

"Therefore, all Project Directors (PDs) and Regional Officers (ROs) are directed to ensure strict compliance of the guidelines being issued. I provide this circular as the same concerns the Public Health and Safety and any laxity in this regard shall not be overlooked," NHA said.

CM urges youth to take active role in politics and democracy

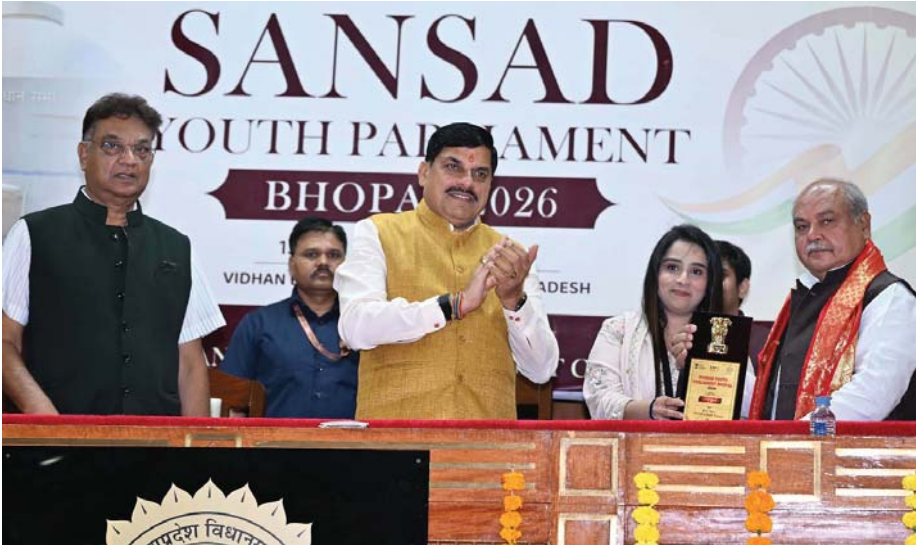
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Thursday called upon the country's youth to actively participate in politics and contribute to strengthening democracy. Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the 'Sansad Youth Parliament 2026' at the Legislative Council Hall in the state Assembly building, Yadav said young people should aspire not only to become doctors and engineers but also enter public life and play an active role in nation-building.

Recalling the contribution of freedom fighters, Yadav cited Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose as an example of commitment to the nation. He said Bose had cleared the Indian Civil Service examination but gave up a government career and joined the freedom movement to fight for India's independence.

Yadav said the initiative to connect young people with democracy, parliamentary traditions and policymaking was commendable. He said it was encouraging to see young people coming together to deliberate on India's future.

Yadav, Assembly Speaker Narendra Singh Tomar and Dilip Buildcon CMD Dilip Suryavanshi jointly inaugurated the event by lighting the ceremonial lamp. Young participants from across the country are taking part in parliamentary-style discussions on parliamentary procedures, democratic values and issues of national importance. The event has been organised



by Sakar Drishti Social Foundation and Kaleidohope Nagpur.

Yadav said India was moving forward under Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the principles of unity in diversity, inclusive development and "live and let live". He said such principles could not remain limited to words and required determination to translate them into action.

Speaking about the Uniform Civil Code, Yadav said extensive consultations had been conducted across Madhya Pradesh, with people from all districts and communities submitting suggestions. He said 76 per cent of Muslim women surveyed had supported the UCC and noted that Madhya Pradesh was among the leading large states to have passed a Bill for its implementation.

Yadav said Madhya Pradesh was the heart of India and described India as the world's youngest country. He noted

that young people from 12 states and 58 cities were participating in the youth parliament. He highlighted the active participation of young women in the event as an example of women's empowerment and said Indian cultural traditions placed motherhood and the family at the centre of social life. He also referred to the principle of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam", describing the world as one family.

Assembly Speaker Narendra Singh Tomar described the youth parliament as a "mini India" and said young people had an important role in determining both their own future and the future of the country. Recalling the freedom struggle, he cited young revolutionaries including Chandrashekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, Sukhdev, Ashfaqullah Khan and Ram Prasad Bismil.

Tomar also said thinkers such as Deendayal Upadhyaya

and Syama Prasad Mukherjee had supported the idea of a Uniform Civil Code. He said the younger generation had also been connected with initiatives such as the cleanliness movement and the vision of a developed India.

Dilip Buildcon CMD Dilip Suryavanshi said the expansion of industrial activity in Madhya Pradesh was attracting investment and creating employment opportunities. He urged young people to work for the nation and society with a spirit of service and dedication.

Youth participants also praised the state government's focus on employment, sports and youth welfare. They highlighted the operation of 274 Sandipani schools and plans to establish another 200 such schools. Former Rajya Sabha member Padma Shri Dr Vikas Mahatme and Assembly Secretary Arvind Sharma were also felicitated during the programme.

Illegal buildings face BMC action

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

The Bhopal Municipal Corporation has intensified action against illegal constructions, unauthorised colonies and structures located within 50 metres of the Full Tank Level of the Upper Lake, in compliance with Supreme Court directions.

On Thursday, the civic body's Building Permission Branch inspected the Oramall construction site and stopped work being carried out on the building's elevation and external appearance. The building owner and developer were served a notice under Section 302(1) of the Madhya Pradesh Municipal Corporation Act, 1956, and directed to submit the required documents and clarification. Further construction has been ordered to conform strictly to the approved building permission and applicable construction rules.

The civic body also took action against two unauthorised colonies in Zone 16. At Indus Muskan Colony on Ayodhya Bypass Road, officials removed illegal construction and encroachments from the site and road area, restoring the affected stretch to an encroachment-free condition.

In the Khejda Baramad area of Zone 16, the civic team demolished an unauthorised construction and took action against an illegal colony being developed over around 2.3 acres of land under Khasra No. 200/1/1 without approval from the Town and Country Planning Department or development permission from the Municipal Corporation.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav during a Tiranga Boat Rally ahead of Independence Day at the Upper Lake in Bhopal on Thursday.

Pioneer photo

CM to interact with farmers, entrepreneurs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav will visit Barwani on Friday, August 14, as part of the Mukhyamantri Jan Vishwas Abhiyan and review the district's progress in resolving public grievances and implementing government schemes.

Yadav will chair the district-level Samadhan programme at the Barwani Collectorate conference hall, where he will review the disposal of complaints and applications received from citizens through the CM Helpline portal. The state government has accorded top priority to ensuring complete resolution of public grievances, effective implementation of welfare schemes, continuous monitoring and timely delivery of public services within prescribed timelines.

During his visit, Yadav will also inspect Government Higher Secondary School, Borlay. He will review facilities including the district's first Maths Park, ICT Lab, Atal Tinkering Lab and Smart Class. At the district Collectorate, the Chief Minister will interact with entrepreneurs, progressive farmers and students who have excelled in different fields. The interactions are aimed at understanding their achievements, challenges and experiences.

Yadav will hold discussions with progressive farmers engaged in agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry and fisheries. The discussions will cover HDPS-based cotton cultivation, Custom Hiring Centres, Farmer Producer Organisations

and food-processing enterprises established with loans under government schemes.

He will also discuss dairy production and conservation of Nimari cattle, fish seed production and fish farming. The Chief Minister will interact with office-bearers of farmers' organisations on issues including the e-token system.

Yadav will further engage with successful entrepreneurs working in food processing and agro-industries, cotton and ginning, renewable energy, waste management, eco-friendly products, manufacturing, innovation and start-ups. The visit will provide an opportunity to review the implementation of public welfare initiatives while directly engaging with citizens, farmers, students and entrepreneurs involved in the district's development.



Indo-Tibet Border Police (ITBP) band personnel perform commemorating 150 years of Vande Mataram, at Bharat Bhawan in Bhopal on Thursday.

Pioneer photo

Massive Tiranga rally held to mark Har Ghar Tiranga

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ratlam

A massive Tiranga rally was organised in Ratlam city on Thursday as part of the nationwide 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign, drawing enthusiastic participation from public representatives, government officials, employees and citizens. The rally conveyed a strong message of patriotism, national unity and civic responsibility.

The rally began from the Municipal Corporation office and passed through College Road, Jail Road, Lokendra Talkies, New Road and Do Batti before concluding at Maharaja Sajjan Singh Square. Citizens gathered along the route and waved the Tricolour with enthusiasm, creating a vibrant atmosphere of national pride.

Collector Ajay Katesaria, Zila Panchayat CEO Vaishali Jain, Additional Collector Brijendra Rawat, District Development Advisory Committee member Pradeep Upadhyay, Municipal Corporation Mayor Prahlad Patel, Municipal Corporation President Manisha Sharma and Zila Panchayat President

Lala Bai Chandravanshi were among those who participated in the rally. Several elected representatives, officials, employees and residents also joined the event.

Addressing the gathering, Collector Katesaria said the country was preparing to celebrate its 80th Independence Day and extended his greetings to the people of Ratlam district. He said Independence Day is an important occasion to remember the sacrifices and contributions of freedom fighters who devoted their lives to India's struggle for independence.

Katesaria also urged citizens to remain conscious of both their rights and responsibilities. He called upon residents to contribute actively towards keeping Ratlam clean and supporting the city's development.

He appealed to people to work collectively in the national interest and contribute towards making Ratlam a clean, beautiful and developed district. The rally concluded with a renewed call for citizens to uphold national unity and actively participate in the progress of the district.

BHEL, Hystar sign hydrogen pact

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) and Norway-based Hystar AS have entered into a strategic partnership to enable phased indigenisation and local manufacturing of PEM electrolyser systems for green hydrogen projects in India.

The agreement was signed by senior BHEL officials and Hystar CEO Fredrik Mowill in the presence of representatives of the Royal Norwegian Embassy and BHEL's senior leadership.

BHEL had earlier partnered with thyssenkrupp nucera India for alkaline electrolyser systems. The latest collaboration with Hystar strengthens BHEL's capability to offer both alkaline and PEM electrolyser solutions for India's emerging green hydrogen market.

The partnership is also expected to enhance BHEL's project execution capabilities in green hydrogen. The company said the agreement marks a significant step towards supporting the National Green Hydrogen Mission and the government's Make in India initiative.

17-year-old student commits suicide after failing exam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

A 17-year-old Class 12 student died by suicide at her residence in the Shahpura area of Bhopal after failing her supplementary examination, police said. The incident took place late Wednesday night.

The student, identified as Nikita Diware, a resident of Paras Majesty City in Shahpura, was a Class 12 mathematics and science student. She had appeared for the supplementary examination after receiving a supplementary in Class 12. The result was declared on Wednesday, after which she took the extreme step.

According to police, a suicide note was recovered from the residence. The note reportedly expressed remorse towards her parents and attributed the decision to her disappointment over the examination result. Police have taken the note for examination as part of the investigation.

Family members told police that Nikita had

earlier struggled emotionally after learning about her supplementary examination result. She was subsequently encouraged by her family to appear for the supplementary examination and continue her studies. Relatives said she had worked hard for the examination but was deeply disappointed after the result.

Shahpura police registered a case of unnatural death and began an investigation. The student's mobile phone has also been seized and will be examined along with the note.

The body was handed over to the family on Thursday afternoon after a post-mortem examination.

Shahpura police station in-charge Santosh Markam said all aspects of the case were being examined. He said the suicide note and mobile phone would be analysed and other relevant circumstances would also be investigated. Further action will be taken based on the findings of the investigation.

450 kg paneer seized in Indore

Indore: After the Madhya Pradesh government on Wednesday imposed an immediate ban on the manufacture, storage, distribution, sale, supply and use of dairy analogues and non-dairy food products resembling genuine dairy products, the Food Safety Administration launched inspections across Indore to protect public health and consumer interests.

Acting on the directions of the Food Safety Commissioner and under the guidance of Collector Shivam Verma, officials inspected several food establishments on August 12 and collected samples of suspected dairy analogue products.

At Umapati Industries in Palda, officials found low-fat paneer being manufactured and packed. The inspection revealed poor drainage, unclean walls, improper storage of raw materials and inadequate documentation related to nutritional information and water quality.

A sample of the paneer was collected for laboratory testing. Around 450 kg of paneer, valued at approximately Rs 1.17 lakh, was seized pending the analysis report.

Four vehicle owners fined Rs 1.03 lakh in Neemuch

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Neemuch

Neemuch Collector Himanshu Chandra has imposed a combined penalty of Rs 1,03,039 on four vehicle owners for illegally transporting minerals in separate cases across the district. The action was taken under the Madhya Pradesh Minerals (Prevention of Illegal Mining, Transportation and Storage) Rules, 2022, based on reports submitted by the District Mining Officer.

During an inspection at Baghana in Neemuch tehsil on August 8, officials found a Mahindra 475 tractor transporting sand illegally. Vehicle owner Shaileendra Kumar was fined Rs 30,625, including Rs 5,625 towards 15 times the royalty and Rs 25,000 as environmental compensation.

In another case at Chenpura village on August 7, a tractor was found transporting khandas stone illegally. Vehicle owner Sampat Bai was fined Rs 13,414, comprising Rs 2,700 towards 15 times the royalty and Rs 10,714 as environmental compensation.

At Suwakheda village in Jawad tehsil, officials found another tractor transporting

illegally mined gravel on August 7. Vehicle owner Deepak Kumar was fined Rs 28,600, including Rs 3,600 towards 15 times the royalty and Rs 25,000 as environmental compensation.

In the fourth case, a tractor found transporting khandas stone illegally at Jawad village on August 4 led to a penalty of Rs 30,400 against vehicle owner Jagdish Kumar. The amount included Rs 5,400 towards 15 times the royalty and Rs 25,000 as environmental compensation.

Collector Chandra directed the concerned vehicle owners to deposit the penalties in the government treasury within the prescribed period. The seized vehicles will be released as per rules after payment. Failure to deposit the amount within the stipulated period will lead to recovery proceedings, with the dues treated as land revenue.

The action reflects the district administration's continued efforts to curb illegal mining and transportation of minerals. Officials have warned that similar violations will invite strict action under the applicable mining rules.

Lal Parade Ground gets traffic and parking plan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

The Traffic Police has issued a detailed traffic and parking plan for the Independence Day celebrations to be held at Lal Parade Ground on August 15. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav will unfurl the national flag and take the salute at the parade during the main state-level ceremony.

A large number of invited guests, citizens and school and college students are expected to attend the event. In view of the anticipated traffic pressure, the Traffic Police has made separate entry, parking and diversion arrangements and advised commuters to follow the designated routes.

Entry and parking

arrangements have been organised according to the colour of invitation passes. Guests with red passes will enter through Gate No. 1 from Jail Road and park their vehicles opposite the Band Training School. Yellow-pass holders will also enter through Gate No. 1, while parking will be available opposite Motilal Nehru Stadium and near the gymnasium.

Green and blue-pass holders will enter through PTS (Armed) Gate No. 6. General citizens will be allowed entry through Gate No. 3, Vijay Dwar, and Gate No. 5, Captain Dwar. Parking for the public will be available at MVM College Ground, MLA Rest House and Jail Headquarters Ground.

School and college students will enter through

Vijay Dwar, Mazar Dwar and Prabandh Dwar. Buses carrying students will be parked at MVM College Ground.

Traffic pressure is expected on the routes from Roshanpura Square via Gandhi Park towards Lal Parade Ground, from DB Mall Tiraha towards Jail Road and from Lily Square via Jahangirabad towards the venue. Traffic diversions will be introduced on these routes wherever necessary.

Alternative routes have been prescribed for buses travelling between TT Nagar-New Market and the railway station and bus stand. Buses from TT Nagar-New Market towards the railway station and bus stand will travel via Axis Bank, Link Road No. 1, Board Office Square, DB Mall, Maida Mill Road, Subhash

Nagar ROB, Prabhat Square, Bogda Bridge and Bharat Talkies. Buses travelling in the opposite direction will follow the same route in reverse.

Two-wheelers, jeeps and cars can use the route from Roshanpura Square via Banganga Square, KN Pradhan Tiraha, the old fish aquarium, Khatlapura Road and PHQ Tiraha.

Entry towards Lal Parade Ground will be completely restricted for public transport and unauthorised vehicles from DB Mall Tiraha towards Jail Headquarters Road, from Lily Square towards Police Headquarters and from Roshanpura towards Gandhi Park Tiraha.

Separate arrangements have also been made for school buses. Buses arriving from the old city will turn

left at State Bank Tiraha, drop students at Gate No. 5, Prabandh Dwar, and park at the old jail premises via Shabban Square. Buses from the new city and Jail Headquarters side will drop students at Gate No. 4, Mazar Gate, and park towards Khatlapura Temple Road via PHQ Tiraha.

Officials and employees participating in the parade will park at PHQ Gate Nos. 2 and 7, Vehicle Hospital, Rustamji Residential Complex and Pratima Malik Hospital premises before proceeding to the venue.

Traffic personnel will be deployed at key junctions to regulate vehicle movement and assist commuters during the programme. Citizens have been advised to leave early and cooperate with traffic personnel to avoid inconvenience.



Madhya Pradesh police contingents during full dress rehearsals ahead of the Independence Day celebrations, at Lal Parade Ground in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo



Youth Congress activists stage a protest against the BJP over the insult of Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge in connection with the purification ritual issue, in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

Ujjain turns waste mountain into green zone

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ujjain

A site in Ujjain that was once covered by a mountain of waste accumulated over 12 years is now witnessing a major transformation, with the Municipal Corporation converting a portion of the reclaimed land into a green zone and garden.

The site at the MR-5 transfer station had accumulated nearly 1 lakh metric tonnes of legacy waste, causing foul odour, smoke and unhygienic conditions that affected the surrounding environment and residents. The Municipal Corporation took up the issue and completed the scientific disposal of the waste through biomining.

Under the directions of Municipal Commissioner Abhilash Mishra, three modern trommel machines,

along with poclain and JCB machines, were deployed to process and segregate the old waste. The material was separated into different categories, allowing useful resources to be recovered through scientific processing.

The process yielded around 20,000 tonnes of refuse-derived fuel (RDF), 30,000 tonnes of construction and demolition waste and nearly 50,000 tonnes of soil. The initiative therefore not only removed years of accumulated waste but also converted it into usable resources and reclaimed the land for productive purposes.

Following the clearance of the legacy waste, a portion of the vacant land has been developed into a garden and green zone. More than 500 plants belonging to different species have been planted,

while fencing has been installed across the area to protect the plantation.

Additional Municipal Commissioner of the Garden Department Yogendra Singh Patel said special attention was being given to the protection and regular maintenance of the plants. With proper care and growth of the plantation, the area is expected to become increasingly green in the coming years.

The transformation has significantly changed the appearance of the site. An area once identified with huge waste heaps is now gradually emerging as a green space. The removal of waste has also helped reduce foul odour and unhygienic conditions, contributing to a cleaner and healthier environment for nearby residents.

Jail inmate escapes, held within four hours

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

An inmate of Bhopal Central Jail escaped from Hamidia Hospital on Thursday morning while wearing handcuffs, after allegedly assaulting a jail guard who was escorting him for treatment. He was arrested within four hours, according to the jail authorities.

The accused, identified as Sohail Khan, son of Wahid Khan, had been sent to jail on Wednesday evening under Section 151 by ACP TT Nagar Ankit Khatrikar. Jail officials said he had a history of criminal cases and had recently displayed aggressive behaviour towards other inmates. His mental health condition had also reportedly raised concerns, following which

he was taken to Hamidia Hospital for treatment on Thursday morning.

According to the jail administration, Khan allegedly assaulted guard Satish Dhakad during treatment and fled from the hospital premises while still wearing handcuffs. CCTV footage showed him among patients in the psychiatric ward before he allegedly removed his handcuffs, picked up his slippers and began running.

The footage reportedly shows Khan closing a door behind him while escaping. The guard and a woman member of the jail staff attempted to chase him, but he managed to get away. He later discarded his slippers while fleeing.

Jail Superintendent

Manvendra Singh Parihar said three teams were formed to trace the accused. During the escape, Khan reportedly got entangled in wires while attempting to cross a wall and suffered an injury to his wrist. The guard also injured his leg while jumping over the wall and was unable to continue the pursuit.

The accused then allegedly made his way on foot towards the Murghi Bazaar area of Jahangirabad, where the search teams traced and arrested him within four hours.

Jail officials said an internal inquiry would also be conducted to examine the circumstances surrounding the escape and assess the security arrangements at the hospital.

Man held for posing as IAS officer

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Narsinghpur

Police have arrested a man from Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, for allegedly posing as an IAS officer and duping a woman doctor of around Rs 3 lakh. The accused, identified as Sanjay Kumar, allegedly contacted the doctor through the matrimonial website Jeevansathi.com.

The woman doctor, a resident of Narsinghpur, lodged a complaint at Kotwali police station on August 10. Kumar allegedly claimed to have completed MBBS and MD from Patna and falsely represented himself as a Madhya Pradesh cadre IAS officer posted as an SDM in Dhar.

According to police, he gained the woman's confidence by claiming close links with senior administrative officials and allegedly took around Rs 3 lakh from her on various pretexts.

During the investigation, police contacted the Dhar district administration and found that no officer with the name and identity provided by Kumar was posted as an SDM or in any other position there.

Technical investigation of his matrimonial profile and social media accounts helped police trace him to Varanasi, where he was arrested. Police also found that Kumar had been portraying himself as an IAS officer to his family and villagers for a long time. He allegedly used AI-based photo editing to place his images in pictures related to senior officials, government offices and official events, which he uploaded on social media.

104 kg paneer, mawa seized

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ujjain

The Food Safety Department has intensified its crackdown on suspected adulteration and substandard food products in Ujjain, seizing 104 kg of paneer and mawa and 876 litres of ghee during inspections at different establishments.

The action was taken on the directions of the Commissioner, Food Safety, Madhya Pradesh, and Ujjain Collector Roushan Kumar Singh as part of an ongoing campaign to monitor the quality of milk and dairy products available in the market.

During an inspection at Shri Krishna Dairy in Anand Nagar, officials seized 71 kg of paneer and collected a sample for laboratory testing. While tracing the supply chain, the team subsequent-

ly inspected Paliwal Dairy at Sanwariya Parisar on Indore Road, where 33 kg of paneer and 80 kg of mawa were found and seized.

Officials suspect that the paneer could be a dairy analogue product. Samples have been sent to the state food laboratory in Bhopal for examination.

In a separate action at Shri Rajendra Traders at Fawwara Chowk, officials seized 876 litres of Pyora Shyor Desi Ghee packed in different quantities. The seized stock, valued at approximately Rs 5.08 lakh, included 15 kg, 900 ml, one-litre and 500 ml packs.

Food Safety Officer Basant Sharma said the action at Paliwal Dairy followed the seizure of 71 kg of paneer a day earlier, which led officials to trace its supply chain to the establishment.

CM announces Pal-Gadariya Welfare Board

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said Punyashlok Lokmata Devi Ahilyabai Holkar was an illustrious ruler of Malwa whose legacy continues to inspire Madhya Pradesh and the nation. During her reign, she set exemplary standards of good governance, justice and public service.

Addressing the Punyasmriti Diwas programme organised by the Akhil Bharatiya Gadariya Mahasabha at Ravindra Bhavan on Thursday to mark the 231st death anniversary of Devi Ahilyabai Holkar, Yadav said her life and work remained a source of inspiration for the state government.

He said a special Cabinet meeting was organised at Rajwada in Indore on the occasion of her 300th birth anniversary to commemorate her con-

tribution to governance and society. Inspired by her commitment to service, devotion, justice and sacrifice, the state government is working towards good governance, public service, women's empowerment and cultural renaissance while promoting development across sectors.

He said the government was working under the guiding principle of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas and Sabka Vishwas" under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Yadav inaugurated the programme by lighting the ceremonial lamp and paid floral tribute to Devi Ahilyabai Holkar. He also released the book Jago Nari Jago, offered prayers and was presented with a statue and portrait of Devi Ahilyabai Holkar.

Responding to a demand raised by representatives of the

Akhil Bharatiya Gadariya community, Yadav announced the formation of a Pal-Gadariya Welfare Board. He said the community's tradition of serving cattle reflected the spirit of Lord Krishna as Gopal and assured that the government would remain committed to its welfare.

