch - ARB, Borrower: M/s Mishra Enterprises, Prop. Shri Anchal Agrawal, 1) M/S Mishra Enterprises, Partnership firm. (Borrower), Address:- D-1, Sai Nath Colony, Kolar Road, Bhopal, M.P., 2) Sh. Anchal Agrawal (Borrower), Partner of M/S Mishra Enterprises,, Address:- H.No. 105, Girdhar Parishar, Kolar Road, Bhopal, M.P., 3) Sh. Hemant Shukla (Borrower), Partner of M/S Mishra Enterprises, Address:- H.No. H.No. Vandana Nagar, Gehu Kheda, Kolar Road, Bhopal, M.P., 4) Sh. Anchal Agrawal (Guarantor), Address:- H.No. 105, Girdhar Parishar, Kolar Road, Bhopal, M.P., 5) Sh. Hemant Shukla (Guarantor), Address:- H.No. H.No. Vandana Nagar, Gehu Kheda, Kolar Road, Bhopal, M.P., 6) Sh. Vinod Mishra (Guarantor), Address:- H.No. 78, Mahabali Nagar, Kolar Road, Bhopal, 7) Sh. Umesh Mishra (Guarantor)/Guarantor of M/s Mishra Enterprises, Address:- DHV-2/219, Danish Hills View, Kolar Road, Bhopal	Rs. 2,10,26,684/- (Rupees Two Crore Ten lakh twenty six thousand six hundred and eighty four) plus unapplied interest + penal interest and other charges/ expenses till realization w.e.f. 12/09/2016	Under construction house situated at Plot D-12, City Vistaar, Phase – II (A) Near Kemfort Public School, Village Sankhed, Ward no.83, Bhopal area admeasuring 1200 sq.ft.	Symbolic	Rs.4627000/-, EMD:Rs.462700/- Rs.10000

Inspection of Properties by bidder: 13.08.2026 to 14.08.2026 between 12:00 pm. and 4:00 pm
Last Date & Time for Submission of Bid application/KYC documents/EMD etc. 18.08.2026 up to 11.00 a.m.
Date & time of E-auction with auto extention for 10 minutes- 18.08.2026 between 12.00 p.m. and 4.00 p.m.

The auction sale will be On-line E-Auction/Bidding through website <https://banknet/psballance.com>, email: support.baanknet@psballance.com. Mob.- 8291220220 The intending Bidders/Purchasers are requested to register on portal using their mobile number and email id. Please take note that the registration and KYC approval etc take 2-3 working days. For detail terms and conditions of sale please refer to the link provided by <https://bankofmaharashtra.bank.in/asset-for-sales-search> and <https://baanknet.com>.Also prospective bidders may contact the authorized officials Contact details: Incharge Recovery Jabalpur Shri Onkar Kumar (Zonal Manager)-9823296164, Shri Nikhil S Patil (DZM) -7387211200, Shri Bhushan Mohite (CM Recovery-Z.U.) -9923257090, Hariom Trivedi 9405719723
Note-The sales are subject to the order/outcome of any case pending/ filed if any before Court/Tribunal

Sale Notice to Borrower/Guarantors/Legal Heirs (LR's)/Coparceners

The above shall be treated as Notice of 15/30 days w/r 9(1) of security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002

Authorised Officer,
Bank of Maharashtra

World Cup: ICC adds Super 7 stage at ODI, Super 10 at T20

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Edinburgh

The 2027 ODI World Cup will be a three-stage competition leading to the finals and the 2028 T20 World Cup's Super 8 phase will be expanded to accommodate 10 teams, the ICC announced on Wednesday as it unveiled a revamped structure for the marquee events to achieve "greater context and consequence". The decisions were taken at the ICC Annual Conference here.

The 2027 ODI World Cup in South Africa will feature have 14 teams as planned before, up from the 10 in the previous edition, but the governing body has added a Super

Series round prior to the 'Group round' and a Super 7 stage before the semifinals in its bid to spice up the competition. "...the revised format will entail a three-stage competition leading to the Finals, which creates greater context, competitiveness and consequence during the event, ensuring meaningful competition from the opening match through to the Finals," said the ICC in a statement.

The teams that would qualify 12th to 14th for the tournament will play the Super Series round and the top finisher will progress to round two of the competition that will see six teams divided into two groups. Top three

teams from each group plus the next highest placed team across both groups will qualify for the Super 7 stage instead of the Super 6 planned earlier.

Four best-placed teams from the Super 7 stage will then progress to the semifinals. "The increased consequence and enhanced competitive intensity promises to enhance the overall experience for fans while continuing to provide emerging teams with the opportunity to compete on cricket's biggest stage," said the ICC.

