

Mamata slams ECI over Bengal BLO suicide

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Make will to avoid litigation, SC tells women

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And steadily flows Marico

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Jaishankar inaugurates two Indian consulates in Russia

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Deaflympics: Abhinav, Pranjali win air pistol mixed team gold

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PIONEER IN SHORT

PREZ REFERENCE: SC VERDICT TODAY

The Supreme Court (SC) is set to deliver its verdict on Thursday regarding a presidential reference on whether courts can set timelines for Governors and the President to assent to bills passed by state legislatures. A constitution bench, led by Chief Justice BR Gavai and comprising Justices Surya Kant, Vikram Nath, PS Narasimha, and AS Chandurkar, heard arguments for 10 days before reserving its judgment on September 11. The reference was sought by President Droupadi Murmu under Article 143(1) of the Constitution, following a Supreme Court ruling on April 8 concerning a Governor's powers over bills passed by the Tamil Nadu government. In the five-page reference, the president raised 14 questions seeking clarity on the discretionary powers of Governors and the President under Articles 200 and 201 when dealing with state legislature bills. The verdict is expected to provide a definitive legal stance on whether judicial timelines can constrain constitutional discretion in legislative assent.

ADANI SECURES JAL ACQUISITION

Adani Enterprises has won creditor approval for its ₹14,535 crore bid to acquire bankrupt infrastructure company Jaiprakash Associates (JAL), outpacing Vedanta and Dalmia Cement. The Committee of Creditors (CoC) gave Adani 89 per cent of votes, with National Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd controlling 86 per cent of the voting share. Adani's offer includes ₹6,005 crore upfront and ₹7,600 crore deferred over two years, valued at approximately ₹12,000 crore in net present terms, compared to Vedanta's back-ended five-year proposal.

BMC: CONGRESS EYES NCP ALLIANCE

The Congress is exploring an alliance with its "natural ally," the NCP (SP), ahead of the Mumbai civic elections expected in January 2026, even as it previously announced plans to contest the polls solo. A Congress delegation led by Mumbai chief Varsha Gaiwad met NCP chief Sharad Pawar to discuss cooperation, with Pawar's daughter Supriya Sule indicating support for decisions made in Maharashtra and Mumbai's interest. The Congress ruled out joining hands with Raj Thackeray's MNS, citing concerns over law and order and intimidation.

TIGER RETURNS TO GUJARAT

Over 30 years after tigers vanished from Gujarat, a tiger has settled in Ratanmahal Wildlife Sanctuary in Dahod district, sparking hopes for the revival of the species in the state, which is also home to Asiatic lions. Forest and Environment Minister Arjun Modhwadia confirmed that the tiger has been regularly captured on CCTV cameras since February 2025, showing it has established a permanent presence. Authorities have monitored the animal's movements for nine months and relocated some herbivores to ensure an adequate prey base. The tiger appears healthy, and the National Tiger Conservation Authority has been notified to guide further conservation steps.

The tenth rise of Nitish

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ Patna

Nitish Kumar on Wednesday took stock of preparations for the oath ceremony at the Gandhi Maidan even as NDA allies lobbied hard for cabinet positions. Kumar will take oath for a record 10th time on Thursday in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the State's capital. Home Minister Amit Shah is scheduled to reach Patna on Wednesday night to iron out differences in the allocation of ministerial berths, if any.

Sources said in the preliminary meeting held between Shah and JD(U)'s strategist Sanjay Jha and Rajiv Rajan Singh on Sunday, the post of Assembly Speaker was allocated to the BJP and that of deputy speaker of the House to the JD (U). While the BJP may induct new faces, the JD(U) is likely to retain its current ministers, according to sources.

LJP's Chirag Paswan, also a Minister in the Modi Cabinet, has insisted on four ministerial berths, including that of a deputy CM. Jitan Ram Manjhi's HAM and Upendra Kushwaha's RLM will get one berth each as per arrange-



Nitish Kumar after being elected as the leader of the NDA in Bihar during a meeting of newly elected MLAs of the alliance partners in Patna

ments. A maximum of 16 ministers from the BJP and 14 ministers, along with CM Nitish Kumar from JD(U), will take oath on Thursday.

The JD(U) patriarch, who tendered his resignation as CM to Governor Arif Mohammad Khan, was chosen leader of the NDA in Bihar at the meeting of newly

elected MLAs of the alliance partners on Wednesday. "I attended the NDA legislature party meeting held in the Central Hall of the Bihar Legislature," Kumar said.

Former Deputy CM Samrat Choudhary was named the BJP legislature party leader in the presence of newly elected party MLAs and central

observer, UP Deputy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya.

The new BJP MLAs also elected Vijay Kumar Sinha as the deputy leader of the BJP's legislature party. Sources added that women's representation in the new Cabinet has been given greater importance, and one of them could be a deputy CM.

Al-Falah founder sent to 13 day ED custody

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

A city court on Wednesday sent Jawad Ahmed Siddiqui, the founder of Al Falah University, to Enforcement Directorate (ED) custody for 13 days. The agency alleged that the university and its controlling entities generated over ₹415 crore in proceeds of crime through deception and misrepresentation regarding their academic status.

"Considering the gravity of the offence and that the investigation is at nascent stage. I deem it appropriate

that the accused is granted Enforcement Directorate (ED) custody remand for a period of 13 days till December 1," the court noted. The ED had sought a 14-day custody.

In its remand paper, the ED has alleged that the Al-Falah University falsely claimed that it is a UGC recognised university and misrepresented its NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council) accreditation status.

NAAC is an autonomous body funded by the University Grants Commission (UGC) of India that assesses and accredits higher education



Officials raiding the office of Al Falah University in Delhi on Tuesday

Anmol Bishnoi in NIA net

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Fugitive gangster Anmol Bishnoi was deported from the US and placed in the custody of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) for 11-days on Wednesday by a Delhi court. Bishnoi is wanted in the murder of NCP leader Baba Siddique and linked to a sprawling cross-border syndicate tied to multiple high-profile attacks.

The court noted his alleged involvement in extortion, harming victims, targeted killings and furtherance of terror activities. Responding

to the court's queries, Bishnoi denied the allegations and confirmed that he received a copy of the arrest memo. He also engaged an advocate of his choice and verified that his medical examination was conducted.

Bishnoi is the 19th person to be arrested in connection with the gang associated with his imprisoned brother, Lawrence Bishnoi.

He is also wanted for firing at actor Salman Khan's residence in April 2024 and the murder of singer Sidhu Moosewala, among others. He was detained in the US in November last year.

Should society allow this? SC on *Talaq-e-Hasan*

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court (SC) on Wednesday said it may consider referring the challenge to the validity of *Talaq-e-Hasan*, a form of divorce among Muslims in India, to a larger five-judge constitution bench while deprecating the practice of sending notices on the husband's behalf. Through *Talaq-e-Hasan*, a man can dissolve a marriage by pronouncing the word *talaq* once every month over a three-month period.

A MARRIAGE CAN BE DISSOLVED UNDER *TALAQ-E-HASAN* BY A MAN SAYING *TALAQ* ONCE EVERY MONTH FOR THREE-MONTHS

In 2017, the SC declared Triple *Talaq*, also a form of divorce prevalent among Muslim community, as unconstitutional after finding it to be arbitrary and violative of fundamental rights of Muslim women.

A bench of justices Surya Kant, Ujjal Bhuyan and N Kotiswar Singh which depre-

institutions in the country.

The agency claimed, "Al-Falah group has seen a meteoric rise since the 1990s, metamorphosing into a large educational body. However, the financials of the various entities are at variance with the huge amount of assets accumulated by the group."

The agency further alleged that Siddiqui had "incentives" to flee India as his close family members are settled in the Gulf. The ED claimed that Siddiqui's arrest was necessary as there was an apprehension of his absconding and of non-cooperation.

cated the practice adopted by Muslim husbands while giving *Talaq-e-Hasan* under which they authorise any person and mostly lawyer to give divorce notice to their wives on their behalf saying, "should a civilised modern society allow this".

Asking the parties to submit notes with regard to types of *Talaq* which can be granted under Islamic practices, the bench said it is not the question of striking down a prevalent religious practice but an issue which needs to be regulated as per the constitutional ethos.

Indian community is a pillar of our human bridge with India: Oman envoy

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

On the eve of Oman's National Day, the Sultanate's Ambassador to India, Issa Saleh Abdullah Alshibani, described the Indian community in Oman with the Arabic phrase "*Alhind hi rakizat Euman!*" (India is the pillar of Oman), underscoring the historic and expanding partnership between the two nations. In an exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*, he noted that the nearly 7,00,000-strong Indian community, the largest expatriate group in the Sultanate, stands as a living example of the deep trust, social harmony and people-to-people bonds that anchor India-Oman relations. Edited excerpts follow:

Q: How do you see India-Oman diplomatic relations evolving in recent years, and what key areas are driving this partnership?

A: In many ways, we in the embassy speak of the relationship as having a "before December 2023 and after December 2023." The State Visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to India in December 2023 was truly a defining moment. It was the first state visit by an Omani leader to India in 26 years, and it produced the Joint Vision document, "A Partnership for the Future," which aligns Oman Vision 2040 with India's development aspirations during *Amrit Kaal*. That vision opened new horizons and



HE Issa Abdullah Saleh Al Shibani, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman

gave us a very concrete roadmap across ten priority fields.

Since that visit, the partnership has clearly moved from being "traditionally close" to being consciously "strategic and future-oriented." We see accelerated cooperation in maritime connectivity, energy and green hydrogen, space, digital payments and fintech, health, tourism, agriculture and food security, and of course trade and investment. The fact that bilateral trade has already crossed 10 billion US dollars and continues to grow, and that we are now on the verge of concluding a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, are direct reflections of the political trust and ambition gen-

erated by His Majesty's visit.

Q: Can you share an update on the ongoing India-Oman Free Trade Agreement negotiations? What gives you confidence that the agreement will be concluded on schedule?

A: The decision to negotiate a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement-our CEPA-was itself one of the key strategic outcomes of His Majesty's visit to India. The Joint Vision specifically identified CEPA as a priority instrument to unlock the full potential of our economic partnership, and both leaderships gave very clear instructions to "move fast and be ambitious."

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Traffic force declines in Dehradun from 411 to 269 since 2017

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Dehradun has observed a decline in police personnel recruitment for traffic management from 411 in 2017 to only 269 in 2025. Due to the shortage of force, the police have not deployed traffic personnel in areas like Vikasnagar and Mussoorie, while Rishikesh has only limited staff for traffic duties. The Dehradun district police officials shared this issue with additional director general (Crime and Law and Order) V Murugesan during a review meeting held on Wednesday. During the meeting, the officials informed that the police identified 20 bottleneck points in the district that require additional deployment. They also highlighted that internal roads face constant congestion due to construction

work by PWD, UPCL, GAIL and the Jal Sansthan. Due to the large number of events, VIP duties and regular traffic pressure from nearly 12 lakh registered vehicles, the department often diverts additional force from police stations for traffic duties, as per the officials. The traffic wing also presented details on the current traffic system, enforcement equipment and the pressure on manpower. The police informed that the district currently operates with three interceptor vehicles, three highway patrol units, two bullet interceptor motorcycles, 26 motorcycles, three speed radar guns, 70 alco-meters, 345 e-challan machines, 62 body-worn cameras and five handy cameras. Officials reported that the district handled 4,145

processions, rallies and demonstrations and 38 fairs and festivals in 2024. This year, 2,653 such events and 32 fairs have taken place. The police also managed four VVIP and 2,825 VIP visits in 2024, while 2025 has already recorded six VVIP and 2,575 VIP movements. After reviewing the situation, Murugesan directed officers to expand action against drunk driving and speeding through special flying squads and ensure licence cancellation reports for offenders. He asked station in-charges to monitor peak-hour traffic themselves, improve visibility of force and prepare targeted plans to reduce congestion. The police department will also work towards more recruitment as per the requirement, he added.

UVSP gears up for successful holding of board examination 2026

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

The Uttarakhand Vidyalaya Shiksha Parishad (UVSP) has begun finalising preparations for the successful conduct of the 2026 board examinations for classes X and XII. UVSP secretary Vinod Simalti provided detailed information about the preparations, stating that they began preparations recently to ensure the examinations are conducted smoothly in 2026. He said that the preparation process is progressing well and is nearly complete. Recently, the UVSP has been engaged in collecting data on the students registered for the 2026 board examinations, which is now al-

most finished. Additionally, the UVSP has instructed the Chief Education Officers (CEOs) in each district to identify suitable centres for conducting the examinations. According to Simalti, the CEOs will first identify centres at the district level. Once these centres are selected, they will inform the UVSP and a final decision will be made at the State level. This selection process is expected to conclude after the Diploma in Elementary Education entrance examination (DEIED), scheduled for November 22. Simalti also said that the date sheet for the board examinations has

not yet been established. The UVSP has requested the State governments to provide a holiday calendar for 2026, which will be used to determine the examination dates. Further, he said that this year, the UVSP plans to enhance the question paper pattern to promote critical thinking and analytical skills among students. The UVSP also aims to declare the results of the 2026 board examinations as early as possible, similar to last year. It will be recalled that this year, on April 19, the UVSP released the results for the class X and class XII board examinations for 2025.

Dehradun Bar association decides to intensify agitation as talks fail with administration

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Following the failure of talks with the administration, the Dehradun Bar association has decided to intensify its ongoing agitation. On Tuesday, the coordination committee of the Bar association held a meeting with the district magistrate of Dehradun Savin Bansal but the talk ended in a failure. The committee was formed on Tuesday during an open house meeting of the agitating advocates. A total of 15 mem-

bers were selected, and advocate Prem Chand Sharma was made the chairman of the committee. On the same day, the committee held its first meeting and also submitted a memorandum containing the main demands of the advocates. The district administration sent a written reply through three officers, but the committee was not satisfied with the response. The advocates have been requesting land for chambers for the last

three years. They are of the view that five bighas of the land allotted to them is not enough for around 11,000 advocates in Dehradun. During a meeting held on Wednesday, the committee discussed the administration's letter and decided to intensify their protest. The chairman of the committee Prem Chand Sharma averred that the protest will go on until the government agrees to their demands.

Rampant landslides along NH- 108 to be taken up with Centre on priority: TS Rawat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Uttarkashi

The former chief minister and Haridwar MP, Triven-dra Singh Rawat expressed concern over the rising incidents of human-animal conflict in Uttarkashi district. "The wild animal activity in mountainous areas in the State, in general, and Uttarkashi district, in particular, is a matter of deep concern. To mitigate casualties, the villagers should remain vigilant. They should not venture into the forests or the uninhabited areas alone. If they have to, they must travel in groups to keep safe from wildlife at-

tacks," he said while addressing a media conference here on Wednesday during his day-long Uttarkashi visit. Asked about the Dharali disaster rehabilitation, he said that the special package announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi would provide relief to the disaster-affected families. "We are all worried about the dangerous sliding zones along NH-108. Coordination among all stakeholders concerned is needed to take on the challenge of recurring natural disasters," he stated. He further said that he had dis-

cussed the sliding zone emerging dangerously in Netala with Bhatwari sub-divisional magistrate Shalini Negi. Besides, I will take up the NH-108 issue with the Centre on priority," he added. Commenting on the landslide NDA victory in the Bihar Assembly election, the former CM said that it reflected the people's confidence in the welfare policies being rolled by the NDA. "At the same time, the victory signifies the strength of India's democratic system," he asserted.

Industrial smart city in Kichha: Secretary, Industry, visits Khurpia Farm

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Rudrapur

With the plan to develop an industrial smart city on 1,002 acres of land at Khurpia Farm kept in view, the secretary, Industry, Vinay Shankar Pandey inspected the farm with SIIDCUL general manager, Saurabh Gaharwar to determine how to develop its infrastructure on Wednesday. He then inspected the proposed SIIDCUL development works being carried out on 1,354 acres at Parag Farm. Moreover, he discussed the industry-related issues with some entrepreneurs in the SIIDCUL premises in Pantnagar. The senior superintendent of police, Manikant Mishra, regional manager, SIIDCUL Pantnagar Manish Bisht and Kichha SDM Gaurav Pandey were also present during the inspection.

Notably, the Central government has announced an industrial smart city in Khurpia Farm under the Amritsar-Kolkata Industrial Corridor. An investment of approximately Rs 28,602 crore has been estimated for implementing this project. A total of 12 projects have been proposed on this land. Under this project, a slew of industries will be set up here which will not only create new employment opportunities but boost the economic development of the region. Under this project, the State government has taken several steps to promote industrial development and provide employment opportunities. A host of incentives and facilities have been announced to attract industries. "Infrastructure like road, rail and air connectivity will be strengthened to help Kichha emerge as a thriving industrial hub," Bisht said.

Central Bank of India to organise Mega MSME Credit Outreach camp on Nov 21

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

The Central Bank of India, Dehradun region, is organising a Mega MSME Credit Outreach camp on November 21 across all 42 branches. The event will be held at the Centre for Aromatic Plants by the Selaqui branch while Bhagwanpur and Kashipur branches will host the camp on the branch premises from 11 AM onwards. Senior officers of the bank said that the camp aims to reach as many entrepreneurs as possible with the benefits of the bank's various loan schemes and promote economic empowerment. "This special camp is being organised to accelerate entrepreneurship development in the bank's priority sectors and provide financial assistance to new and existing entrepreneurs. The programme will provide information about the bank's various MSME loan schemes, such as Cent Business Loan, Cent Business Vehicle, Cent Sanjeevani, Cent Textile, Cent Stand Up India, Cent Shop and Cent Hotel and provide entrepreneurs with on-the-spot application assistance, financial guidance and loan approval," an officer said. They urge the MSME entrepreneurs to take advantage of the camp and learn about the financial opportunities available to expand their businesses.