Yadav said increasing milk production and promoting animal husbandry were among the government's priorities to strengthen the state's economy and enhance farmers' incomes.

National president of the Akhil Bharatiya Gadariya Mahasabha Moti Shripal said Devi Ahilyabai Holkar had made public service the foremost objective of governance. He highlighted her contribution to the renovation and construction of temples, monasteries, dharamshalas, wells and ghats across the country.

Quick Darshan tickets go online

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ujjain

The Shri Mahakaleshwar Temple Management Committee has introduced an online 'Quick Darshan' ticketing facility for devotees visiting the Nagchandreshwar Temple on the occasion of Nag Panchami.

The Nagchandreshwar Temple is opened for devotees only once a year on Nag Panchami, drawing lakhs of pilgrims from across India and abroad. To facilitate smoother and more convenient darshan arrangements, devotees can now book Quick Darshan tickets online through the official temple website.

Tickets can be booked at www.shrimahakaleshwar.mp.gov.in, and devotees must carry a printout of their ticket to gain entry.

The designated route for Quick Darshan will be Harsiddhi Pal – Bada Ganesh Gali – Gate No. 5. Mobile phones will not be permitted inside the temple premises.

The temple committee has urged devotees to strictly follow their allotted time slots and designated entry gate. It has also advised devotees to book tickets only through the official website and avoid unauthorised persons or agents offering darshan tickets.

Pithampur echoes with patriotic slogans

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Pithampur

A Tiranga Yatra was organised by the Pithampur Municipal Council under the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign, drawing enthusiastic participation from school students, self-help group women, government officials and employees, elected representatives and a large number of citizens.

The yatra began at the Housing Community Hall and concluded at Jayanagar Sangam Garden. Participants raised patriotic slogans including "Bharat Mata Ki Jai" and "Vande Mataram" throughout the procession.

As part of the national celebration, the Municipal Council has also been organising a series of activities, including the national anthem, painting competitions, quizzes and essay competitions, aimed at encouraging patriotic spirit and civic awareness among citizens and students.

Tehsildar Shivani Shrivastava said that while the Tiranga Yatra may be a one-day event, every Indian should remain committed to respecting the national flag every day. She also stressed the need to make students aware of national duties and civic responsibilities beyond classroom learning.

President representative Suresh Patel said the continued organisation of such programmes had strengthened the spirit of patriotism among citizens.

Municipal Council president Sevanti Suresh Patel, vice-president Pappu Asoliya, councillor Ashok Patel, councillor representatives Lalu Sharma and Mahesh Patharia, along with other public representatives and municipal staff, participated in the event.

In his concluding remarks, in-charge Chief Municipal Officer Vijay Ahir expressed gratitude to all participants and those involved in organising the programme.

11 Panchayats join M3M plantation drive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Gurugram

M3M Foundation's flagship environmental programme Sankalp will launch a large-scale plantation drive across Gurugram and Tauru Block on Friday under the "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" campaign, with an aim to plant more than 1 lakh trees this monsoon.

The initiative will engage 11 Panchayats and local communities across identified areas, including locations around the Aravalli landscape. The plantation drive will begin in Ghata, Kadarapur, Ullawas, Ramgarh, Bahrampur and Baiyyawas, with local leaders supporting community mobilisation and participation.

The Foundation said the initiative goes beyond plantation and will focus on the long-term care, protection and nurturing of trees.

Panchayats and residents will be encouraged to take collective responsibility for ensuring the survival of the saplings.

The campaign builds on Sankalp's earlier initiative, "Ek Ped Ghar Ke Bachche Ya Bachche Ke Naam", launched across villages of Tauru Block in Nuh. Inspired by the "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" campaign, the initiative encourages families to dedicate a tree to every son or daughter, creating an emotional connection with the trees and encouraging their long-term care.

Dr Payal Kanodia, Chairperson and Trustee, M3M Foundation, said the monsoon provides an opportunity to plant thousands of saplings, but the real responsibility begins after plantation. She emphasised that trees need sustained community care to survive and contribute to expanding green cover.

Rs 70,000 fine for improper waste disposal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

The Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC) has intensified its drive to strengthen cleanliness and solid waste management in the city, taking action against establishments found violating prescribed waste disposal norms.

As part of the campaign, BMC officials on Thursday imposed a fine of Rs 50,000 on BHRC Hospital in Sneha Nagar for mixing biomedical waste with kitchen waste and failing to segregate wet, dry and other categories of waste. A fine of Rs 20,000 was also imposed on a dental clinic in Ratnagiri for non-compliance with solid waste management guidelines.

The action was taken under the directions of Municipal Commissioner Sanskriti Jain and in accordance with the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026. The civic body said the campaign aims to ensure proper segregation, collection and disposal of waste and prevent practices that could adversely affect public health and the environment.

During an inspection of the Garbage Transfer Station and Adampur landfill site, BMC officials found a significant quantity of biomedical waste mixed with wet waste. On tracing its source, officials found that the mixed waste had been supplied by BHRC Hospital.

The civic team subsequently inspected the hospital and

advised its management to ensure that biomedical waste is handled over only to authorised incinerators and disposed of through the prescribed system. The Rs 50,000 spot fine was imposed for violating waste management norms.

Officials also inspected the dental clinic in Ratnagiri and found that waste management practices were not in accordance with the prescribed standards. The clinic was consequently fined Rs 20,000.

The BMC said improper segregation and disposal of biomedical waste can create serious risks for sanitation workers, residents and the environment. It has therefore directed healthcare establishments to strictly

follow the prescribed procedures for handling and disposing of biomedical waste.

The civic body said inspections and enforcement action against hospitals and other establishments violating the National Green Tribunal directions and Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026, will continue. Establishments have been urged to comply with waste segregation and disposal requirements to maintain a cleaner and healthier Bhopal.

The civic body has warned hospitals, clinics and other establishments to ensure strict compliance with waste segregation and disposal norms. Officials said repeated violations will invite further penalties and enforcement action under the applicable rules.

Shops, hotels can operate 24x7

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Shops, hotels, restaurants, malls and other commercial establishments in Madhya Pradesh can now operate round the clock, seven days a week, after Governor Mangubhai Patel approved the Madhya Pradesh Workplace Empowerment Code, 2026.

The new provision does not allow employees to work continuously. Workers will have to be assigned shifts, with duties changed after the prescribed working period. Employees can work a maximum of 48 hours a week. Overtime will require their consent and must be paid as per rules.

Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd.
Corporate Office: Unit No. 802, Natraj Rustonjee, Western Express Highway and M.V. Road, Andheri (East), Mumbai - 400069
Biaora Branch : Guptaaji Buildings, 1st Floor, Ward No. 07, OLD A B Road, Near Axis Bank, Vishwanth Colony, Bakhatpura Biaora, Dist. Raigarh, Madhya Pradesh-465674

POSSESSION NOTICE Appendix IV (for immovable property)
Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Aadhar Housing Finance Limited (AHFL) under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002. Demand Notice(s) issued by the Authorised Officer of the company to the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) mentioned herein below to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within **60 days** from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under Sub-Section (4) of the Section 13 of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement rules, 2002. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets. The borrower in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of AHFL for an amount as mentioned herein under with interest thereon.

S. No.	Name of the Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower(s) (Name of the Branch)	Description of Secured Asset (Immovable Property)	Demand Notice Date & Amount	Date of Possession
1	(Loan Code No. 13610000321 / Biaora Branch) Salman Khan (Borrower) Muskan Khan (Co-Borrower)	All that piece and parcel of the property bearing, Survey No 63/2, P.H. No. 07, Ground Floor, Raigarh Road, Tehsil Biaora, Plot No. 20, Mohinipura (Part) Raigarh, Madhya Pradesh 465674. Boundaries: East: Plot of Pradum Dangri, West: 20 Ft Wide Road, North: Plot of Rashid Khan, South: Remaining Land of Seller	13-05-2026 & ₹ 6,58,816/-	11-08-2026

Place : Madhya Pradesh
Date : 14.08.2026

Authorised Officer
Aadhar Housing Finance Limited

IN FOCUS



People take part in a Tiranga Yatra rally under the Har Ghar Tiranga campaign ahead of Independence Day celebrations at Karad in Satara district, Maharashtra on Thursday

PTI

Fresh clashes at Assam, Arunachal border

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

A fresh clash erupted between protesters from Assam and Arunachal Pradesh in Dhemaji district on Thursday days after 12 people were injured on August 10 after alleged firing by miscreants along the inter-State border over a land encroachment dispute. Arunachal police fired in the air to control the mob even on Thursday even as the indefinite economic blockade called by the local groups linked to Assam's Mising community on Wednesday continues to be in force.

The Takam Mising Porin Kebang (TMPK), the top student organisation of Assam's Mising community, and other local groups, on Wednesday launched an indefinite economic blockade against Arunachal Pradesh in protest against the alleged firing in which 12 indigenous people from Assam were injured. "When the blockade was going on, some people from Arunachal Pradesh indulged in



Monsoon Session ends in blame game

"So, nothing has changed in 11 years. There were laws made and now reels are being made but nothing has changed," Ramesh said. Addressing a press conference after both Houses of Parliament adjourned sine die, Rijiju said the Government was not happy as elaborate discussions on key Bills could not take place. Productivity in Lok Sabha was merely 19 per cent, and in Rajya Sabha 39 per cent, he said. While Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla did not read out the usual valedictory address in which he highlights the performance and productivity of the House, Rajya Sabha Chairman CP Radhakrishnan expressed "deep concern" over disruptions that "derailed" the business of the Upper House during the session. Rijiju said 12 Bills were passed during the Monsoon Session, but sadly only one saw discussions in both Houses, referring to the Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, which was passed by both Houses with voice votes. The Monsoon Session, which started on July 20, saw prolonged disruptions in both Houses. The Opposition protests initially started over the NEET paper leak and the alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ram temple in Ayodhya. It later pressed for a discussion on the police action against students protesting over the NEET paper leak and demanded the presence and statements of PM Modi and home minister Shah in the House. To break the logjam, the Government on Monday offered a debate on the paper leak issue and a reply by Shah, but the Congress rejected it. A similar attempt was made on Wednesday too, but that failed as the principal opposition party turned down the proposal again, with Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi asserting that the youth want to know who ordered the use of pellet guns on the protesting students. Meanwhile, the Congress, the Trinamool Congress, and the Samajwadi Party boycotted the customary tea party hosted by Birla after the House was adjourned sine die. Only DMK leader Kanimozhi attended the traditional get-together. In Rajya Sabha, however, opposition leaders, including Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge

Seva Teerth takes centre stage in I-Day invites

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The invitation cards for the 80th Independence Day celebrations at the Red Fort prominently depict the newly built Seva Teerth complex, which houses the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the National Security Council Secretariat and the Cabinet Secretariat. A 'Dharm Chakra', symbolising the "eternal movement of righteous duty and continuous selfless action", has also been portrayed on the invitation cards. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lead the celebrations from the Red Fort complex in Delhi on August 15. "The grand event will also commemorate 150 years of the enduring legacy of the national song 'Vande Mataram' and celebrate the energy, aspirations and pivotal contribution of 'Yuva Shakti' in driving India's journey towards Viksit Bharat by 2047," the Defence Ministry said on Thursday. The multi-page e-invitation cards issued by the Defence Ministry carry a silhouetted image of the Seva Teerth complex at its centre, an icon of the 'Dharm Chakra' on the top right corner, and name of the enclosure on the top left corner, the list of fundamental duties (in English and Hindi), and the full six stanzas of 'Vande Mataram' (in English and Hindi).



Another page carries a set of three QR codes – one which can be scanned for watching live streaming of the 80th Independence Day celebrations, another one which can be scanned to listen to 'Vande Mataram' and while a third one on scanning will provide the route map, seating arrangement and traffic orientation to reach the venue. The defence ministry also said, in keeping with its efforts to "end VIP culture" and underscore the importance of water conservation, seating enclosures along the Kartavya Path here, during the 2026 Republic Day celebrations, were named after rivers. For the 80th Independence Day celebrations, the names of the seating enclosures have been named

Security tightened at Vaishno Devi shrine ahead of I-Day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Jammu

Security has been strengthened at the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine and across the Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir ahead of Independence Day, with police carrying out anti-sabotage checks, frisking, hotel verification and area domination operations, the SSP said. Talking to reporters on the sidelines of a 'Tiranga Rally', Tibrewal said that Independence Day is a sensitive national festival and all necessary security measures were being taken to ensure peaceful celebrations. "Independence Day is always a sensitive national festival for us. Keeping that in mind, we are taking all necessary safety measures, including anti-sabotage checks, frisking, hotel checks, area domination in adjoining hills and activating VDGs," he said. He said people were expected to come out of their homes and celebrate the national festival, adding that special attention was being paid to the security of the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine. "Vaishno Devi is a shrine where people from all



corners of the country come to visit. Keeping that in mind, our SOG teams are dominating all areas around Vaishno Devi," Tibrewal said. A massive 'Tiranga Rally' was also taken out from the Bhawan of Mata Vaishno Devi as part of the nationwide 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign. "As part of this initiative, yesterday we organised a rafting rally in the Chenab with the district administration. Today, we also held a bike rally across Reasi city to ensure that the message of 'Har Ghar Tiranga' and our national festival, Independence Day, reaches every household," he added. Deputy Commissioner Kumar Abhishek said the administration was fully prepared for the Independence Day celebrations.

AI group plans to induct over 100 planes in 2 years: CEO

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Air India is facing challenges due to external volatility but remains focused on the profitability path and plans to induct over 100 new planes over the next two years, its CEO Campbell Wilson said on Thursday. The loss-making airline has been facing multiple headwinds, and a leadership transition is happening, with former Ethiopian Airlines Group chief Tewolde Gebremariam set to take over as the CEO and MD from Wilson. During a town hall with staff, Wilson, who is likely to leave the airline next month, said the annual salary increments will come into effect from October 1. The recently revised pay structure for pilots will also be effective on the same date, according to sources. Earlier this year, the increment cycle was deferred by one quarter amid the West Asia turmoil significantly impacting flight operations and costs. Talking about the future trajectory, Wilson said the



CEO Campbell Wilson

group expects to induct over 100 new planes in the next two years and that 16 Boeing 787-8 aircraft are to be retrofitted in 2027, according to the sources. He told the employees that the airline continues to make steady progress on its transformation journey despite a challenging operating environment marked by geopolitical uncertainty, airspace disruptions, fuel price volatility and macro-economic pressures. Currently, Air India Group, comprising Air India and Air India Express, has nearly 300 planes. Air India has more than

185 aircraft, including the wide-body fleet of 35 Boeing 787s, 19 Boeing 777-300 ERs and 6 A350-900s. Out of these wide-bodies, 26 Boeing 787-8s are legacy ones, and 3 are brand new and were inducted this year. In 2026, the airline is to induct 2 new Airbus A350-1000 aircraft. Over the past six months, Wilson said airlines worldwide have faced significant headwinds, including a surge in jet fuel prices during the March-May period, and the Pakistan airspace closure increased flight times for Indian airlines by up to three hours on various Europe and North America routes.

3 feared trapped, 16 rescued as water, debris enter tunnel in Uttarakhand's Chamoli

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Panchalingala (Andhra Pradesh)

At least three workers were feared trapped and 16 rescued on Thursday after water and debris entered a tunnel under construction at a hydroelectric project site in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand, officials said. Some of those rescued sustained minor injuries in the incident that occurred at the Tehri Hydro Development Corporation (THDC) Limited's project site in the Pipalkoti area. The construction work is being carried out by the Hindustan Construction Company (HCC), the officials said. Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said the government's top priority is to safely rescue everyone trapped. According to information released by the state government, 18 to 19 workers were trapped inside the tunnel around 7 pm. So far, 16 of them have been safely rescued and the operation to bring out the remaining workers is underway. Uttarakhand Chief Secretary



People gather outside tunnel of the Vishnugad-Pipalkoti Hydroelectric Project in Chamoli district, Uttarakhand on Thursday

PTI

Anand Vardhan told PTI that reports were received that several workers were trapped after water and debris entered the tunnel of the Pipalkoti hydroelectric project. Police, State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and other agencies rushed to the spot. Initially, eight workers were rescued and then another eight were brought out, he said. According to the officials, the condition of those rescued is stable. Some of them sustained minor injuries. A National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) team from Rudraprayag is on the way to Pipalkoti to join the rescue operation. Indo-Tibetan Border Police and Army teams have also been deployed. District Magistrate (DM) Gaurav Kumar has reached the spot and is overseeing the entire operation, the officials said. In a post on X, Chief Minister Dhami expressed concern over the incident and directed all agencies to conduct relief and rescue operations on a war footing. The government's top priority is to safely rescue every person trapped inside the tunnel, he said, adding that he is receiving real-time updates on the situation.

FROM PAGE - 1

and former party chief Sonia Gandhi, attended the tea party hosted by the chairman. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, and several other senior leaders and ministers were present at the tea party in the Speaker's chamber.

UN attributes Red Fort blast to AQIS

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) later filed a 7,500-page chargesheet against 10 people, linking them to Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind (AGuH), described as an offshoot of AQIS. The agency said several of the accused were radicalised medical professionals who rebuilt the group and planned the attack under the name Operation Heavenly Hind, which aimed to impose Sharia rule in India. An earlier monitoring team report had cited information from one member State that linked the Red Fort incident, among other attacks, to the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed. The current report's official attribution to AQIS now puts the international focus on Al-Qaeda's south Asian affiliate. AQIS was formed in 2014 to expand Al-Qaeda's reach in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. It was once seen as a smaller group, but the latest UN report says it has become a more organised regional threat. Besides the Delhi attack, the report says AQIS was the main force behind Ittihad-ul-Mujahideen Pakistan (IMP), which carried out several attacks in Pakistan, including a suicide car bombing near a security post in Bannu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on 9 May that killed 21 people. The IMP leader was identified as Waqas, also known as Kalim Ullah. The UN team noted "some concern about AQIS trying to exploit Bangladesh to establish cells there." The monitoring team's broader findings show that terrorist activity is still coming from Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda's presence and strength in the country have not changed much. The group continues to provide ideological guidance, training, and support to Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). In April, Al-Qaeda's official media arm released a rare public statement supporting both the Taliban and TTP operations against Pakistan. One Member State also reported that Baloch Liberation Army members trained with TTP fighters under Al-Qaeda instructors in Afghanistan. Security analysts in New Delhi see the UN's find-

ings as confirmation of India's long-standing warnings about cross-border terrorism and safe havens in Afghanistan. As Indian courts continue to investigate the Red Fort attack, the UN's findings are likely to influence diplomatic talks at the Security Council and among countries in South Asia.

Ex-Pakistan minister praises Hafiz Saeed

He also claimed that Saeed's phone number appeared on his mobile during a US visit, which led to his expulsion, adding, "We are with Pakistan, with Hafiz Saeed." He also said, "No birds will chirp in India, nor will bells ring in a temple." Variations in reports include vows to "crush and obliterate" the country. "When a former minister openly calls himself a slave to a mass murderer and stands with his commanders, it shows where the state's priorities really lie. The video reveals a political culture that supports terror while acting like a victim", intelligence sources said. Saeed was declared a global terrorist by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in December 2010. He is the founder of LeT and Jamaat-ud-Dawa, even though Pakistan sometimes claims to act against him. The open presence of Sandhu and Yaqoob shows that these groups still have political support. Rasheed's former role as Interior Minister, in charge of internal security, makes this situation even more serious. When a former top official openly supports the leader of cross-border terrorism, it shows how weak Islamabad's denials are to organisations like the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the United Nations (UN), and Western Governments.

Badal injured in Nanded attack

Maharashtra Police are investigating the incident since it happened in their state. Kler also said authorities will look into whether a larger conspiracy was involved. The SAD strongly condemned the attack. Kler said that "panthic (community) leaders" have been targeted many times and claimed that

"some *panth virodhi* (anti-community) forces are hatching such conspiracies." Senior SAD leader Virsa Singh Valtoha also denounced the attack and called for a full investigation to find out who was behind it. This is the second attack on Badal in recent months. In December 2024, Badal was attacked by former militant, Narain Singh Chaura, who fired at him from close range outside the Golden Temple in Amritsar. At that time, Badal was doing *sewa* as a *sewadar* outside the shrine during a period of public penance related to the SAD Government's time in office from 2007 to 2017. Chaura approached Badal, who was in a wheelchair because of a fractured leg, pulled out a handgun, and fired. The bullet missed Badal and hit the wall at the shrine entrance. A plainclothes policeman stopped the attacker at the site. Badal escaped unhurt on that occasion.

Badal has remained a prominent figure in Punjab politics as the head of the Shiromani Akali Dal, a party with deep roots in Sikh religious and political affairs. The December 2024 incident had drawn widespread attention because it occurred at the holiest Sikh shrine during a period of public atonement. Thursday's attack in Nanded, though less severe in outcome, has again brought focus on security arrangements for political and religious leaders associated with the community. Maharashtra Police have not provided more information about the detained Nihang's identity or possible motives.

Tricolour sails across Bhopal Boat Club...

Sports and Youth Welfare Minister Vishwas Sarang said the entire country was being imbued with the spirit of the Tricolour under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Paying tribute to the martyrs of the freedom struggle, he said the nation's brave soldiers had sacrificed their lives to safeguard India's freedom. "Our goal is to ensure that the Tricolour flies proudly everywhere - on land, in water and in the sky," Sarang said. He added that the grand rally was organised with the objective of taking India's glory to greater heights and inspiring every citizen with a strong sense of patriotism. The natural setting of Bhopal's Upper Lake provided a striking backdrop to the rally. Several boats

carrying the Tricolour participated in the event, while a large number of citizens joined the celebration. A special formation of boats and flags created a giant Tricolour across the surface of the lake, turning the water body into a symbol of national pride and patriotic spirit. Young athletes, members of social organisations and a large number of school students also participated in the boat rally. The event brought together sports, youth participation and the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign, creating a vibrant display of national unity and pride. Minister Krishna Gaur, Bhopal Mayor Malti Rai, MLA Bhagwandas Sabnani and Ravindra Yati were among those present at the event.

Air India orders drug tests for all pilots

The airline said the decision followed concerns raised by employees and was aimed at protecting the confidence passengers place in the carrier. The move comes after an incident involving an Airbus A320neo operating from Phuket to Delhi. The aircraft, which had 137 passengers and eight crew members on board, suffered a sudden loss of altitude of around 300 feet during the flight before continuing to Delhi and landing safely. The incident left 13 passengers and four crew members injured. Under DGCA regulations, crew members operating scheduled flights from India must undergo a pre-flight breathalyser examination at the first departure airport during their flight-duty period. A crew member who operates without completing the mandatory test can be removed from the roster at the first landing point, with the incident reported to the aviation regulator. The Aircraft Rules, 1937, separately prohibit operating crew from consuming alcohol, sedatives, narcotic drugs or stimulants within 12 hours before commencing a flight or while a flight is in progress. Crew members are also prohibited from reporting for duty while intoxicated or with detectable alcohol in their blood. DGCA procedures require positive or missed alcohol tests to be reported to the regulator within 24 hours. While alcohol can generally be detected through breath or blood testing, drug screening involves the collection of biological samples and laboratory analysis to confirm the presence of prohibited substances.

Vaishnaw walks Union Ministers through the Railways’ war room

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Thursday explained the functioning of the Railways War Room to Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs Kiren Rijju and Union Minister for Labour & Employment and Youth Affairs & Sports Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya.

During the visit, Vaishnaw showed how the War Room uses live railway station feeds, AI-based systems and operational data to monitor railway activities and support timely action.

The War Room provides live feeds of railway stations, including platforms, foot-over bridges and areas outside the station. Live feeds



from stations such as New Delhi and Hazrat Nizamuddin can be monitored from a central location.

Officials can also zoom into individual camera feeds

to examine a particular location in greater detail. The system can respond to prompts and provide information about what happened at a particular location,

helping officials understand incidents more quickly.

During rush periods, festivals and high-footfall occasions, the War Room can be used to monitor activity across stations and keep track of changing passenger movement. The system also tracks train movement and delays, helping officials identify which trains are delayed and understand the reason for the delay.