The tournament will feature 10 automatic qualifiers. Among the three co-hosts South Africa and Zimbabwe will be automatic qualifiers for



being full members. The third co-host, Namibia, has not received an automatic qualification as it is an associate member. The eight highest

teams on the ODI rankings will complete the top 10 line-up. The remaining four teams will be decided by a global qualifier. **Super 10 instead of**

Super 8 at T20 World Cup: For the T20 showpiece in the Australia and New Zealand in 2028, the ICC has decided to try Super 10 instead of the Super 8 after the Group stage.

Five groups of four teams will be created and top two from each enter the Super 10. Instead of top two teams from each Super 8 group making the semifinals in the last edition, only the one that tops the table in each group enters the last four.

Teams placed second in groups play in the eliminator against the teams placed third in the opposite group, adding another layer to the competition.

"Encouraged by the performance of emerging teams in

the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, the ICC has decided to increase the number of teams competing in the second stage of the tournament from 8 to 10," said the ICC.

Scotland will enter directly into the Europe Regional Final, recognising the exceptional circumstances surrounding its participation in the 2026 tournament, having replaced Bangladesh in the 11th hour.

The remaining teams that competed at the T20 World Cup 2026 but did not secure automatic qualification will advance directly to the Global Qualifier. The other eight places in the Global Qualifier will be filled through regional qualification, with two

teams each qualifying from Africa, Asia and Europe, and one team each from the Americas and East Asia-Pacific regions. The highest placed team from each region at the Global Qualifier, together with the next three highest-placed teams overall, will qualify for the T20 World Cup 2028.

"The new marquee tournament has been endorsed by the Board after being recommended by the ICC Development and Chief Executives' Committees. However, it will be finally approved by the Board after review by ICC's Finance & Commercial Affairs committee in the November meetings," the ICC added.

Tried to hit too hard in T20Is, focussing on timing in ODIs: Axar



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Birmingham

All-rounder Axar Patel said his measured half-century in India's match-winning chase against England in the opening ODI here was a result of his renewed focus on timing after trying to hit too hard during a barren T20 run against the same opposition.

Axar displayed all-round brilliance, snaring four wickets in his 9.5 overs before striking a 52-ball 57 that was laced with five fours and a maximum. India won the match by four wickets and 28 balls to spare with a nicely paced chase of 259 in which skipper Shubman Gill (80) and Washington Sundar (52) also played a crucial role.

"It was very important for me to deliver this kind of performance. As for my mindset, I needed to keep at it. I had to stay focused rather than thinking it would just happen on its own. I had to have self-belief and execute my plans. I feel like I was trying to hit the ball too hard during the T20Is," Axar, who was adjudged player of the match, told 'JioStar'. "When you go in

to bat in the death overs, you don't have any other option but to go for big shots, but I was losing my shape a little. So, when I went in to bat in this game, obviously after we got a great start, I just wanted to build a partnership," he said, explaining the tweaks he made. Axar scored a total of 19 runs in the T20 series that India lost 0-4 last week. The 32-year-old said on Tuesday, his focus was on timing the ball. "I wasn't trying to hit the ball too hard because I knew I had time and could afford to take a few balls as well. I was focusing on my timing. On this kind of wicket, it is very important to trust the bounce. Once you start reading it well, I think you can score runs," he said.

Talking about the Edgbaston wicket, Axar said it was not conducive for strokeplay at the very outset and batters in both the teams needed time to settle down. "Whoever was new to the crease found it very difficult to come in and start hitting straight away. Even for them, it became easier for Joe Root and Liam Dawson once the partnership was set," he said.

Ayush, Unnati, Lakshya bow out in dismal day for India at Japan Open

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Tokyo

Young shuttlers Ayush Shetty and Unnati Hooda put up gallant fights before bowing out, while Lakshya Sen went down in straight games as India endured a disappointing second day at the Japan Open Super 750 badminton tournament here on Wednesday.

Ayush, a finalist at the Asia Championships, showed grit to recover after losing the opening game but ran out of steam in the end, going down 19-21 25-23 15-21 to second seed and former world champion Kunlavut Vitidsam of Thailand in an 82-minute clash. World No. 24

Unnati, a two-time Odisha Open Super 100 champion, once again lost to Huang Yu-Hsun, going down 21-16 16-21 15-21 to the Chinese Taipei shuttler for her second defeat in as many meetings.

Lakshya, a runner-up at the All England Championships, was no match for local favourite Koki Watanabe, losing 16-21 14-21 in just 38 minutes as the Japanese improved his head-to-head record against the Indian to 4-3. It was a disappointing day for India as all three shuttlers in action failed to cross the opening hurdle. The first-round exits do not reflect well on India, which is set to host the World Championships in

New Delhi next month after a gap of 17 years.