Community development centre comes up in Avantika Mandir complex

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lalkuan

A community development centre, built in the Maa Avant Keshari (Avantika) Mandir complex, was jointly inaugurated on Wednesday by a number of public representatives and those from industries. Among those present at the inaugural ceremony were the former Union Minister and MP Ajay Bhatt, MLA Mohan Singh Bisht, president of the municipal council Surendra Singh Lotni and CEO, Century Pulp and Paper Mill, Ajay Kumar Gupta. They said that the newly inaugurated centre would boost the area's socio-cultural development. The participation of locals and industries in the centre's construction was lauded.

Rising road accidents, Police to tighten noose on drunk driving cases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Road accidents in Uttarakhand are rising at an alarming rate. Official data shows that seven districts of the State including provisional State capital Dehradun have reported more accidents, deaths and injuries this year compared to the previous year. Drunk driving and traffic jams remain major problems in the cities.

Additional director general (Law and Order), V Murugesan said that strict action will be taken against drunk driving cases, and manpower will be increased to better manage

traffic across the State. The data shows that from January to September 2025, road accidents increased by 4.42 per cent. The number of deaths rose by 19.09 per cent, while the number of injured people went up by nearly 40 per cent. Speaking on the issue, Murugesan said that police manpower has been increased to control traffic. The police are also focusing on the cases of drunk driving. He said that strict action will be taken against anyone caught driving under the influence of alcohol.

Godiyal extends Cong party's support to agitating lawyer's in Doon

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

The president of the Pradesh Congress Committee Ganesh Godiyal visited the protest site of the agitating members of the Dehradun Bar association on Wednesday and extended full support of the party to them. Speaking to the lawyers, Godiyal said it is surprising that the government wants to build a hostel in the middle of the court area. He said there are many places in Dehradun for constructing hostels, but choosing in the court premises shows the government's wrong planning. He also said that young lawyers who will join the profession in the future will need proper space to work, and shifting their chambers far away is not practical. Godiyal reminded the government that lawyers played an important role in the Uttarakhand statehood movement. Many lawyers had supported people by fighting cases for free at that time. He said the government should respect the contribution of the legal community. He also criticized the

government for not listening to people's problems. He said that even Uttarakhand Purva Sainik Kalyan Nigam Limited (UPNL) workers are on strike, but the government is not fulfilling their demands despite the Supreme Court's orders. He called this attitude stubborn and insensitive. The PCC president demanded that the government should reconsider its decision and accept the lawyer's demands. He said the issue was created by the government by itself, so it is their responsibility to solve it. He also said that when Chief Minister Pushkar Dhama took charge, people expected positive changes, but the government is still running in an old and rigid style. The president of Dehradun Bar association Manmohan Kandwal, vice president of Uttarakhand Congress Suryakant Dhasmana and others were present on the occasion.

Advisory issued to stop swill feeding to pigs in U'khand

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

In response to a request from Mercy For Animals India (MFA), the Directorate of Animal Husbandry in Uttarakhand has issued an advisory to all Chief Veterinary Officers (CVO) in the districts. This advisory aims to prohibit the dangerous practice of feeding untreated and unregulated food waste, or swill, to pigs on both backyard and commercial farms. According to the Organising Specialist for MFA, Niharika Kapoor, the Directorate was recently requested and alerted that feeding stale, mold-infected or highly contaminated food components (such as those high in salt, oil, or chili) to pigs is harmful not only to their digestive health but also to public health. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH/OIE) have documented that feeding food waste is a significant vector for the spread of livestock diseases, including African Swine Fever (ASF) and Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), she said.

According to officials responding to this request, the advisory issued to all CVOs and project directors includes three main directives. These directives require them to actively educate pig farmers in their districts about the risks of disease spread and poor growth associated with feeding food waste. Additionally, they must strictly monitor state pig farms to prevent the use of rotten, spoiled, or fungus-infected materials. They are also tasked with taking all necessary steps to implement effective awareness and monitoring initiatives across the State.

Negligence of Peyjal Nigam, residents face hardships post water project

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Haridwar

Thousands of residents of Jain plot, Vani Vihar in Adoiwala area of the provisional State capital are suffering from the apathy of the Peyjal Nigam. The department has dug the roads

have yet to find a solution. A resident of the said area, Kalam Singh Chauhan commented on the situation, saying that the pipeline work was completed about one and half months ago. Although



in order to lay a new drinking water pipeline, but the roads have not been repaired yet, even after the project is completed. Many residents have expressed their concern, stating that this situation has resulted in increased respiratory problems and other ailments due to the dust in the area. They warned that if the authorities do not resolve this issue soon, they will approach the district magistrate for assistance. It is worth noting that other areas are experiencing similar problems, but the authorities

the project has finished, the roads remain unrepaired, which has become a significant concern. Thousands of residents are affected, suffering from dust and dirt due to the damaged roads. Chauhan shared his experience of having to take his children to the doctor frequently for treat-

ment of dust allergies and breathing difficulties. He said that they had also approached the chief minister's portal for help, but no action has been taken. He stated that on Tuesday, some officials

visited the colony, filled in the pot-holes, and assured the residents that the roads would be repaired soon. However, he added that if these assurances are not fulfilled, they will escalate the matter to the DM. Executive engineer at Peyjal Nigam Deepak Nautiyal told The Pioneer that the contractor responsible for addressing the issue has been contacted and a penalty has been issued due to the delay in repairing the roads. He assured that if the contractor does not begin work soon, a new agency will be hired for the repairs. Nautiyal expressed confidence that the road repair issue will be sorted out quickly.

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1	The skilled type of work at various places located at V.C.V. Gabar Singh Urja Bhawan Dehradun	06/EE (CM)/ 2025-26	150000.00 In favour of Executive Engineer (HQ), UPCL, Dehradun	5900/- In favour of Executive Engineer (HQ), UPCL, Dehradun	04.12.2025 upto 17:00 hrs.	05.12.2025 at 11:00 hrs.	To be notified later
2	The security work at various places located at V.C.V. Gabar Singh Urja Bhawan Dehradun	07/EE (CM)/ 2025-26	70000.00 In favour of Executive Engineer (HQ), UPCL, Dehradun	1180/- In favour of Executive Engineer (HQ), UPCL, Dehradun	04.12.2025 upto 17:00 hrs.	05.12.2025 at 11:15 hrs.	To be notified later
3	The unskilled type of work at various places located at V.C.V. Gabar Singh Urja Bhawan Dehradun	08/EE (CM)/ 2025-26	150000.00 In favour of Executive Engineer (HQ), UPCL, Dehradun	5900/- In favour of Executive Engineer (HQ), UPCL, Dehradun	04.12.2025 upto 17:00 hrs.	05.12.2025 at 11:30 hrs.	To be notified later

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Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower(s)/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Physical Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs)	Name of Branch
1.	Jasbir Singh / Kamaljeet Kaur / LBDEH00006312778/ LBHWRO00006297022/ LBDEH00006916084/ TBDEH00006912983	Shop Bearing Municipal No. 76/76 (Old No.65), Situated At Lunia Mohalla, District Dehradun Uttarakhand/ 18-Nov-25	January 29, 2025 Rs. 35,12,542.64/-	Dehradun

The above-mentioned borrower(s)/guarantor(s) is/are hereby issued a 30 day Notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold after 30 days from the date of publishing this Notice, as per the provisions under Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

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पत्रांक : 2953 / 7-नोवंबर-सत्र / 2025-26 दिनांक : 18.11.2025

ई-निविदा सूचना

कुमाऊँ मण्डल विकास निगम लि0, नैनीताल के पक्ष में जनपद चम्पावत की तहसील पूर्णागिरी के ग्राम-झालाकुड़ी क्षेत्रान्तर्गत खाता संख्या-109 के खसरा संख्या-1, 17, 22म, 23म, 84म मध्ये कुल रकवा 5.83 है0 राजस्व उप खनिज क्षेत्र से प्रतिवर्ष 3,32,310 टन उपखनिज की निकासी हेतु तथा जनपद व तहसील पिथौरागढ के ग्राम राड़ी खूँटी-1। क्षेत्रान्तर्गत खसरा संख्या 579 मि. 695म, कुल रकवा 0.645 है राजस्व उप खनिज क्षेत्र से प्रति वर्ष 34,830 टन उप खनिज की निकासी हेतु उत्तराखण्ड ई-निविदा पोर्टल www.uktenders.gov.in के माध्यम से ई-निविदायें आमंत्रित की जाती है। उक्त निविदाओं से सम्बन्धित समस्त विवरण दिनांक 20.11.2025 से www.uktenders.gov.in एवं निगम वेबसाईट www.kmvn.in पर उपलब्ध होगा। निविदा में किसी भी प्रकार के संशोधन की दशा में संशोधन का प्रकाशन केवल www.uktenders.gov.in एवं www.kmvn.in के माध्यम से ही प्रकाशित किया जायेगा। प्रबन्ध निदेशक

U'khand again receives Rs 100 cr Central incentive for mining sector reforms

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Continuous reforms in the mining sector have started yielding good incentives for the State government. Taking cognizance of the minor mineral reforms made by the State, the Union ministry of Mines has released an incentive of Rs 100 crore to Uttarakhand. The incentive has been given to Uttarakhand for minor minerals reforms under the Special Assistance Scheme for the year 2025-26 (SASCI).

Pertinently this is for the second consecutive month, the State has received an incentive from the centre. In the month of October, the State had received an incentive of Rs 100 crore for securing second place in the SMRI ranking.

As per the officials of the

State Mining department, the State has implemented improved policies with an emphasis on mining reforms in recent years, resulting in Uttarakhand achieving the first position in the country in the mining sector. The latest office memorandum issued by the Central government mentions that the State has implemented most of the mining sector reforms in a timely and effective manner. Specifically, six out of seven major reform criteria related to minor mineral reforms were successfully met by the State.

The department claims that transparent and business-friendly policies in the mining sector have led to an unprecedented increase in government

revenue. Robust management and innovative policies have not only strengthened the government's treasury, but also provided employment opportunities for a large number of people in the State.

Expressing happiness, chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said that the State government has taken many initiatives including e- auction system and satellite based monitoring to ensure transparency and accountability in the mining sector.

The government is cracking down on illegal mining while taking environmental precautions into account and positive results are clearly visible, he said.

91 border villages in U'khand selected under Vibrant Village Project: Ganesh Joshi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Rural Development minister Ganesh Joshi said that 91 villages along the India-China and India-Nepal borders in Uttarakhand have been selected for the Vibrant Villages Project (VVP). He said this while he received a detailed progress report on the project from the Rural Development commissioner. The VVP, implemented by the Central government aims to strengthen infrastruc-

amenities and employment opportunities.

Joshi said that out of the 91 villages selected under VVP-1, 51 are located in districts along the India-China border, including 10 villages of Bhatwadi block, Uttarkashi, Jyotirmath Block, Chamoli with 14 villages, Munswari, Dharchula and Kanalicchhina, Pithoragarh with eight villages, 17 villages and two villages respectively.

The State government has allocated Rs 520.13 crore to the Home ministry to bolster economic activities in these villages, build connectivity roads, promote local culture and tourism and develop modern facilities. Of this, the State has received

over Rs 110 crore in funds.

He added that the remaining 40 villages selected under VVP-2 are located along the India-Nepal border. This includes Champawat with 11 villages, Pithoragarh with 24

villages, and Udham Singh Nagar with six villages. Data collection and verification for these villages are currently in progress. For the road component of the VVP, Rs 119.44 crore has been approved for the construction of five PMGSY roads in Pithoragarh district. This will further enhance road connectivity in border areas, facilitating movement and trade in strategically important regions.

Joshi expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, highlighting his special affection for border villages as an inspiring force. He noted, "The message of making Mana the first, not the last, village in the country reflects PM sensitivity towards Uttarakhand." Joshi said that the VVP will promote modern facilities, sustainable livelihoods, agriculture and horticulture, a safe environment and a tourism-based economy in the State's remote villages. He expressed confidence that the full implementation of this scheme will be a milestone in transforming Uttarakhand's border villages into self-reliant, safe and advanced model villages.

BJP claims Uttarakhand received Central incentive in mining sector due to Dhami's policies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

The Bharatiya Janata Party said that Uttarakhand receiving a significant incentive grant in the mining sector is the result of the chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami government's transparent policy. The BJP State president and Rajya Sabha MP Mahendra Bhatt welcomed the Central government's decision to provide Rs 100 crore to the State for reforms in the mining sector and expressed gratitude to Dhami. He said that the Central government has granted this amount under the Special Assistance to States Capital Investment (SASCI) scheme for 2025-26 for the State's performance in minor mineral reforms. Bhatt said that Uttarakhand earlier received Rs 100 crore in October 2025 after securing the second position in the State Mining Readiness Index (SMRI) ranking. With the latest allocation, the State has now obtained a total of Rs 200 crore for its work in the mining sector. He said that the State implemented key reforms in recent years, which helped Uttarakhand secure the top position in the country in the mining sector. The government met six out of seven major reform

benchmarks related to minor mineral reforms, which led to this achievement. He said that transparent and business-friendly policies increased the State's revenue from mining. Strengthened management and new policies in the Mining department supported the State treasury and provided employment to many people associated with mining and related businesses. Local residents and construction agencies are also getting material at lower prices due to streamlined mining activities. The mining sector continues to generate employment opportunities and supports the local economy. Bhatt said that the Congress raised allegations in the mining sector but the facts show a different picture. He claimed that the Dhami government earned more incentive-based benefits in one year than what the Congress could generate during its tenure. He added that the current government has secured four times more revenue from mining and continues to move forward on the strength of transparent policies, which he said is beneficial for the State.

CS Bardhan reviews Bhagirathi Eco-sensitive zone compliance

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Chief secretary Anand Bardhan chaired a meeting of the Bhagirathi Eco-Sensitive Zone Monitoring Committee and directed departments to take immediate protective and corrective measures within the zone.

The Wadia Institute are required, they should be included in the planning process. Bardhan asked officials to present the zonal master plan and details of any commercial activity proposals, along with re-



He instructed the Irrigation department and other agencies concerned to carry out flood control and related safety works in areas close to the river. On the issue of permissions for non-agricultural and commercial activities, he asked the Uttarkashi district magistrate and officials to study the zonal master plan and all provisions linked to environment and biodiversity. He said that if scientific studies from institutes such as IIT Roorkee, the Hydrology Institute or

quired permissions and regulatory clearances in the next meeting. He stressed the importance of solid waste management in the zone and instructed departments and agencies to coordinate and prepare a plan based on the ground situation for presentation in the upcoming session. He also advised committee members and officials to conduct field inspections of identified sites and set a fixed date for the visits.

Uttarakhand bans strikes in State services for 6 months

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

The Uttarakhand government has imposed a ban on strikes in the State government services for a period of six months. Invoking the provisions of the Essential Services Maintenance Act 1966, secretary Personnel Shailesh Bagaula issued a notification in this regard on

Wednesday. The order prohibits strikes in State services for a period of six months from the date of issuance in public interest. The ban order of the government assumes significance as more than 22,000 UPNL workers have been on strike for the last 11 days.

Dehradun police intensify screening of Kashmiri and foreign students after Delhi blast

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Considering the recent car blast near the Red Fort in Delhi, Dehradun police have increased monitoring of Kashmiri students as well as foreign students. The police have started a fresh verification drive to collect updated information on all students from outside the State and from other countries. The police aim to identify any suspicious activity and take action without delay, the Dehradun senior superintendent of police Ajai Singh said. He informed that currently over 900 Kashmiri students study across various institutions in Dehradun. Police already maintain student records but after the Delhi blast case revealed a Kashmir link, all Kashmiri students in the city are undergoing re-verification. The process includes checking addresses, ID proofs and movement details of those staying in hostels, PGs and rented rooms.

Singh said that police keep social groups, chat patterns and communication activity of suspected students, if any, under monitoring to track any unusual input. "If we find something unusual or suspicious, we coordinate with the authorities of the hometown of the student within the country or abroad. We check out the background of their close family as well for security purposes. The increased vigilance extends to students from other states and from abroad. Nothing suspicious has been found so far. The objective is to stay alert and ensure that no suspicious network operates in the city," he added.

The police are monitoring the social media activities and locations of Kashmiri and foreign students. He said that after the Delhi blast, police have tightened its security strategy. Screening of all possible links is

underway with increased caution. High-tech monitoring of social media groups, contact history and locations aims to ensure that no anti-national network finds a foothold in the city, he added. He also informed that in the past six months, monitoring teams flagged the activities of 16 Bangladeshi nationals. Nine were deported and action is being taken against the remaining individuals. The SSP stated that any anti-national input triggers immediate action, regardless of the person's place of origin. Colleges also monitor their students and report suspicious behaviour to both parents and police. Singh stated that the verification drive helps maintain complete data, enabling quick action when required. He said that police stay in touch with all students from outside the State whenever agencies share information.