This information can help railway teams assess the situation and determine what action is required to prevent further delays. The Union Ministers got a firsthand look at how the Railways War Room uses live station feeds, AI-based analysis and train movement data to monitor railway operations, official sources said.

Nurse found dead in washroom of state-run hospital in Kolkata

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kolkata

A nurse was found dead in a washroom of the state-run NRS Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata, hours after she joined duty, the police said on Thursday.

The police have started an investigation into her death, while the health department also formed a separate team to probe into the matter.

Health Minister Dr Sharadwat Mukherjee visited the hospital on Thursday morning and spoke to those



on duty with her the previous night. The 30-year-old nurse was on night duty at the hospital's high-dependency unit (HCU) on Wednesday.

According to the preliminary investigation, she reported for duty around 8 pm and

went to the staff washroom at the antenatal ward in the Gynaecology Department Building around 10.30 pm, police said.

"When she did not return for some time, her colleagues went to check on her and found the washroom door locked. After repeated knocks drew no response, two of them broke open the door and found her lying unconscious on the floor," a police officer said.

A doctor was called to examine the nurse, and she was subsequently declared dead, he said. Personnel from

Entally police station, along with officers of the Detective Department's Homicide team, reached the hospital after being informed about the incident, the officer said.

The preliminary investigation found no visible injury marks on the body, and no suicide note was recovered, he said.

Several medicine vials were reportedly found near her body, prompting investigators to examine whether she had taken the vials with her to the washroom while on duty.

Restoring J&K Statehood first step towards rebuilding democratic institutions: Farooq

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Srinagar

National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah on Thursday said the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir is an indispensable first step towards rebuilding democratic institutions and restoring the constitutional and democratic rights of the people.

Abdullah made these remarks while addressing a

gathering here.

The three-time chief minister described the restoration of statehood as one of the "most urgent necessities" before J-K.

"Restoration of statehood is an indispensable first step towards rebuilding democratic institutions and restoring the constitutional and democratic rights of the people," he said.

He also expressed concern over continuing wars, violence,



oppression, human rights violations and excessive use of force in Palestine, Lebanon, Iran and other parts

of the world.

"The continued killing and targeting of innocent children, women and elderly people is deeply tragic and a grave concern for humanity," he said.

The NC president expressed alarm over the destruction of hospitals, schools, universities, power stations and other essential infrastructure, saying that human values, democratic principles and international

Bihar Minister meets Shah, discusses cooperative sector

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Bihar's Cooperation Minister Ram Kripal Yadav on Wednesday met Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah at Parliament House in New Delhi and held detailed discussions on the progress, achievements and key issues concerning the cooperative sector in Bihar.

During the meeting, Yadav apprised Shah of the steps being taken to

The Bihar minister also informed the Union minister about ongoing efforts towards computerisation of cooperative societies in the state, development of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) as multipurpose service centres, expansion of banking services under the 'Sahakarita mein Sahakar' initiative, training of PACS and cooperative officials, and linking cooperative products with national and international markets.



strengthen the cooperative movement in the state and to deliver greater benefits to farmers.

The discussions covered major initiatives, including the establishment of a cooperative sugar mill at Sakri in Madhubani district, the Bihar State Cooperative Policy-2026, implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, promotion of vegetable processing and marketing, the world's largest grain storage scheme, and membership of interstate cooperative societies.

Yadav raised several important demands aimed at accelerating the cooperative sector in Bihar. These included faster computerisation of PACS, development of multipurpose service centres, expediting Minimum Support Price (MSP) payments to farmers, and ensuring timely release of funds to the State Food Corporation (SFC).

Amit Shah appreciated the efforts being made to strengthen the cooperative sector in Bihar and assured necessary support and guidance.

Nation Focus



Youth should play active role in politics: CM Mohan Yadav

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav inaugurated the 'Youth Parliament 2026' at the Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly on Thursday and called upon the youth to actively participate in politics.

Addressing more than 50 youngsters from 12 states, he said, "Youth should study and become doctors and engineers, and also enter politics to strengthen democracy. The youth of the country must actively participate in politics. Only the youth will strengthen democracy."

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, after passing the ICS exam, gave a befitting reply to the British by rejecting the job, and jumped into the freedom movement "to free Mother India from the chains of slavery," the chief minister said.

(PTI)



Urgent action needed to retain Chakan firms: Sharad Pawar

NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar on Thursday expressed concern over 20 companies in the Chakan industrial belt planning to shift their operations due to severe traffic congestion and inadequate infrastructure, and urged the Maharashtra Government to take urgent steps to retain industries and protect jobs.

In a post on X, Pawar said the decision by 20 companies employing more than 2,000 workers to relocate was a "serious matter". He said problems related to traffic, pollution, water supply, electricity and roads were forcing industries to consider moving out of Chakan MIDC. "Industries should not be forced to relocate, employment opportunities should be protected and the industrial strength of the state should be maintained," Pawar said.

(PTI)

RG Kar: Ex-TMC MLA arrested after CM intervention

SAUGAR SENGUPTA
■ Kolkata

The police on Thursday arrested former Trinamool Congress MLA and powerful North 24 Parganas leader Nirmal Ghosh for his alleged involvement in the "hurried cremation" of the victim of RG Kar Medical College rape and murder case.

The arrest was made days after Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari announced during a memorial programme of the victim that not one person involved in the case would be spared. "Within the limited jurisdiction I have in this case, I am committed to that cause. We have not forgotten Abhaya, not forgotten her at all," the Chief Minister had said.

Ghosh was picked up from Sambalpur in Odisha and was being brought to Kolkata, sources said adding his arrest was based upon a fresh complaint made by the father of the victim on Monday. The father of the victim named two other persons. They include TMC's former Panihati Municipality chairman,



Somnath Dey, and the family's neighbour, Sanjib Mukherjee. The Thursday's development comes amid reports of an on-duty nurse found dead under mysterious circumstances inside the washroom of NRS Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata.

Then a sitting MLA Ghosh in connivance with some other influential persons of Panihati in North 24 Parganas had allegedly hijacked the body of the victim soon after the postmortem ignoring the demand by her family members and protesters for

a second postmortem at an "neutral venue." The post-mortem was conducted post sundown and inside the same hospital where she was murdered in utter defiance of the established Supreme Court guidelines.

Symbolically known as "Abhaya" in Bengal the victim was a lady doctor pursuing her postgraduate course at RG Kar Medical College. She was raped and murdered in the night intervening August 9 and 10 of 2024 sending ripples throughout the country, making international head-

lines.

While one Sanjay Rai a civic volunteer was awarded life sentence as the sole accused in the case some other persons including Sandip Ghosh the then Principal of the College and a police inspector and two doctors were subsequently arrested and facing trial for associated offences.

The Chief Minister had already suspended top police officials including then Kolkata Commissioner of Police Vineet Goyal and two other IPS officers for dereliction of duty and offering cash to the victim's kin.

Nirmal Ghosh's son Tirthankar was arrested on July 13 for his involvement in post 2024 elections violence. The senior Ghosh too was named in a number of other cases including post poll violence and a lottery fraud case.

Reacting to the Thursday's development BJP MLA Sourav Sikdar said that "the arrest of such powerful persons itself proves that the police had been freed from the shackles unlike in the previous (Mamata Banerjee) regime when they had to hid

beneath the table. With the BJP and honourable Suwendu Adhikari in power the police have started doing what they should do." Another MLA Sajal Ghosh said, "BJP Government will do whatever it can to bring the guilty to justice."

The Thursday's development comes amid reports of yet another mysterious death inside another medical college in Kolkata. Rupali Burman an on-duty nurse was on Wednesday night found dead inside a washroom of the NRS Medical College and Hospital.

The 30-year-old Rupali Burman was found dead inside the washroom of the Gynaecology Department's High Dependency Unit (HCU). Joint CP Crime Kunal Agarwal said that the matter was noticed around 10.30 at night," adding she was found inside the bathroom which was closed from inside and the doors had to be broken open. "No suicide has been established so far. The forensic team will conduct investigation and CCTV footage is also being investigated," he said adding three injection vials

Netaji insult row: West Bengal strips BJP MP of State honour

SAUGAR SENGUPTA
■ Kolkata

Even as the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose humiliation row threatened to snowball into a major controversy the Bengal Government on Thursday moved swiftly stripping the prestigious Banga Bibhushan Award from Rajya Sabha MP Anant Maharaj for his "derogatory remarks" against the iconic freedom fighter.

This even as one person from Islampur in North Bengal was on Thursday arrested following stern warning by Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari asking people to withdraw derogatory posts from the Net. The Award was withdrawn following a notification from the State Information and Culture Department cancelling the honour.

The Government notification read: "The Government of West Bengal hereby withdraws and annuls the Banga Bibhushan conferred upon Shri Nagendra Ray alias Ananta Maharaj on 21st February, 2026 with immediate effect. Consequently, Shri Nagendra



Rajya Sabha MP Anant Maharaj

Ray alias Ananta Maharaj shall cease to be entitled to represent himself as a recipient of the Banga Bibhushan and shall not hereafter use, claim or derive any recognition, privilege or benefit specifically arising from such conferment."

The state Government's order, would not however, refer to any specific comment or incident.

Earlier the Chief Minister had said that "the Government will not tolerate any insult to Netaji who is a national icon...all such posts should immediately be deleted from the social media and those who have done so must apologise though such apology do not guarantee any relief from legal action."

He said that "any person howsoever high one is will have to bear the consequence of insulting Netaji ... the Government will take strict action against them." He however would not take any name in particular.

Maharaj a former leader of Greater Cooch Behar People's Association and presently a BJP Rajya Sabha MP however continued to remain defiant saying his statements were sufficiently buttressed by facts.

The leader who had earlier referred to Netaji as a war criminal who had 'stolen British army and led them against the British Government justifying a counter attack' from the colonial rulers said, "I don't speak without documents it is not me who is talking it is the records that are speaking," he said.

Bengal BJP president Samik Bhattacharya publicly "discredited" such elements who would use derogatory words against Netaji "because he resides in the hearts of the Bengalis and people of India." He said, "anyone political or apolitical who dares insult him should be strongly dealt with."

India leading sustainable future for elephants: Kirti Vardhan Singh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

India is pioneering a sustainable future for elephants by combining cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), remote sensing, and geospatial mapping with traditional knowledge to protect their habitats, Minister of State for Environment Kirti Vardhan Singh said on Thursday.

He also underlined the need for cross-sectoral engagement, community participation and scientific approaches to reduce human-elephant conflict



while ensuring the well-being of local communities.

Singh made these comments during an event to mark World Elephant Day 2026 -- celebrated on August

12 every year -- in Visakhapatnam.

"India's commitment to elephant conservation is not merely a policy choice, but a reflection of our civilisation-

al values and ecological responsibility," he added.

The minister highlighted that with 33 elephant reserves, 150 scientifically identified elephant corridors and nearly 60 per cent of the world's wild Asian elephant population, India continues to play a leading role in elephant conservation.

"Human-elephant conflict is a complex issue and it requires a coordinated solution by including various stakeholders and utilising scientific data after its ground-level validation," Singh said.

Law & order deteriorated in Andhra Pradesh: Jagan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Panchalingala (Andhra Pradesh)

YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday alleged that law and order had deteriorated in the state and accused the TDP-led coalition Government of pursuing vindictive politics and targeting Backward Classes (BCs).

Speaking to reporters after meeting YSRCP MLA Virupakshi at the local jail here in Kurnool district, the former chief minister alleged that the Government was filing false cases against victims and Opposition leaders to silence them and was particularly targeting BCs, whom he described as the party's support base.

"Law and order has deteriorated in



the State, while the TDP-led coalition Government is pursuing vindictive politics and targeting Backward Classes," Reddy charged. He alleged that the motive was to trouble political adversaries by foisting false cases and warned that those responsible would have to repent in the coming days.

There was no immediate reaction



from the ruling TDP. The YSRCP chief further alleged that false cases had been registered against Virupakshi, with the sitting MLA, his relatives and followers being booked in fabricated cases involving 38 people.

Police entered the MLA's house at night, damaged CCTV cameras and arrested him while imposing serious charges, he claimed.

He further alleged that a TDP worker tore his wife's clothes and blamed the incident on the MLA to enable police to invoke provisions of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

He claimed police had refused to register a case despite being shown evidence of an attack on a YSRCP cadre's house.

■ States Focus ■



GUJARAT GETS APPROVAL FOR ₹542 CR DESERT-THEMED NIGHT SAFARI

Gujarat has received formal approval from the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) for a 103-hectare desert-themed zoological park and drive-through night safari at Deesa in Banaskantha district. The project, estimated to cost ₹542.14 crore, is expected to give a major boost to tourism and employment opportunities in North Gujarat. According to state officials, the project has been planned in accordance with CZA guidelines and will feature around 2,700 animals and birds representing 83 species. The facility is being developed as a modern centre for wildlife conservation, rescue and rehabilitation, conservation breeding, environmental education and scientific interpretation. (PNS)



RAJASTHAN CM DISTRIBUTES HOUSING LETTERS TO 473 FAMILIES

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma on Thursday handed over keys for houses to 473 families belonging to denotified, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities in Jaipur, and said the State Government was committed to their economic and social empowerment. The beneficiaries have been allotted houses under a housing scheme in Jaisinghpura Khor, each comprising a bedroom, hall and kitchen, Sharma said while handing over allotment letters. “An allotment letter for a permanent house is a right to dignity, security, stability and a better future for the beneficiary families,” Sharma said, adding that 50 flats in Kota and 80 plots in Jodhpur were also ready for allotment to eligible families. (PTI)

Lok Sabha records one of its lowest productivity in 20 years: PRS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Lok Sabha recorded one of its lowest productivity levels in more than two decades during the Monsoon Session that ended on Thursday, with only two Parliament sessions since 2004 showing lower functioning, according to data compiled by PRS Legislative Research. The figures over the past 22 years show wide swings in parliamentary functioning, from sessions where the Houses sat well beyond their scheduled hours to those where political confrontation consumed most of the time available for business. For the Lok Sabha, the just-concluded session falls among the worst. At 15 per cent, it matches the Winter session of 2016 and is ahead only of Winter 2010 and Winter 2013, when the House functioned for five per cent and eight per cent of its scheduled time respectively, according to the PRS data. The Rajya Sabha fared



better than the Lok Sabha but still functioned for only 33 per cent of its scheduled time, according to PRS, an independent, not-for-profit group that researches and tracks the functioning of Parliament and state legislatures. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, however, said the productivity of the Lok Sabha during the Monsoon Session was 19 per cent and that of the Rajya Sabha 39 per cent. Responding to a query on the slight variance, PRS maintained that it calculates House productivity by dividing the actual hours Parliament functioned in a session by the total planned sitting hours for that session. The figure can

Monsoon Session fell victim to Rahul Gandhi’s ego: BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The BJP on Thursday accused Congress leader Rahul Gandhi of repeatedly changing goalposts on discussions in Parliament and alleged that the Monsoon Session had fallen victim to “one leader’s ego, indiscipline and insolence.” Lok Sabha was adjourned sine die on Thursday, drawing curtains on a stormy Monsoon Session that saw relentless protests by the Opposition over the police action against agitating students and the alleged theft of Ram temple donations, besides the passage of several key bills without debate. Addressing a press conference on the last day of the Monsoon Session, senior BJP leader and MP Ravi Shankar Prasad alleged that the Opposition did not allow Parliament to function despite the Government’s readiness for discussions. Calling Gandhi irresponsible and “immature”, Prasad accused him of lacking political propriety.



Union Minister Kiren Rijiju, MoS Jitendra Singh, Arjun Ram Meghwal, BJP MP Nitin Nabin and others stand at attention during the rendition of ‘Vande Mataram’ in Rajya Sabha during the Monsoon Session of Parliament in New Delhi on Thursday

“I would like to repeat that Rahul Gandhi is irresponsible. Rahul Gandhi is yet to mature as a leader in the politics of the country. Rahul Gandhi is delinquent. And Rahul Gandhi has a great sense of arrogance and entitlement,” he said. “The Parliament’s Monsoon Session has fallen victim to one leader’s ego, indiscipline and insolence,” he added. He said that Gandhi and the opposition kept changing the goalposts during the entire Monsoon Session. Prasad said that the

Govt was rattled during Monsoon Session; Opposition unity was on display: Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Congress on Thursday claimed that never before had a Government been so “scared and rattled” as the Modi Government was during the just-concluded Monsoon Session, and the BJP leadership was seen “running away” from Parliament. The Congress also claimed that opposition unity and solidarity was on full display during the entire duration of the session. Congress general secretary-in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah stayed away from parliamentary proceedings, appearing only on the last day just before the House was adjourned sine die. “I want to remind you that the Monsoon Session has been washed out and 11 years ago in 2015, the Monsoon Session was washed out and the reason was the Vyapam scam. After 11 years, again an issue related to the youth result-



Lok Sabha LoP Rahul Gandhi, Congress MP KC Venugopal and others stand at attention during the rendition of ‘Vande Mataram’ in the House during the Monsoon Session of Parliament in New Delhi on Thursday

ed in a washout,” Ramesh said at a press conference here alongside Congress’ Deputy Leader in the Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi. “So, nothing has changed in 11 years. There were laws made and now reels are being made but nothing has changed,” Ramesh said. Opposition unity was on display during the session as leaders of the INDIA bloc would meet every day in the chamber of Mallikarjun Kharge, he said. “We walked together on the path we collectively decided,” Ramesh said. The Rajya Sabha Sabha MP said there were five big achievements for the

NDA and INDIA bloc MPs face-off outside Parliament

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Ruling NDA and Opposition INDIA bloc MPs came face-to-face near Parliament’s Makar Dwar on Thursday — with security personnel forming a cordon between them — as they staged protests and raised counter-slogans over police action on job aspirants in Jharkhand and issues surrounding the alleged theft of donations at the Ram temple in Ayodhya. While NDA MPs demanded answers from Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and



Opposition MPs in a protest seeking response from the Government on police action on student demonstrators and alleged theft of Ram temple donations during the Monsoon Session of Parliament in New Delhi on Thursday

alleged that he was “running away” from a debate on student protests across the country, INDIA bloc MPs demanded accountability from Union Home Minister



BJP MP Nishikant Dubey, and others, stage a protest over police action on job aspirants in Jharkhand during the Monsoon Session of Parliament in New Delhi on Thursday

Amit Shah over alleged police excesses during the July 20 student protests over paper leaks. The INDIA bloc MPs also raised the issue of alleged

theft of donations at the Ram temple in Ayodhya. Before the face-off, the NDA MPs and the INDIA bloc MPs held their respective protests separately. The NDA MPs sat on the steps of the Makar Dwar and raised slogans against Gandhi and accused him of running away from a debate on student protests in Jharkhand. BJP MP Kangana Ranaut hit out at the opposition, saying it had no issues to raise, first seeking a discussion and then demanding answers.

Owaisi appears in Hapur court to record statement in 2022 firing case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Hapur (UP)

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi appeared before a court on Thursday to record his statement in connection with a 2022 firing case in which his convoy was allegedly attacked on the Delhi-Meerut highway, officials said. Additional Superintendent of Police Vineet Bhatnagar said tight security arrangements were in place at the Hapur district court complex and surrounding areas in view of the Hyderabad MP’s arrival. Additional police personnel were deployed at the court premises with special security arrangements made for Owaisi’s movement to and from the court, he added. Owaisi was returning to Delhi after campaigning for the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections on February 3, 2022, when shots were allegedly fired at his convoy



near the Chhijarsi toll plaza in Pilkhuwa. He escaped unhurt in the attack. Police had arrested Sachin, a resident of Duriyaai in Gautam Buddha Nagar, and Shubham, a resident of Sapla Begampur in Saharanpur’s Nakur area, in connection with the case. During interrogation, the two allegedly told police that the weapons used in the attack had been provided by Alim, a resident of Radhna village in Meerut’s Mundali area. Alim was subsequently arrested and booked under Section 120B (criminal conspiracy). The three accused are currently out on bail.

Government spending ₹3,000 crore to improve healthcare facilities in Himachal: Health minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Shimla

Himachal Pradesh Government was spending around ₹3,000 crore to improve healthcare facilities and replace old machines and equipment, Health and Family Welfare Minister Dhani Ram Shandil said on Thursday. Chairing the 7th Board of Directors’ meeting of the Himachal Pradesh Medical Services Corporation Limited (HPMSCL) here, he said the Government was working to strengthen and modernise the health sector and ensure that people receive advanced and quality healthcare at their doorstep. In a statement, Shandil said that HPMSCL plays an important role in purchasing and distributing medicines, medical equipment, surgical items and other supplies for Government hospitals and medical colleges. The minister appreciated



Health and Family Welfare Minister Dhani Ram Shandil

HPMSCL’s efforts in making the procurement process faster and more efficient, saying that the new system ended the earlier lengthy, time-consuming and costly process. He said efforts are underway to replace machines and equipment that are 15 to 20 years old in a phased manner. The meeting also discussed ways to strengthen diagnostic services, with a focus on expediting the purchase and installation

of advanced machines and medicines. These included PET scan, colour Doppler, digital X-ray and mammography machines, laparoscopic surgery equipment, DSA machines, blood separators, advanced echocardiography machines, ECG machines and cath lab equipment. The minister directed officers to accelerate the procurement process and ensure it is done transparently and reliably.

Cannot interpret constitutional provisions in manner which encourages sin: Shiv Sena (UBT) to SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Uddhav Thackeray-led faction of the Shiv Sena on Thursday told the Supreme Court that provisions of the Constitution cannot be interpreted in a manner that encourages the “very sin” which the anti-defection law sought to prevent. A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana was hearing arguments on the pleas of the Thackeray-led faction against the Election Commission’s decision to recognise the Eknath Shinde-led faction as the real Shiv Sena and allot it the party’s name and the “bow and arrow” symbol. “You can’t interpret the provisions of the Constitution to give encouragement to the very sin which the anti-



defection law sought to prevent,” senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the Thackeray faction, told the bench during the hearing in the matter on the fifth day. Sibal said the test in a disqualification case is completely different. “Split is completely different and disqualification is completely different,” he said. Sibal argued that subsequent events may be taken into account for disqualifica-

tion but not for considering whether there was a split. He said the apex court has the opportunity to lay down the law for the country and for the future of democracy. Sibal said it is a “very sad state of affairs” as whichever party is in power ensures that disqualification is not decided. When the senior advocate contended that the burden of preserving democracy is on the judiciary, the bench said it

is a “collective responsibility”. “We are conscious of our role. The Constitution is lived by the people,” the bench observed. The CJI said, “Let us not underestimate our other institutions. They are also quite committed.” Sibal said ultimately, the law has to be laid down by the apex court. Parliament will keep on passing legislation but those laws can be tested by the judiciary, he said. The arguments in the matter would continue on August 18. While hearing the matter on Wednesday, the apex court said it will have to first see whether there had been a split in the Shiv Sena as such a division may originate in the legislature party and the fissure can percolate into the organisation and the primary membership.

Govt orders Ola, Uber, Rapido, InDrive to remove advance tipping feature

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

In a major relief for millions of daily commuters, the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has directed Ola, Uber, Rapido, and InDrive—to remove “advance tipping” and “add-on” features from their mobile applications that suggest passengers can improve their chances of getting a cab by paying extra before a trip begins. The Government stated that demanding extra money from passengers to secure or expedite bookings is a violation of consumer rights and goes against established aggregator guidelines. The Government stated that the Motor Vehicle Aggregator Guidelines, 2025, do not permit such practices. Complaints regarding pre-



ride tip messages prompted the directive. Previously, commuters during peak hours or bad weather were frequently forced to pay premiums ranging from ₹10 to ₹100 just to get their rides accepted. Ride-hailing services were previously instructed to cease the practice by the Central Consumer Protection Authority. Passengers will have one fewer choice when making a reservation. Only after your trip is over will you be able

to see the tip choice. Under Clause 14.15 of the Motor Vehicle Aggregator Guidelines, 2025, tips must be voluntary and can be offered only after the journey ends. It applies to all motor vehicle aggregators under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988. The entire tip must go to the driver. The aggregator cannot deduct anything from it. The tip cannot be available: at booking, before the journey begins, or during the journey. The tipping

option cannot be shown at the booking stage, before the ride starts, or while the trip is in progress. “No tipping feature or mechanism shall be provided in the App that is misleading, manipulative, or otherwise in violation of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019,” the ministry said. The ministry clarified that no app feature, prompt, payment option or user interface element should create the impression that paying extra could influence driver acceptance, ride allocation, booking confirmation, waiting time or service quality. The Ministry also reiterated that aggregators cannot deduct any portion of customer tips. The entire tip amount must be transferred directly to the driver, in line with the 2025 guidelines.