Two-time Olympic medalist PV Sindhu and the mixed doubles pair of Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto remain India's only hopes in the \$950,000 tournament. While Sindhu will face fifth seed Han Yue of China, Dhruv and Tanisha will take on top seeds Feng Yan Zhe and Huang Dong Ping in the second round on Thursday.

Ayush vs Kunlavut: Ayush, the 21-year-old from Mangaluru, came into the match after his sensational win over Kunlavut en route to the Asia Championships final, but knew it would not be a cakewalk against the Thai, a three-time world



junior champion. The Indian made a decent start, opening up a 7-4 lead early on, but it disappeared in no time as Kunlavut surged ahead to 12-9. Ayush fought back to make

it 13-12, but the Thai again moved ahead at 19-16. Three straight points gave Ayush hope, but Kunlavut sealed the opening game by winning the next two points.

Gill, Rohit in focus as India eye series win over England

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Cardiff

Skipper Shubman Gill's fitness and Rohit Sharma's form are major concerns for India as they seek to lock a much-needed series victory over England in the second ODI here on Wednesday.

India's six-wicket win in the first match in Birmingham gave them a 1-0 lead in the three-match series, but it also highlighted some worrying aspects of the team's performance.

Batting on 80, Gill had to walk off the field in palpable pain and India would hope that it was nothing more than cramps.

A similar exit by Gill last year during the first Test against South Africa at Kolkata had led to hospitalisation, rendering him



unavailable for the remainder of that engagement.

So, the Men in Blue will not want an encore as Gill's presence is imperative as leader and a tone-setting opener. While his opening partner Rohit does not carry any such fitness issues, the management will certainly look at his batting numbers.

The Mumbai man seemed to have shelved his brazen aggression since losing captaincy, but the changed approach has not brought any bigger dividend yet.

The 'Hitman' has played 13 ODIs just as a senior member in the team since October last year, making 563 runs at an average of 46.91 with a

hundred and four fifties.

It's not a record to scoff at. But the current dynamics within the Indian dressing room and the absence of the safety net of captaincy around him have made it mandatory for Rohit to deliver on almost every outing. It will be a stretch of imagination to think that Rohit will be out of contention in the race to 2027 ODI World Cup even if he courts a couple of more failures, but the way the think tank looked over Suryakumar Yadav and Sanju Samson recently offers a warning note to him. At 39, Rohit would not like to leave anything for chance as India also have an explosive top-order option in Ishan Kishan in the shed.

Comparatively, Kohli, another one-format player, is

in a better place both in terms of fitness and statistics. From October 1, 2025, the 37-year-old has churned out 621 runs from 10 matches at an average of 77.62 with three hundreds and as many fifties.

So, the Delhi man would be expecting a far kinder treatment from the management at the moment.

A major positive for India is the way pace ace Jasprit Bumrah returned to the 50-over set-up for the first time since the 2023 World Cup final. He was a delight to watch. Bumrah seemed to have regained his magic after a temporary loss of form during the IPL this year where he struggled for rhythm and wickets.

Similarly, the return to form of all-rounders Axar Patel and Washington

Sundar would also please the management to no end.

After the Edgbaston victory, Gill had indicated that the management will try different combinations according to the conditions.

The Sophia Gardens pitch often offers good bounce and carry, keeping pacers firmly in the mix. In that context, India can bring in seasoned left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh in place of Gurnoor Brar. Brar took the wickets of Ben Duckett and Jacob Bethell but conceded 61 runs in nine overs.

So, Arshdeep can be included in the eleven if the bigwigs feel the need of more experience in the bowling line-up in a crucial match. But it also means that left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav will, in all likelihood, remain in dugout.

Mixed results for Indian junior women's hockey team in exposure trip to UK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

The Indian junior women's hockey team logged three wins, and four losses in a bitter-sweet exposure-cum-competition tour of the UK as it geared up for the Under-21 Asia Cup in China later this year.

The Asian event is scheduled from September 4 to 13 in Moqi, China. During the exposure tour, India played seven matches, including against Scotland senior women, USA U-21, England U-21 and Belgium U-21.

The tour began in Edinburgh with two closely fought encounters against



the Scotland team. While India narrowly went down 2-3 in the opening match, they lost the second match 3-1. Shashi Khalsa scored India's lone goal, while Bronwyn Shields, Zara Kennedy and Charlotte Watson were on target for Scotland.

The team bounced back in

its third match, registering a commanding 6-0 victory over the USA U-21. Sukhveer Kaur starred with a brace, while Kajal, Shashi Khalsa, Purnima Yadav and Puja Sahoo also contributed to the scoresheet in India's most dominant performance of the tour.

Different batting roles excite me: Washington Sundar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Birmingham

India all-rounder Washington Sundar said he is happy to bat anywhere in the order, calling the opportunity to perform different roles "exciting".