PROPERTIES FOR SALE A leading Home Finance Co. has the following properties for sale on "As is where is what is there is" basis

PROPERTY ADDRESS	STATE	TYPE	AREA	LATEST RP
Property Bearing Nagar Palika Khata No. 254 situated at Mohalla Ramnagar Roorkee Pargana and Tehsil Roorkee District Haridwar - 247667	Uttarakhand	Residential Independent House	Land Area 476 sq. ft. & Bua Of Gf 1428 sq. ft.	5,500,000
Property Bearing Khasra No. 629 Kha Old Khasra No. 515/2 Situated At Mauza Majra Pargana Kendriyadood Tehsil And District Dehradun - 248002	Uttarakhand	Residential Independent House	Land 1700 sq.ft, GF 1216 sq.ft, Built up 1516 sq.ft	7,658,379
Flat No. 102, Situated at First Floor on Scorf, Bearing Old Khasra No. 12, New Khasra No.17, Situated at Village Jakhan, Pargana Central Doon, Tehsil and District Dehradun	Uttarakhand	Residential Flat	Built up 2151 sq.ft	11,847,708
Khata No 01101 (fasi Year 1396-1401) Khasra No 533/2 Mauza Bharuwalla Grant Pargana Central Doon Tehsil Sadar Distt Dehradun - 248002	Uttarakhand	Residential Independent House	Land 855 sq.ft, Built up 2157 sq.ft	9,120,420

Contact Person > Call: 99208 79111 (Bhavika) www.icicihfc.com/property-auction To schedule site visit within 7 days

ICICI Home Finance Corporate Office: ICICI Home Finance Company Limited, ICICI HFC Tower, Andheri- Kurla Road, Andheri (East), Mumbai- 400059, India Branch Office: 1st Floor, Ashirwad Tower, Model Colony, Near Ranipur Mor, Haridwar- 249407. Branch Office: 3rd Floor, Shop no, 21/42, Rajpur Road-2, Near Cross Road Mall, Dehradun UK- 248001. Branch Office: Plot no. 16/1 & 17/1, Ward no. 13, Shop no. 9, 2nd Floor, SGAD Complex, Nainital Road, Rudrapur- 263153.

[See proviso to rule 8(6)] Notice for sale of immovable assets E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with 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 property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of ICICI Home Finance Company Ltd., will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is", as per the brief particulars given hereunder:

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Legal Heirs. Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date and Time of Auction	One Day Before Auction Date	SARFAESI Stage
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H)	(I)
1.	Ikram Tyagi (Borrower) Nargis Khan (Co-Borrower) UH-HWR00001602920/ UH-HWR00001602921/ UH-HWR00001609636/ UH-HWR00001609638	Plot No.145,146 Part of Plot No. 147 Kh 714 Mshivam Vihar Gram Salempur Mahdood 1 Prg. Roorkee Haridwar-Haridwar Uttarakhand-249402	Rs. 43.40, 008.72/- November 14, 2025	Rs. 1,02,88,260/- To 10,28,826/-	December 16, 2025 11:00 AM To 03:00 PM	December 23, 2025 02:00 PM To 03:00 PM	December 22, 2025 Before 05:00 PM	Symbolic Possession
2.	Jasavant. (Borrower) Sushila (Co-Borrower) Lan No. UH-HWR00001585855/ UH-HWR00001585857/ UH-HWR00001591493	Plot No. 149 Kh No. 1566 Gram Salempur Mahdood Second Prg Roorkee Tehdistt Haridwar No Haridwar Uttarakhand-249402	Rs. 94.22, 561.00/- November 14, 2025	Rs. 1,09,02,150/- To 10,90,215/-	December 16, 2025 11:00 AM To 03:00 PM	December 23, 2025 02:00 PM To 03:00 PM	December 22, 2025 Before 05:00 PM	Symbolic Possession
3.	Mahipal Singh (Borrower) Dolly (Co-Borrower) Lan No. LH-HWR00001486511/ LH-HWR00001486512	1103 A Commercial Property Bearing Its Khadra No. 1103M Situated At Village Salempur Rajputan Pargana Bhagwanpur Roorkee District Haridwar 1103 Haridwar Uttaranchal- 249132	Rs. 11.49, 342.38/- November 14, 2025	Rs. 49,22,100/- To 4,92,210/-	December 16, 2025 11:00 AM To 03:00 PM	December 23, 2025 02:00 PM To 03:00 PM	December 22, 2025 Before 05:00 PM	Symbolic Possession
4.	Shaheed. (Borrower) Salama (Co-Borrower) Lan No. LH-DEH00001531476/ LH-DEH00001531485	Khatauni No. 403 Khadra No. 987 Situated At Majia Shishambada Pargana Pachwadon Vikasagar Dehradun Dehradun-Uttarakhand-247656	Rs. 20.65, 638.52/- November 15, 2025	Rs. 29.16, 000/- To 2,91,600/-	December 16, 2025 11:00 AM To 03:00 PM	December 23, 2025 02:00 PM To 03:00 PM	December 22, 2025 Before 05:00 PM	Symbolic Possession
5.	Pramod Kumar Joshi (Borrower) Kavita Joshi (Co-Borrower) Lan No. LHRUD00001556889/ LHRUD00001568321	Khet No. 132 Min Vill Jainagar Plot No. 23 Golden Gate Rudrapur Udham Singh Nagar 263153 Jainagar Rudrapur Rudrapur Uttarakhand-263153	Rs. 21.61, 594.52/- November 15, 2025	Rs. 23.33, 313/- To 2,33,331/-	December 16, 2025 11:00 AM To 03:00 PM	December 23, 2025 02:00 PM To 03:00 PM	December 22, 2025 Before 05:00 PM	Symbolic Possession
6.	Shivam. (Borrower) Nagina (Co-Borrower) Lan No. LHRUD00001551235/ LHRUD00001551236	House No. 83 Ward No. 25 Khasra No. 136/2/1 Min Rudrapur U.S. Nagar Fazalpur Mahraula	Rs. 10.16, 558.50/- November 15, 2025	Rs. 12.05, 100/- To 1,20,510/-	December 16, 2025 11:00 AM To 03:00 PM	December 23, 2025 02:00 PM To 03:00 PM	December 22, 2025 Before 05:00 PM	Symbolic Possession
7.	Pravesh. (Borrower) Manoj Kumar (Co-Borrower) Lan No. LHCTD00001612562	Khasra No. 6 Min Cha Mauza Badrish Puram Colapur Gram Jainagar Rudrapur Pargana Jwalapur Teh & Dist Haridwar 1 Uttarakhand-249403	Rs. 38.40, 415.00/- November 15, 2025	Rs. 51.88, 250/- To 5,18,825/-	December 16, 2025 11:00 AM To 03:00 PM	December 23, 2025 02:00 PM To 03:00 PM	December 22, 2025 Before 05:00 PM	Symbolic Possession
8.	Vikrant Kumar Ghaghat (Borrower) Nirmala Devi (Co-Borrower) Lan No. LHRUD00001606873/ LHRUD00001606874	Plot S-4 Khata No. 00858 Khasra No. 119 Gram Kalara Tehsil Rudrapur Udham Singh Nagar-263153	Rs. 34.12, 554/- November 14, 2025	Rs. 41.96, 124/- To 4,19,612/-	November 29, 2025 11:00 AM To 03:00 PM	December 06, 2025 02:00 PM To 03:00 PM	December 05, 2025 Before 05:00 PM	Symbolic Possession
9.	Pankaj Kumar Sharma (Borrower) Pooja Sharma (Co-Borrower) Lan No. LH-HWR00001573710/ LH-HWR00001573712	Plot No. 13 Part of Plot No. 13 Khasra No. 461 Ward No. 13 Raja Ji Avenue Near Shivalik Ganga Vihar Gram Salempur Mahdood 1 Pargana Roorkee Tehsil And Distt Haridwar Haridwar Uttarakhand- 249402 Uttarakhand Haridwar Uttarakhand-249404	Rs. 15.70, 236/- November 14, 2025	Rs. 15.14, 700/- To 1,51,470/-	November 29, 2025 11:00 AM To 03:00 PM	December 06, 2025 02:00 PM To 03:00 PM	December 05, 2025 Before 05:00 PM	Symbolic Possession

The online auction will be conducted on website (URL Link- https://BidDeal.in) of our auction agency ValueTrust Capital Services Private Limited. The Mortgages/ notice are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till December 22, 2025, December 05, 2025 before 05:00 PM else these secured assets will be sold as per above schedule. The Prospective Bidders must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) RTGS/ Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at ICICI Home Finance Company Limited Branch Office Address mentioned on top of the article on or before December 22, 2025, December 05, 2025 before 04:00 PM. The Prospective Bidder(s) must also submit signed copy of Registration Form & Bid Terms and Conditions form at ICICI Home Finance Company Limited Branch Office Address mentioned on top of the article on or before December 22, 2025, December 05, 2025 before 05:00 PM. Earnest Money Deposit Demand Draft (DD) should be from a Nationalized/Scheduled Bank in favor of "ICICI Home Finance Company Ltd. - Auction" payable at the branch office address mentioned on top of the article. For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact ICICI Home Finance Company Limited on 9920807300. The Authorized Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit https://www.icicihfc.com/ Date: November 20, 2025 Authorized Officer, "ICICI Home Finance Company Limited", Place: Uttarakhand CIN Number- U65922MH1999PLC120106

Health department to soon receive 103 nursing officers: Rawat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Health minister Dhan Singh Rawat said that the Medical Health and Family Welfare department will soon recruit 103 nursing officers, following a similar initiative by the Medical Education department. This recruitment brings the total number of nursing officer positions across both departments to 690.

The Uttarakhand Medical Services Selection Board (UMSSSB) has initiated the recruitment process for the 103 backlog posts of nursing officers, which are available for both male and female candidates. The online application process will begin on December 2, 2025, and will close on December 22, 2025. Among the 103 positions available, 63 are designated for diploma-holder nursing officers (female), 31 for degree-holder nursing officers (female), five for diploma-

holder nursing officers (male) and four for degree-holder nursing officers (male), he said.

Rawat said that previously, the Board announced recruitment for 587 vacant posts of nursing officers in the Govern-



ment medical colleges. This means that a total of 690 nursing officer positions will soon be filled in both the Health and Medical Education departments. Selected nursing offi-

cers will be appointed to government medical colleges and various medical facilities across the State, which will enhance health services and significantly improve patient care, Rawat stated.

Additionally, he said that the recruitment process has also begun for 30 vacant backlog posts of dental hygienist within the Medical Health and Family Welfare department. The department has sent a requisition to UMSSSB for direct recruitment to these posts. Of the 30 positions, four are for the unreserved category, 14 for Scheduled Castes, three for Scheduled Tribes and nine for Other Backward Classes.

Candidates interested in applying can do so online starting December 3, 2025, on the official website of the Board, with the application deadline set for December 23, 2025, Rawat added.

Striated Heron, Gadwall make hills their winter habitat, surprising ornithologists

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Bageshwar

With the climate change effects being increasingly visible in the migration pattern of the nomadic birds in the Uttarakhand Himalayas, Striated Heron and Gadwall ducks, which are known to migrate to the plains in winter, are now reaching the hills, swimming upstream along rivers.

A Gadwall has been spotted in Garud, Bageshwar, indicating that changing climate patterns are affecting the migration routes and habitat range of many species. Birds that used to settle along coastal areas, plains, Bhabhar (Tarai) and reservoirs are now making their way to the Himalayan foothills. The presence of the Striated Heron and Gad-

wall has been recorded in the lower Himalayan belt, at altitudes between 600 and 1,500 meters above the sea level. This is surprising to the ornithologists. According to them, this change in their migration routes-revealed from a recent bird count survey-needs to be studied deeply. They, however, agree on one point that climate change is affecting their migration patterns. As per the survey, a total of 43 bird species have been spotted in Kapkot and Garud areas of Bageshwar district.

Speaking of the matter, a researcher and professor,



Deepak Kumar, who headed the survey, said: "Birds are expanding their habitat range owing to climate change. The sighting of

Gadwall (a duck species) in Baijnath and Striated Heron locally known as Dharidar Bagula in Kapkot is unusual. The Great Cormorant has

been spotted this season, too." Notably, Kapkote is located at an elevation of 1,150 metres while Baijnath stands at a height of 1,130 metres where these birds were seldom seen.

Echoing the same view, an avian expert associated with Corbett National Park, Ramanagar, Rajesh Bhatt said that these birds have been adapting well with the local climate. "The availability of diverse food options in and around rivers may be encouraging them to settle in mountainous areas," he added.

Former judges, veterans slam Rahul Gandhi’s attack on ECI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A group of citizens comprising former judges, retired bureaucrats and veteran armed forces officers has criticised Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for unleashing what they claimed “impotent rage born out of repeated electoral failure” to tarnish the dignity of the Election Commission of India (ECI).

In a joint statement, these 272 personalities said that the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha has repeatedly attacked the Election Commission over accusations of “vote theft” using “unbelievably uncouth rhetoric” and claiming that he would “hound” officers when they superrannate from the poll authority.

“Yet, despite such scathing accusations, there has been no formal complaint filed by him, along with the prescribed sworn affidavit, to escape his accountability for levelling unsubstantiated alle-



gations and threatening public servants in the performance of their duty,” it said. “This pattern of behaviour reflects what might be called “impotent rage”-deep anger born of repeated electoral failure and frustration, without a concrete plan to reconnect with the people,” said the statement signed by National Green Tribunal Chairman Adarsh Kumar Goel, former judges S N Dhingra, Hemant Gupta, Rajiv Lochan, former RAW chief Sanjeev Tripathi, and former NIA director Y C Mod among others.

They claimed that several senior figures of Congress and other political parties, leftist NGOs, ideologically opinionated scholars, and a few attention seekers in other walks of life, have joined Gandhi with similarly blistering rhetoric against the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) and even declared that the Commission has descended into complete shamelessness by acting like the “B-team of the BJP”.

“Such fiery rhetoric may be emotionally powerful -but it collapses under scrutiny, because the ECI has publicly

shared its SIR methodology, overseen verification by court-sanctioned means, removed ineligible names in a compliant manner, and added new eligible voters,” the statement said.

It alleged the actions of the Leader of the Opposition suggests that the accusations against the EC were an attempt to drape political frustration in the garb of institutional crisis.

The eminent personalities said that when political leaders lose touch with the aspirations of ordinary citizens, they lash out at institutions instead of rebuilding their credibility. “Theatrics replace analysis. Public spectacle takes the place of public service,” the statement said, referring to Gandhi’s attempts to target the Indian Armed Forces, the judiciary, parliament and its functionaries.

The eminent citizens also urged political leaders to accept the democratic verdicts with grace and respect the constitutional process.

Long extinct in Gujarat, tiger now returns to forest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Ahmedabad

More than three decades after tigers went extinct in Gujarat, a wandering big cat has made Ratanmahal Wildlife Sanctuary its new home, raising hopes for the revival of the striped animal in the state, known as the last abode of Asiatic lions.

The settling of the tiger has prompted State Forest and Environment Minister Arjun Modhwadia to announce that Gujarat has become the abode of three big cats — the lion, leopard and tiger.

Modhwadia said tigers were once found in large numbers in Gujarat; however, they eventually disappeared with the passage of time.

“Now, forest officials have confirmed that a tiger that wandered into Gujarat nearly nine months ago has made Ratanmahal Wildlife Sanctuary in Dahod district its new home”, Modhwadia told reporters. He said the big cat was first captured on the CCTV cameras placed inside

the forests of Ratanmahal in February this year.

“Since February, forest staff have been keeping a close watch on the tiger’s movement. During the last nine months, this tiger was captured at regular intervals on our cameras placed inside the forest, which has established that the big cat has settled in the Ratanmahal forest,” the minister said, adding that the tiger appears to be healthy.

The minister stated that has relocated some herbivores in the forest to make sure that the tiger gets enough prey base for its survival.

The National Tiger Conservation Authority has been informed about the tiger’s presence in Gujarat and its guidance has been sought for further action.

The forest department records show that tigers went extinct in Gujarat in 1989.

In February 2019, the forest department confirmed the presence of a tiger in Lunawada tehsil of Mahisagar district.

2,000 CISCE school heads to meet in Chandigarh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Heads of more than 2,000 schools affiliated to the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) from across the country will meet in Chandigarh on Thursday to deliberate on emerging trends in school education and frame a future-ready action plan, according to officials.

The two-day gathering, the 68th AGM and Annual Conference of Association of Schools for Indian School Certificate, is set to bring together some of the most influential voices in Indian schooling at a time of rapid educational transformation.

“Ashok Mittal, Rajya Sabha MP and an eminent educationist, will deliver the inaugural address on Thursday. Justice Vikramjit Sen, former Supreme Court judge and former chief justice of the Karnataka High Court, will be the chief guest on Friday,” a senior CISCE official said.

During the two days, participants will engage in thematic discussions, presentations and consultations designed to strengthen academic standards, administrative systems and student-centred practices across CISCE schools.

The prestigious Derozio Awards 2025, recognising outstanding contributions to education, will be conferred during the conference. In addition, eight significant policy documents, handbooks and resource materials developed by CISCE will be formally released, marking key milestones in the Council’s ongoing academic initiatives.

“Our roadmap focuses on empowering schools with clear standards, enriched curricula, inclusive practices and robust training systems. By building collaborative networks and actionable strategies, we aim to enhance the learning environment and equip students with skills essential for an evolving global landscape,” said Joseph Emmanuel, CISCE Chief Executive and Secretary.

TMC MP files counter-complaint against Bengal Governor Bose

SAUGAR SENGUPTA
■ Kolkata

The battle between Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose and Trinamool Congress MP Kalyan Banerjee reached the next level with the TMC leader on Wednesday filing a counter-complaint against the Governor, accusing him of interfering in the State’s electoral process and inciting disharmony among the citizens.