Vande Mataram played in Parliament for first time as Monsoon Session ends

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

In a historic first, the national song Vande Mataram was played to open the final Monsoon Session proceedings on Thursday.

The move came days after a new law granted the National Song legal protection and set rules for official renditions.

On the last day of the Monsoon Session, Lok Sabha proceedings opened with Vande Mataram on Thursday, marking a first for Parliament, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and a full house in attendance.

After six stanzas of the National Song were played,



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Ministers Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Rajnath Singh and other MPs stand at attention during the rendition of Vande Mataram in Lok Sabha during the Monsoon session of Parliament in New Delhi on Thursday

the Lower House was subsequently adjourned sine die, bringing the session to a close. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla did not read out the usual valedictory

address in which he highlights the performance and productivity of the Lok Sabha during the session. Meanwhile, the Rajya Sabha was also adjourned sine die

with the National Song.

The development comes days after President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent to legislation providing legal protection to Vande Mataram.

The law makes intentional disruption or prevention of the singing of the National Song a punishable offence, placing it on a similar legal footing to the National Anthem.

The Government had earlier issued protocols governing the singing at official functions. In an order dated January 28, the Union Home Ministry prescribed that six stanzas of the song be sung on occasions including the arrival of the President, unfurling of the Tricolour and addresses by governors.

Row in Rajya Sabha over purification ceremony after Kharge's Uttarakhand rally

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A row erupted in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday after the Leader of Opposition (LoP) and Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge alleged a '*shud-dhikaran*' (purification) ceremony was held at the venue where he addressed a rally in Uttarakhand. Termining the incident "unfortunate," Union Minister JP Nadda asserted that the BJP does not subscribe to such activities.

The issue has already created a political stir in Uttarakhand, where the Congress and the BJP have been trading charges over the ritual at Haldwani's Ram Lila Ground. It was held by a



Rajya Sabha LoP Mallikarjun Kharge speaks in the House during the Monsoon session of Parliament in New Delhi on Thursday

right-wing outfit two days after Kharge, a Dalit, addressed a public rally at the venue.

Raising the matter in the Upper House, Kharge claimed that BJP workers performed a "havan" and carried out a "purification" of the stage from which he addressed a rally on August

8. "There were lakhs of people present at the time. I did not name any community or religion. I only spoke about the problems faced by the people there. But after my speech, BJP workers performed a havan" he said.

"Is this the way in a democracy? How are you protecting the Constitution?

I am the LoP... I never wanted to politicise these issues," Kharge, only the second Dalit leader to head the Congress, said.

Amid sloganeering by Congress MPs, Rajya Sabha Chairman C P Radhakrishnan sought to pacify Kharge, emphasising that there was no bigger sin in the world than "untouchability". "It should be condemned... Those who have done it should be caught. There is no two opinions on this," he said.

Nadda sought to distance the BJP from the incident. He assured Kharge that the matter would be investigated. "Please don't say repeatedly that we (BJP) did. The BJP does not subscribe to such activities," Nadda said.

Vizhinjam port to commence EXIM operations from August 18: Kerala CM Satheesan

TR SREEHARSHAN
■ Thiruvananthapuram

Kerala Chief Minister VD Satheesan on Thursday said export-import operations at the Vizhinjam International Seaport would commence from August 18 after it received all necessary clearances, including from Customs.

Speaking at a press conference here, the CM said the commencement of EXIM operations would be the first step towards enabling the state to directly be nefit from the port's activities. The

A Customs-bonded area has also been established inside the port, as Thiruvananthapuram does not have a Container Freight Station, Satheesan added.

Responding to queries about the proposed transfer of a stake in Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd's Vizhinjam port venture to a foreign shipping company, Satheesan said an empowered committee headed by the chief secretary was examining the matter and had not yet submitted its report.

"There is currently no



Customs commissionerate has issued the necessary notifications for the commencement of export-import operations, he said.

The port had thus far been handling only transshipment operations, with more than 60 per cent of the containers handled there being linked to other countries, Satheesan said. To support EXIM operations, a temporary arrangement has been made to connect the port road to NH-66, following directions from the National Highways Authority of India, he said.

urgency to permit it. The Centre has to give permission with regard to the strategic and security aspects of the transaction.

After they do that, we will decide by taking into account the interests of the state," Satheesan said.

In June, APSEZ announced that Switzerland-based Mediterranean Shipping Company, the world's largest shipping and logistics group, would acquire a 49 per cent stake in Adani Vizhinjam Port Private Ltd, the concessionaire of Vizhinjam port, for about \$1.4 billion.

ED raids across Punjab over illegal industrial plot allotments by PSIEC officials

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
■ New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate's (ED) Jalandhar office has stepped up its money-laundering investigation into alleged illegal industrial plot allotments by Punjab Small Industries & Export Corporation (PSIEC) officials. ED teams carried out searches at 11 locations in Chandigarh, Amritsar, Gurdaspur, and Ludhiana.

Officials also surveyed the PSIEC office. This action, carried out under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002, came after the Vigilance Bureau filed an FIR against several PSIEC officials and private

individuals under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and the Indian Penal Code. According to the ED, industrial plots were given to people without technical industry experience, using fake companies and false addresses. These allotments were reportedly made possible by close connections with PSIEC officials, and the handover of plots was often delayed much longer than allowed.

Officials labelled the years in between as a "zero period," which let them move allotment dates forward and give beneficiaries more time to pay without interest. Investigators found that



these illegal allotments were made in return for large bribes, paid either in cash or through complicated financial deals. Many plots went to shell companies and fake firms, then were sold at market prices to others, creating large illegal profits.

In some cases, plots meant for industry were split up and used for homes or businesses instead.

During the searches, ED teams took incriminating documents and digital devices from several places. They also found unaccounted cash

Shimla vendors protest against eviction drive, demand designated vending zones

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Shimla

Hundreds of street vendors in Shimla are facing eviction from their livelihood spaces, the Street Vendors' Union affiliated with the CITU said on Thursday as it staged a protest against the Municipal Corporation's ongoing eviction drive.

The union held the protest outside the Deputy Commissioner's Office here and demanded that the Municipal Corporation immediately stop the drive.

Union president Darshan Lal, while addressing the protesters, said hundreds of street vendors have been earning their livelihood in Shimla for years, but instead of finding a permanent solution to their problems, the Municipal Corporation was continuously harassing and evicting them.

He alleged that the evic-



tion drive was a violation of the Street Vendors Act, 2014, and urged the civic body to provide proper vending spaces and streamline the vending system to protect the livelihoods of vendors.

The union demanded full implementation of the Street Vendors Act, 2014, and an end to the eviction of any street vendor without following the pro-

visions of the law.

It also demanded that the survey and registration of all eligible street vendors be completed, vending certificates issued to them and designated vending zones established.

Darshan Lal said the union would intensify its agitation and hold a massive protest outside the Shimla Municipal Corporation office on August 17 over its demands.

Kerala honours medal-winning athletes with cash awards

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

Kerala Government on Thursday announced cash awards for Malayalee athletes who won medals and achieved notable performances in international competitions.

Long jumper M Sreeshankar, who won silver at the Commonwealth Games, and para-athlete Mohammed Basil, who bagged silver in the men's 100m, will receive ₹20 lakh each, Sports, Youth Affairs and Registration Minister O J Janeesh said, adding that the Cabinet has decided to provide the cash awards.

He said Divi Bijesh, who won the under-12 World Chess Championship, and Sandra Mol Sabu, a member of the Indian team that won gold in the mixed relay at the Under-23 Asian Games, will also receive ₹20 lakh each. Commonwealth Games



swimming finalist Sajjan Prakash and 4x400m mixed relay finalist Ansa Babu will get ₹5 lakh each.

Coaches of Sreeshankar and Basil will receive ₹2 lakh each, according to an official statement.

The Government said the existing cash award norms were inadequate and decided to enhance the awards. Under the existing norms, gold, silver and

bronze medalists are eligible for ₹5 lakh, ₹3 lakh and ₹1 lakh, respectively.

Sreeshankar had received ₹10 lakh for his silver medal at the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

The Government said it was also making efforts to clear pending cash awards for athletes who won medals at national and international competitions since 2019.

Indigenous, native flowering plants to be major attraction of Amrit Udyan this year

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Indigenous and native flowering plants, known for their vibrant colours and ecological significance, will be the major attraction of the famed Amrit Udyan, which is scheduled to open to the public on Sunday, an official said on Thursday.

The indigenous collection includes Balsam/Gul-mehndi, Aparajita, Rukmini, Barsha Phool, Lal Saag and Nagphana among others, showcasing India's rich floral heritage and enhancing the biodiversity of the gardens.

The Summer Annuals of Amrit Udyan will open from August 16 to September 15.

"Indigenous and native flowering plants, known for their vibrant colours and ecological significance, are a major attraction of the Summer Annual Edition-2026 at Amrit Udyan," said Navika Gupta, Deputy Press Secretary to the President.

She said this year the garden will showcase a huge collection of indigenous/native species alongside ornamental summer annuals, thoughtfully arranged across the land-



scape to create spectacular seasonal displays.

Together, these vibrant blooms celebrate India's rich floral diversity, support biodiversity, and promote awareness of the country's valuable native plant heritage, Gupta said during the media preview of the Udyan, which is spread around 15 acres inside the President's Estate.

The flowers are planted in mass displays, mixed borders and colour-themed beds, with careful consideration of plant height, texture and flowering season. These artistic combinations create

striking pyramids of colour and provide a harmonious, natural and visually captivating landscape throughout the gardens, she said.

Visitors to the garden can also see Banyan groves — home to majestic banyan trees, known for their sprawling branches and aerial roots that create an enchanting atmosphere — and a babbling brook — where a gentle flow of water and vibrant greenery create a calming atmosphere.

There is also a floral clock — a working clock representing the form of floral art. The Udyan will remain

open from 10 am to 6 pm, with the last entry at 5 pm. The Udyan will remain closed on all Mondays for maintenance. Sportspersons on August 29 and teachers on September 5 will get exclusive access to Amrit Udyan to mark the National Sports Day and Teachers' Day, respectively, Gupta said.

Entry and exit for visitors will be from gate no 35, located near North Avenue Road.

Entry to Amrit Udyan will be free of cost, but visitors have to book their slots online at visit.rashtrapatibhavan.gov.in in advance.

Jharkhand students stick to CBI probe, exam cancellation demands; refuse to call off stir

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ranchi

Agitating students and job aspirants in Jharkhand on Thursday refused to call off their protest over alleged irregularities in recruitment exams, insisting on their demands for a CBI probe and cancellation of the JPSC and JSSC exams.

Hundreds of students, job aspirants and youths gathered at the Jaipal Singh Munda Stadium on the 20th day of the agitation, saying they would continue the protest until their demands are met.

Vivek Pandit, a student and JPSC aspirant from Bokaro district, said he had been at the protest site since the first day and would remain there until the State Government agreed to their demands.

"Today is the 20th day that I have been here. On August 10, when police lathi-charged us during a protest march to the Assembly, my mother was crying and urging me to return home. She was scared after the assault on us during the march. But now, we have decided not to step back from our demands," Pandit said.

"There is no transparency



ABVP workers stage a protest outside Jharkhand Bhawan against alleged irregularities in JPSC and JSSC examinations and action against protesting students in Ranchi on Thursday

in both agencies, and the Government's attitude regarding these issues is not what it should be. They are using their power to divide students rather than resolving the issues," he said.

Pandit alleged that senior district officials had visited the protest site on Tuesday night and tried to create a division among the protesters by asking those demanding action on JPSC-related issues to return home following the Government's announcement to cancel the exam.

Another protester, Ravi Kumar from Lohardaga district, said he had been at the protest site since July 29,

when the agitation began.

"I cracked multiple exams conducted by both the agencies, but due to prevailing corruption, partiality and irregularities in the system, we have suffered. We will not stop until the Government agrees to bring reforms, order a CBI probe and cancel the Jharkhand Staff Selection Commission (JSSC)-CGL exam," he said.

Vani Kumari, a software engineer working with a private company in Ranchi, said she had been participating in the protest for more than a week.

She visits the protest site every evening and stays there through the night.

"I have been preparing for state civil service examinations. I appeared in the 14th JPSC exam, held on April 19, but due to large-scale irregularities, we have been cheated badly. In Jharkhand, not a single exam has been conducted fairly for several years," she alleged.

"This agitation is the outcome of accumulated anger and frustration over several years, as our hopes and dreams have been fading," Kumari said.

Soni Kumari from Gumla district said she had been preparing for JPSC exam and had appeared in the JPSC-backlog 2025 and the 14th Preliminary Examination.

"I have been here for over a week and will remain until the Government meets our demands. The Government says Jharkhand is young, having completed 25 years since its creation. If they accept the state is young, why are they not agreeing with the demands of the young generation? This shows a difference between what they say and what they are doing," she said.

She said a panel comprising four state ministers had held several rounds of talks with their delegation.

Justice must not end with the verdict

The Supreme Court’s recent push to clear execution backlogs has shown that much can be achieved through existing judicial powers, without waiting for Parliament. But it has also exposed a deeper problem: unless courts can ensure timely compliance, justice may be delivered yet remain beyond the reach of those who have won it



VIVEK KUMAR SINGH

A litigant who obtains a civil decree after spending ten or fifteen years in court often discovers that the real battle begins after judgment. The decree-holder may spend several more years merely trying to secure compliance with the very order that has conclusively recognised his rights. For many litigants, the verdict is not the end of litigation but an entry

ticket to another queue.

India’s justice system is usually criticised for delays in adjudication. Equally serious, though far less discussed, is what may be called an enforcement deficit in civil justice. When final orders are routinely ignored, delayed or frustrated, subordinate courts and tribunals appear toothless - not because their decisions lack legal validity, but because they lack effective enforcement. The problem extends well beyond civil courts: Consumer Commissions, RERA Authorities, Labour Courts, Revenue Courts, Commercial Courts and numerous tribunals all see successful litigants forced into a second round of litigation just to realise the fruits of the first. The Supreme Court has repeatedly expressed concern over this state of affairs. In *Rahul S. Shah v. Jinendra Kumar Gandhi*, it directed that execution proceedings ordinarily be completed within six months, with reasons recorded for any extension. More recently, deciding a four-decade-old Tamil Nadu land dispute in *Periyammal v. V. Rajamani*, the Court went further. It directed every High Court to collect execution-pendency data from its district judiciary and issue an administrative circular requiring disposal within six months, with presiding officers held answerable for delay.

The results are instructive. In the six months after the March 2025 circular, 3,38,685 execution petitions were disposed of nationwide - yet pendency stood at a still-alarming 8,82,578 by October 2025, prompting the Court to extend the deadline by six months. A second wave followed and by April 2026, a total of 7,69,731 petitions had been cleared. But fresh filings kept arriving faster than courts could clear the backlog, and 7,95,981 petitions remained pending beyond six months when the matter was last reviewed. Karnataka’s High Court, which had failed to submit its data on time, was separately directed to devise its own disposal mechanism, and its executing courts were barred from allowing withdrawal-and-refiling without valid reason - a targeted fix imposed without any new legislation.

This is the clearest available demonstration that a great deal can be accomplished through existing supervisory and rule-making power, without waiting for Parliament. It is worth asking, though, why a circular producing three-quarters of a million disposals still leaves the backlog looking much as before. The likely answer is not that the mechanism failed, but that it addressed only half the problem. A time-bound circular pushes courts to dispose of petitions already filed, but does nothing to slow the rate at which judgment-debtors generate fresh obstruction to keep a petition alive past its deadline. Disposal speed and defiance are different problems - which is why the disclosure and contempt measures below matter as much as the timeline itself.

There is a second, more uncomfortable question the same episode raises - who enforces the enforcers? Karnataka’s High Court itself missed the Supreme Court’s own reporting deadline and had to be separately reminded before it complied. If administrative direction is the preferred route precisely because it moves faster than legislation, its speed still depends on High Courts choosing to comply with the Supreme Court the way judgment-debtors are meant to comply with executing courts. The honest answer is that this route trades one enforcement problem for a smaller, more visible one - a High Court answering to the Supreme Court is far easier to hold to account than a scattered judgment-debtor is to trace, but the dependency does not disappear, it simply moves up a level. The answer does not lie in bypassing the existing legal framework altogether. Sections 36 to 74 and Order XXI of the CPC already provide for elaborate execution machinery - attachment and sale of property, arrest and detention, appointment of receivers, delivery of possession. The difficulty is not the absence of legal provisions - it lies in prolonged delays and, in some cases, consequence-free defiance of lawful orders.

Other jurisdictions treat post-judgment compliance as



INDIA’S JUSTICE SYSTEM IS USUALLY CRITICISED FOR DELAYS IN ADJUDICATION. EQUALLY SERIOUS, THOUGH FAR LESS DISCUSSED, IS WHAT MAY BE CALLED AN ENFORCEMENT DEFICIT IN CIVIL JUSTICE

seriously as adjudication itself. England and Wales compel asset disclosure and back it with contempt proceedings, while the United States’ Rule 69 permits post-judgment discovery in aid of execution. The lesson is not that India should transplant a foreign model, but that enforcement needs active disclosure and credible consequences - exactly what Periyammal’s circulars did not supply.

The temptation, at this point, is to reach for a new law - a Civil Justice Compliance Act codifying timelines, mandating disclosure and layering on graded sanctions. The instinct is sound, but a standalone central statute would need to clear a crowded legislative calendar and navigate the fact that execution touches both Union and State List subjects. The Commercial Courts Rules, 2021 offer a cautionary tale. Their Chapter XII, proposing dedicated District Execution Cells, has sat un-notified by the Union government for five years, despite being fully drafted. Faced with that inertia, the Supreme Court in May 2026 told High Courts to constitute such cells on their own under existing supervisory jurisdiction - the strongest case yet for treating rule-making as the default route, and new legislation as the fallback.

Three concrete steps follow.

First, generalise the Order XXI amendment that Periyammal has already begun. High Courts possess rule-making power under Section 122 CPC to supplement CPC procedure within their jurisdiction - though that power reaches procedure, not substantive rights, so it can fix timelines and disclosure duties but cannot itself create new categories of liability. Codifying the six-month benchmark, making asset disclosure mandatory rather than discretionary, and prescribing fixed compliance hearings at 90 and 180 days can be notified by individual High Courts, several of which already issue execution-specific circulars under Supreme Court supervision. Where uniformity is desirable, a focused CPC (Amendment) Bill limited to Order XXI is a far lighter lift than an entirely new statute.

Second, put real force behind disclosure and contempt tools that already exist. Order XXI Rule 41 already permits courts to examine judgment-debtors on their assets, but it is rarely invoked and carries weak consequences for non-compliance - making non-disclosure itself independently punishable would close much of the gap a new “mandatory disclosure” provision would otherwise address. Executing courts could similarly be empowered to certify deliberate, repeated defiance directly to the High Court for summary con-

tempt - as Karnataka’s courts effectively were on withdrawal and re-filing.

Third, build transparency through technology. A national execution-tracking dashboard, integrated with the existing e-Courts platform, could make pendency visible in real time - a pure implementation project, built substantially on data the ongoing court-by-court reporting to the Supreme Court has already generated. None of this fore-closes a more comprehensive statutory framework later. But sequencing does matter. Administrative circulars produced three-quarters of a million disposals in thirteen months, at a speed no new statute could have matched, even as they proved unable to outrun the rate of fresh filings. Rule amendments and Practice Directions can be tested and refined if they misfire - a central Act, once passed, is far harder to correct. The prudent path is to exhaust what existing rule-making power can deliver, and treat new legislation as the tool of last resort.

Whichever instrument closes the remaining gap, it must carry the same safeguards, viz, prior notice, hearing, speaking orders, proof of wilful default, protection for bona fide third-party claims, exclusion of genuine inability to comply, and appellate remedies. Graded consequences - realistic costs, compulsory disclosure, temporary civil disabilities, expedited attachment - should precede civil detention, which should remain an exceptional last resort. The goal is predictability, not punitive excess. A litigant who has already succeeded should not face another prolonged struggle to secure compliance, and those who deliberately frustrate final orders should not profit from delay. Justice delayed is damaging. Justice unenforced is worse. Thirteen months of Supreme Court-driven administrative circulars have already shown what is achievable without new legislation, and how much further there is to go. That experience, not a hypothetical statute, should now anchor the reform agenda.

It is worth recalling the circular trigger. Ayyavoo Udayar signed a sale agreement for a modest plot in Salem in 1980 and sued for possession in 1983. He won his decree in 1986 but did not live to see it enforced - he died while the vendors’ appeal was pending, and his legal heirs carried the case through a second appeal, a dismissed Supreme Court petition in 2006, and an execution petition resisted for years by relatives claiming tenancy rights they could never quite document. It took until March 2025 - forty-five years after the original agreement - for the Supreme Court to order his heirs into possession within two months, and to use his family’s case to order every High Court to prevent the same thing happening to anyone else. Faith in justice is tested not when a verdict is pronounced, but when it is obeyed - and for one family in Salem, that test lasted forty-five years too long.

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The challenge of human-elephant coexistence



VK BAHUGUNA

Elephant Day 2026’. Incredible elephants are symbols of wisdom, strength, and prosperity in Indian and many other cultures. But this day should inspire us not only to celebrate but also to ask serious questions - are awareness and celebrations alone enough? As we observe Elephant Day this year, there is a need to think seriously beyond organising photography competitions, awareness campaigns, and cultural programmes.

Elephants are under serious threat from the loss of their habitat and continue to face many threats. Habitat loss due to fragmented forest areas, human-elephant conflict, poaching, and climate change are the main challenges. In the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, the African elephant is classified as Critically Endangered, while both the African savanna elephant and the Asian elephant are listed as Endangered.

The cost of human-elephant conflict is very heavy. Thousands of people have lost their lives in India in recent years. In Assam, more than 1,147 people have died over the past decade, including 138 deaths recorded in 2025 alone, and 53 people have been killed so far in 2026. In Jharkhand, 22 people died in just 21 days between December 2025 and January 2026. In one incident, an elephant trampled seven people in West Singhbhum in a single night, including a family of five. In Odisha’s Dhenkanal district, a wild elephant killed three people while they were collecting minor forest produce from the forest. Several deaths have also occurred in the Nilgiri region of Tamil Nadu - including attacks on women working in tea plantations and elderly villagers. In the early days of August 2026 alone, reports emerged of approximately nine people being killed in several human-elephant encounters in India, including in Uttarakhand. These incidents show how deep and persistent the conflict is.

Yet, there are some successful examples of community-based coexistence that are noteworthy, and there is hope if we replicate these stories while celebrating Elephant Day. Some of these, to quote, are:

i) The “Hati Bandhu” (Friends of Elephants) initiative has been successful in Hatikuli Ronghang village, located on the Nagaon-Karbi Anglong border in Assam. Villagers have grown Napier grass, paddy, jackfruit, bananas, and other crops on vacant land for elephants. Around 200-800 bighas of land have been dedicated to elephant fodder. The result - crop damage has decreased drastically, and there have been no human or elephant deaths in the past eight years. In this regard, we must agree that elephants are very conscious and intelligent animals and become angry with humans for their loss of habitat, and if they know that humans are helping them, like in this village of Assam, they will not harm them. I am reminded of an incident I read in a book by the late Vinod Rishi, former Additional DG Wildlife under the Ministry of Environment and an eminent wildlife expert. In his latest book, he stated that in 1974, an elephant killed a village Pradhan and his servant (the servant tried to shoot the elephant and injured the enraged elephant, which trampled and killed both of them) while he was posted in Siliguri in West Bengal. But when he went to the village to discuss the compensation, he was surprised that people were opposed to any compensation for them as the Pradhan was a notorious animal killer and used to supply animal meat to visiting senior officials in Siliguri. But what caused him great surprise was the fact that while returning, he noticed the same elephant standing in the cremation ground near the bank of the river and preventing his family from collecting the ashes, and ultimately threw them into the river flowing. It shows that the elephant had marked him for revenge and knew his exploits.

ii) In Nepal’s eastern border village of Bahundangi, farmers have started growing crops that elephants do not like (tea, bay leaf, lemon), begun beekeeping, and formed rapid response teams. There have been no deaths in the area since 2015.

iii) Hanging solar fencing in the Manas National Park area of Assam has provided protection to dozens of villages. Crop losses decreased, and human deaths in fenced areas remained zero.