Washington, whose role has frequently changed across formats, walked in at number five and struck an unbeaten 52 as India defeated England by six wickets in the first ODI here on Tuesday.

The 26-year-old shared an unbroken 102-run stand with Axar Patel (57 not out) to guide India home after captain Shubman Gill's fluent 80 had laid the foundation for the chase.

"The fact that I play different roles is exciting. Not

many people get to play different roles. I get to play those different roles and be in those different situations," Washington said in the post-match press conference.

"Obviously, I try my best to help the team win. It is exciting to be in different situations and different phases of the game," Washington said head coach Gautam Gambhir, who prefers to pack the team with all-rounders, has played a key role in improving his confidence as a batter, while also acknowledging the influence of Gujarat Titans head coach Ashish Nehra.

"Gauti bhai (Gautam Gambhir) always made me understand what exactly I could do with the bat, especially, and made me under-



stand my game as well. Even Ashish Nehra at GT has always made sure 'he has helped me understand myself a lot more, be it as a person or as a cricketer on the whole,' Washington said.

"As an all-rounder, I think it is really important to keep looking to improve every single day, understand my game and, obviously, play according to the situation. Playing a lot of games also

helps. You get to be in those situations, understand what exactly you can do, and you have a lot of learning as well.

"I am so grateful that I have got such people who have always had faith in my skill sets and also made me understand what exactly I could do with my different skill sets," he added.

The Tamil Nadu cricketer said teams benefit immensely from having multiple players who can contribute with both bat and ball.

"It is such a blessing for me to be an all-rounder and I mean any team would love to have as many all-rounders as possible because you can play according to the conditions and it is always nice to have different varieties.

Lakra urges inquiry into handling of sexual harassment complaints in HI

MONA PARTHSARATHI
■ New Delhi

Former India captain Asunta Lakra has written to the National Commission for Women (NCW), requesting an inquiry into the handling of sexual harassment complaints at Hockey India and its affiliated organisations to expose institutional failure in following safeguards and procedures.

"I request the National Commission for Women to take cognizance of the broader concerns regarding the handling of sexual harassment complaints within Hockey India and associated bodies, and to direct an independent inquiry into whether there has been any institu-

tional failure, deliberate inaction, intimidation of complainants, or protection of individuals in positions of authority despite complaints being brought to the attention of responsible officials," she said in the e-mail sent to NCW on Sunday.

Former India captain and Asian Games medallist, Lakra had accused Hockey India secretary general Bholanath Singh of threatening and intimidating her after she raised concerns over alleged misconduct by Jharkhand coach Sudhir Gola towards female players at Eklayva Hockey Academy in Ranchi.

She had also written to the sports ministry seeking urgent intervention following which the ministry asked Hockey



India to investigate the allegations and share the findings.

"I request you to take immediate cognizance of the complaints raised by women hockey players from Jharkhand regarding alleged sexual harassment, intimidation, abuse of authority, and caste-based humiliation

and constitute or recommend an independent inquiry into the allegations against Mr. Sudhir Gola and into the circumstances surrounding the handling of these complaints," she wrote in the letter to NCW.

She also alleged that there have been five complaints or

instances relating to alleged sexual harassment within Hockey India and associated hockey bodies since January 2025, but despite the seriousness of such allegations, effective and visible action has not been taken in several matters.

"Conduct an inquiry into the role of Mr Bholanath Singh and other officials of Hockey Jharkhand, including whether their actions, omissions, or conduct contributed to the suppression of complaints, intimidation of complainants, or failure to provide protection to affected women athletes," she said.

Lakra, who belongs to a Scheduled Tribe, has accused Gola of caste-based humiliation of tribal players. (PTI)

Fitness in focus as Indian hockey teams gear up for World Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Strength and conditioning has emerged as the central focus as India prepares for next month's FIH Hockey World Cup, with chief coaches Craig Fulton and Sjoerd Marijne saying the ongoing national camps are aimed at ensuring the men's and women's teams peak physically for the marquee event.

The World Cup will be held in Belgium and the Netherlands from August 15 to 30, marking the first time that the men's and women's tournaments will be staged simultaneously. The men's



team heads into the showpiece after an encouraging FIH Pro League campaign in Europe, where it registered wins over reigning world champions Germany, Olympic champions the Netherlands and Pakistan. "The players have come into the camp fresh after the

break and you can see it in the energy on the pitch. The sessions have been sharp and competitive, with everyone eager to be back together," Fulton said in a Hockey India release.

"The first few days have been about getting the legs moving again, re-establishing our standards and now we are gradually building the intensity as we prepare for the World Cup." India, the 1975 world champions, have been drawn in Pool D alongside England, Pakistan and Wales. They begin their campaign against Wales on August 15 before taking on England and Pakistan on August 17 and 19 respectively.