Banerjee’s step comes a day after Bose got an FIR registered against the TMC MP at the Hare Street Police Station in Kolkata under a catena of sections i.e. 151, 152, 197, 353, and 196 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for alleging in public that the Governor was in the practice of harbouring criminals in his official residence at Raj Bhavan, from where he supplied guns and bombs to BJP criminals. Referring to Bose’s state-



Governor CV Ananda Bose (left) and MP Kalyan Banerjee (right)

ment that Bengal required “ballot and not bullet culture”, Banerjee said that this was intentionally done to influence the electorate. “Irrespective of the immunity he enjoys, I, as a citizen, do have all the rights to get certain things investigated for the sake of the safety and security of the people of my country and my State, which is why I have demanded an investigation,” Banerjee said. The TMC MP urged the

police to treat his complaint under Section 173 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNS), sources said.

Advocate Arka Nag said on behalf of Banerjee that despite being in a constitutional post, the Governor had no business bringing false and fabricated charges — of corruption and politicisation — against the Bengal Police, which amounted to undermining public trust and peace.

Afghan industry minister visits IITF 2025

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A high-level Afghan delegation led by H.E. Alhaj Nooruddin Azizi, Minister of Industry and Commerce, visited the India International Trade Fair (IITF) 2025 on Wednesday as part of his five-day official trip to India aimed at strengthening bilateral trade and investment links.

The Minister was received by Neeraj Kharwal, Managing Director of India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO), who briefed him on the ongoing fair, its facilities, and opportunities for Afghanistan to participate more extensively in future exhibitions.

During the visit, Minister Azizi toured various stalls, including Afghan pavilions showcasing traditional Afghan products. He interacted with Afghan traders based in India to discuss market

access challenges and prospects for expanding Afghan exports into the Indian market. This is the first visit by an Afghan Minister to an ITPO event since 2021 and comes at a time of heightened Afghanistan-Pakistan tensions, including border closures that have disrupted Afghan exports. These developments have pushed Afghanistan to diversify its trade routes and strengthen economic engagement with India.

Key Indian exports to Afghanistan include pharmaceuticals, textiles, machinery and essential food items such as sugar, tea and rice. Afghan exports to India consist mainly of agricultural goods, dry fruits, spices, gemstones and minerals.

Recent diplomatic steps have also supported closer ties, including India’s decision in October 2025 to upgrade its Kabul mission to full embassy status.

Indian Army secures intellectual property rights for new coat combat (digital print)

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Indian Army has secured the intellectual property rights for a new coat combat (digital print) — a three-layered garment that integrates combat functionality with comfort and protection, according to officials.

The ‘New Coat Combat’ has been designed and developed by the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), Delhi, as a consultancy project under the aegis of the Army Design Bureau, the defence ministry said on Wednesday.

Following the unveiling of the new combat uniform (digital print), the Army introduced the new coat combat (digital print) in January 2025, marking another milestone in its ongoing journey towards modernisation, indigenisation, and enhanced soldier comfort, it said in a statement.

The three-layered garment incorporates advanced technical textiles and features an ergonomic design tailored to improve comfort, mobility, and operational efficiency in diverse climatic and tactical conditions, the officials said.

“The Indian Army has successfully registered the design of the new coat combat (digital print) with the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trademarks, Kolkata, under Design Application No. 449667-001, dated February 27, 2025 and published in the Official Journal of the Patent Office on October 7, 2025,” it said.

With this registration, the exclusive intellectual property rights (IPR) for both the design and camouflage pattern “rest solely” with the Indian Army, the ministry said.

The registration establishes the Army’s sole ownership and legal protection against unauthorised manufactur-

ing, reproduction, or commercial use by any non-authorised entity, it added.

“Any infringement of these rights will attract legal consequences, including injunctions and claims for damages, as per the provisions of the Designs Act, 2000 and Designs Rules, 2001 and Patents Act, 1970,” the statement said.

The new coat combat ensemble includes an outer layer, an inner jacket and a thermal layer.

The outer layer consists of digitally printed camouflage coat designed for operational durability and concealment in varied terrains.

The inner jacket is an insulated mid-layer using lightweight, breathable material, providing warmth without restricting movement; while the thermal layer is a base layer ensuring optimal thermal regulation and moisture control in extreme weather, it said.

Bengaluru hosts aerospace medicine conference

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A two-day conference highlighting the innovative approaches by aerospace medicine practitioners in balancing safety and optimal performance requirements of aviators is set to begin in Bengaluru on November 20, the defence ministry said on Wednesday.

The Indian Society of Aerospace Medicine (ISAM) is organising its 64th annual conference at the Institute of Aerospace Medicine (IAM), which will be inaugurated by Indian Air Force (IAF) chief Air Chief Marshal A P Singh, it said.

“The current edition of the conference is themed on ‘Innovations in Aerospace Medicine: Infinite

THE CONFERENCE WILL HOST NEARLY 300 DELEGATES FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND ABROAD

Possibilities’, which highlights the innovative approaches by aerospace medicine practitioners in balancing safety and optimal performance requirements of aviators,” the ministry said in a statement.

The conference will host nearly 300 delegates from across the country and abroad.

Participants also include researchers from associated institutions, including prominent scientists from the Defence Research and Development Organisation

(DRDO) laboratories and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

Key highlights will include the Air Marshal Subroto Mukherjee Memorial Oration to be delivered by Anchit Gupta, an avid historian, and the Air Vice Marshal M M Srinagesh Memorial Oration to be delivered by Air Vice Marshal Deepak Gaur (retd).

Another significant oration is the ‘Jemi Hormusji Framji Manekshaw Panel’, featuring guest lectures from notable experts, including Awais Ahmed, CEO and Founder of Pixxel Aerospace Technologies, and Captain Dhruv Rebbapragada, Chief Flight Safety Officer, IndiGo Airlines, it said.

With over 100 scientific papers to be presented at the conference, the delegates

can look forward to a robust agenda-filled scientific discussions, presentations and networking opportunities that aim to shape the future of aerospace medicine research and policy in the country, it said.

Established in 1952, ISAM is the only registered society dedicated to promoting the knowledge and practice of aerospace medicine in India.

The premier institute deals with military and civil aerospace medicine, including the human aspects of the spaceflight programme of the country.

With an aim to advance research, foster knowledge exchange and seek solutions to aeromedical challenges, ISAM has been conducting its annual scientific conference since 1954, it said.

Odisha CM Majhi asks police to up vigil against illegal immigration

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Bhubaneswar

Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Wednesday asked the police to up its vigil on illegal immigration in the state.

Addressing the concluding session of the two-day annual conference of district collectors and superintendents of police, Majhi asked the officers to work in coordination with the Coast Guard and Indian Navy to check illegal immigration.

The direction came as the police have launched a crackdown in coastal districts against illegal Bangladeshi immigrants.



Majhi also asked the police not to succumb to any pressure and take necessary action against criminals as per the law.

“The district collectors and SPs should work in coordina-

tion with each other. Care should be taken so that development is ensured along with security,” he said.

The CM asked the SPs to formulate a strategy to increase the conviction rate and set up

Investigation and Prosecution Wings, wherever necessary.

He also asked them to ensure complaints received at the police stations are registered and action is taken against officers who harass people.

He said the SPs should regularly visit police stations, be well versed with laws, and extensively use technology to stay a step ahead of criminals. “Our government gives top priority to maintaining law and order and controlling crime,” he said.

Maintaining that peace is required for attracting investment, Majhi said collectors and SPs have big roles to play in this regard.

SC slams Govt for recycling struck down...

What Parliament may legitimately do is to cure the defect identified by the court, whether by altering the underlying conditions, removing the constitutional infirmity, or restructuring the statutory framework in a manner consistent with the court’s reasoning, it said.

The verdict said the judicial system is already burdened with a staggering pendency across all the courts.

The responsibility of reducing pendency in courts does not rest only on the judiciary, it said, adding “It is a shared institutional duty. While the judiciary must strive to enhance efficiency in case management and decision-making, the other branches of government must exercise their legislative and executive powers with due regard to constitutional principles and judicial precedent.”

The bench directed the Centre to establish a National Tribunals Commission and said it is an essential structural safeguard designed to ensure independence, transparency, and uniformity in the appointment, administration, and functioning of tribunals across the country.

It also clarified that appointments done before the commencement of the Tribunal Reforms Act, 2021, but whose formal appointment notifications

were issued after the Act came into force, shall be protected.

Indian community is a pillar of our human...

Since then, negotiations have advanced rapidly. Formal talks began in late 2023 and, by mid-2025, the two sides had successfully concluded the negotiation phase; we are now essentially in the final procedural stage. What gives us confidence is that CEPA is not being negotiated in a vacuum: it sits on top of a strong political relationship, a clear Joint Vision, steadily rising trade-over 10.6 billion US dollars in 2024-25 and a shared understanding that both economies are complementary in many sectors. So, there is political will at the highest level, and there is a strong economic logic. That is usually the best recipe for concluding such agreements on schedule.

Q: The Indian community has a strong and growing presence across GCC countries, including Oman. How do you view the contribution of Indian expatriates to Oman’s development and society?

A: The Indian community is not just a “presence” in Oman; it is one of the pillars of our human bridge with India. There are nearly 700,000

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Indians living and working in the Sultanate, making them our largest expatriate community and, by some estimates, around one-fifth of our total population. Their contributions span every sector: from engineers and doctors to teachers, entrepreneurs and skilled workers who helped build our infrastructure, our services sector and our private companies.

During His Majesty’s State Visit, both leaders explicitly recognised the Indian community as a “living example” of the depth of India-Oman friendship. Oman attaches great importance to ensuring that Indians feel safe, respected and integrated into our society, while preserving their culture and traditions. In return, the Indian community has shown remarkable loyalty and attachment to Oman, often calling it their “second home.” So, when we speak of our strategic partnership, we must remember that it is not built only by diplomats-it is built every day by hundreds of thousands of ordinary people whose lives connect our two countries.

Q: India and Oman share a strategic maritime partnership. Could you elaborate on the maritime and port-related opportunities that could further enhance bilateral trade and connectivity?

A: Our maritime story is actually centuries old—shows sailing between the western coast of India

and the Omani ports long before the word “strategic” existed. His Majesty’s visit to India gave that historic reality a modern strategic shape. Maritime cooperation and connectivity are among the central pillars of the Joint Vision, reflecting Oman’s unique geography at the mouth of the Gulf and India’s role as a major Indian Ocean power.

Today, our ports at Duqm, Sohar and Salalah are emerging as key logistics and trans-shipment hubs with direct access to the Arabian Sea and the wider Indian Ocean. India already has access to the port of Duqm for naval and logistical purposes, which extends its operational reach in the western Indian Ocean and complements our shared interest in safe sea-lanes, especially given recent disruptions in the region. Looking ahead, we see major opportunities in: integrated port-led industrial zones; linking Omani ports with Indian industrial corridors; collaborating within emerging initiatives such as the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor; and expanding cooperation in ship repair, bunkering, green fuels and maritime security. All of this builds directly on the strategic guidance that came out of the December 2023 summit.

Q: There is increasing interest among Indian business leaders to invest in Oman. Could you highlight the sectors attracting the most

interest and any major investment plans that are currently under discussion?

A: The momentum we see from Indian investors is a direct response to the clarity provided by His Majesty’s visit and the Joint Vision. Oman Vision 2040 positions the Sultanate as a diversified, knowledge-based and logistics-driven economy, and Indian companies immediately recognise how well that aligns with India’s own outward investment push.

Today there are more than 6,000 India-Oman joint ventures in Oman across sectors, with estimated investments of over 700 million US dollars, and this number is growing. The strongest interest currently is in petrochemicals and energy value-chains, green hydrogen and green ammonia, manufacturing and metals, logistics and ports, mining and critical minerals, healthcare, education, tourism and hospitality, and ICT and digital services. The third tranche of the Oman-India Joint Investment Fund-announced during His Majesty’s visit-has also sent a strong signal that there are institutional vehicles ready to support large-scale projects from both sides. With CEPA on the horizon and the 70th anniversary of our diplomatic relations being celebrated, we expect a new wave of Indian investments that are long-term, technology-rich and job-creating for young Omanis.

India on path of becoming global hub of organic farming: PM



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said India is on the path of becoming the global hub of organic farming, and asserted that it is native and traditional to the nation.

Meeting of NSAs of Colombo Security Conclave to be held

The seventh meeting of the National Security Advisers of the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) will be held in Delhi on November 20, during which participants will discuss ways to further strengthen the partnership for enhancing regional security in the Indian Ocean Region. National Security Advisor(NSA) Ajit Doval will host his counterparts from Member States, including the Maldives, Mauritius, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.



Suicide *haram* in Islam: Owaisi on Delhi suicide bomber's video



AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi on Wednesday condemned a video of Red Fort suicide bomber, saying suicide is 'haram' in Islam and the killing of innocents is a "grave sin". Haram refers to anything prohibited by Islamic law.

Gehlot accuses ECI of creating controversy over SIR

Former Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot on Wednesday accused the Election Commission of India (ECI) of creating unnecessary controversy over the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, alleging that the situation had arisen due to the commission's "foolishness". Responding to questions from reporters here, Gehlot said, "This has become a major issue, and the biggest mistake is that of the ECI."



Congress seeks PM's answer in Parliament on Delhi blast lapse

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Senior Congress leader Salman Khurshid on Wednesday said the Delhi blast has put a "very serious question mark" on the government's security policy and demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi should soon answer in Parliament on the "lapse".

The former external affairs minister also alleged that "strategic failures" are now writ large as far as the Modi government is concerned.

In an interview with PTI, Khurshid called for a steady foreign policy instead of a "personalised" and "episodic" one playing out currently.

"We should have a steady foreign policy. I don't think we have a steady foreign policy, we have a sporadic, episodic, personalised, aberrational foreign policy. This is not

foreign policy (at all)," he said while talking about the recently-published book "India's Tryst with the World: A Foreign Policy Manifesto" that has been edited by him and Salil Shetty and contains an article by former prime minister Manmohan Singh.

Asked about the Congress' assertion calling on the government to clear its stance on the 'new normal doctrine' which stated that any future terror attack after Pahalgam would be treated as an act of war, Khurshid said, "We are not jingoists but we believe that the country needs the best attention of the people that command attention in the country, which means the government and the opposition."

"We are startled about what has happened near the Red Fort and its connections with other parts of the country. In all these days

there is not a single clear statement that has come from the government, saying two things: how did this intelligence failure happen and what are its implications particularly in light of what it has been saying in the past," the chairperson of the Congress' foreign affairs department said.

"For people who turn around and say to the Congress -- 'why are you not pushing the government enough?' Frankly if there is a crisis of confidence, or of strategic nature etc., we owe it to the country and to the people that we let the government take the best decisions possible and then come out clearly in its support but a government that is not willing to trust people and trust the opposition, what do you expect of that government," Khurshid asked.

"I could take a whole hour



Congress leader Salman Khurshid

to talk about strategic and intelligence failures. I think this is a very serious question mark on this government's security policy," he said of the blast.

Talking about the demands of the Congress on the issue, Khurshid said his party has made it clear that "let's get into Parliament quickly".

"In a responsible way, in a responsible place, let us talk about what is happening and why it is happening again and again despite all the pro-found statements made by this government," he said.

Asked if the party is demanding that the prime minister should answer on the issue on the floor of the

House, Khurshid said, "Should he not?" Pressed if that is the demand of the party, he answered in the affirmative and said "absolutely".

"We should get to the House as quickly as possible to talk about why a security lapse of this nature (took place) and then see how the country can go forward together. These are challenges that have to be fought together, these challenges that cannot be fought on our party lines," Khurshid said.

His remarks come days after the Congress demanded that Modi should immediately chair an all-party meeting on the Delhi blast incident. The opposition party also asked whether the "new normal doctrine" defined by the government following the Pahalgam attack stands.

The Congress has also demanded that the Winter Session of Parliament, sched-

uled to start on December 1, be advanced so that there could be a debate on the incident.

Last week, a high-intensity blast ripped through a car near Red Fort in Delhi, killing 13 people and injuring several others, hours after the busting of a "white collar terror module" and the arrest of eight people, including three doctors. Talking about the pitfalls of a personalised foreign policy, Khurshid said if the personal relations falter then the entire edifice of the foreign relations falls.

"I think India and most countries have had projections of their top leadership as the face of their foreign policy. (Jawaharlal) Nehru ji was the face of foreign policy undoubtedly, Rajiv Gandhi was the face of foreign policy, Manmohan Singh was the face of foreign policy and I assume that was true also of

Atal Bihari Vajpayee. But foreign policy was more than the face, foreign policy was the edifice and the base that was built by that face," he said.

Foreign policy involved an enormous amount of conflict resolution ability by being friends and sharing aspirations which India did with many countries of the world, he said. "I think that is not there today and it is all transactional, it is 'I hug you, you hug me'...America is a clear example of that. Look at the relationship we were supposed to have with the US. Look at what President Donald Trump has continued to say about the friendship that he owes to Prime Minister Modi and look at what America is doing to India," he said.

Khurshid also slammed the government for its policy on the Palestine-Israel issue.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla calls for UN reforms

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ new Delhi

Stressing the need for UN reforms, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Wednesday underscored the importance of re-evaluating the United Nations' current structure in light of a rapidly changing global landscape.

He highlighted the necessity of essential reforms that address contemporary challenges. Birla observed that in a world grappling with critical issues—including war, terrorism, climate crises, and digital threats—dialogue, cooperation, and timely global reforms have become indispensable.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla made these remarks while delivering the inaugural session of the 26th International Conference of Chief Justices of the World on Wednesday.



Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla

Birla highlighted India's ancient philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and the principles of peace, harmony, and equity enshrined in the Constitution as the foundation of the country's global commitment.