These examples prove that when local people are involved, alternative livelihoods are provided, and space is made for elephants, conflict can be reduced. Now the question is: what should be done for harmonious living? The authorities need to:

- work for habitat conservation and ensure protection of corridors;
- community-managed solar fences, bee fences, and early warning systems;
- elephant-resistant crops and alternative employment;
- prompt and transparent compensation; stopping the exploitation of captive elephants;
- the villagers as well as foresters must emulate the Assam village by creating food crops inside and outside the forests; and
- last but not least, strong law enforcement, research, and education.

World Elephant Day should, therefore, be a symbol not just of a one-day celebration, but of a year-round commitment. The safety of both elephants and humans will be possible only when we focus on landscape-based land-use policies, community participation, and long-term solutions. The message should remain clear - there is a need to move beyond celebration and take concrete action so that giant elephants and human beings can live peacefully alongside each other. People should understand the importance of elephants and other wild animals of their own accord and act like people in Assam and Nepal. At the same time, they should help the Forest Department so that the ecosystems of which elephants are an integral part can be protected. To quote Lord Buddha, “Awaken. Be a witness to your thoughts. The elephant pulls itself out of the mud. In the same way, you too should pull yourself out of your laziness.” This profound statement reflects the regal essence of the elephant in Indian tradition, connecting inner wisdom with the majestic presence of this animal of India’s national heritage. The elephant is India’s national heritage animal, symbolising grace, strength, and ecological memory. It is worshipped as Lord Ganesha, the remover of obstacles and god of wisdom. Let us all pledge to protect elephants while preserving their grace.



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Freedom at Midnight: The astrological twist behind India’s tryst with destiny



BP ACHARYA

with the concomitant inconveniences of participating with groggy eyes! Mercifully, this time around, we are spared such nocturnal celebrations. Yet, a question continues to linger in our minds: why on earth did we choose to be free at such an unearthly hour? Was it by choice or by compulsion? What was so special about that midnight hour for our “tryst with destiny”? If you have ever wondered, there hangs a fascinating, lesser-known tale that I recount below.

To answer these questions, I must jog my memory back to the 1980s, when I had a gap year as a research scholar at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). Having completed my M Phil coursework with a high grade-point average, I was eligible to fast-track directly into a PhD programme. I registered for it, though it was not my immediate priority, simply because I was still underage to appear for the Civil Services Examination.

Since I was relatively free, my professor and

research guide asked me to assist the internationally celebrated authors Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre - of Freedom at Midnight fame. They needed help editing a vast archive of personal papers and private documents belonging to Lord Louis Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India, which they had gathered for their bestseller. That was how I found myself swamped with huge loads of primary historical material. My task was to ferret out insights for new publications, which were later brought out in two separate volumes: Mountbatten and the Partition of India and Mountbatten and Independent India.

It was during this deep archival dive that I stumbled upon a fascinating interview with Lord Mountbatten, conducted by the authors during their research for Freedom at Midnight. This recorded interview was published in the first volume of Mountbatten and the Partition of India. Characterised by his trademark arrogance and insouciance, the story is best heard straight from the horse’s mouth, as Mountbatten recounts the events in these interview excerpts:

Question: The ceremony of August 15 had no precedent. Who invented and engineered it?

Answer: Well, I discussed it with Nehru. The first and most amusing thing, of course, is that I had selected August 15 because it was the date of the Japanese surrender to me as the



Commander of the Allied forces in Singapore - which, don’t forget, had taken place only two years prior. However, I had not consulted the astrologers.

As you know, Indians are deeply invested in astrology. I did not realise it at the time, but on an inauspicious day, they would do nothing. While Nehru himself did not believe in astrology, he mentioned that so many others did, and that I had chosen an unpropitious day. I suppose it was silly of me not to consult the astrologers, but it had slipped my mind.

He then suggested, “Never mind. If you agree, we can hold a midnight meeting. Just before the clock strikes midnight, we will transfer power, which will make it all the more auspicious.”

I thought to myself - what a marvellous, dramatic idea, to hold a midnight meeting while the rest of the world sleeps! As you will remember,

tistical Viceroy, what remains surprising is that the Indian leaders rather meekly submitted to his whims and fancies.

When Nehru broached the subject with other leaders, there was apparently stiff resistance, particularly from Sardar Patel and JB Kripalani, both of whom wanted to avoid the inauspicious day. Ultimately, it was left to an ingenious astrological subterfuge to resolve this conundrum. This is how it was done.

As per the Hindu calendar, tithis (days calculated based on the solar/lunar cycle) begin at sunrise, whereas the Western (Gregorian) calendar dictates that a new date commences at midnight. This crucial difference afforded a slim window of opportunity to work out an astrological solution (upay) to a difficult dilemma.

According to astrologers, August 15, 1947, was a day to be avoided at all costs. It fell on the 14th

day (Chaturdashi) of the dark fortnight (Krishna Paksha), with the most inauspicious new moon day (Amavasya) also setting in. Thus, an innovative compromise formula was struck: by scheduling the transfer before the sunrise of August 15, they successfully avoided the inauspicious dark Chaturdashi and Amavasya under Hindu reckoning. Meanwhile, under the Gregorian calendar, August 15 would technically begin immediately after midnight. It was this ingenious tightrope walk that necessitated the midnight ceremony, and the rest is history.

This apparently win-win formula was actually a difficult compromise born out of compulsion rather than choice. We had no option when confronted by a supercilious Viceroy’s arbitrary choice of date, which smacked of scant regard for the people’s sentiments. However, what was indeed disappointing was the meek submission of Indian leaders to his whims and fancies, going out of their way to accommodate his peccadilloes. Thus, *Freedom at Midnight* became our “tryst with destiny” and, over time, a celebrated symbol of a dramatic transfer of power, later emulated in other colonial transitions like that of Hong Kong. For us, however, it remains a story of a queer compromise that defined the dilemmas of our country during the initial years after independence - dilemmas that linger on in more ways than one.

The writer is a retired Special Chief Secretary of Telangana

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Order Order

Delhi HC seeks Centre's stand on Club de-recognition



The Delhi High Court on Thursday sought the Centre's stand on a petition by the Central Secretariat Club against the revocation of its recognition.

The club, formerly known as Talkatora Club, also assailed an eviction order by the Estate Officer asking it to immediately vacate its present premises in the President's Estate. Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma issued notice to the central Government and asked it to file its response to the petition. A senior counsel for the petitioner urged the court to pass an order directing status quo in the matter, stating that "nothing would be left" if such a protection was not granted.

Declining the request, Justice Sharma said, "I don't think so. List on August 24." In its petition, the club said that on July 14, the Department of Personnel and Training arbitrarily, illegally, and unconstitutionally, withdrew the recognition granted to it.

The petitioner said that instead of taking corrective action on its complaints regarding irregularities during the term of the ad hoc committee managing its affairs, the authorities first withdrew the recognition in February without issuing any show cause notice. (PTI)

DA case: Rahul moves SC against Allahabad HC order



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has moved the Supreme Court challenging an order of the Allahabad High Court which directed the CBI and ED to verify the allegations of disproportionate assets against him.

As per the apex court cause list, a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana is likely to hear the matter on August 17.

Expressing dissatisfaction with the CBI's response, the Allahabad High Court's Lucknow bench on July 20 had directed the agency's senior officer to personally file a fresh affidavit detailing the progress made in the probe into allegations of disproportionate assets against the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha.

The high court had also observed that if, during the course of its inquiry into the allegations, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) comes across material and documents indicating any illegality, it would be free to proceed further in accordance with law.

The high court was hearing a plea that sought an investigation by the CBI and the ED into allegations of disproportionate assets against the Congress leader.

The order was passed after an in-chamber hearing lasting nearly two hours in the criminal writ petition filed by Karnataka resident S Vignesh Shishir.

Vignesh, a BJP worker, had earlier filed pleas alleging that the Congress leader holds dual citizenship. (PTI)

SC halts Odisha DGP selection till August 18

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday told the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) not to finalise till August 18 the names of probable officers for appointment of the Director General of Police of Odisha.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana sought responses from the UPSC and others on a PIL which alleged that the Odisha Government was trying to include a junior officer in the list of probable candidates for the DGP post, in breach of the apex court's directions in the 2006 Prakash Singh case. The incumbent DGP, Y B Khurania, will demit office on August 16 this year.

"We will take it up on August 18. You assist us on that day but don't finalise in the meanwhile," the bench told the counsel appearing for the UPSC. The bench was informed that the UPSC was slated to convene a meeting on Thursday. The counsel appear-



ing for the UPSC told the bench that no meeting would be convened by it on the issue till the next date of hearing. Senior advocate P Chidambaram, appearing for the petitioner, told the bench that on Wednesday, an officer of the rank of ADGP was promoted in Odisha.

The bench observed that no affected officer has approached the court on the issue. The counsel appearing for the state said there was no breach of the apex court's directions in the Prakash Singh case. Senior advocate Raju Ramchandran, who is assisting the top court as an amicus curiae in the Prakash



Supreme Court asks Centre to consider AI ethics guidelines

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday asked the Centre and others to consider suggestions given by a petitioner on framing binding guidelines on ethics and transparency in AI-based surveillance and content moderation.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana was hearing a petition filed by advocate Narendra Kumar Goswami. "Tell us what can we do," the bench told the petitioner at the outset.

Goswami said he was pressing one of the prayers made in the petition, which sought a direction to the Centre to file an affidavit disclosing all existing and proposed high-risk Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems used by the ministries or agencies in welfare, policing, surveillance and content regulation.



"Send your writ petition as a representation," the bench said, adding that it was a comprehensive petition. "We are not the experts. It is a highly technical issue and it is in policy domain," the bench said.

It observed that the issues raised in the petition needs formulation of appropriate policy or regulation.

The bench noted the petitioner had, in February this year, submitted a representation to the Government on

the issue. While disposing of the petition at this stage without expressing any opinion on the merits, the bench asked the authorities to consider the suggestions for taking appropriate measures.

It said the petitioner is at liberty to supplement the representation. In his PIL, Goswami has sought a direction to the Centre to constitute a high-powered expert committee to frame "binding guidelines on AI

ethics, mandatory algorithmic impact assessments and bias audits, transparency in AI-based surveillance and content moderation, human-in-the-loop oversight for all high-risk Governmental AI systems, and data protection safeguards..."

The plea sought a direction to the Centre and others to conduct and make public within six weeks a comprehensive algorithmic impact assessment and independent bias audit of all existing AI systems deployed in welfare allocation, predictive policing, facial recognition and content moderation, and to disclose the complete inventory of such systems.

Besides other prayers, it also sought a direction to the Centre to take steps to enact a comprehensive parliamentary legislation regulating the development and deployment of AI by the State, consistent with the guidelines framed by the

SC agrees to hear plea on facial recognition at Jantar Mantar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday agreed to hear a plea filed by a Rajya Sabha lawmaker challenging the alleged deployment of facial recognition technology and other biometric surveillance measures by Delhi Police during the recent student protest at Jantar Mantar here.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana directed the matter be tagged with earlier petitions on the issue.

Senior advocate Menaka Guruswamy, appearing for Rajya Sabha MP AA Rahim, said there are two issues which are a matter of concern-facial recognition of protestors done by Delhi police and data stored by private companies.

"One maps your face and one is a vehicle. So spectacles are used and a vehicle is



also used. And that data is all taken without permission. These private entities host the data. In violation of the rules..." she submitted.

The bench said it would hear the petition along with other related matters.

Rahim, who is member of the Rajya Sabha from Kerala for the Communist Party of India (Marxist), has approached the top court seeking a declaration that the use of indiscriminate biometric surveillance at peaceful public assemblies is unconstitutional and should

be restrained until Parliament enacts a law specifically authorising and regulating such measures. The plea, filed through advocate Subhash Chandran KR, alleged that Delhi Police conducted biometric surveillance in a "complete legal vacuum".

It said neither the Delhi Police Standing Orders governing protests nor the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act, 2022, authorises biometric surveillance of persons participating in civilian assemblies.

Centre agrees to give rail concessions to acid attack victims, tells SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Centre on Thursday told the Supreme Court that it has agreed in principle to formulate a policy for granting railway travel concessions to acid attack survivors to enable them to travel to well-equipped hospitals in cities for periodic treatment.

The top court asked the Centre to consider the issue of granting travel concessions to acid attack survivors "liberally".

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana took note of the submissions of

Additional Solicitor General Archana Pathak Dave, appearing for the Ministry of Railways, and asked her to file the draft policy on record within six weeks.

At the outset, the law officer said that a meeting has been held and it has been decided in principle that the acid attack survivors can be given railway concessions. She said the Centre proposes to extend the benefit under the "patient category" as it has reservations about placing acid attack survivors in a separate category among persons with disabilities.

"I can inform that they will put the acid attack victims in the patient category..."



because they have some reservations about putting them under the disabled category as others in that disabled category are not given railway concessions," she added. "Putting them in the disabled category, that has now been statutorily

resolved, with the amendment through another petition before us," the CJI said.

"They are in the disabled category, but we will give them concession under the patient category because they require it for the purpose of going to the doctor and for

2020 Delhi riots: Court says unsafe to rely on tainted witness testimony

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A court here has acquitted 13 accused in a 2020 northeast Delhi riots case, saying the testimony of the key prosecution witness was under a "shadow of doubt". Additional Sessions Judge Parveen Singh said the CCTV footage relied upon for identification was too poor to establish the identity of the accused persons.

"Considering the fact that this witness had suddenly become an eyewitness and in view of the above discussion that the testimony of PW8 as an eyewitness is under a shadow of doubt, it will be unsafe to rely upon the testimony of PW8 (prosecution witness 8)," the court said in its recent order.

The case pertained to an incident on February 25, 2020, in the New Usmanpur police station area, where Raman Chauhan was allegedly attacked during the communal violence. Chauhan told the court that he could not



identify any of the rioters who had attacked him.

An FIR was registered at New Usmanpur police station against 13 accused identified as Mohammad Anas, Mobin, Mohd. Javed Khan alias Shanu, Faisal, Shahjad Khan alias Montu, Imran Khan, Badshah Khan, Irfan Khan, Siraj Khan, Arman alias Arbaz, Aman alias Suhail and Iqbal Khan alias Sonu.

The accused faced charges including rioting, rioting armed with deadly weapons, attempt to murder, criminal conspiracy and disobedience of an order promulgated by a public servant.

SC expresses concern over pendency of cases at NCDRC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday took serious note of the pendency of cases in the National Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission (NCDRC) and asked the Centre to consider setting up regional and circuit benches to clear the backlog.

The top court also called for performance audits of state and district consumer commissions. The forums should not become rehabilitation centres for retired judicial officers, it said.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana asked the Centre to consider setting up regional and circuit benches of the national consumer forum, saying a consumer must not be made to travel all the way to Delhi, instead, the forum



must go to them. The bench asked the chairman of the NCDRC to furnish a status report on total pending cases, total complaints filed, average rate of disposal of cases, estimated time likely for disposal of a pending case and need for increasing the strength of members of the commission.

The top court, which is monitoring the functioning of consumer commissions, including appointments, service conditions and infrastructure, said the report must be filed in two weeks.

The top court was informed that pendency of case is huge in NCDRC as the matters which are being taken up for hearing at present are from 2018-19.

While some lawyers informed the bench that if a matter is listed in June this year, then the next date of listing of the matter is almost next year while others said that 30-40 matters are normally listed in post-lunch session, which does not get disposed of.

The bench then told Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for Centre in the matter that if the arrears are piling up in the NCDRC, then the only option left is to increase the maximum strength of the commission. "We have a consumer friendly jurisprudence and pendency of cases can be reduced by increasing the number of benches," CJI Kant said.

their treatment. We are still deliberating, but under the disabled category, because we are not giving this concession to all disabled persons, then the other categories would also come and say that the concession should be given to them as well," the law officer said.

She said the Railways will not be able to differentiate amongst each disabled person. "We will give them, but under the patient category. How and how it would be given, those modalities, I would seek some time," the law officer said.

The CJI said that the relief should be given in a time-bound manner.

On July 16, the bench had sought the views of the Centre on the plea seeking concessional air-conditioned class rail fare for acid attack survivors to enable them to travel to well-equipped hospitals in cities for treatment.

It had asked Dave to take requisite instructions from the Ministry of Railways on the issue.

Dave had earlier said that there are 21 categories of persons with disabilities (PwDs) and the railways is already providing travel concessions to them. She said the railways is also contemplating providing an emergency travel quota for all categories of PwDs.

Dismiss CBI's challenge to discharge in excise case: Kejriwal, Sisodia to Delhi HC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

AAP leaders Arvind Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia on Monday urged the Delhi High Court to dismiss the CBI's petition challenging their discharge in the liquor policy case, stating that it was filed with "unprecedented haste" and in the "most unserious manner".

In separate applications, the former Delhi chief minister and his deputy assailed the maintainability of the CBI's revision petition, and said they have been unable to discern the agency's case against them in the "bare-shell" and "non-specific" petition.

"The CBI has preferred the present revision petition with unprecedented haste and in the most unserious manner. The present revision petition was filed only within four hours of passing of the order of discharge by



the Ld. Special Judge, which manifestly shows non-appreciation of the findings of the Ld. Special Judge in the discharge judgement running into more than 500 pages," the application stated.

"Thus, if such a petition is held to be maintainable, a grave prejudice will be caused to the respondent herein," it added.

Justice Manoj Jain is scheduled to hear on August 17 and 18 the CBI's petition assailing the trial court's

February 27 decision. On the last occasion, Justice Jain had granted a final opportunity to Kejriwal, Sisodia and Durgesh Pathak to respond to the plea within two weeks.

In the latest applications, Kejriwal and Sisodia asserted that the trial court discharged all accused persons after hearing the matter in detail for more than three months, but the CBI has not pointed out any specific finding that is "perverse" or

shows any irregularity. Claiming that the agency has merely pointed out "self-serving facts", they also claimed that the petition does not specifically state how the discharge of each accused was done without appreciating the evidence.

"The present petition is incomplete as it is without the material being relied upon and the specific averments in the order of discharge- hence it is liable to be dismissed in its present form. It is clear from the present petition filed by the CBI that not a single paragraph out of 1133 paragraphs of the discharge judgment is referred by CBI to suggest the perversity in the order," the application stated.

Kejriwal and Sisodia also emphasised that jurisdiction of the high court in the present case was limited and could be exercised cautiously, only in cases of grave perversity.

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1 in every 7 food orders now comes from 99 Store: Swiggy

Food delivery aggregator Swiggy on Thursday said it has witnessed remarkable growth in the affordability-led offering '99 Store' since its launch a year ago, with the platform accounting for one in every seven orders through the disruptive offering.

In the last one year, 99 Store has expanded to over 500 cities with an extensive network of over 1.8 lakh restaurant partners. 99 Store has a dedicated section within the Swiggy Food app. While it offers food across categories, the most popular food choices on 99 Store include Bowls and Thalys, South Indian Breakfast, Burgers and American food, Pizzas, Beverages, Chaats and other snacks. Sidharth Bhakoo, Chief Business Officer, Swiggy Food Marketplace, said, "The response over the last year has been phenomenal, with monthly orders growing 2.4x over the last year. Looking ahead, we are committed to expanding our partner network and bringing an even wider assortment of choices to our 99 Store customers."

AISATS offers jobs to armed forces dependents

Airport services provider AISATS plans to offer more jobs to Veer Naris, widows and wards of deceased armed forces personnel as it inducted the first batch of such people on Thursday.

Air India SATS Airport Services Pvt Ltd (AISATS) is an equal joint venture between Air India and Singapore's SATS. The first batch of 10 candidates will start working for AISATS at the Delhi airport. They will be deployed across key airport functions, including customer service executives, load control agents, cargo service agents and ramp agents, the company said on Thursday.

The recruitment has been done through its partnership with the Indian Army and the Army Welfare Placement Office (AWPO). At a briefing in the national capital, AISATS Chief Human Resources Officer said 46 more people have been shortlisted for recruitment through the partnership and that it would explore more opportunities.

"Veer Naris, widows and their wards have made extraordinary sacrifices for the nation, and while those sacrifices can never truly be repaid, we hope this initiative helps create opportunities for financial independence, professional growth, and a brighter future," he said.

Gold, silver imports soften in July

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

India's gold and silver imports softened in July following a sharp increase in customs duty on these precious metals, according to data released by the commerce ministry.

While gold imports rose by only 4.77 per cent to \$4.16 billion, silver imports dipped 66.1 per cent to \$171.68 million in July, the data showed. The

Government has increased import duty on precious metals from 6 per cent to 15 per cent effective May 13. Prices of the yellow metal

The Pioneer

BHOPAL | FRIDAY | AUGUST 14, 2026

India, US continue trade talks: Commerce Secretary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

India is in 'regular contact' with the US for negotiating the proposed bilateral trade agreement (BTA), Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal said on Thursday.

He said that both sides are committed to the framework deal that was agreed upon in February.

In February, both sides finalised contours for the first phase of the BTA.

However, changes in the tariff landscape in the US have led to further negotiations on the agreement between the two countries.

At present, the US has imposed an additional 10 per cent duty on Indian goods under a Section 301 probe on alleged forced labour concerns.

"We are engaged with the US side on the trade deal and our contacts are regular," Agarwal told reporters here.

On the issue of the USA's Russian oil tariff bill, the secretary declined to comment, saying it is a legislative process of the US, which is

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal

underway and is their internal process.

Earlier this month, the US Senate voted overwhelmingly to approve a bill to punish Russia and key buyers of its petroleum products, such as China and India, claiming that such trade helps fuel the Ukraine war.

This bill will allow US President Donald Trump to impose 100 per cent tariffs on goods from countries that are the top five importers of Russian oil and gas.

He said that a key outcome of a trade deal is that it brings in more stability and pre-

dictability in the trade relationship so that businesses can work along.

The commerce ministry said that India continues to actively engage with US authorities to resolve outstanding trade issues while working toward the early conclusion of the India-US BTA. On the bill, a source said that it is a matter of concern, but India is closely following developments and remains in touch with the US side at various levels and talks with them as reassuring.

The source also said that it is misleading and factually

incorrect to link the reforms in UPI to India-US trade discussions.

Recently, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has said that the first tranche of the bilateral trade agreement between India and the US will come into operation as soon as the United States is able to ensure that India gets a comparative advantage over its competitors.

The US has imposed an additional 10 per cent tariff on a number of countries, including India, from July 24. Countries, including Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia, are major competitors of India in the US market.

Tariff advantage vis-a-vis these nations will give price competitiveness to Indian goods in the American market. India exported goods worth about \$87 billion to the US in 2025-26. Goyal and USTR Jamieson Greer held bilateral talks in June on issues related to the first phase of the agreement.

'EXPORTS TO WEST ASIA REGION RISE 8.62% IN JULY'

New Delhi: India's exports to the West Asian region rose by 8.62 per cent year-on-year to \$5.7 billion in July, despite global uncertainties, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal said on Thursday. Exports to the West Asian countries stood at \$5.2 billion in the same month last year, as per the Government data.

The shipments to the region had declined for the first time in March due to the US-Iran conflict, but improved in April and further in May and June.

Agarwal said that trade is back to earlier levels with this region. The country's exports to the UAE rose 10.15 per cent to \$3.3 billion, but shipments to Saudi Arabia declined by 2.73 per cent year-on-year to \$763.7 million.

Imports from the UAE and Saudi Arabia dipped during the last month. However, imports from Oman more than doubled to \$1.57 billion. Indian

exporters are using three ports (Duqm, Sohar and Salalah) in Oman, and the Port of Fujairah and Khor Fakkan Port in the UAE to push exports to the region.

Earlier, the Port of Jebel Ali in the United Arab Emirates used to handle a lot of cargoes for that region, but it has faced operational disruptions due to the ongoing crisis.

The US-Iran war has impacted the movement of ships carrying cargoes in international waters, particularly through the Strait of Hormuz. India normally exports goods worth about \$6 billion every month to the region.

INDIA-SACU PTA

When asked why India has shifted its focus in trade negotiations from developed countries to the SACU group, the secretary said the world is increasingly integrating with the African continent, and India is starting with a preferential trade agreement (PTA).

(PNS)

Sensex up nearly 114 pts, Nifty ends below 24,400

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

Benchmark indices ended mixed on Thursday, with the Sensex rising nearly 114 points and the Nifty sliding over 40 points, as elevated crude prices and geopolitical uncertainty made investors cautious.

Fag-end buying helped the BSE Sensex to end the session in positive territory. The 30-share index settled 113.61 points, or 0.15 per cent, higher at 78,079.96. During the day, the benchmark hit a high of 78,119.39 and a low of 77,665.89, gyrating 453.5 points.

The 50-share NSE Nifty was marginally down 40.10

points, or 0.16 per cent, to end at 24,395.85, registering its third day of decline.

From the Sensex pack, InterGlobe Aviation, NTPC,

Industries, UltraTech Cement and Infosys were among the major laggards.

Elevated crude oil prices remain a key overhang, with geopolitical uncertainty in the Middle East preventing a stronger risk-on move. Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, declined 1.44 per cent to \$87.70 per barrel.

"Investor sentiment remained subdued as Brent crude hovered around the \$87-89 per barrel range, with persistent concerns over the Middle East and key shipping routes keeping energy prices elevated," Ajit Mishra, SVP – Research, Religare Broking, said.

Rupee falls 12 paise to close at 95.45 against US dollar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mumbai

The rupee depreciated 12 paise to 95.45 against the US dollar on Thursday, weighed by weak domestic markets and persistent foreign fund outflows amid lingering geopolitical risks.

Forex traders said investor sentiment remains fragile on the delay in the deal between the US and Iran and the broad strength of the American currency in the overseas markets.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 95.40 against the greenback and traded in a range of 95.35-95.48 during the session. It eventually settled at 95.45 (provisional), lower by 12 paise from its previous close.

On Wednesday, the rupee settled

just 3 paise higher at 95.33 against the US dollar. "We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on the delay in the deal between the

US and Iran and a strong dollar. However, renewed hopes of talks and softening of crude oil prices may support the rupee at lower levels.

"Any intervention by the RBI may also support the rupee at lower levels. Traders may take cues from US PPI inflation and weekly unemployment claims data. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 95.20 to 95.70," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset ShareKhan.

On the domestic macroeconomic front, retail inflation inched up to 4.45 per cent in July on expensive kitchen staples, including onion and ginger, even as the price rise remained above the Reserve Bank's median target for the second consecutive month

L&T bags mega order for India's largest AI facility

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Infrastructure major Larsen & Toubro (L&T) on Thursday said it has secured an order ranging between ₹10,000 and ₹15,000 crore to build the country's largest single-cluster Artificial Intelligence (AI) infrastructure facility, marking the company's foray into the AI Factory business.

Through its AI Infrastructure arm, LTN Compute, and L&T's AI and data centre business, Vyoma.AI, L&T will set up an NVIDIA B300-based AI Factory at its Chennai data centre campus to power the AI-native cloud platform of the US-based Together AI.

The AI Factory will power

the AI-native cloud platform for large-scale inference, fine-tuning and training workloads, strengthening India's AI infrastructure ecosystem while supporting global innovation, L&T said in a statement.

L&T has not revealed the exact value of the order. However, under its order classification, a 'mega order' ranges between ₹10,000 and ₹15,000 crore.

Vyoma's Chennai data centre campus, conceived as a gigawatt-scale AI infrastructure site, has been designed with Phase I capacity of 250 MW and power infrastructure readiness of 150 MVA, laying a scalable foundation for future AI Factory expansion.

The Pioneer

Classified

CHANGE OF NAME

It is for general information that I, Rijwan Khan S/o Irfan Khan R/o ward no 18, kile ke pass, Bhind, PO:Bhind, DIST: Bhind, Madhya Pradesh-477001 declare that name of mine and my mother has been wrongly written as Rijwaan Khan and Parveen Bano in my 10th Class Educational Documents. The actual name of mine and my mother are Rijwan Khan and Noor Bano.

न्यायालय अपर जिला दण्डाधिकारी, जिला बड़वानी (म.प्र.)
क्रमांक / 1071 / सीडर / 2026
बड़वानी, दिनांक 12/08/2026
प्र.क्र. / 0006 / ब-121 / 2026-27
पेशी दिनांक 18.08.2026
॥ सूचना पत्र ॥
बनाम :- 1. धीरज कुमार कानूनगो
2. खुशबू कानूनगो, पता- गोपी विहार कालोनी, टीकरी, तहसील टीकरी, जिला बड़वानी (म.प्र.)
...अनावेदक
सूचित किया जाता है कि आवेदक आईसीआईसीआई होम फाइनेंस कम्पनी लिमिटेड पंजीकृत कार्यालय आईसीआईसीआई बैंक टावर, बांद्रा कुर्ला कॉम्प्लेक्स, मुंबई-400051 (भारत), शाखा कार्यालय- शेखर सेंट्रल इंडिया, नं. 116, एबी रोड, मनोमार्गज, इंदौर- 452018, अधिकृत प्रबंधक पवन बंसल द्वारा आवेदन पत्र धारा - 14 वित्तीय आस्थितियों का प्रतिप्रतिकरण और पुनर्गठन तथा प्रतिप्रति हित प्रवर्तन अधिनियम, 2002 के तहत अनावेदक श्रेणी 1. धीरज कुमार कानूनगो, 2. खुशबू कानूनगो पता- गोपी विहार कालोनी, टीकरी, तहसील टीकरी, जिला बड़वानी (म.प्र.) विरुद्ध शपथ पत्र सहित प्रस्तुत किया गया है कि आप अनावेदक श्रेणी को लोन की राशि रुपये 55,000/- एवं राशि रुपये 55,000/- इस प्रकार कुल राशि रुपये 8,60,000/- का प्राप्त कर बैंक के पक्ष में प्रतिप्रति के रूप में अचल सम्पत्ति बंधक रखी गई है :- रेसीडेन्सी प्लॉट नंबर 188, ब्रजमार्ग, कालोनी, सर्वे नंबर 131/1, 132/1, 131/2, 132/2, टीकरी, तहसील टीकरी, जिला बड़वानी (म.प्र.) जिसका कुल क्षेत्रफल 92.93 वर्गमीटर होकर बंधक रखी गई है। प्राप्त उक्त ऋण राशि का भुगतान नहीं करने से संबंधित उक्त सम्पत्ति का भौतिक कब्जा दिलाने हेतु निवेदन किया गया है।
2. उपरोक्तानुसार आपको प्रदान की गई वित्तीय सहायता राशि को अनुबंध की शर्त अनुसार नियत अवधि में जमा नहीं किया गया, जिस बाबद आवेदक आईसीआईसीआई होम फाइनेंस कम्पनी लिमिटेड द्वारा जारी की गई फाइड लाइन एवं दिशो-निर्देशों के प्रकाश में उक्त ऋण खते को दिनांक 09.07.2025 को एम.पी.ए. क्लासिफाइड कर दिया तथा प्रतिप्रति के रूप में रखी गई उक्त सम्पत्ति का कब्जा दिरु जमा के अयोग्य प्रतिप्रति हित प्रवर्तन अधिनियम, 2002 की धारा 13(2) के अंतर्गत बकाया राशि रुपये 8,83,683/- ब्याज व अन्य खर्च सहित जमा करने हेतु सूचना पत्र दिनांक 14.07.2025 को प्रेषित किया गया तथा दो प्रमुख दैनिक समाचार पत्रों में प्रकाशन किया गया, लेकिन 60 दिवस की अवधि के बाद भी बकाया राशि जमा नहीं की जाने से धारा 13(4) के तहत बंधक उक्त सम्पत्ति का सार्वजनिक अधिकार प्राप्त किया गया है तथा उक्त सम्पत्ति का भौतिक कब्जा प्राप्त करने में सहायता प्रदान करने हेतु निवेदन किया है।
3. उपरोक्तानुसार आप मूलभूत द्वारा अधिनियम की धारा 13(2) के अंतर्गत सूचना प्रति दिनांक से 60 दिवस के भीतर कोई आपत्ति आदि प्रस्तुत नहीं करने से आवेदक द्वारा अधिनियम की धारा 13(4) के अंतर्गत सूचना जारी करने के पश्चात उपर्युक्त बंधक सम्पत्ति का भौतिक अधिकार अधिनियम की धारा 14 के तहत दिलाने हेतु निवेदन किया गया है।
अतः आवेदक द्वारा प्रस्तुत आवेदन पत्र अनुसार उल्लिखित उक्त अचल सम्पत्ति का आपत्तिय आवेदक को क्यों न दिलाया जाए, इस संबंध में प्रकरण में निमत दिनांक 18.08.2026 को आप रविवार अथवा जरिए अभिभाषक के इस न्यायालय के समक्ष साथ 4.00 बजे उपस्थित होकर अपनी पक्ष प्रस्तुत करें। सूचना उपरान्त अनुपस्थित रहने की दशा में एकपक्षीय कार्यवाही कर नियमानुसार आगामी कार्यवाही की जाएगी।
अपर जिला दण्डाधिकारी, जिला- बड़वानी (म.प्र.)

FORM No. IV (See-sub-rule (2A) of rule 5) Summon under sub-section 19 of the Act, read with sub rule (2A) of rule 5 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure) Rules, 1993. BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL, JABALPUR, 2nd & 3rd Floor, Sanchar Vikas Bhavan (BNSL Building), Near Head Post Office, Residency Road, JABALPUR (M.P.) 482001

CASE NO. OA No. 1828/2025

Indian Bank APPLICANT

-VERSUS-

M/s Kunjal Singh & Co and others.....DEFENDANTS

2. Nivendra Singh S/o Shri Surendra Singh R/o Agroha Villa, Katni Road Maihar, District- Satna (M.P.).

Whereas, OA No. 1828/25 was listed before Hon'ble Presiding Officer on 29/01/26 Whereas this Hon'ble Tribunal Please to issue summons/notice on the said Application under 19(4) of the Act, (OA) filed against you for recovery of debts of Rs.66,41,411/-with expenses & future interest. (application along with copies of documents etc. annexed). In accordance with sub section (4) of section 19 of the act, you, the defendants are directed as under:- (i) To show cause within thirty days of the service of summons as to why relief prayed for should not be granted; (ii) To disclose particulars of properties or assets other than properties and assets specified by the applicant under serial number 3A of the Original Application; (iii) You are restrained from dealing with or disposing of secured assets or such others assets and properties disclosed under serial number 3A of the original application, pending hearing and disposal of the application for attachment of properties; (iv) You shall not transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise, except in the ordinary course of his business any of the assets over which security interest is created and/or other assets and properties specified or disclosed under serial number 3A of the original application without the prior approval of the Tribunal; (v) You shall be liable to account for the sale proceeds realized by sale of secured assets or other assets and properties in the ordinary course of business and deposit such sale proceeds in the account maintained with the bank or financial institutions holding security interest over such assets. You are also directed to the written statement with a copy thereof furnished to the applicant and to appear before registrar on 06.01.2027 at 10:30 Am failing which the application shall be heard and decided in your absence. Give under my hard and seal of the Tribunal on this the 11th day of Aug 2026 By Order of the Tribunal.

Registrar :Debt Recovery Tribunal, Jabalpur

बैंक ऑफ़ बड़ौदा

Bank of Baroda

Morena Branch Dist - Morena (M.P.)-476001, Mob. : 72477-70054, Email ID: morena@bankofbaroda.com Website : www.bankofbaroda.in

POSSESSION NOTICE [RULE 8 (1)] FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

Whereas, the Undersigned being the Authorised officer of the Bank of Baroda Under the securitisation and reconstruction of Financial assets and Enforcement of security interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the security interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notice upon the Borrower calling to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice being within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower having failed to repay the amount, Notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken the possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under section 13(4) of the Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on this the borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealing with the property will be subject to the charges of Bank of Baroda For an amount as shown below and Interest thereon.

Name & Address of Borrower	Description of the Property	Demand Notice Date Amount Possession Date
Borrower: Mr. Rambabu	Property Owner - All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Survey No. 21 Min 1, Ward 3 Kabir Ward Mauja Badokhar, Area-1000 Sqft. (92.93 Sq. Mtr.) Tehsil & Dist- Morena (M.P.)-476001, Boundaries : East : Common Road 20 Feet Wide after that khet Arvind Pankaj Dandotiya, West : Land Owner Plot, North : Plot Barelal, South : Land Owner Plot	Demand Notice Date 27-04-2026 Rs. 18,70,480.95/- + Interest & other expenses Possession Date: 12-08-2026

Place: Gwalior

Date: 13/08/2026

Authorised officer, Bank of Baroda

HDFC BANK

POSSESSION NOTICE

Registered Office, HDFC Bank House, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel (West), Mumbai - 400013.

Ref No: HDFC/KGC/H-1/26

Date: 04/08/2026

1. Ramkishan Yadav S/o. Kamta Yadav (Primary Applicant)

2. Hari Shankar Yadav S/o. Ramkishan Yadav (Co-Applliant-1)

3. Nathuram Yadav S/o. Kamta Yadav (Co-Applliant-2)

4. Malkhan Yadav S/o. Kamta Yadav (Co-Applliant-3)

5. Bhagvandas Yadav S/o. Kamta Yadav (Co-Applliant-4)

All R/o.: H.No. 68, Vill. Ganeshpura, Post Ahar, Tehsil Baldeogarh, Distt. Tikamgarh, MP-472111

R/o. W.No. 1, Near Purani Tehri, Near Deviji Mandir, Tikamgarh, Distt. Tikamgarh, MP-472001

SUB: POSSESSION OF THE SECURITIES CHARGED TO THE BANK UNDER SECTION 13(4) OF SECURITIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002.

Please refer to our letter dated 23/05/2026 demanding from you within 60 days a Sum of Rs. 28,51,532.67/- (Rs. Twenty Eight Lakhs Fifty One Thousand Five Hundred Thirty Two and Sixty Seven Paise Only), is towards the other charges, along with the future interest and incidental expenses mention therein till the date of full and final payment in respect of various credit facilities allowed as specified in the said letter and intimating you that in case of default of payment, bank shall enforce the securities without intervention of court by taking recourse to one or more of the measures under Chapter III of the above Act, 2002 including taking over the possession of the assets /property charged to the bank to realize the Bank's dues.

However, you have failed to repay the above-mentioned amount along with the future interest and incidental expenses from 23/05/2026 to till date, therefore; the Bank shall be at liberty to recover the same hereby taking the possession of the secured assets /properties and selling the same.

The Undersigned being the authorized officer of HDFC Bank Ltd., under the said Act in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 13(4) of the said act hereby demand you to hand over the possession of the secured assets / properties given below to the undersigned on the following date and time.

Date: 10-August-2026

Time: 11 A.M onwards

Place: Ramkishan Yadav S/o. Kamta Yadav, R/o. H. No. 68, Vill. Ganeshpura, Post Ahar, Gali No. 2, Tehsil Baldeogarh, Distt. Tikamgarh, MP -472111

Security:-

Sr. No.	Name of Owner	Type / Nature	Address of Property	Area
1.	Hari Shankar Yadav S/o. Ramkishan Yadav	Tikamgarh Kila, Patwari Halka-18, W.No.-27, Part of Kharsa No.-592/1, Thai Mohalla, Mamon Darwaja, RIC-Tikamgarh, Tehsil & District Tikamgarh, MP 472001.	Plot Area- 50x50= 2500 Sqft First Floor= 4 Shop, and 4 BHK Rooms, Construction Area-Ground Floor-2500 Sqft. First Floor-Under Construction	
	Nathuram Yadav S/o. Kamta Yadav			
	Malkhan Yadav S/o. Kamta Yadav			

Date : 13.08.2026

Place : MADHYA PRADESH

For HDFC Bank Ltd. Authorized Officer

US envoy calls West Bank settler siege act of terror



SAM METZ ■ Jerusalem

The US Ambassador to Israel condemned the actions of Jewish settlers who are besieging the home of an American Palestinian family in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. US Ambassador Mike Huckabee called the siege a "horrific act of terror."

Since Sunday, according to local officials and family members, settlers have gathered near the home in the village of Qusra and harassed those inside, defying efforts by the Israeli military to defuse the situation.

A group that has included up to dozens of men has thrown stones, attempted to bring down a stone wall nearby, and prevented the occupants from leaving despite dwindling supplies.

Speaking to The Associated Press by phone from his home in Ohio, the home's owner Lou Ridi said his 48-year-old brother and nephew, who have been holed up in the home to

defend it, had been unable to leave the house and did not have access to food or water for several days.

On Thursday morning, the owner's brother Qusai Abu Rida said that he and his teenage son had been evacuated by Israel's military. It was unclear what would happen to the property and at least one other that has been targeted. Israeli troops intervened in recent days to try to restore order. The military said that overnight Thursday its troops had dismantled "two illegal outposts" on the outskirts of Qusra and a nearby village, and detained one Israeli. It added that additional soldiers had surged to the area, which is about 16 kilometers (10 miles) of the Palestinian city of Nablus, to "carry out defensive missions and patrols." Journalists on the outskirts of Qusra said roads into the village were closed. Israeli police did not immediately respond to questions about whether any Israeli

civilians had been arrested. Palestinians and the Israeli opposition accuse Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hardline government of turning a blind eye to attacks by settlers against Palestinians as clashes have surged in the last few years.

Huckabee's post on X was an unusually sharp rebuke from a US official, even as he defended the Israeli military's response.

Huckabee is a longtime ally of Israel's settler movement and in the past has expressed support for Israeli control over the occupied West Bank while condemning settler violence. Home security footage from Thursday morning appeared to show a few settlers still hiding by a damaged stone wall near the house.

Ridi said that settlers have been harassing his home for months before the situation escalated in recent days, saying they had cut off the water and electricity to

his house and thrown stones, causing damage to the property as well as at least one more house in the area. "We are prisoners in our own house, hostages in our own house," he said.

Last month, a mosque in Qusra was set on fire in another apparent settler attack. That followed the killing of an Israeli settler, which triggered violence that left two Israeli soldiers and four Palestinian villagers dead.

Settlers have been building more outposts in an effort condemned by many in the international community as aimed at dismantling any remaining hopes of establishing a Palestinian state in the occupied West Bank. The Palestinians seek the West Bank, captured by Israel in the 1967 war, as part of a future State. Many settlers and their supporters say the entire area should belong to Israel for historical, religious and security reasons.

Gas pipeline destroyed in Pakistan's Balochistan province



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Karachi

Militants have blown up a pipeline of a state-run gas company, disrupting supply to several towns and cities, including parts of the capital Quetta, in the restive Balochistan province of Pakistan, officials said on Thursday.

The explosion occurred at the KMP-246 Valve Assembly in the Bolan riverbed area near Gorkat, around 700 to 800 metres from the main Quetta-Sibi Road of Kachhi district, a spokesperson of Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) said.

The explosion damaged the 18-inch-wide pipeline, disrupting the gas supply since Wednesday night, the spokesperson said.

A senior police officer said the militants had blown the pipeline by planting explosives and detonating it with a remote control.

Security had been increased in the area and security is also being provided to the SSGC teams doing the repair work.

The gas utility said that the management is closely monitoring the situation and working to restore supplies at the earliest.

Ex-Nepal PM Deuba returns after treatment

SHIRISH B PRADHAN ■ Kathmandu

Former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba returned to Nepal on Thursday after spending more than five months abroad for medical treatment following injuries sustained during the Gen Z

protests last year. Deuba and his wife, former foreign minister Arzu Rana Deuba, were seriously injured during violent protests on September 9, 2025, when anti-Government demonstrations led by the Gen Z movement swept across Nepal and resulted in the fall of the K P Sharma Oli

Government. The couple travelled to Singapore in February for medical treatment. Deuba, who is also the former president of Nepali Congress (NC), reportedly stayed in Hong Kong for a brief period as well.

According to his party leaders, Deuba landed at Tribhuvan International

Airport here in the afternoon after completing his medical treatment. The whereabouts of Rana remain unclear. Deuba was received at the airport by senior NC leaders, including Purna Bahadur Khadka, Shashanka Koirala, Prakash Man Singh and Bimalendra Nidhi, among others.