Citing India's active role in UN peacekeeping missions, its contribution of over 300,000 peacekeeping troops, and the vaccine assistance extended to more than 150 countries during

the COVID-19 pandemic, he affirmed that India has consistently acted with a deep sense of responsible global cooperation.

The Lok Sabha Speaker hoped that the conference—focused on emerging challenges before the judiciary, such as environmental justice, sustainable development, digital security, and the ethical use of artificial intelligence—will further strengthen global peace, justice, and stability.

BJP seeks SIR in Sikkim

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Gangtok

The BJP demanded a special intensive revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in Sikkim under Article 371(F) of the Constitution, which protects the rights of the indigenous people, a party leader said.

A delegation of BJP functionaries met the district election officer (DEO) Gangtok, to press for updating of the electoral rolls through the SIR, the party's spokesperson Sangay Gyatso Bhutia said in a statement on Tuesday.

"The BJP is committed to protecting the unique identity and constitutional safeguards of the Sikkimese people. We have clearly articulated that the electoral rolls should be revised under Article 371(F), which lays down the historical and legal framework of Sikkim," the state BJP spokesperson said.

The SIR, as and when it takes place, should adhere to the Sikkim Citizenship Order Act, 1975 and the

Representation of the Sikkim Subject Act, 1974, he said.

The BJP delegation also submitted a comprehensive application, which they had submitted to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) earlier, detailing the party's legal and constitutional arguments on the matter.

"Our party's stand has always been Sikkim and Sikkimese people first. We will never compromise on this sacred trust. The BJP is steadfastly committed to the welfare of the people of Sikkim and its future generations," Bhutia said.

The BJP leader also criticised other political parties for their alleged silence on the need for SIR in Sikkim.

"The silence maintained by other political parties of Sikkim on an issue of fundamental importance to our identity is deeply disappointing and frankly, alarming. Their silence triggers the suspicion that they only care about their narrow political interests," Bhutia alleged.

Eknath Shinde fears Shiv Sena split, claims Congress

TN RAGHUNATHA
■ Mumbai

Maharashtra Congress president Harshavardhan Sapkal on Wednesday charged that deputy chief minister and founder-president of Shiv Sena (Shinde) Eknath Shinde was "isolated" within his party and feared a split in his party. The Opposition MahaYuti said that Shinde had begun to understand the ruling BJP's "use and throw" policy.

On a day when Sakal led the way in targeting Eknath Shinde a day after several of his party ministers boycotted the MahaYuti government's Cabinet meeting, the leaders from the Opposition Maha

Vikas Aghadi (MVA) sought to drive wedges in the Devendra Fadnavis-led government by saying that Shinde had now begun to understand the ruling BJP's "use and throw" policy.

Singling out Mahayuti in general and Shinde in particular for an attack, Sakpal said, "Eknath Shinde has now become isolated within the Mahayuti, and the fear of a potential party split has started troubling him. It is out of this very fear that the drama of his displeasure and protests has begun to unfold. This Mahayuti was not formed based on ideology, development, or trust, but solely for power. But instead of accepting humiliation for the sake of

power, Eknath Shinde should walk out of the government."

Talking to media persons on the sidelines of the launch of the Congress' campaign for the municipal polls in the Buldhana district of the Vidarbha region, Sakpal said, "The BJP, Shiv Sena (Shinde) and NCP (Ajit Pawar) have come together out of the helplessness that comes with holding onto power. This is a "Gangs of Triple Engine Government," which is why we are witnessing gang wars among them. Sometimes Shinde gets upset and sulks in a field in Dare village of Satara district, while on some other occasions, the other deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar goes missing".

"If Eknath Shinde truly wants to register his protest or is genuinely upset, and if nothing concrete is happening, then he should step down from power. But since he cannot live without power, he will have to silently endure whatever harassment Devendra Fadnavis subjects him to," the State Congress chief said.

Mumbai Congress President Prof Varsha Gaikwad, who is an MP from Mumbai North-Central said the discord that was earlier happening behind closed doors had now come out in the open now.

"Slowly, Eknath Shinde is now understanding BJP's use and throw policy. It's unfortu-

nate that instead of worrying about the people of Maharashtra, all these people are engaged in getting upset and pacifying each other," Prof Gaikwad said.

NCP (SP) national spokesperson Clyde Crasto said, "Fadnavis giving a piece of his mind to ministers of Shinde Sena and Shinde attending the Cabinet meeting alone because his ministers boycotted it means Fadnavis has no respect for Shinde and also his Ministers have scant respect for him."

"If Shinde has any 'self-respect', he should sever his party's alliance with the BJP. If he does not leave at the right time, Shinde will surely be shown the door soon.



Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Union Minister Kiren Rijiju, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, LoP in the Lok Sabha and party leader Rahul Gandhi, party MP Sonia Gandhi and others at Central Hall of Samvidhan Sadan to pay tribute to former PM Indira Gandhi on her birth anniversary in New Delhi on Wednesday

Termites, seepage damage artefacts as Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar museum faces funds, staff crunch

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar

Water seepage and termites have cost a museum in Maharashtra's Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar many of its prized relics, as the establishment, managed by the municipal corporation, is grappling with a lack of funds and staff crunch.

The Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Museum, home to nearly 3,000 antiquities dating back to the Satavahana period, sees at least 40,000 visitors annually.

With upkeep stalled,

museum officials are now removing exhibits from display to save them from damage, an official said.

The local civic body set up the museum after history scholar Dr Shantilal Purwar donated the collection in 1999. It houses relics such as Satavahana coins and the only painting of Maratha commander Ibrahim Khan Gardi, who played a key role in the 3rd Battle of Panipat.

Speaking to PTI, honorary director of the museum, Shriprakash Purwar, said, "Termites are eating away the furniture. Chemical treat-



ments have been carried out only a few times in the past. We are now forced to remove some items from display because of damage from water seepage and termites. We have lost a few medieval-era paintings and a leather shield due to rainwater."

The museum started with 10 staff members, but is now left with only three, he said.

"We need at least two temporary workers to help with the daily tasks. There was a sound and light show about the life of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj that was never held. The control room for the

show is also infested with termites. The wooden stands for two cannons, weighing approximately one tonne, are in a weakened condition and pose a danger to visitors. The museum was painted only once when it was commissioned," Purwar said.

Moreover, the museum doesn't have a storage room or a conservation lab, which the local municipal corporation should provide, he said.

A project to establish a research centre about Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was approved in 2016 with a budget of Rs 1.6 crore, but

now only a signboard for the project remains on the museum's campus.

A city engineer with the municipal corporation said, "We have sent a detailed project report (DPR) for the modernisation of the museum and furniture-related works to the state government. However, the funds haven't been allotted. We are planning to repair the galleries in the museum."

"The issues of staff crunch and other maintenance work will be taken into consideration, and we will work on it," he added.

States Focus



UP CM REVIEWS DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR MEERUT, KANPUR

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday reviewed development plans for Meerut, Kanpur and Mathura, and said that the growth of these cities must go beyond building roads and structures. Development should integrate local identity, heritage, culture, and modern amenities in a balanced manner, he said while directing officials that projects must be executed in phases, completed on time with high quality, and deliver visible benefits to citizens.



5.67 LAKH VILLAGES DECLARED ODF PLUS: GOVT

Nearly 5.67 lakh villages across the country have been declared Open Defecation Free (ODF Plus), recording a 467 per cent increase from 1 lakh in 2022, according to official data released by the Jal Shakti ministry on the occasion of World Toilet Day on Wednesday. Of these, 4.86 lakh villages have achieved the 'ODF Plus Model' stage which means that they sustain open-defecation-free status while managing both solid and liquid waste and maintaining visual cleanliness, the data said. Jal Shakti Minister CR Paatil said the transformation reflects both nationwide participation and sustained government backing.

Mamata slams ECI over Bengal BLO suicide

SAUGAR SENGUPTA
■ Kolkata

Even as a Booth-Level Officer (BLO) on Wednesday committed suicide in Bengal, allegedly failing to bear the workload of Special Intensive Revision (SIR), Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee lambasted the Election Commission of India for its "unplanned and inhuman" treatment of the government staff. "Today again, we lost a BLO in Mal, Jalpaiguri, an anganwadi worker who took her own life under the unbearable pressure of the ongoing SIR work," Banerjee wrote on social media, alleging thus far Bengal had lost 28 "precious" lives since SIR commenced in the State appealing to the ECI to "act with conscience and immediately halt this unplanned drive before more lives are

lost." The 48-year-old Shantimuni Orao, an ICDS worker functioning as the BLO for booth number 20/101 under Rangamati gram panchayat in the Jalpaiguri district of North Bengal, hung herself with a scarf from a tree near her house in the New Glencoe tea garden area, police said. Her husband, Suku Ekka, a tribal worker, said she was regularly complaining about "mounting pressure ever since the SIR began." Her son said, "SIR forms were being filled in Bengali, and we could not help with uploading them because we do not know the language. so she was afraid about how to complete the work by December 4." "The body has been sent for post-mortem, and an investigation has begun," District Superintendent of



Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee

Police K.U. Ganpat said, adding, "The family members were complaining that she was quite upset about the work pressure." Other family members, too, said that "she could not cope with household work and her new assignment. Besides, a new guideline was issued where the BLOs were asked

to digitally upload the forms. Which made things all the more difficult for her." The incident took place within a few days of another BLO — for booth 278 in Chak Balarampur, Memari — Namita Hansda of East Burdwan district dying of a brain stroke that her family member complained was

due to her failure to cope with the workload. Soon after Wednesday's incident, the Chief Minister expressed her anger, writing "deeply shocked and saddened" at yet another BLO's death during SIR, reminding how "a process that earlier took three years is now being forced into two months on the eve of elections to please political masters, putting inhuman pressure on BLOs." Trinamool Congress spokesperson Kunal Ghosh wondered, "How many more deaths does this ECI need to quench its thirst for human slaughter just to please its political bosses?" Additionally, 28 people had died in Bengal since SIR commenced, either by committing suicide or by heart attack. Union Minister and BJP leader Sukanta Majumdar, however, refused to buy her

argument, saying she wanted such deaths to halt SIR so as to keep her "army of fake voters, most of whom are either dead persons or infiltrators, intact, but that is not going to happen. SIR will and should continue. The problem does not lie with SIR, but it lies with state administration, that is, Mamata Banerjee." Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari said that the victim died because of the pressure she was getting from her senior officials. "My information says that her officers were pressuring her, she was under immense stress and committed suicide," Adhikari said. The incident comes amid protests from BDOs in Kolkata and districts demanding extension of dates or appointment of data entry operators for uploading the voters' details.

Congress makes first move to align with Sharad Pawar for BMC polls

TN RAGHUNATHA
■ Mumbai

Within days after it decided to go it alone in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) polls, the Congress has made the first move to align with the Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) for the forthcoming BMC and other municipal corporation polls across the state. While it was known in the state political circles that the Congress leadership was in touch with Sharad Pawar before it announced its decision to go it alone in the BMC polls, the grand old party has now set the ball rolling on matters relating to having an alliance for the municipal corporation polls. After her party announced its decision to contest the BMC polls independently on Saturday, Mumbai Congress chief President Prof Varsha Gaikwad indicated that her

party might align with the Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) by saying, "Our alliance with the NCP is "intact." Only Sharad Pawar can comment on this matter," she said. As a first step, Mumbai Congress chief President Prof. Varsha Gaikwad—with other city party leaders including Aslam Shaikh, Jyoti Gaikwad and Amin Patel met Sharad Pawar and NCP (SP) Working President Supriya Sule at their Silver Oak residence at Worli in south Mumbai on Wednesday. The Sharad Pawar-led NCP came into being after a split in the Congress in June 1999 over Sonia Gandhi's foreign issue. Ever since its formation, the NCP has been close to the Congress. That they are natural allies can be evidenced from the fact that after its formation, the NCP and Congress formed a post-poll coalition government in Maharashtra in

October 1999, as neither party had secured an outright majority to prevent the rival Shiv Sena-BJP alliance from coming to power. Subsequently, the two parties ruled the state for two more terms. The MVA — comprising Congress, NCP (SP) and Shiv Sena (UBT), had contested the 2024 Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha polls together. Following the first rounds of talks with Sharad Pawar and Supriya Pawar, Mumbai-level leaders of Congress and NCP (SP) are expected to meet and carry forward the matters relating to the sharing of seats between the two parties for the BMC polls. Talking to media persons here, Prof Gaikwad said, "There was an alliance between the Congress and the NCP for the BMC polls. The parties that respect democracy and the Constitution expect to contest this election together

er this time. In this regard, a positive discussion has taken place today with Pawar Saheb, who is our senior leader. There will be further discussion on this matter next week." "This election should not be based on religion, caste, or language because Mumbai is such a city where people come from all states of the country, and everyone contributes to the development of this city...we cannot go together in the election with those who take the law into their own hands," she said, while taking a swipe at Raj Thackeray. She herself had earlier indirectly spilled out the beans that it was Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena's decision to include the Raj Thackeray-headed MNS into the MVA that had prompted her party to go it alone in the BMC polls. MNS chief Raj Thackeray, it

may be recalled, had some years ago carried out a vicious campaign against the north-India migrants — especially those from Bihar and UP settled in Mumbai and other parts of Maharashtra. "We are a cultured and respected party and cannot align with any outfit that had previously targeted Bihari and north Indian migrants," Prof Gaikwad had said. On Wednesday, she was more specific that the Congress has nothing to do with the Shiv Sena-MNS alliance. "Our best wishes are with both Thackeray brothers coming together. But no discussion has taken place with them regarding the alliance," the Mumbai Congress chief said. The Congress' decision to contest the BMC polls in alliance with the NCP (SP) may prove to be detrimental for the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) and Raj Thackeray-led MNS.

SP QUILTS MVA FOR BMC
Mumbai: The Samajwadi Party (SP) on Wednesday announced it will exit the Opposition's Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance and contest the coming local body elections in Mumbai and elsewhere in Maharashtra on its own. The decision was taken after the Congress, a prominent member of the MVA, decided to contest the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections independently, said SP leader Abu Asim Azmi. His party would field candidates in 150 out of 227 seats in the BMC elections, he said, adding, "Across the state, the SP will contest every local election independently. "A big party like the Congress only wants to take, not give. They do not call us for alliance meetings," he said.

Karnataka Govt launches LEAP programmes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bengaluru

Karnataka Minister Priyank Kharge on Wednesday unveiled a range of initiatives—LoIs, MoUs and skilling partnerships—aimed at making the state a global technology and talent hub. He highlighted two new programmes under the state government's flagship Local Economy Accelerator Program (LEAP)—Elevate Next (Deeptech) and Elevate Beyond Bengaluru. "LEAP is a five-year, ₹1,000-crore initiative designed to strengthen emerging clusters outside Bengaluru by providing access to infrastructure, funding and sector-specific support, while reinforcing Karnataka's leadership in advanced and disruptive technologies," Priyank said at a press conference on the sidelines of the 28th Bengaluru Tech Summit 2025. By adopting a full start-up lifecycle approach, LEAP aims to support innovation from ideation to commercialisation and empower

LEAP is a five-year, ₹1,000-crore initiative designed to strengthen emerging clusters outside Bengaluru by providing access to infrastructure, funding and sector-specific support, while reinforcing Karnataka's leadership in advanced and disruptive technologies
—PRIYANK KHARGE, MINISTER

start-ups across the technology and innovation ecosystem, the state IT minister added. Priyank said Letters of Intent worth Rs 2,600 crore were signed with leading innovators and enterprises, committing significant investments to Karnataka and boosting the state's manufacturing and innovation ecosystem. "These LoIs, expected to generate 3,500 direct and indirect jobs, were signed across the semiconductor, EV battery and biotech sectors," he said. According to a statement, Elevate Next (Deeptech), starting January 1, 2026, will offer targeted grants to support cutting-edge research and development. Elevate Beyond Bengaluru, launching on

February 1, 2026, aims to accelerate entrepreneurial growth in tier-2 and tier-3 cities. "Together, these flagship programmes will decentralise opportunities, foster vibrant innovation hubs across the state, and ensure that Karnataka's start-up story remains inclusive, future-ready and globally competitive," the statement said. Under the programme, 40 start-ups under Elevate Next will receive grants ranging from ₹50 lakh to ₹1 crore, while 50 start-ups under Elevate Beyond Bengaluru will be provided grants of up to ₹50 lakh. The Electronics Sector Skills Council of India (ESSCI), in partnership with the Karnataka government, also signed an MoU with

Marvell Semiconductor to train 90 women in semiconductor VLSI (Very Large Scale Integration) design and embedded systems. "The programme is fully sponsored by Marvell, delivered across tier-2 and tier-3 cities, and integrated into graduation-level courses," the statement added. The Government further announced NIPUNA Karnataka, a mission to skill 4,000 youth in partnership with major corporate employers. In the first phase, training programmes have been approved through four skilling aggregators working with Capgemini, Wells Fargo, Standard Chartered, and Sumeru, with training partners including ICT Academy, ARWS, FUEL and AISECT. "NIPUNA will offer targeted training in high-demand areas such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and data science. More than 2,800 the job opportunities are expected to be created through this mission," it added.

MP sees alarming jump in tiger deaths

GIRISH SHARMA
■ Bhopal

Even as Madhya Pradesh embarks on the nationwide tiger census, the state finds itself confronting a deeply unsettling reality — an unprecedented surge in tiger mortality. With 48 deaths reported in the first eleven months of 2025 — the highest for any state this year — the mounting toll has sent ripples of concern through India's wildlife community and cast a stark spotlight on the condition of the state's tiger reserves and the resilience of its protection mechanisms. According to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), the death count has already eclipsed last year's figure of 47, itself a record at the time. If current trends continue, the toll is expected to cross 50 before the year closes, marking the most fatal year for tigers in Madhya Pradesh in over a decade. Particularly distressing is the loss of several tigresses in the prime reproductive age bracket of five to eight years — individuals whose breeding potential is central to sustain-



ing the species' long-term viability. Their deaths represent not merely numerical loss, but a significant erosion of future population strength. An analysis of mortality data since 2013 underscores the gravity of the trend. While the state reported only 11 deaths in 2013, the numbers have escalated in successive years, ultimately culminating in this year's unprecedented spike. Since the last tiger census in 2022 — which recorded 785 tigers and reaffirmed Madhya Pradesh's distinction as the country's Tiger State — a staggering 172 tigers have died. This trajectory threatens to cast a shadow over the forthcoming census and may

alter the state's hard-won ecological prestige. Equally disquieting is the fact that a majority of this year's deaths — 29 so far — have occurred inside tiger reserves, the very landscapes designed as sanctuaries for these apex predators. Forest officials attribute many of the fatalities to intensified territorial conflicts, a consequence of rising tiger densities in reserves such as Kanha and Pench, where growing populations have compressed territorial boundaries and heightened competition. As dominant males assert control, weaker individuals are often pushed into peripheral or unprotected zones where risks multiply.

ACCORDING TO THE NTCA, THE DEATH COUNT HAS ALREADY ECLIPSED LAST YEAR'S FIGURE OF 47, ITSELF A RECORD AT THE TIME
While Bandhavgarh has historically recorded the highest mortality, Kanha and Pench have emerged as new epicentres of concern, signalling shifting fault lines within the state's conservation geography. Overlaying these ecological pressures is the darker threat of poaching, with several cases detected this year, suggesting that wildlife crime networks remain active and opportunistic, exploiting lapses in surveillance. Conservationists argue that while Madhya Pradesh's rising tiger numbers are a testament to previous successes, they also demand significantly stronger and more technologically equipped monitoring frameworks, enhanced patrolling capacities, and swift institutional responses to emerging risks.

Cannot be state Congress chief forever, says Shivakumar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Bengaluru

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Wednesday indicated that he may have to step down as the state Congress president, but assured party workers that he will remain "in the frontline leadership" of the party. Speaking at a party event to mark former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's birth anniversary, Shivakumar said, "Whether I'm around or not is immaterial. But I want to set up 100 party offices during my tenure." When some party workers expressed concern over his uncertain tenure as state Congress chief, he said, "I cannot hold the post permanently. It has already been 5.5 years, and in March, it will be six years." "Others should be given an opportunity. But I will be in



Where I am is not important. I am confident the Congress will come back to power in Karnataka. Don't lose hope. We should all live on hope and continue working. We will get power, don't worry. But to achieve it, we must work hard
—DK SHIVAKUMAR, KARNATAKA DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

the leadership. Don't worry, I will be at the frontline," he added. Shivakumar was appointed Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) President in May 2020. He said he had intended to

resign as party president upon becoming deputy chief minister in May 2023, but was asked by AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge and senior leader Rahul Gandhi to continue for some more

time. Earlier, during his address, Shivakumar called on Congress workers to continue working for the party with hope. He said, "Where I am is not important. I am confident the Congress will come back to power in Karnataka. Don't lose hope. We should all live on hope and continue working. We will get power, don't worry. But to achieve it, we must work hard." Shivakumar's remarks come amid speculation about a change in the chief ministerial post as the Congress government approaches the halfway mark of its five-year term this month, a period some have referred to as the "November revolution", citing a rumoured power-sharing arrangement between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar. Senior party leaders have also raised questions about

the KPCC leadership. AICC General Secretary K C Venugopal had said in 2023 that Shivakumar would serve as KPCC President until the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. PWD Minister Satish Jarkiholi and former Minister K N Rajanna, considered close to Siddaramaiah, have openly expressed aspirations for the post. After the event, Shivakumar told reporters he was not avoiding responsibility but trying to set an example as party president. "No one can be permanent here. One should leave a mark during their tenure. I will work as party president until I'm told to continue. I'm trying to set an example of how a president should work and maintain discipline," he said. "I'm not someone who runs away. I will work as long as the Gandhi family and the Congress president want me," Shivakumar said.

Andhra police arrest 50 maoists

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Amaravati

Andhra Pradesh Police arrested 50 CPI (Maoist) cadres across five districts in a coordinated intelligence-led operations, said an official on Wednesday. The crackdown coincided with an encounter at Maredumilli in Alluri Seetharam Raju district on November 18 where top naxalite commander M Hidma and five others were killed. "Following Hidma's killing, we launched a coordinated intelligence-driven operations across five districts and apprehended 50 CPI (Maoist) cadres," said ADGP Intelligence Mahesh Chandra Laddha, addressing a press conference in Vijayawada. Police said that the arrested cadres belonged to different ranks within the Maoists, including special zonal committee members, divisional



ADGP (Intelligence) Mahesh Chandra Laddha during a press conference in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh

committee members, area committee members and regular party members operating across the south Bastar-Dandakaranya region. According to Laddha, this is one of the most extensive operations undertaken in recent years, resulting in the arrest of 50 Maoist operatives from multiple districts. The operation was carried out across Krishna, Eluru,

NTR, Kakinada and Konaseema districts, including Vijayawada City in a silent, synchronised manner, he said. Personnel from the State Intelligence Department, Special Investigation Branch (SIB), district police units and the Vijayawada Commissionerate took part in the crackdown following inputs on the Maoists movement.



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**We don't mind criticism of
judiciary but there shouldn't
be sweeping allegations: SC**



The Supreme Court (SC) on Wednesday said it does not mind criticism of the judiciary but there should not be sweeping allegations of any kind. A bench of Justices Surya Kant, Ujjal Bhuyan and N Kotiswar Singh cautioned a social activist Pardeep Sharma who has made certain allegations against judges of the Punjab and Haryana High Court. "You have raised several good causes but you can't make sweeping allegations against anyone. We don't mind criticism of the judiciary but it should be in the proper way," the bench told the counsel, appearing for the petitioner.

The counsel informed the bench that the High Court, while pursuing the contempt on Sharma tendering an unconditional apology, has directed for the planting of saplings of trees. Justice Kant remarked that Chandigarh was in serious need of greenery and it is good that the High Court ordered so.

It noted in the order, "Counsel for the petitioner informs that in deference to the order dated September 15, 2025, the petitioner had tendered an unconditional apology as well as an undertaking before the High Court. Demonstrating magnanimity, the High Court has accepted the unconditional apology and has discharged the petitioner from the contempt proceedings."

The Supreme Court disposed of the plea in which Sharma had challenged the High Court order.

**U'khand HC hands over
Kailashananda Trust's
properties to BKTC**

The Uttarakhand High Court (HC) has directed that the Swami Kailashananda Trust's dharamshala, temple, cowshed and other properties be handed over to the Shri Badrinath Kedarnath Temple Committee (BKTC).

The dispute concerning the ownership and management of the trust and its properties located near Lakshman Jhula in Rishikesh first came before the Dehradun District Court in 2014.

The case was heard by Justice Rakesh Thapliyal, who after hearing all parties and considering the evidence, ordered that all the trust's properties, including the dharamshala, be handed over to the BKTC.

During the lengthy proceedings, it was revealed that some people had illegally encroached upon the trust's temple near Lakshman Jhula, its dharamshala in Mussoorie, its cowshed in Jonk village and various movable and immovable properties. Many of the trust's properties were allegedly misused and the original legitimate stakeholders were wrongfully evicted.

As per the Uttarakhand High Court's decision, the BKTC will now have the right to represent the Kailashananda Mission Trust before any court, authority, or Government department.

The BKTC will be permitted to place its signboards on the trust's properties. Furthermore, the trust's assets and funds may only be used for public welfare and non-profit activities. The court also directed the district administration to provide full support to the committee as needed. Welcoming the High Court's order, BKTC President Hemant Dwivedi said that the temple committee will coordinate with the district administration and take all necessary action soon.

He said that the committee is committed to fulfilling the obligations required by the judiciary.

SC pulls up CBI, slams SEBI's 'double standards' over reluctance to probe allegations against Indiabulls

Questioning the CBI and SEBI's "reluctance" to probe allegations of "dubious transactions" against Indiabulls Housing Finance Limited (IHFL), now known as Sammaan Capital Limited, the Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered the agency director to hold a meeting with SEBI, SFIO and ED to look into the matter.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant, Ujjal Bhuyan and N Kotiswar Singh, which also pulled up the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) for the compounding of multiple offences committed by IHFL, came down heavily on the Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI) over the "double standards" adopted by the market regulator in different cases over its jurisdiction to probe into illegalities.

The Supreme Court asked what was preventing authorities from filing an FIR and probing the allegations. It said that in the meeting to be held by the CBI director with officials of SEBI, SFIO and the ED, the closure of cases by the MCA shall not be an impediment and all allegations levelled by NGO 'Citizens Whistle Blower Forum', represented by advocate Prashant Bhushan, will be looked into.

The Supreme Court also asked the

Delhi Commissioner of Police to furnish original records of the complaints made by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for probing into the allegations against IHFL and the basis on which the said complaint was refused to be probed by the Economic Offence Wing (EOW).

It directed that a senior official of the EOW of Delhi Police should be physically present with all original records at the next hearing on December 17.

During the hearing, the Chief Justice of India designate, Justice Kant, said, "We are surprised to see that the CBI has adopted a very cool kind of attitude and approach in this case. We have never seen such a friendly attitude, as we find in this case. We are sorry to observe this."

The bench further said, "This is ultimately public money, it's not somebody's private self-earned money that is being circulated here and there. There is a strong element of public interest involved. Even if 10 per cent of allegations are correct, there are some large-scale transactions which can be dubbed as dubious".

It added that once a doubt is created, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has to register an FIR, which may not be against 'A' person or 'B' person. "During the investigation, somebody may or may

Make will to avoid litigation, SC tells women

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court (SC) on Wednesday made an appeal to all women without sons, daughters or husbands to make a will to avoid potential litigation disputes between their parents and in-laws.

Referring to the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, the Supreme Court said Parliament at that time may have assumed that women would not have self-acquired property, but the progress of women in these decades cannot be underestimated. "Education, employment and entrepreneurship of women in this country including Hindu women has led to their acquiring self-acquired property.

If such self-acquired properties are to be succeeded only by the heirs of the husband if a female Hindu dies intestate in the absence of having sons, daughters and husband, possibly it may cause heartburn so far as the maternal family is concerned. We do not make any observation in this regard also," the Supreme Court said.

A bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and R Mahadevan suggested while disposing of a PIL filed by a woman advocate challenging Section 15(1)(b) of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956. According to Section 15(1)(b) of the Act, when a Hindu woman dies intestate, her property devolves to her husband's



heirs first before her own parents. The plea filed by advocate Snidha Mehra argued that the provision was arbitrary and violative of Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution and needs to be struck down.

She argued that if a female Hindu dies intestate, in the absence of sons, daughters and husband, her properties would devolve only on the heirs of the husband.

"We appeal to all women and particularly all Hindu women irrespective of their age who are likely to be in position of Section 15(1) of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 to take immediate steps to make a testament or will bequeathing their properties including their self-acquired properties in accordance with section 30 of the Hindu Succession Act read with the provisions of the Indian Succession

Act. "We say so in order to safeguard the interest of not only women in this country in general but female Hindus in particular so as to avoid any further litigation in this regard," the bench said.

Additional Solicitor General KM Nataraj, appearing for the Centre, opposed the PIL saying these are questions which have to be raised by affected parties and cannot be assailed by the petitioner.

Nataraj said the provision dates back to 1956 and Parliament would not have contemplated the situation that a female Hindu would have self-acquired property.

The Supreme Court also directed that if a Hindu woman dies without a will and her parents or their heirs claim her property, the parties must first go through pre-litigation mediation before filing any case in court. Any settlement reached in mediation must be treated as a decree of the court, the bench said. "If the parents or heirs of the parents of a female Hindu dying intestate as stated in section 15(1)(c), (d) and (e) make a claim to the estate of a Hindu female dying intestate and section 15(2) does not apply, then in such a case we direct the parties to go in for mediation in the first instance.

We direct that there should be a pre-litigation mediation prior to filing of any suit or proceeding in a court of law," the bench said.

The Supreme Court had earlier observed that it would move cautiously while examining challenges to provisions of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 and that it would be wary of shattering the Hindu social structure and its basic tenets that have been in existence for thousands of years.

It had said that while women's rights were important, there had to be "a balance between social structure and giving rights to women".

**HC concerned over alleged lapses
related to prisoners' safety in jail**



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court (HC) has expressed serious concern over the alleged lapses in the administration of jail premises related to the safety and treatment of inmates.

The High Court observations came while dealing with a petition of an inmate, lodged in Mandoli jail here, who alleged that he and other prisoners were being subjected to assault and harassment for extortion of money at the behest of jail officials.

Justice Sanjeev Narula directed that this petition be treated as a complaint by the investigating officer in the court-monitored CBI investigation initiated over similar charges.

"Upon conducting a preliminary inquiry, it shall be open to the investigating officer to determine as to whether the allegations warrant registration of a separate case or can be appropriately examined as part of the ongoing investigation in...," the court said in a November 7 order.

While considering the gravity and seriousness of the allegations levelled by the petitioner inmate, which the HC said are supported by prima facie material, the High Court said they cannot be brushed aside.

"Alleged lapses in the administration and supervision of jail premises, particularly those relating to the safety and treatment of inmates, raise matters of serious concern.

"Any lapse that has the potential to endanger the life and well-being of persons in

custody, who are under the protection of the State, warrants a fair and impartial examination through appropriate mechanisms," it said.

The petitioner, Farman, accused in an Arms Act case, alleged that on June 7, 2024, he was physically assaulted by certain inmates, purportedly acting on the instructions of jail officials and that the incident was captured on CCTV.

He further alleged that the acts formed part of a larger pattern of extortion within the jail in which inmates were compelled to make monetary payments through digital platforms under threat of violence.

The inmate said that despite payment of substantial amounts under threat, the alleged ill-treatment had not ceased but instead had intensified.

The counsel for the authorities denied the allegations and said that pursuant to an order of a division bench of the High Court on October 28, the CBI has registered an FIR under Section 386 and 120B of IPC, Section 61(2) read with Section 308(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, concerning allegations of a similar nature.

The counsel also said that the Delhi Government's Directorate of Vigilance has also appointed an inquiry officer to examine possible administrative lapses.

The High Court said that the petitioner's request for transfer from Central Jail, Mandoli, to any other district jail is not being acceded to, at this stage.

**SC wants Maharashtra Govt to defer
local body polls till order on quota**

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court (SC) on Wednesday asked the Maharashtra Government to consider deferring the process of nomination for local body elections till the issue of grant of 27 per cent reservation is adjudicated by it.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant, Ujjal Bhuyan and N Kotiswar Singh posted the matter for hearing on November 25, after Solicitor General Tushar Mehta sought to submit some additional documents concerning the dispute over quota for Other Backward Class (OBC) quota in local body elections. "Why can't you consider deferring the nomination process till we look into the issue?" the bench said.

At the outset, Mehta, seeking accommodation for the day, submitted that it is only the nomination process which is going on for the local bodies.

Advocate Amol B Karande, appearing for parties opposing the grant of 27 per cent reservation in local body elections, submitted that the poll process will be irreversible if the State is allowed to carry on with the nomination. Justice Kant observed that the court was conscious of the fact and asked the petitioners to mention the matter on November 25, and it would hear the issues.

On November 17, the Supreme Court asked the state Government not to exceed 50 per cent reservations in local body elections scheduled for next month, and warned to stay the polls

if the quota limits are breached. It had said that the local body elections in Maharashtra can only be held as per the situation prevailing before the 2022 J K Bantia Commission report, which recommended a 27 per cent quota in Other Backward Classes (OBC) categories.

The Supreme Court had issued a notice on pleas alleging that in some cases, the reservation has reached 70 per cent in local body polls of the State. It said the commission report is still sub-judice, and the only thing which the court said in its May 6 and September 16 orders was that local body elections can be held as per the situation prevailing before the commission's report.

Justice Kant had observed that it appears that the court's simple orders are being complicated by State officials and therefore, the filing of nominations for the local body polls should be deferred.

According to the schedule announced on November 4 by the State Election Commissions (SEC), polls to 246 municipal councils and 42 nagar panchayats in Maharashtra will be held on December 2, while the votes will be counted on December 3.

The last day to file nominations was November 17, and the scrutiny will be done on November 18. November 21 is the deadline to withdraw nominations, while election symbols and the list of candidates will be published on November 26.

On September 16, the Supreme Court said the pending delimitation

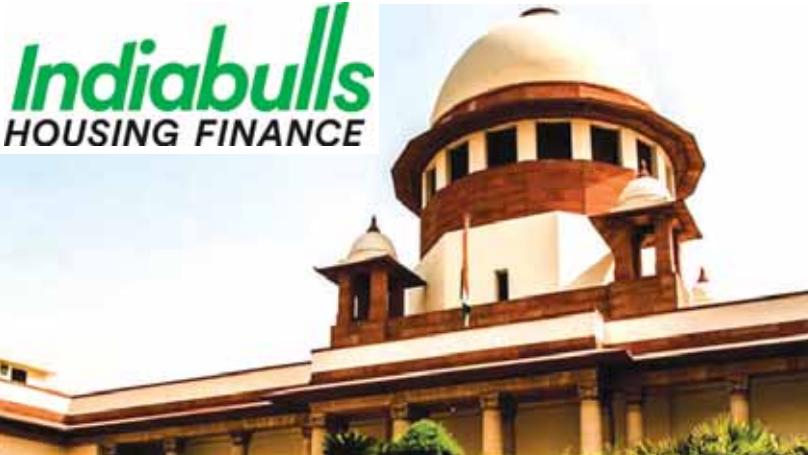
exercise(s), in all circumstances, shall be completed by October 31, 2025, and no further extension shall be granted in this regard.