बैंक ऑफ महाराष्ट्र
Bank of Maharashtra
पारत सरकार का उपक्रम

JABALPUR ZONAL OFFICE, WRIGHT TOWN,
JABALPUR PH: 0761-2480065,67,68

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 15.09.2026**, 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																																																								
Branch - Asset Recovery Branch Borrower : M/s Alok Chemtech Prop. Shri Prem Chawla G-2/161, Gulmohar Colony, Bhopal, M.P. Corporate office- E-2/133, Arera Colony, Bhopal, M.P. Smt. Sarita Chawala, w/o Shri Prem Chawala, Plot no. 120, New Industrial Area II, Mandideep, District Raipur, M.P. (Guarantor)	Rs. 3,48,58,430/- (Three crore Forty eight lakhs fifty eight thousand Four hundred and thirty only) + unapplied interest and penal charges thereon w.e.f. 28/07/2014	Open land situated at Khasra no.91/2/1, village Simrai, behind Rajput Dhaba and family Restaurant, ward no.25, Tatya Tope Ward Mandideep, Tehsil: Goharganj, Dist: Raipur, area admeasuring 87048.40 sq.ft	Symbolic	Rs. 18000000/- Rs. 1800000/- Rs. 10000/-																																																								
1. Sahib Siksha evam Samaj Kalyan Samiti E 8/42, Bharat Nagar, Shahpura, Bhopal, 462039. Indore Office Address: 25/1/1, Gram Morod, Khandwa Road, Indore. Through its Directors: (1) Mr. Mohd. Faisal Khan (Chairman) (2) Dr. Asiya Faisal Khan (Secretary) Guarantors: (1) Mr. Mohd. Faisal Khan S/o Zafar Ahmed Khan. R/o 76-77-78, Indus Empire, Shahpura, Bawadiya Kala, Bhopal, 462026. (2) Dr. Asiya Faisal Khan (Secretary), R/o 78, Indus Garden, Bawadiya Kala, Bhopal, 462026. (3) Mr. Zafar Ahmed Khan s/o Mohd Ahmed, R/o 169/2, Juna Risala, Indore, 452006. (4) Smt. Tanveer Khan w/o Zafar Ahmed Khan, R/o 169/2, Juna Risala, Indore, 452006. (5) Mohd Imran Khan s/o Zafar Ahmed Khan, R/o 169/2, Juna Risala, Indore, 452006. (6)Sayed Sajid Ali s/o Syed Sahib Ali, E 8/42, Bharat Nagar, Shahpura, Bhopal, 462039. (7) Smt. Fauzia Ali w/o Syed Sazid Ali , E 8/42, Bharat Nagar, Shahpura, Bhopal, 462039.	Rs. 7,15,12,770 (Seven crore Fifteen Lakh Twelve thousand Seven Hundred Seventy only) + Unapplied Interest @ 9.30 % p.a. with monthly rest w.e.f. 26.09.2024 + penal interest and other charges / expenses	School Building constructed on Diverted land with Khasra no.89/1, 139/4, PH no. 33/53 Village: Barkhedi, 250 mtr in side Sehore- Bhopal Road, area admeasuring 192066 sq.ft. constructed area 62261.46 sq.ft	Symbolic	Rs.100500000/- Rs.10050000/- Rs. 10000/-																																																								
Branch - Asset Recovery Branch Borrower: Sourabh Sethi Dairy Farm, M/s Sourabh Sethi Dairy Farm Proprietor, Mr. Sourabh Sethi S/o Neval Kumar Sethi, and Guarantors Mrs. Nisha Sethi W/o Late Neval Kumar Sethi and Mr. Vipin Kumar Sethi, House no. 1859, Near Sanatan Dharam Mandir, Gorakhpur	Rs.2,30,21,122/- (Rupees Two Crore Thirty Lakh Twenty One Thousand One Hundred Twenty Two Only plus applicable unapplied interest + penal interest thereon and other charges and expenses w.e.f 25.07.2024	Godown animal Shed at Mouza Imaliya, N.B: no.07, PHN-16/21, New-1, Khasra no. 30.32/2.36/1, Guru Govind Singh ward no. 76, The & Dist: Jabalpur area admeasuring 29866 sq.ft.	Symbolic	Rs. 24241000/- Rs. 2424100/- Rs. 10000/-																																																								
Branch - Asset Recovery Branch Borrower: 1. M/s U R Engineering Prop. Rajan Mishra S/o Shri Munnail Mishra, 52B, Industrial area 1, AB Road, Dewas, 455001. 2. Smt. Usha Mishra w/o Shri Rajan Mishra, R/o 119, Tilak Nagar, AB Road, Dewas, 455001. 3. Shri Akram Baksh S/o Shri Shakur Baksh 13, Anand Nagar, Ujjain Road, Dewas, 455001.	Rs.3,09,25,642/- (Rupees Three crores Nine lakhs Twenty five thousands Six hundred forty two only) + Unapplied interest on contractual rate w.e.f. 06.04.2017+ penal interest thereon and other charges and expenses	Industrial Shed & infrastructure built over leasehold land in Industrial area 1, Plot no. 52-B, A B Road, Dewas area admeasuring 12589.20 sq.ft + plant and machinery	Symbolic	Rs. 4253000/- Rs. 425300/- Rs. 10000/-																																																								
Branch - Asset Recovery Branch Borrower: 1.M/s Radhika Rice Mill Through Prop. Mrs. Garima Pachori D/o Shri Shyam Manohar Through its POA Mr. Varun Pachori Add-1 House No.1312, Pachori House, Wright Town Jabalpur 482002 2.Mrs. Garima Pachori Add-2 Khasra No. 147/1 Village Amarpur Patan, Jabalpur - 483113 Guarantor: 1.Mr. Varun Pachori S/o Shri Shyam Manohar Add-1 House No.1312, Pachori House, Wright Town Jabalpur 482002 2. Mr. Varun Pachori Add-2 Khasra No. 147/1 Village Amarpur Patan, Jabalpur - 483113	Rs.2,08,38,787/- (Rupees Two Crore Eight Lakh Thirty eight Thousand Seven Hundred and eighty seven Only plus applicable unapplied interest + penal interest thereon and other charges and expenses w.e.f 30.05.2023	Open land with warehouse M/s Radhika Rice Mill Situated at Mouza Amarpur, Kh no. 147/1 after mutation KH. No. 147/1/1, PH no. 52 (plot area 11836 sq.ft) builtup area 11223 sq.ft And Kh no. 147/1 after mutation KH. No. 147/1/2, PH no. 52, (plot area 11836 sq.ft)builtup area 6,755.24 sq.ft Mouza: Amarpur, Udna- Bhedaghat to patan Road, RNM- Patan, Tehsil: Patan, Dist: Jabalpur	Symbolic	Rs.11588000/- Rs.1158800/- Rs. 10000/-																																																								
Branch - Asset Recovery Branch Borrower: M/s Matrachaya Jewellers Prop. Amit Soni & Mr.Amit Soni, Mrs. Annie Soni C/o Shri Brij Mohan Soni, 1652 Dixitpura Gurutriaha	Rs.6393604/- (Rupees Sixty three Lakh Ninety Three Thousand Six Hundred Four Only) plus applicable unapplied interest, Penal Interest thereon and other charges and expenses w.e.f 03.12.2024	Municipal corporation house no 595 nazul block 48 plot no 133/2 Jawaharganj ward no 22 Niwadganj, inside gali from Jawahar ganj main road Jabalpur /Area Admeasuring 924 sq ft, undivided share area 660 sq ft	Symbolic	Rs. 10145000/- Rs. 1014500/- Rs. 10000/-																																																								
Branch - Asset Recovery Branch Borrower : Shri Vinod Sahu Mrs. Sapna Sahu House No 2741, Tripuri Chowk ,Garha ward, Purwa Jabalpur - 482003,	Rs.2526801/- (Rupees Twenty five Lakh Twenty Six Thousand Eight Hundred One Only) plus applicable unapplied interest + penal interest thereon and other charges and expenses w.e.f 21.10.2024	Lay out Plot No.42 Divya Jyoti Parisar Firm,Vill: Binaik, N.B 296,Kh. No. 170 & 172/2,Tah Patan, Phase II, Dist: Jabalpur Admesuring Plot area 946 sqft	Physical	Rs.1277000/- Rs. 127700/- Rs. 10000/-																																																								
Branch - Asset Recovery Branch Borrower : 1. Babu Sahab Builders, "Babu Sahab Parisar", 67- Ghora Nakkas, Bhopal (M.P), 462001 (Borrower) Guarantor- 2. Smt. Kusum Lata Srivastava, "Babu Sahab Parisar", 67- Ghora Nakkas, Bhopal (M.P.)462001 3. Shri Harish Srivastava, "Babu Sahab Parisar", 67- Ghora Nakkas, Bhopal (M.P.)462001 4. Shri Yuvraj Srivastava, "Babu Sahab Parisar", 67- Ghora Nakkas, Bhopal (M.P.)462001 (Guarantor)	Rs. 1,96,65,159/- (One Crore Ninety Six lakh Sixty five thousand one hundred and fifty nine only) + unapplied interest and penal charges thereon w.e.f. 01.04.2015	Second and Third floor, Plot no.67, Ghoda Nakkas, " Babu Sahab Parisar", Tehsil Huzur, Bhopal, area admeasuring 9992 sq.ft. shops at second floor as given below-	Symbolic																																																									
				<table><tr><td>S1</td><td>Rs.1059000/- Rs.105900/- Rs. 10000/-</td><td>S2</td><td>Rs.103300/- Rs. 10000/-</td><td>S3</td><td>Rs.933000/- Rs. 93300/- Rs. 10000/-</td><td>S4</td><td>Rs.1398000/- Rs.139800/- Rs. 10000/-</td></tr><tr><td>S5</td><td>Rs.123000/- Rs. 10000/-</td><td>S6</td><td>Rs.119400/- Rs. 10000/-</td><td>S7</td><td>Rs.122700/- Rs. 10000/-</td><td>S8</td><td>Rs.146800/- Rs. 10000/-</td></tr><tr><td>S9</td><td>Rs.1123000/- Rs.112300/- Rs. 10000/-</td><td>S10</td><td>Rs.1157000/- Rs.115700/- Rs. 10000/-</td><td>S11</td><td>Rs.148800/- Rs.148800/- Rs. 10000/-</td><td>S12</td><td>Rs.1339000/- Rs.133900/- Rs. 10000/-</td></tr><tr><td>S13</td><td>Rs.972000/- Rs.97200/- Rs. 10000/-</td><td>S14</td><td>Rs.914000/- Rs.91400/- Rs. 10000/-</td><td>S15</td><td>Rs.967000/- Rs.96700/- Rs. 10000/-</td><td>S16</td><td>Rs.1000000/- Rs.100000/- Rs. 10000/-</td></tr><tr><td>S17</td><td>Rs.1048000/- Rs.104800/- Rs. 10000/-</td><td>S18</td><td>Rs.1018000/- Rs.101800/- Rs. 10000/-</td><td>S19</td><td>Rs.1080000/- Rs.108000/- Rs. 10000/-</td><td>S20</td><td>Rs.1493000/- Rs.149300/- Rs. 10000/-</td></tr><tr><td>S21</td><td>Rs.1128000/- Rs.112800/- Rs. 10000/-</td><td>S22</td><td>Rs.1128000/- Rs.112800/- Rs. 10000/-</td><td>S23</td><td>Rs.1111000/- Rs.111100/- Rs. 10000/-</td><td>S24</td><td>Rs.1120000/- Rs.112000/- Rs. 10000/-</td></tr><tr><td>S25</td><td>Rs.1128000/- Rs.112800/- Rs. 10000/-</td><td>S26</td><td>Rs.1155000/- Rs.115500/- Rs. 10000/-</td><td>S27</td><td>Rs.1341000/- Rs.134100/- Rs. 10000/-</td><td>S28</td><td>Rs.1195000/- Rs.119500/- Rs. 10000/-</td></tr></table>	S1	Rs.1059000/- Rs.105900/- Rs. 10000/-	S2	Rs.103300/- Rs. 10000/-	S3	Rs.933000/- Rs. 93300/- Rs. 10000/-	S4	Rs.1398000/- Rs.139800/- Rs. 10000/-	S5	Rs.123000/- Rs. 10000/-	S6	Rs.119400/- Rs. 10000/-	S7	Rs.122700/- Rs. 10000/-	S8	Rs.146800/- Rs. 10000/-	S9	Rs.1123000/- Rs.112300/- Rs. 10000/-	S10	Rs.1157000/- Rs.115700/- Rs. 10000/-	S11	Rs.148800/- Rs.148800/- Rs. 10000/-	S12	Rs.1339000/- Rs.133900/- Rs. 10000/-	S13	Rs.972000/- Rs.97200/- Rs. 10000/-	S14	Rs.914000/- Rs.91400/- Rs. 10000/-	S15	Rs.967000/- Rs.96700/- Rs. 10000/-	S16	Rs.1000000/- Rs.100000/- Rs. 10000/-	S17	Rs.1048000/- Rs.104800/- Rs. 10000/-	S18	Rs.1018000/- Rs.101800/- Rs. 10000/-	S19	Rs.1080000/- Rs.108000/- Rs. 10000/-	S20	Rs.1493000/- Rs.149300/- Rs. 10000/-	S21	Rs.1128000/- Rs.112800/- Rs. 10000/-	S22	Rs.1128000/- Rs.112800/- Rs. 10000/-	S23	Rs.1111000/- Rs.111100/- Rs. 10000/-	S24	Rs.1120000/- Rs.112000/- Rs. 10000/-	S25	Rs.1128000/- Rs.112800/- Rs. 10000/-	S26	Rs.1155000/- Rs.115500/- Rs. 10000/-	S27	Rs.1341000/- Rs.134100/- Rs. 10000/-	S28	Rs.1195000/- Rs.119500/- Rs. 10000/-
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Inspection of Properties by bidder: 10.09.2026 to 11.09.2026 between 11:00 am. and 4:00 pm
Last Date & Time for Submission of Bid application/KYC documents/EMD etc. 15.09.2026 up to 11.00 a.m.
Date & time of E-auction with auto extention for 10 minutes- 15.09.2026 between 12.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m.

The auction sale will be On-line E-Auction / Bidding through website <https://baanknet.com>, email: support.baanknet@psballiance.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 in <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.O.) - 9923257090 & Shri Hariom Trivedi (CM & Authorised Officer) - 9405719723
Note- The sales are subject to the order/outcome of any case pending/ filed if any before Court/Tribunal

Date: 14/08/2026

Sale Notice to Borrower/Guarantors/Legal Heirs(LRs):Coparceners
The above shall be treated as Notice of 15/30days u/r 9(1) of security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002

Authorised Officer, Bank of Maharashtra

PROSPECT



ONGC Chairman & CEO Arun Kumar called on Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma in Guwahati and committed ₹25 crore towards Assam floods (₹5 crore to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund and ₹20 crore to help rebuild over 700 flood-affected schools, with nearly ₹3 lakh per school)

Fire incident at ONGC installation in Kalol Field brought under control

A minor fire incident was reported this morning at one of ONGC's installations in the Kalol Field. ONGC's Fire and Emergency Response teams responded immediately and successfully extinguished the fire.

No injury or harm to any personnel has been reported. The situation is fully under control, and normal production operations have been completely restored. ONGC places the highest priority on the safety of its personnel, assets and neighbouring communities. The Corporation remains committed to maintaining robust safety standards and emergency-response preparedness across all its operational locations.



Delhi Transco appeals to people not to fly kites near high tension lines



With kite flying expected to increase during the monsoon season and around Independence Day, Delhi Transco appeals to the public to fly kites in open spaces such as parks and playgrounds and should not use metal-coated manjha for their safety and smooth transmission of power because their minor carelessness can lead to major power failure, blackout, electrocution or even death.

The extra high voltage transmission lines are the corridor to transmit bulk power feeding the larger areas. Whenever there is a tripping due to entangling of kites, it takes considerable time to locate and remove the kite from the line; therefore, it may result in an outage for a long time. During the last few years many trippings running in the few hundreds have occurred in the Delhi Power System, which includes both transmission and distribution, due to kite flying on 15th August.

UPSIDA CEO inspects Ex-LIDA, Sarojini Nagar industrial areas

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE Lucknow

Under the leadership of the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath, the Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority (UPSIDA) is continuously working towards strengthening and expanding industrial infrastructure across the State. The Authority is making a significant contribution towards achieving the vision of transforming Uttar Pradesh into a 1 Trillion Economy.

In this direction, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), UPSIDA, conducted a field inspection of the Ex-LIDA Industrial Area and Sarojini Nagar Industrial Area on Thursday. During the inspection, detailed information regarding the infrastructure facilities, industrial activities and other related arrangements available in



the areas was obtained from the concerned officers and representatives of the industrial community.

During the visit to the Ex-LIDA Industrial Area, the CEO conducted a detailed on-site assessment of various facilities and directed the concerned officers to ensure that basic infrastructure facilities are strengthened, properly maintained and systematically managed in accordance with the requirements of industrial units.

Particular emphasis was

laid on the proper maintenance and upkeep of roads, drainage systems, street lighting, water supply, sanitation, electrical infrastructure and plantation within the industrial area.

Subsequently, the CEO visited the Ashok Leyland unit located in Sarojini Nagar Industrial Area and reviewed its industrial activities and operations. Thereafter, a meeting was held with the office-bearers and representatives of the Industrial Association. During the

meeting, detailed discussions were held on various issues related to the industrial area, infrastructure facilities, maintenance works and matters raised by the entrepreneurs.

The CEO stated that UPSIDA is continuously working towards promoting industrial investment in Uttar Pradesh and creating a conducive environment for industries. Effective management of basic infrastructure facilities, time-bound resolution of issues faced by entrepreneurs, and regular engagement with the industrial community are among the key priorities of the Authority.

The concerned officers were directed to examine the issues and suggestions received from industrial units in accordance with the applicable rules and ensure their time-bound and effective resolution.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah and his wife Sonal Shah on Thursday unfurled the Tiranga at his Delhi residence under the Har Ghar Tiranga campaign

Ramraj Cotton launches PANCHHAATM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

Ramraj Cotton has launched PANCHHAATM, a new handloom offering that reimagines the traditional Santhali weave of Mayurbhanj, Odisha, as a contemporary Dhoti. Through Panchaa, the brand continues its effort to bring India's lesser-known weaving traditions into the spotlight, creating renewed recognition and livelihood opportunities for the tribal women weavers who keep the craft alive.

Traditionally woven as sarees by women of the Santhali tribal community, this distinctive weave has gradually faded from prominence over the decades due to declining patronage, changing lifestyles and limited market opportunities. Recognising both its artistic value and its potential for contemporary relevance, KR Nagarajan, Founder & Chairman, Ramraj Cotton, has now reimagined the Santhali weave in the form of the Dhoti through Panchaa. Panchaa retains the traditional character of the weave while giving it a new,



wider relevance. Each piece is handwoven in 100 per cent cotton with an off-white base and azo-free dyes, combining a plain weave with an extra-weft technique — a reflection of the skill of the weavers who continue to practise this generations-old tradition.

Commenting on the launch, The Culturepreneur, KR Nagarajan, Founder & Chairman, Ramraj Cotton, said, "The Santhali weave of Mayurbhanj is one such treasure. We believed it deserved a wider audience without losing its authenticity. With Panchaa, we have reimagined this traditional weave as a dhoti, creating a new avenue for the craft while preserving the skill and identity behind it. Our hope is that this initiative encourages greater appreciation for the weave and strengthens the livelihoods of the women weavers who have kept this tradition alive."

124th SLBC meeting held in New Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

The 124th meeting of the State Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC), Delhi, was held on Wednesday at Hyatt Regency, New Delhi. The meeting was chaired by Principal Secretary Santosh Vaidya and M Parmasivam, Executive Director, Punjab National Bank.

The meeting was attended by several senior officials and banking-sector dignitaries, including Sarada Prasan Mohanty, Regional Director, Reserve Bank of India, New Delhi; Nazuk Kumar, Managing Director, Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (DSIIDC); Rajneesh Gupta, Joint Commissioner of Delhi Police; MM Ayeppan, Joint Secretary, Department of Financial Services; and Nabin Roy, Chief General Manager, NABARD.

The proceedings were coordinated by Debarchan Sahoo, General Manager and SLBC Convenor. Senior officials from various banks,



Delhi State Heads and other distinguished representatives also participated in the meeting. During the meeting, Santosh D Vaidya has reviewed the performance of banks under PM Suryaagar and various social security schemes.

MM Ayyappan has advised the bank to improve TAT in lending. Sarada Prasan Mohanty, Regional Director, RBI, has said that with coordination with SLBC, we will monitor Msme growth of banking sector. Nazuk Kumar briefed the participating banks on the Delhi State DCGS scheme where 95 per cent cgtnse covers is available. She encouraged banks to actively extend finance to eligible beneficiaries under these schemes and emphasised the role of credit support in promoting entrepreneurship and economic development in Delhi.

CM Sukhu reviews progress of Himachal Niketan building

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

Chief Minister Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Thursday visited Himachal Niketan at Dwarka, New Delhi, and reviewed the progress of the building, which is nearing completion. He took detailed stock of the ongoing construction and directed the concerned officers to complete the remaining finishing works at the earliest so that the facility could be dedicated to the people of Himachal Pradesh at the earliest.

The Chief Minister said that Himachal Niketan would provide comfortable and quality accommodation facilities to people from the state visiting the national capital, particularly for medical treatment and educational purposes.

He said that the facility would offer almost four-star category amenities and serve as an important support system for



Himachalis visiting Delhi.

Built at an estimated cost of around ₹190 crore, Himachal Niketan will have 107 rooms along with a restaurant, a banquet hall, two multipurpose halls, a meeting hall and student dormitories. The facility will also include adequate parking space, landscaped gardens, EV charging stations and other modern amenities. The Chief Minister said that the project was of significant importance for the people of Himachal and directed the officials to ensure that all remaining works were completed within the stipulated timeframe while maintaining the required quality standards.

BHEL enters into strategic tie-up with Hystar AS, Norway for PEM electrolyser systems



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) and Hystar AS, Norway, have entered into a strategic tie-up which shall enable phased indigenisation and local manufacturing of PEM electrolyser systems for green hydrogen projects in India.

The agreement was signed by Y Srinivas Rao, Executive Director (Heavy Power Equipment Plant, Hyderabad), and Sutripto De, General Manager & Head (New & Renewable Energy Business), on behalf of BHEL, and by Fredrik Mowill, CEO (Hystar), on behalf of Hystar AS Norway; in the presence of Arvinn Eikeland Gadgil, Chargé d'Affaires, Royal Norwegian Embassy in New Delhi, and Bani Varma, Director (Industrial Systems & Products, BHEL), SM Ramanathan, Director (Engineering, Research & Development, BHEL), and other senior officials.

Notably, BHEL has already entered into a strategic tie-up with thyssenkrupp nucera India Private Limited for alkaline electrolyser systems

earlier this year. This collaboration with Hystar for PEM electrolyser systems further strengthens BHEL's position as one of the few Indian players capable of offering both alkaline and PEM electrolyser solutions to serve the country's emerging green hydrogen market. Moreover, the collaboration will also strengthen BHEL's project execution capabilities for green hydrogen projects in India.

BHEL is one of India's leading engineering and manufacturing companies, with decades of experience across power, transmission, renewables, oil & gas, transportation, defence and aerospace sectors. The company has played a key role in building India's industrial infrastructure and is now leveraging its engineering, manufacturing and project execution capabilities to address emerging clean energy areas, including green hydrogen.

This agreement marks a significant step in enhancing BHEL's contribution to the National Green Hydrogen Mission and the Government of India's Make in India initiative.

Haryana Govt approves Bill for setting up Masters Union University in Gurugram

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

The Haryana Cabinet, which met under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Thursday, approved the proposal to move The Haryana Private Universities (Amendment) Bill, 2026, for setting up Masters Union University in Gurugram by amending the Haryana Private Universities Act, 2006.

The proposed university will be established by Shanti Foundation Trust, Gurugram, a charitable, non-political, non-profit and non-sectarian trust working in the field of education. The proposal is aimed at expanding higher education opportunities for the youth of the state and strengthening the participation of the private sector in expanding the capacity and quality of higher education in Haryana.

The university is proposed to be established on approximately 5.14 acres of contiguous land. A building with a constructed area of approximately 1,07,358 square feet is already available at the site, including around 96,600



square feet of instructional area, 5,400 square feet of administrative area, 5,000 square feet of amenities area and 358 square feet of circulation area. The sponsoring trust has the property on lease for a period of 30 years.

The proposal has been examined by the relevant committees constituted under the Haryana Private Universities Act, 2006. The Academic Committee and Finance Committee examined the proposal, while the committee constituted under the chairmanship of the Chairperson, Haryana State Higher Education Council, recommended the issuance of the Letter of Intent subject to stipulated conditions.

DAILY SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

HOW TO SOLVE IT

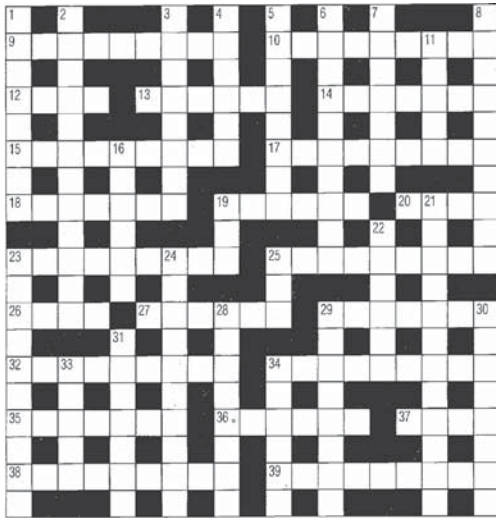
Sudoku is a logic puzzle where you fill a 9×9 grid so that numbers 1 to 9 appear once in every row, column, and 3×3 box, using elimination and logical deduction—no maths involved.