It said the elections to all local bodies, including zila parishads, panchayat samitis and municipalities, shall be conducted by January 31, 2026 and made it clear that no further extension shall be granted to the State or the SEC.

On May 6, the Supreme Court paved the way for local body polls, which were stalled for more than five years due to the OBC reservation issue, as it ordered the SEC to notify it in four weeks. Reservation, it ordered, should be provided to the OBC in line with the law existing in the state before the 2022 report of the Bantia Commission, which recommended a 27 per cent quota for the category in local bodies.

On August 22, 2022, the Supreme Court directed the SEC and the Maharashtra Government to maintain the status quo with regard to the poll process for the local bodies in the State.

The Supreme Court had passed the order on a plea of the Maharashtra Government seeking a recall of the Supreme Court order by which it directed the SEC not to re-notify the poll process for 367 local bodies, where it has already begun, to provide reservations to OBCs. The State Government came out with an ordinance providing 27 per cent reservation to the OBCs in local body polls. The Government then moved the Supreme Court seeking a recall or modification of its order.



not be found involved. But registering an FIR will strengthen the hands of the ED, SFIO, SEBI. What really is preventing the authorities? Why is the MCA indulging in closing the matter like this? What is their interest in this?" the bench told Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for the Centre and probe agencies.

Bhushan alleged large-scale irregularities in the affairs of Indiabulls, a non-banking financial company, and claimed that IHFL and its erstwhile promoters

advanced dubious loans to companies owned by large corporate groups, which in turn were round-tripping the money back to the accounts of companies owned by the promoters of Indiabulls to increase their personal wealth.

During the hearing, Bhushan alleged that erstwhile promoter Sameer Gehlaut had fled the country and was now living in London and was purchasing a plane, yacht and a bungalow.

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi said Gehlaut had exited the company

way back in 2022-23 and does not hold a single share in it. The company now is 'Sammaan Capital' where several foreign companies have their stakes.

Later, senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for the company, refuted the allegations levelled by Bhushan. The bench said it has not gone into the merit of the allegations and only asked the CBI director to hold a meeting with officials of other agencies to look into it.

When the order was dictated by the bench, a counsel appearing for SEBI showed reluctance in investigating the allegations, citing lack of jurisdiction.

Justice Kant observed, "When the question of taking over properties and selling comes, then you say we are the only authority in the country with jurisdiction.

But when the question of investigation comes, you show reluctance and shy away. Why, because your officers have some vested interest? When we are conferring you jurisdiction, then what is the problem?"

The judge further said, "Every day we are seeing double standards of SEBI. In one of the matters where I constituted a high-powered committee, your stand was that only SEBI has the right to auction the properties. And what you

have been auctioning, we know that! A property worth ₹30 crore was sold for just ₹2 lakh."

The bench said that when the court was conferring it the responsibility, the market regulator should perform its statutory duty. "You say you don't have power. Why are your officers getting a salary if you do not have power?" remarked Justice Kant.

The bench asked the CBI director to file an affidavit on the deliberations that are to be held by officials of other agencies. On October 8, the Supreme Court asked the MCA to place before it the original records of the closure of illegalities pointed out by SEBI in the affairs of IHFL.

The company has refuted the allegations contained in the petition and said all were looked into by all relevant regulators and investigation agencies like RBI, MCA, SEBI, ED, CBI, EOW etc., and none of the averments were substantiated. On July 30, the CBI told the Supreme Court that it was not investigating any irregularities in IHFL and has not found any wrong in the company disbursing loans to corporate entities.

The NGO has challenged the February 2, 2024, order of the High Court refusing to order an investigation into the matter.

Editor's
TAKE

Japan and China face off over Taiwan

The latest clash between Tokyo and Beijing over Taiwan has inflamed old grievances, revealing the fragile balance of power in the Indo-Pacific

Taiwan is the bone of contention in East Asia which refuses to perish. A small island nation to the north of the South China Sea, which China claims as its own and Taiwan refuses to accept, is indeed one of the biggest flashpoints in the region. Taiwan is once again the reason for the latest diplomatic flare-up between Japan and China. What began as a candid remark by Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi on the Taiwan issue has led to an escalation of tension between China and Japan. It has now unfolded into a full-blown geopolitical feud, carrying significant implications for regional security and even global economic stability. The tensions ignited when Takaichi suggested that Japan's Self-Defence Forces could respond if China attacked Taiwan, under the Japanese doctrine of a "survival-threatening situation". Beijing interpreted this as a clear signal that Tokyo was aligning more openly with the US position on Taiwan. China's reaction was swift and crude. The incendiary comment by China's consul general in Osaka-hinting that Takaichi's "dirty head" should be "cut off" – crossed decency and diplomacy at the same time and set off a chain reaction of protests, counter-protests, travel warnings, and cultural sanctions. The verbal spat led to the halting of a film release, trip cancellations, and a surge in mistrust.

Though the flare-up can be attributed to a verbal spat, Taiwan is the faultline rooted in history. But the real catalyst for rising tension may lie in Japan's evolving strategic posture. Takaichi, following the assertive vision of her mentor Shinzo Abe, has pushed for stronger defence capabilities and closer alignment with the United States – moves that do not go down well with China. It is one flashpoint the world would not like to see ignited, as the implications are far-reaching. The narrow strait separating Taiwan from the mainland is strategically important to China, and any third-party involvement – especially from a major power like Japan – is a big red flag for China.

Besides strategic considerations, economic fallout could be equally damaging. China is Japan's largest trading partner, and even symbolic retaliatory actions – tourism restrictions, cultural boycotts, film bans – can inflict measurable costs on Japan's economy, particularly its retail and service sectors. Any shake in Japan's economy could have implications for the world economy.

Though India would be watching the developments from afar, it definitely has concerns and interests in East Asian politics. As a member of the Quad and a country with ties to both Japan and China, India has stakes in the stability of the Indo-Pacific. Tokyo's stance on regional security aligns with India's own concerns about China's expansionist behaviour. Japan serves as a strategic counterweight that benefits India, while a weaker Japan undermines India's position in East Asia. Right now as things are, Delhi must prepare for the possibility of a prolonged Japan-China confrontation disrupting supply chains, trade flows, and Asian economic set up. What happens next depends on whether Beijing and Tokyo adopt a pragmatic stance, as even a low-key conflict could ignite the region.

Congress: Existential crisis deepens

With the NDA securing a sweeping victory and the Prime Minister openly predicting another possible split in the Grand Old party, the Congress faces an existential moment that demands urgent introspection



KALYANI SHANKAR

The Congress party's dismal performance in the Bihar Assembly elections has once again raised questions about its organisational strength, political relevance, and leadership crisis.

With the NDA securing a sweeping victory and the Prime Minister openly predicting another possible split in the party, Congress faces an existential moment that demands urgent introspection.

In his victory speech following the Bihar elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi predicted that the Congress party might split again, given the NDA's landslide victory. He criticised the Congress for transforming into a communist-Maoist entity, noting that it has been losing election after election-both in the Lok Sabha and in Assembly polls-and that it lacks any positive political direction.

The Prime Minister's criticism of the Congress is not surprising. He often targets the party whenever an opportunity arises. Congress leaders have failed to recognise the changing social dynamics in Bihar and other regions. They have lost support from their traditional voter base, including upper castes, Dalits, and Muslims, yet have made no meaningful attempt to win these groups back.

The Prime Minister highlighted that the party has polled fewer votes than the NDA in six Assembly elections held since 2024. This marks a significant setback for a party that once held a dominant position in Indian politics.

Is the Congress Party finished after Bihar elections?

The party unquestionably suffered a major blow. Morale among workers was low despite extensive campaigning by leaders such as Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi, and party president Mallikarjun Kharge, who were unable to sway voters. The results showed their limited influence even in constituencies previously held by Congress.

The party ended with just five seats. The message from Bihar is clear: voters no longer view the Congress as a party capable of governing effectively, and the Gandhi family must take responsibility for this decline. Congress remains in denial about the real issues and appears stuck in its past. In Bihar, the party lacks a strong organisation and broad public appeal. As Congress continues to lose ground in state after state, its future looks increasingly uncertain. To compete with the BJP, the party needs to reinvent itself.

Many key leaders have been shifting to the BJP or other parties. Congress has traditionally relied



THE PRIME MINISTER HIGHLIGHTED THAT THE PARTY HAS POLLED FEWER VOTES THAN THE NDA IN SIX ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS HELD SINCE 2024. THIS MARKS A SIGNIFICANT SETBACK FOR A PARTY THAT ONCE HELD A DOMINANT POSITION IN INDIAN POLITICS

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 The Pioneer

on regional leaders and political families, but even these groups are now distancing themselves. At present, the party largely depends on the Muslim vote, which is also under threat due to the rise of other political options. The party's hopes were dashed as it expected to secure more seats this time. The stark defeat raises the question: why did Congress lose a stronghold it once dominated? Is this the end of the road for the Grand Old Party after such a dismal performance? The future remains unclear.

The decline of Congress can be traced back to the rise of Mandal leaders in the 1980s and 1990s, which eroded its dominance and that of the BJP.

This shift pushed Congress to ally with multiple factions, diluting its influence and authority. It had to join coalitions of like-minded parties to remain politically relevant. The party now faces a serious challenge in winning Assembly seats and reclaiming its past stature. Congress suffers from weak leadership at both national and state levels. While Mallikarjun Kharge is the party president, most critical decisions are made by Rahul Gandhi, who – despite his hard work during elections – is frequently abroad. Priyanka Gandhi, meanwhile, has not demonstrated the ability to draw voters effectively.

First, during the freedom struggle, Congress was an umbrella organisation representing all ideological streams – from nationalists to

Leftists. This broad appeal has disappeared, and the party has increasingly leaned towards Left-aligned politics.

Second, the party lacks active grassroots workers, unlike the BJP and several regional parties. Without dedicated support, no party can survive.

Third, Congress struggles with fund mobilisation. When it governed fifteen states, funds flowed from the chief ministers; that era is long gone. Fourth, the party lacks effective advisers to guide its leadership.

Fifth, it needs attractive policies and schemes to win voter interest. Sixth, it must conduct honest introspection after every electoral defeat. Catchy slogans-like "The Common Man" in 1984 – once helped return the party to power.

Any organisation needs a clear ideology, strong leadership, a broad support base, and a robust structure. In Bihar and across the country, the Congress lacks all these essentials. The party must convene and seriously rethink its future strategy. Six Assembly elections are due next year, and unless

Congress decides to reorganise itself, it will continue to decline. It must also prevent the remaining leaders from drifting away. India's oldest political party will not disappear overnight, even if the BJP hopes it continues to weaken.

Congress leaders must come together to rebuild the party's organisational strength and restore its original character.

The Pioneer
SINCE 1865

Tamoguna reveals darkness hidden within us



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

2ND OPINION
THE PIONEER

Tamoguna is commonly translated into English as the mode of darkness. But what does this really mean in our day-to-day lives? We often classify actions as good or bad, yet we rarely stop to ask why we behave the way we do.

Why do we sometimes act nobly and at other times fall into harmful behaviour – even when we fully understand the consequences? The answer lies in the three gunas described in the *Bhagavad Gita*. These three *gunas-sattva* (goodness), *rajas* (passion), and *tamas* (darkness) – exist within all of us in varying proportions. A person who is generally calm, composed, and virtuous has a higher proportion of *sattva*. Someone driven, ambitious, and restless is dominated by *rajas*. And one who frequently acts negligent-

ly, destructively, or ignorantly is influenced predominantly by *tamas*. Importantly, no one is made of only one *guna*. Even a noble person has moments of anger or confusion, just as someone considered "bad" still feels love or compassion. As Lord Krishna says, "There is no being on earth or even among the gods who is free from these three modes of material nature" (10.40). Since this discussion focuses on tamoguna, it is worth understanding its impact. Krishna describes *tamas* as the force that brings delusion, born of ignorance, binding a person with carelessness and excessive sleep (14.8).

Darkness covers knowledge and pushes one toward indifference and inattention (14.9). The influence of *tamas* begins with something as basic as food habits: stale, tasteless, putrid, spoiled, or unclean food is dear to people in the mode of darkness (17.10). Many of us may recognise occasional lapses in our own habits. *Tamas* also manifests in our attitude toward duty. "Renunciation of prescribed work out of misunderstanding is said to be in the mode of darkness" (18.7). Actions performed without considering consequences, loss, one's capability, or the harm they may cause are also classified as *tamasic* (18.25). Why does this happen? Because intelligence itself becomes clouded by ignorance. When this happens, a person mistakes irreligion for duty and constantly interprets things in the oppo-

site way (18.32). Their resolve becomes distorted, leading to daydreaming, depression, fear, disappointment, and arrogance (18.35). Even spiritual practices like austerity turn harmful when performed with stubbornness or with the intention of hurting oneself or others (17.19).

The real-world effects of tamoguna can be severe: lust becomes something one feels entitled to, jealousy corrodes from within, greed destroys judgement and relationships, pride inflates the ego and isolates us, and those absorbed in *tamas* ultimately sink to lower states of living and being (14.18). From personal experience, like everyone else, I, too, carry a measure of tamoguna.

However, through spiritual practice and conscious effort, its influence reduces over time. I still feel flashes of anger, lust, or greed, but I have learned to recognise them quickly and bring myself back. A saint once said such thoughts are natural with material bodies, but what matters is whether we entertain them or dismiss them. This teaching stays with me. Greed is a silent enemy that seems harmless but can lead us into trouble. The struggle against tamoguna is ongoing, but awareness is the first step. By recognising its signs, we strengthen *sattva* and *rajas*, ensuring darkness does not dominate our lives.

The writer is a spiritual teacher

PIC TALK



Floral decorations for the 'Dzongsar Monlam Chenmo' festival at Mahabodhi Temple, in Bodh Gaya. PHOTO: PTI

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

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INDIA'S OVERLAND LEGACY HOLDS LESSONS FOR TODAY

Apropos "The Indian heritage of overland outreach" (Nov 19), the article offers a timely reminder of how geography once shaped India's civilisational engagement with its wider neighbourhood. Long before borders hardened and diplomacy became digitised, expansive overland routes connected communities across mountains, deserts, and river valleys. As India reimagines its regional role in an increasingly fractured world, this legacy deserves to be viewed not as romantic nostalgia but as a strategic resource.

Connectivity today extends far beyond roads, ports, and freight movement; it rests on trust, mutual access, and cultural familiarity.

The erosion of these traditional links-whether through conflict, political hesitation, or prolonged

neglect-has constricted India's natural sphere of influence where it once flowed freely.

Reviving these routes-physically and diplomatically-would help India regain its role as a regional bridge rather than a competing power.

Enhancing cultural exchanges, academic partnerships, and locally rooted yet modern infrastructure could make a meaningful difference. In an era marked by walls, suspicion, and geopolitical rivalries, India's ancient ethos of outreach may, in fact, be its most modern strategic advantage.

Reconnecting with neighbours through shared heritage may not resolve every dispute, but it can certainly soften hardened boundaries and rebuild regional goodwill.

K SAKUNTHALA | TAMIL NADU

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Rethinking our dependence on AI

The CEO of Alphabet Inc, Sundar Pichai, has issued a global warning, urging people not to rely blindly on the outcomes produced by artificial intelligence. He emphasises that AI tools should be used judiciously and with discernment. Currently, many individuals regard AI-generated output as more accurate and superior to human work. However, as Pichai correctly points out, "AI is also prone to errors," and this caution must be taken seriously. Artificial intelligence should be seen as a supportive technological aid rather than as an infallible or definitive solution for every problem. It is important to remember that AI is still evolving and undergoing continuous refinement. Over-reliance on such technology could have significant consequences and may prove costly to humanity in the long run.

Therefore, it is essential that we approach AI responsibly, recognising its limitations while leveraging its capabilities. AI must be treated as a supportive tool that complements human judgment, rather than replacing thoughtful decision-making. By combining human intelligence with AI assistance, we can harness its potential safely and effectively, ensuring that technology serves as a tool for enhancement rather than a substitute for critical thinking or moral reasoning.

KIRTI WADHAWAN | KANPUR

Reforming electoral processes in India

The current practice of democracy in India requires certain reforms to make it more reflective of the people's true aspirations. The recently concluded elections in Bihar have highlighted the need for changes that reaffirm democracy as a system genuinely "for the people". Although the vote share of political parties remained largely unchanged, there was a dramatic swing in the number of seats won. This illustrates that the attainment of power often depends more on constituency-specific calculations than on the collective voice of the electorate.

Every party elected by the people should receive representation in governance proportionate to its vote share. The existing "first-past-the-post" system could be replaced with a preferential transferable vote mechanism. Additionally, voters must not be compelled to tolerate ineffective representatives for an entire five-year term. A system enabling the recall of non-performing representatives would ensure greater accountability. Campaigns should be restricted to achievements and detailed development plans, while bribery and inducements must be strictly monitored. Party manifestos should carry legal accountability to ensure fulfilment of promises.