SOLUTION (13.8.26)

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

DOUBLE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 9 Near in the clear - until tomorrow (9)
- 10 Figure the man hurt got caught in a skiing disaster (9)
- 12 Bear up when there's a suspension (4)
- 13 Cooking food outside for the animals (6)
- 14 First to give one's approval to (7)
- 15 At home, I have the fireplace to blacken
- 17 Trifle with a pretty woman toting a gun
- 18 A little band for the hair (7)
- 19 "Hates Crooks," a hard cover (6)
- 20 Ring the gentleman from the jeweller's
- 23 Not bothered when one went off on one's own (4,5)
- 25 Furnished, or provided, with a job (9)

DOWN

- 1 Take into account, when you mull over
- 2 The cost of one's keep? (9,3)
- 3 Ranting foolishly about nothing, having a lot to learn (8)
- 4 Are out to attack (6)
- 5 Not so wonderful as to stop you in your tracks? (8)
- 6 Not telling the truth about burying the hatchet? (6,2,2)
- 7 Said to put out on the streets - they're very cruel (7)
- 8 Properly repaired at last? That's rich!
- 11 The companion is off colour - a cold (5)
- 16 A merry lawbreaker in an Irish holiday

- 26 Drop off at the building (4)
- 27 Firm though, without it, the least bit wobbly (6)
- 29 Read the notes (7)
- 32 They've done wrong by accepting the last tenders (9)
- 34 On a happy note's re-packing the bag (9)
- 35 Go off when people annoy, or ruffle (7)
- 36 A type of stress (6)
- 37 Tries - and it works (4)
- 38 The one with the awkward stance on the outside is Chinese (9)
- 39 He fights, but not for money (9)

- 1. Sprat
- 2. Astor
- 3. Niff
- 4. Sells
- 5. Nice
- 6. W-ash-e'd
- 9. Out-pur-t
- 11. Lug
- 12. Onion
- 13. Confuse
- 15. Cat
- 16. L-it
- 18. Ro-tors
- 20. Al-off
- 21. Fed
- 22. Ant
- 23. Sai-ami
- 25. Do-g
- 28. A-tch
- 30. Lay on
- 31. Geese
- 32. Beds
- 33. Serf

SOLUTION (13.8.26)

- ACROSS
- 4. Sin-EWS
- 7. Past-ill-e
- 8. Locust
- 10. A-hoof
- 13. Clue
- 14. Turn
- 15. CO-Set
- 16. Leg
- 17. Iran
- 19. PA-Id
- 21. Foot fault
- 23. Sen-T
- 24. Unto
- 26. Cad
- 27. Dast
- 29. Flog (golf)
- 32. Brie
- 33. Stage
- 34. Latest
- 35. Char-IO-ts
- 36. KItch-ns
- DOWN
- 1. Sprat
- 2. Astor
- 3. Niff
- 4. Sells
- 5. Nice
- 6. W-ash-e'd
- 9. Out-pur-t
- 11. Lug
- 12. Onion
- 13. Confuse
- 15. Cat
- 16. L-it
- 18. Ro-tors
- 20. Al-off
- 21. Fed
- 22. Ant
- 23. Sai-ami
- 25. Do-g
- 28. A-tch
- 30. Lay on
- 31. Geese
- 32. Beds
- 33. Serf

PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LTD.
(Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall Patiala-147001)
Corporate Identity Number U40109PB2010SGC033813 Website- www.pspcl.in
Mobile No. 96461-55525

E-Tender Enq. No. 753/P-3/EMPW-13411 Dated 13-08-2026
Dy. Chief Engineer/ Headquarter (Procurement Cell-3) GGSSTP, Roopnagar
Invites E-Tender ID No. 2026_POWER_173558_1 for Replacement of HP Bypass valves ARS-100I E325 of 210 MW 'KWU' designs unit at GGSSTP Roopnagar.
For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from dated 13-08-2026/ 05:00 PM onwards.
Note:- Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online at <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in>

RTP-79/26

1079/12/2026-27/14249 Dated CHD :- 13/08/2026



India's heart lies in its villages, and the development of villages is integral to the nation's progress. The Swamitva Yojana and land reforms will serve as the foundation pillars for rural development. The Swamitva Yojana is a significant step towards realizing the vision of Gram Swaraj (village self-governance) as envisioned by Mahatma Gandhi.

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

MADHYA PRADESH LEADS IN SVAMITVA



By securing legal ownership rights for rural citizens, Madhya Pradesh has set a new benchmark in land governance and empowerment. Through the Ownership Rights Records Execution and Registration Scheme-2026, the state is turning property ownership into a pathway for financial inclusion and economic growth

A NEW CHAPTER IN RURAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

For generations, land has been one of the most valuable assets for rural families, yet clear and legally recognised ownership has often remained a challenge. Madhya Pradesh is now taking a decisive step to change that through the Ownership Rights Records Execution and Registration Scheme-2026, a landmark initiative that aims to provide legal certainty, financial security and economic opportunity to millions of rural citizens.

Under the leadership of chief minister Dr. Mohan Yadav, the state has approved a comprehensive framework that will grant legally valid ownership rights records to eligible rural property holders. By removing the financial barriers often associated with property registration, the government has sought to ensure that citizens can secure ownership without additional burden, making the process more accessible and inclusive.

FROM DOCUMENTATION TO EMPOWERMENT

The initiative builds upon the significant progress achieved under the SVAMITVA Scheme, which has transformed the way rural properties are surveyed and documented. Through advanced drone-based mapping and digital technologies, a reliable database of rural properties has been created, bringing greater clarity and transparency to land ownership records.

This transformation goes beyond administrative reform. Secure ownership rights provide families with confidence in their assets and strengthen their ability to plan for the future. By creating legally recognised property records, the state is helping citizens establish stronger economic foundations while reducing uncertainties that have historically

led to disputes and complications.

UNLOCKING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

One of the most significant outcomes of the initiative is its potential to improve access to formal finance. With authenticated ownership records, rural citizens can more easily approach banks and financial institutions for loans to build homes, invest in agriculture, start businesses or meet other productive needs.

For many families, land is their most valuable asset. Formal recognition of ownership enhances the value and utility of that asset, creating new opportunities for financial inclusion and economic advancement. The initiative therefore links property rights directly with livelihood opportunities and rural prosperity.

TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN GOVERNANCE

The programme also reflects Madhya



A NATIONAL LEADER IN LAND GOVERNANCE



Pradesh's broader commitment to modern, technology-enabled governance. Digital mapping, accurate surveys and authenticated ownership records are helping create a more transparent land administration system. These measures are expected to reduce disputes, improve record management and simplify future property-related transactions.

BUILDING A STRONGER RURAL FUTURE

Madhya Pradesh has already emerged as one of the country's leading performers in the implementation of the SVAMITVA Scheme. The newly approved execution

and registration framework represents the next stage of that journey, ensuring that survey and mapping efforts translate into legally enforceable ownership rights.

More than a land-records initiative, the scheme is a step towards greater financial inclusion, stronger rural economies and citizen empowerment. By securing ownership rights and strengthening legal protections, the state is laying the foundation for a future in which rural families can participate more confidently in economic growth and development.

FROM LAND RECORDS TO ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

OWNERSHIP RIGHTS TO UNLOCK FINANCIAL INCLUSION IN RURAL MADHYA PRADESH



For many rural families, land is their most valuable asset. Yet without legally recognised ownership documents, that asset often remains underutilised and difficult to leverage for financial growth. The Ownership Rights Records Execution and Registration Scheme seeks to change this by converting property ownership into a gateway for economic empowerment.

Under the initiative, registered ownership records will provide legal recognition to rural properties, enabling citizens to access formal financial services with greater ease. Ownership documents can help families obtain loans from banks and financial institutions for house construction, agricultural investments, small businesses and other productive activities.

The scheme is expected to reduce dependence on informal sources of credit and strengthen financial inclusion across rural areas. With authenticated ownership records in place, financial institutions will be able to assess property value more accurately, improving confidence in lending and making credit more accessible.

Beyond individual households, easier access to institutional finance has the potential to stimulate local economic activity, encourage entrepreneurship and support livelihood generation. By providing citizens with legally recognised ownership rights, Madhya Pradesh is not only strengthening land security but also creating new pathways for economic advancement and rural prosperity.

Technology has become a key driver of Madhya Pradesh's efforts to strengthen rural property rights. At the heart of the initiative is the use of advanced drone-based surveys and digital mapping, which are helping create accurate and transparent ownership records across villages.

Traditional land records often faced challenges related to unclear boundaries, outdated information and ownership disputes. Through high-resolution aerial surveys, properties can now be mapped with greater

precision, ensuring that ownership records are based on verified and scientifically generated data.

The digital mapping process enables clear identification of property boundaries while creating records that are easy to verify and maintain. This not only improves transparency but also reduces the likelihood of future disputes, benefiting both citizens and local administrations.

The use of technology also supports faster service delivery and more efficient

record management. As ownership records become digitally documented and legally authenticated, citizens gain stronger protection over their assets while government agencies benefit from a more reliable land administration system.

By combining modern technology with citizen-centric governance, Madhya Pradesh is demonstrating how innovation can strengthen property rights, improve transparency and build greater trust in public institutions.

NO COST TO CITIZENS

MADHYA PRADESH REMOVES FINANCIAL BARRIERS TO PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

One of the most significant features of Madhya Pradesh's Ownership Rights Records Execution and Registration Scheme-2026 is its commitment to ensuring that rural citizens receive legally recognised ownership rights without bearing any financial burden. In a landmark decision, the state government has completely waived stamp duty and registration fees on ownership rights records issued under the scheme, making the process accessible to every eligible beneficiary.

Traditionally, the registration of property-related documents involves expenses that can discourage citizens from completing the process. By removing these costs, the government has ensured that financial constraints do not become an obstacle to securing legal ownership. Beneficiaries will not be required to pay any fee at the time of registration, allowing them to obtain authenticated ownership documents without additional expenditure.

The state has undertaken the responsibility of bearing the entire cost of implementation, estimated at approximately ₹3,800 crore. This reflects a strong commitment to citizen welfare and inclusive development, particularly in rural areas where secure property ownership can have a transformative impact on families and communities.

Beyond easing the registration process, the decision also highlights the government's broader objective of bringing every eligible rural property holder into the formal ownership framework. By removing procedural and financial hurdles, the scheme encourages wider participation and accelerates the creation of a transparent and legally robust land governance system.



Through this citizen-centric approach, the state is laying the groundwork for stronger rural economies, greater financial inclusion and a more secure future for millions of families across Madhya Pradesh.

MAPPING OWNERSHIP THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

DRONE SURVEYS ARE BRINGING CLARITY, TRANSPARENCY AND TRUST TO LAND GOVERNANCE



CREATING FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Registered ownership records will provide legal recognition to rural properties and enable citizens to access institutional finance more easily.



MISSION MODE IMPLEMENTATION

A dedicated statewide campaign will be undertaken to ensure that all remaining eligible beneficiaries receive ownership rights records within a defined timeframe.

- Faster registration
- Citizen convenience
- Simplified procedures
- Last-mile coverage
- Time-bound implementation



STRONG MONITORING FRAMEWORK

A high-level committee has been constituted to guide implementation, review progress and ensure effective coordination across departments.

The committee will oversee:



AWARENESS AND OUTREACH

A dedicated awareness campaign will ensure that citizens understand the benefits of ownership rights and the registration process.

Activities will include:

- Public information campaigns
- Village-level outreach
- Awareness materials and publications
- Citizen guidance and support



ACCESS TO CREDIT AND RURAL PROSPERITY

Ownership records are already helping citizens access formal financial services.



BRIEFLY

India emerge overall champions in CWG fencing



India have emerged as the overall champions at the Commonwealth Fencing Championship, returning with 35 medals from the event held in Lagos, Nigeria. Indian fencers won 13 gold, eight silver and 14 bronze medals across the U-23 and senior competitions. The senior Indian fencers claimed five gold medals in six events on the fourth day of the competition, securing honours in men's sabre, women's sabre, men's epee, women's epee and women's foil, as well as a silver in men's foil. The performance also helped India win the Wilkinson Sword Trophy. (PTI)

Ladakh LG opens Leh's first 24x7 ice hockey rink



In a major boost to winter sports infrastructure in Ladakh, Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Thursday inaugurated the Union Territory's first international-level artificial ice hockey rink at NDS Stadium, describing the facility as a major investment in the future of Ladakh's young sportspersons. Built at a cost of approximately ₹42 crore, the state-of-the-art rink is equipped with a 24x7 chilling facility, enabling ice hockey players to train throughout the year, irrespective of the natural weather conditions. The Lieutenant Governor termed the facility a landmark investment in Ladakh's youth and expressed confidence that it would help transform the UT into one of India and the world's leading winter sports hubs. He said the project aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of making India a global sporting powerhouse and expanding access to quality sports infrastructure across the country. (PTI)

FIFA chief Infantino receives support from six Arab federations



STEVE DOUGLAS ■ Zurich

The heads of six Arab soccer federations expressed their "full support" and "confidence" in Gianni Infantino on Thursday as the embattled FIFA president fights to keep his job after his failed World Cup private investment plan. The backing came from 2030 World Cup co-host Morocco, Qatar, Egypt, Mauritania, Lebanon and Sudan, with four of the signatories being FIFA council members. "We, the undersigned leaders of our respective football associations, express our full support for Mr Gianni Infantino, President of FIFA, and reaffirm our confidence in his leadership and continued commitment to the development of football worldwide," the statement read. "We deeply appreciate Infantino's sustained efforts to advance football globally, expand opportunities across all regions and strengthen the game's role in bringing people and communities together." The statement said the signatories "look forward to continuing our close cooperation with him towards a stronger and more prosperous future for world football, expanding opportunities and further enhancing Arab football's contribution to the global game." Infantino is facing a revolt after his plan to sell stakes in the World Cup to private equity investors. He withdrew the \$20 billion proposal after a furious backlash by global soccer officials, including European body UEFA, which has warned of a boycott of all FIFA games and events. (AP)

TTFI urges ministry to revoke suspension

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI) on Thursday flagged the implications of the Sports Ministry's decision to suspend the national body for the sport, stressing that its autonomy under the IOC's Olympic Charter must be respected and its governance kept free from third-party interference. It also urged the Ministry to keep its August 12 order in abeyance and reconsider the matter afresh. The ministry on Wednesday withdrew recognition of the TTFI and asked the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) to form an ad-hoc committee to run the sport, citing governance lapses. The ministry said the TTFI's failure to hold elections on time was among the reasons for the suspension, following an "unsatisfactory response" to a show-cause notice issued earlier this year.



"TTFI respectfully seeks the Ministry's kind consideration of the implications that any external or interim administrative arrangement may have in this regard, including the principles of autonomy recognised under Rules 27 and 28 of the Olympic Charter," TTFI said in a statement written by its President Meghna Ahlawat.

"The Olympic Charter and the Statutes of the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) recognise and expressly protect the autonomy of National Sports Federations and require their governance and administration to remain free from any third-party interference," it added. The statement, while expressing

its high regard for the ministry, said the federation was duly registered under the Societies Act and that its governance and administration as an autonomous National Sports Federation were governed by its Constitution and the applicable principles of sporting autonomy. "TTFI is an autonomous society duly registered under the Societies

Registration Act, 1860, and is governed by its Constitution and General Body. The Federation holds the Ministry in the highest regard and recognises its role. "At the same time, TTFI respectfully submits that the governance and administration of an autonomous National Sports Federation are guided by its Constitution and the applicable principles of sporting autonomy and good governance," the statement said. TTFI chief Ahlawat, who took charge in December 2022, is the wife of former Haryana Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala, son of former TTFI president Ajay Singh Chautala. The federation has been embroiled in turmoil for several months. In January, it suspended its secretary general and former player Kamlesh Mehta over alleged financial irregularities. Mehta challenged the suspension in the Delhi High Court, which later quashed it.

Gukesh crumbling under pressure, needs to shut out noise: Nakamura

AMIT KUMAR DAS ■ Paris

World champion D Gukesh is crumbling under the weight of expectations and needs to shut out the noise to regain his form ahead of his title defence, said American Grandmaster Hikaru Nakamura, who also revealed that the 2028 Chess Olympiad could potentially be his last tournament featuring "true classical" chess. Gukesh has faced a slump since his historic 2024 World Championship win, dropping down in ratings after finishing last at both Norway Chess and a recent event in Chennai, alongside low finishes at the Tata Steel Chess and Prague Masters.

"I don't know what Gukesh can do differently. I know what he should have done differently, which is to basically be willing to take draws in a lot of games instead of trying to play for the win," Nakamura said to a PTI query on Wednesday. "But obviously, I'm not Indian. So, I don't necessarily understand the culture, all the pressure that he's facing. But I get the general sense



that there's a lot of pressure whether it's external, whether it's internal. I think he's crumbling because of it. "I think if he can kind of just, like, block it all out, forget that he's world champion. You know, this is obviously quotable. But sort of forget that he's never going to be Magnus Carlsen. I'm quite confident his rating will go back up." Gukesh's classical FIDE rating dropped to 2703 in the August 2026 list. "I don't know if it'll go to 2,800. But I mean, he'll definitely get to, like, 2,740 at least if he kind of just puts a couple of things out of his mind. But obviously, it's very hard," Nakamura continued. (PTI)

Pranavi and Diksha make modest starts in Swiss Ladies Open

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Holzhausem (Switzerland)

India's Pranavi Urs and Diksha Dagar were off to a modest start in the opening round of the Swiss Ladies Open even as a Spanish duo took the early lead in the event. The Indian duo, both backed by Hero, carded 1-under 70 and even par 71 after early tee offs. Pranavi was tied 16th, while Diksha was T-32, though more than half the field was yet to finish the first round. Tvesa Malik, also supported by Hero, is making her first LET start since May in Mauritius. She finished 1-over with two birdies, one bogey and a double bogey and lying tied 65th. Tvesa was a runner-up in 2024, when she lost to Alice Hewson, who is aiming for a third win at the event. Spain's Luna

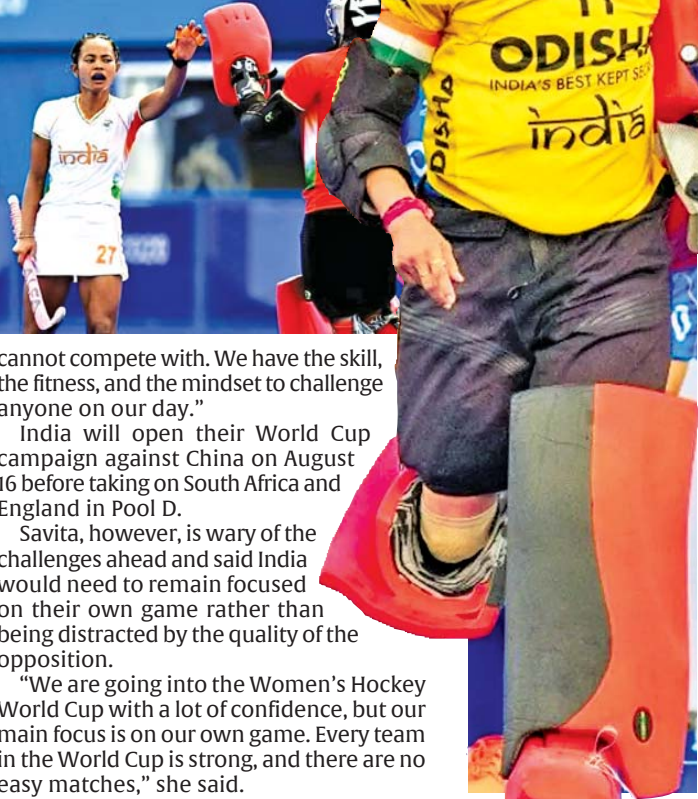
Sobron Galmes and Amaia Latorre were tied for the top spot with cards of 6-under 65 each, while another Spaniard Blanca Fernandez (66) was third. England's Hewson who is aiming for an unprecedented three-peat of victories in the competition had just started the round but was 1-over after two holes. The 28-year-old earned her second Ladies European Tour (LET) win at this event in 2024 defeating India's Tvesa Malik in a playoff before defending her title in style with a dominant five-shot victory last time out. Swedish legend Annika Sorenstam was the last player to three-peat on the LET when she won the HP Open (later renamed the Scandinavian TPC hosted by Annika) in 2004, 2005 and 2006 on home soil. As for form, Hewson has enjoyed a fine month on home turf making the cut at the co-sanctioned ISPS HANDA Women's Scottish Open and AIG Women's Open before finishing T6 at last week's PIF London Championship.



Indian women's hockey team has real chance of a podium finish in WC: Savita

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Seasoned goalkeeper Savita Punia believes India's FIH Nations Cup triumph has given the women's hockey team the confidence and belief to challenge the world's best and finish on the podium at the upcoming World Cup. India head into the showpiece event on the back of their Nations Cup title, where they beat a competitive field to claim their first major international gold in a long time. "Winning the FIH Nations Cup was a big achievement because all the top teams were there. It was a competitive tournament, and coming out on top gave us a huge boost and winning a gold medal after a long time has lifted the team's morale and belief," Savita told JioStar. The veteran feels India's performances against top sides in the FIH Pro League have also shown that the team is capable of competing with the best. "In recent years, during the FIH Pro League, we have played close matches against top sides like Argentina, Netherlands, and Germany. Those games showed us that we can match the best teams in the world," she said. "I can confidently say about this Indian women's hockey team that while all the teams are world-class, there is no team we



cannot compete with. We have the skill, the fitness, and the mindset to challenge anyone on our day." India will open their World Cup campaign against China on August 16 before taking on South Africa and England in Pool D. Savita, however, is wary of the challenges ahead and said India would need to remain focused on their own game rather than being distracted by the quality of the opposition. "We are going into the Women's Hockey World Cup with a lot of confidence, but our main focus is on our own game. Every team in the World Cup is strong, and there are no easy matches," she said.

Jamal Hossain takes two-shot lead as India open reduced to 54 holes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kolkata

Jamal Hossain carded a seven-under 63 to take a two-shot lead following the completion of the rain-delayed second round of the Coal India Open at Tollygunge Club in Kolkata on Thursday. The 41-year-old Bangladeshi golfer (65-63), a six-time winner on the DP World PGTI, moved to 12-under 128 after an eventful round featuring seven birdies, an eagle and two bogeys. Hossain began his second round three shots behind first-round leader Om Prakash Chouhan and was tied fifth when heavy rain forced the suspension of play on Wednesday. He returned on Thursday to complete his remaining holes when he moved clear of the field. The tournament has been reduced to 54 holes following the weather disruptions. The third and final round will be played on Friday with a shotgun start. Delhi's Kshitij Naveed Kaul (64-66), who held the clubhouse lead overnight, moved to second place at 10-under 130. Chandigarh's Akshay Sharma (66-



65) and Ajeetesh Sandhu (63-68) shared third place at nine-under 131. Former Asian Tour winner Sandhu endured multiple weather interruptions before completing a two-under 68 on Thursday. Current DP World PGTI Rankings leader Saptak Talwar (67-65), first-round leader and 2023 rankings champion Om Prakash Chouhan (62-70), and University of South Florida graduate Shubham Jaglan (67-65) shared fifth place at eight-under 132.

India pulls out of ASEAN Cup to prioritise friendly match against Brazil

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India have withdrawn from the inaugural FIFA ASEAN Cup, opting to prioritise their high-profile international friendly against five-time world champions Brazil in October. All India Football Federation (AIFF) deputy secretary general M Satyanarayanan said on Thursday. India's withdrawal from the upcoming tournament also means they will miss the opportunity to face some of Southeast Asia's leading sides in a FIFA-sanctioned competition. "We have pulled out of the FIFA ASEAN Cup since we can't play both Brazil and FIFA ASEAN Cup," Satyanarayanan told PTI. The inaugural tournament was conceived as a new international competition for teams from the ASEAN region, with India invited as one of the non-ASEAN participants. India had initially accepted FIFA's



invitation to participate in the new tournament and were subsequently drawn in Division 1 Group A alongside Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. The competition is scheduled to be played during the September 21-October 6 FIFA international window.

However, India's commitment to play Brazil on October 3 at Kolkata's Salt Lake Stadium created a scheduling clash. The AIFF had earlier explored the possibility of fielding a separate or developmental squad in the ASEAN

Cup, but has now opted to withdraw altogether and use the international window for friendlies. The match against Brazil was officially announced last month. Meanwhile, reports on Thursday suggested that India are exploring friendlies against teams that featured at the 2026 FIFA World Cup, with Cabo Verde and Iran among the sides being discussed. However, those fixtures have not yet been officially confirmed by the AIFF. The AIFF's decision marks a significant change from its plans earlier this year, when it had accepted FIFA's invitation and signed the participation agreement. India, who failed to qualify for the 2027 AFC Asian Cup, have struggled to secure regular high-quality opposition in recent years. It's learnt that only one bid has been submitted for the media rights of the Indian Super League which is scheduled

to start on September 4. The extended deadline to submit bids for the ISL media rights ended on August 12. If sources are to be believed, the lone bidder is a digital streaming platform with no linear TV channel. It is to be seen what the AIFF and the ISL clubs will proceed on the matter as linear television broadcast will be key to the fans' interest in the top-tier league. In the ISL 2025-26 also, the media rights holder (FanCode) had sub-licensed the linear TV broadcast rights to Sony Pictures Networks India, while it retained the exclusive digital streaming rights. The AIFF floated the RFP (Request for Proposal) for ISL 2026-27 media rights on July 25. That was after the AIFF and the participating teams agreed to a club-led model for two years, extendable to four, with the national federation keeping the administrative and core regulatory functions.