AG RAJMOHAN | ANANTAPUR

Balancing security and diplomacy carefully

Apropos "Gallows for Sheikh Hasina, dilemma for India", published on November 19th. It is deeply ironic that Sheikh Hasina, who established the International Crimes Tribunal in 2010, has today been sentenced to death by the very court she created. Her supporters may describe this as a revenge trial, while her critics may consider it delayed justice.

Extraditing her may harm India's credibility among nations that rely on its support, while refusing the request could be viewed as sheltering someone convicted of grave offences.

Complicating matters further is Bangladesh's increasing closeness to Pakistan's military establishment, the release of radical elements hostile to India, and defence cooperation with China. These developments pose serious challenges to India's security agencies, especially along the North-Eastern borders, where the potential for proxy activity may re-emerge.

India must therefore calibrate its response with careful consideration of diplomatic, economic, and strategic implications in both the short and long term. At a time when China and Pakistan already pose significant hostilities, Bangladesh turning unfavourable is an additional concern.

BAL GOVIND | NOIDA

Bihar elections: The crash and collapse of Congress

Congress’s Bihar defeat reflects long-term decline, ideological confusion, and refusal to accept electoral reality, highlighted by Modi’s critique and Jairam Ramesh’s accusations, exposing deeper structural and historical weaknesses within the party

FIRST
Column



BALBIR
PUNJ

The reasons for the recent Congress’s miserable performance in the Bihar Assembly elections are readily discernible in two succinct statements— one by Prime Minister Modi and the other by the Congress commisar Jairam Ramesh.

In just one trope, PM Modi succinctly encapsulated all that is wrong with the Grand Old Party when he described it as a “Muslim-League-Maoist Congress.” He reiterated this critique three times. Modi’s characterisation was notably supported by none other than Jairam Ramesh.

Explaining the massive defeat of his party, Jairam asserted that the “election results in Bihar reflect vote chori on a gigantic scale- masterminded by the PM, the HM, and the Election Commision.”

While Modi correctly diagnosed the disease, Jairam’s statement delineates its reasons. His outright denial of reality and outlandish attempt to undermine people’s faith in national institutions are classic Marxist traits, reminiscent of the ‘revolutionary’ stance the Communist Party took before and after India’s independence.

For the uninitiated, a little recall of the history. During the Quit India movement (1942-45), the Communists in India worked as British spies, collaborated with the Muslim League and colonial powers to help create Pakistan, and then were quick to mourn when India finally gained independence.

The Marxists, in denial, refused to accept the government led by Pandit Nehru and declared war against it. However, Sardar Patel quickly crushed their efforts, as the so-called revolution lacked real support on the ground and was limited to a foreign-funded and inspired elite, with no traction among the masses.

Jairam is attributing the disaster his party faced in Bihar to “vote chori”. It contested 61 seats in Bihar and secured six seats with 8.7 per cent Congress’s Bihar defeat reflects long-term decline, ideological confusion, and refusal to accept electoral reality, highlighted by Modi’s critique and Jairam Ramesh’s accusations, exposing deeper structural and historical weaknesses within the party votes. But the party had suffered a worse drubbing



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*‘Tryst with Ayodhya:
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‘Narrative ka Mayajal’*

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in the Bihar election in 2005, when its share dropped to 6 per cent while the UPA-1 government was in power in Delhi. Can someone please explain?

The fact is, Congress’s downward slide in Bihar has continued unchecked for three decades. From a 24.78 per cent vote share in 1990, the Congress fell to 16.27 per centin 1995, to 11 per centin 2000, and, fighting alone in 2010, mustered only 8.37 per cent. In 2015 and 2020, too, the party obtained just 6.7 per cent and 9.48 per cent of the votes, respectively.

Jairam and the party ‘Supremo’ Rahul Gandhi refuse to look at the valid reasons behind the party’s steady decline. Their arrogance and ‘sense of entitlement’ block self-reflection. They press on like Don Quixote, charging at windmills, blissfully unaware of reality and blaming “vote chori” by Modi

and the Election Commission for their setbacks — no wonder the party remains stuck in a funk, with little hope of a fresh start.

Over the last four Lok Sabha elections, the BJP’s journey has vividly captured a dramatic shift in India’s political landscape. In 2009, it secured an 18.8 per cent vote share and 116 seats. However, the 2014 elections revolutionised the scene: a surge to 31 per cent of the vote catapult-

ed the BJP to 282 seats, establishing it as a dominant force in national politics.

These elections took place while UPA-2 was still in power. Food for thought for those who are busy running down the system and the country.

What might those who rely solely on selective ‘strike-rate’ arguments say about the 1971 Lok Sabha elections? Under Indira Gandhi’s leadership, the Congress sensationally claimed victory in nearly every seat-if not all-in Bihar, Maharashtra, Haryana, Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, and Mysore.

Similarly, in the 1984 general elections held after Indira Gandhi’s assassination, the Congress won 404 out of 514 seats and later gained 10 more in by-elections. Recent examples of near-total strike rates also include: in the 70-member Delhi Assembly, the Aam Aadmi Party secured 77 seats in 2015 and 62 in 2020; and in 2022, it won about 80 per cent of the Assembly seats in Punjab.

Rahul Gandhi and his caucus are following a contentious path rooted in his family’s ideological legacy. Since 1950, his great-grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru, adopted a skewed version of secularism that empowered Islamic fundamentalism

and anti-India elements.

Nehru clandestinely embedded Articles 370 and 35A into the Constitution to preserve the Islamic character of Jammu & Kashmir. He brought the ‘Hindu Code Bill’ while leaving out Muslims bound by practices like halala and triple talaq. To Nehru, Hindu temples were “oppressive,” and Hindus “communal.” His socialist economic policies eventually led to devastating consequences for India’s economy.

Worse followed. Indira Gandhi, after the Congress split in 1969, outsourced ideological paradigm to Marxists, in exchange for their support in Parliament.

As a consequence, when the Allahabad court exposed her electoral malpractice (read “vote chori”), she imposed the Emergency (1975-77). During this period, the Archaeological Survey of India’s excavation report-containing evidence about the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya-was also suppressed.

In the years that followed, to marginalise her political opponents in the Akali Dal, she resurrected the defunct idea of “Khalistan”. This has been documented by Gurbaksh Singh Sidhu, a non-political former IPS officer who served for years in India’s intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW), in his book The Khalistan Conspiracy. Rajiv Gandhi, influenced by Islamic fundamentalists,

The forgotten Indian theory now powerfully driving the quantum age



NISHANT
SAHDEV

A hundred years ago, a young physics teacher in Calcutta quietly rewrote the way nature counts. On November 20, the idea he discovered-now known as Bose-Einstein statistics-turns 101. It is not the kind of anniversary that usually makes headlines. There are no rockets launching or satellites blinking in the sky. Yet this century-old insight by Satyendra Nath Bose lies beneath some of the world’s most advanced technologies shaping the twenty-first century.

The story began with a simple question Bose asked his students: what happens when we try to count tiny particles of light? In our everyday world, counting is straightforward. Ten apples mean ten individual pieces of fruit. But at the microscopic level, the rules bend. Light particles behave in a strange way-their act not like separate apples but more like a perfectly synchronised crowd. Bose realised that identical particles can merge into a shared behaviour, moving in harmony rather than individually.

The idea was so unusual that a British journal rejected his paper without review. Bose then took a bold step-he sent it directly to Albert Einstein. Einstein immediately recognised its brilliance and expanded it further. Together, their insight opened the path to a completely new understanding of matter. Decades later, this work inspired the discovery of the Bose-Einstein Condensate, a bizarre state in which atoms become so coordinated that they behave like a single “super-atom.”

One does not need to know any physics to appreciate why this matters. Bose’s discovery revealed something simple and powerful: nature often behaves in teams. And this quiet insight from 1924 now lies beneath modern technologies that require extreme precision.

Today, scientists use Bose’s principles to build devices that can sense incredibly tiny changes in movement, gravity or time. These quantum sensors are becoming the eyes and ears of tomorrow’s technological ecosystem. They can help aircraft navigate safely without relying on GPS. They can help detect minerals beneath the Earth’s surface. They can assist doctors in spotting diseases earlier by noticing minute shifts inside the human body. All of this depends on particles acting together in the way Bose described.



The same principle also fuels the rise of quantum computers. These machines do not use the electrical bits inside your phone or laptop. They use the strange collective behaviours found in quantum systems-behaviours that Bose’s idea predicted long before the first computer existed. As the world enters a phase where computing power, encryption and secure communication become strategic resources, the foundations laid by Bose are becoming more relevant than ever.

This anniversary arrives at a meaningful moment for India. The country is investing heavily in quantum computing, quantum communication and semiconductor fabrication. The National Quantum Mission and new deep-tech initiatives signal a shift towards building technologies at home rather than importing them. What makes this especially remarkable is that several of these next-generation tools rely on principles that emerged from an Indian classroom a century ago.

A quantum sensor based on Bose-Einstein behaviour can detect extremely small motion. This means trains and aircraft could navigate more safely even if GPS fails. Hospitals could monitor organs and tissues with far greater accuracy. Geologists could study the Earth’s crust with unprecedented detail. Although the underlying science is subtle, the benefits are straightforward: safer travel, better healthcare and smarter industry.

Countries such as the United States, China, Japan and Germany are pouring billions of dollars into these technologies. They see quantum science as the next industrial revolution. India has entered this global race at

exactly the right time. Quantum technology today is like solar power two decades ago-new, full of potential and ready for nations that move early. And India carries a unique advantage: the seed of this revolution was planted by an Indian scientist.

There is also a cosmic twist to Bose’s story. His idea may not only explain how tiny particles behave-it may help explain the structure of the universe itself. Some researchers believe that dark matter, the unseen material making up most of the cosmos, might behave like an enormous Bose-Einstein Condensate. This possibility sounds like science fiction, yet it is being studied seriously in leading laboratories. If it turns out to be true, then the shape of the Milky Way may be influenced by the same principle Bose discovered while studying particles of light. A thought born in a Calcutta classroom could help explain the architecture of galaxies.

All of this shows how far a single insight can travel. Bose likely never imagined that his idea would one day influence national technology policy, guide the development of future industries or help physicists think about the universe on its largest scales. Yet that is exactly what has happened.

The beauty of this anniversary is that one does not need to master quantum physics to appreciate its significance. What matters is the direction the world is moving in. The next generation of technology-communication, navigation, health, defence, computing-will depend on tools that are smaller, faster, more precise and more secure. Quantum technologies promise all of this, and Bose’s idea is one of their foundations.

As India builds its quantum infrastructure-labs capable of cooling atoms to near absolute zero, photon-based communication networks, and new semiconductor fabrication facilities-the country is not starting from scratch. It is building on a century-old Indian contribution to global science. The celebration, therefore, is not only about looking back. It is about recognising that the next phase of India’s technological development may carry the imprint of an Indian scientist whose thinking was far ahead of its time. Bose did more than solve a physics puzzle. He changed the way the world understands nature. A hundred years later, that shift in understanding is helping shape the future-quietly, steadily and powerfully. It reminds us that great revolutions often begin not in giant laboratories but in the mind of someone who sees the world a little differently.

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RISHMA
DHILLON PAI

Anaemia continues to be a major health risk for pregnant women in India. According to the National Health Survey-5 (2019-21), nearly 57 percent of women aged 15-49 in India are anaemic, compared with 25 percent of men in the same age group.

Among pregnant women in this group, 52.2 percent are anaemic, meaning they lack healthy red blood cells. Anaemia is more common in young girls, women who eat less or skip meals, and those who appear thin and pale even before pregnancy. Many women do not even realise they are anaemic. However, anaemia can be dangerous, as it may lead to premature births, low birth weight, or complications during childbirth.

This is why it is crucial for every pregnant woman to have her blood tested during the first visit and at every check-up thereafter, to ensure there is enough iron in the blood. Usually, anaemia is caused by low iron levels, but it can also result from deficiencies in vitamins such as folic acid or B12. Doctors may therefore recommend additional tests to identify the exact cause. Once the cause is known, treatment is generally simple.

Most women can correct anaemia by taking iron tablets daily. It is important to understand that anaemia does not develop in a single day, nor can it be corrected overnight. It requires consistent care and monitoring, which is why regular check-ups during pregnancy are essential. Anaemia does not affect only the mother; babies born to anaemic mothers may experience stunted growth, lower immunity, or even problems in brain development. Treating anaemia is, therefore, also an investment in the baby’s long-term health.

In India, the central government runs several programmes that provide free check-ups and treatment for women. Yet the number of anaemic pregnant women remains high. The Anaemia Mukta Bharat strategy focuses on reducing anaemia across six groups: children (6-59 months), children (5-9 years), adolescents (10-19 years), pregnant and lactating women, and women of reproductive age (15-49 years). It has established a strong institutional framework for implementation.

However, the biggest challenge is the lack of awareness among women about the need to



take supplements regularly. In small towns, villages, and some communities, myths about taking medicines during pregnancy make the problem worse. Anaemia is more prevalent among adolescents, the illiterate, the poor, and tribal populations. There is an urgent need for social norm-based interventions, awareness campaigns, educating family members, and strengthening community health facilities - including ensuring the regular availability of iron tablets and other supplements.

State governments play a crucial role in ensuring that help actually reaches every woman. Check-ups, tests, and medicines are already free under central schemes; the real challenge is ensuring delivery to

those who need them most, especially in rural and remote areas. States can achieve this by monitoring implementation closely and making local health workers and panchayats more accountable. Regular blood tests can be conducted through schools and Anganwadi centres to detect anaemia early. Awareness drives in local languages can help families understand the importance of iron supplements and nutritious food.

States can also track progress district by district to identify gaps and take timely corrective action. With better follow-up and strong local efforts, anaemia can truly become a condition of the past. Anaemia is easy to treat if detected early—but dangerous if ignored. Let us ensure that no woman suffers from it silently ever again. Let us make “strong mothers, strong babies” a reality in every home.

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BLASÉ CAPITAL

GROWW & BOW



There was a growing belief that the IPO (Initial Public Offering) market was becoming more like a casino, rather than a trading event. This was proved during the trading in Groww's parent company, Billionbrains Garage. The stock, which climbed 90 per cent within days of listing, hit the 10 per cent lower circuit yesterday. It implies that the price fell by this margin, and trading was halted. According to the experts, this was not a routine fall, or a logical correction after days of trading heat and dust. This was speculation, and greed at their extremes. The listing price on the National Stock Exchange, at ₹112, was unremarkable, with a gain of 12 per cent. But then it gained exceptionally. And attracted the bears.

According to a trader, who was quoted in a website article, short-sellers felt that the frenetic rise was unsustainable, and betted on the price coming down. They sold shares that they did not possess, and hoped to buy similar quantities when the price crashed, and reap huge profits, which would be the difference between the higher selling prices, and lower buying ones. But the price did not quake. Short-selling is not allowed in India, and those who sell shares without owning them need to deliver the shares the next day (T+1 system). Since the short sellers in this case did not have the shares, and could not buy at the lower prices, they were stuck. This is when, as per the rules, the stock exchange stepped in, and called their bluff.

In such situations, when the bears are caught in a trap, the stock exchange conducts a "separate buy-in auction the next day." It looks at the figures of the shares that needed to be delivered by the sellers, and buys the same quantity. The discovered price in the auction becomes the buying price for the bears. The seller purchases the shares at this price, and pays a penalty. She obviously incurs a huge loss, as the discovered price is generally higher than the price at which the shares were short-sold. The difference becomes the liabilities of the bears. For example, in the case of Groww, suppose the shares were sold at ₹150, and the price at which trading was halted is ₹180. The price discovered in the auction may be ₹200. The sellers pay ₹50 (₹200 minus ₹150) per share, and penalty.

Remember Groww is a profitable entity, whose financials were higher than experts' estimates, and better than the peers. But a similar valuation jump was witnessed in another recent IPO, Physicswallah. The issue was subscribed on the last day, largely because of institutional investors, whose response too was not great. The retail portion was barely subscribed. In terms of overall subscription, it was the second-worst IPO this year. Yet its debut on the exchanges was phenomenal. There was a lot of chemistry between the investors and stock, which swooshed more than 50 per cent over its offer price. Why did the investors shun it in the first place? Why was the pre-listing grey market premium zero, or minimal? In this case, the experts and investors were wrong. Valuations shot up, although the share price was down Rs 13 yesterday. This is for a loss-making company.

Compared to the offer price of ₹109, the list price was an impressive ₹145, and the closing price on the first day was a higher ₹156.5, or 44 per cent listing gain. This is remarkable given the state of the edtech segment. Byju, once a renowned name, is trouble. From a valuation of more than \$20 billion, the company is under insolvency. This disrupted the segment's future. Another peer, Unacademy, is struggling for survival and, according to reports, may be sold for a song. Thus, Physicswallah's debut on the exchange was unexpected, especially after the subscription numbers. The fact that the stock moved against the current, and established itself over the past few days was unexpected. But anything can happen in the future. Maybe the investors see value in it. Maybe they will take advantage of the gains, and scoot away. Others can watch the fun.

There were two other recent IPOs, which raised sizable amounts, but whose stocks meandered. After a subdued listing, Lenskart gained double-digit percentage over the next few days. But despite an attractive offer price to induce the investors, and a credible brand name backing it, Tata Capital was last listed at a minor discount to the offer price. Retail investors feel that the company has issues to sort out in the future and, hence, remain unexcited. Institutions have the money and patience to wait it out. They get in early, at a decent price, and wait for the financials to improve. No one is in a hurry. Lenskart's valuation was always in question, and some of the brokerage houses expected a big fall in stock price. This did not happen, and the stock did not crash. But there is always a nagging feeling that something dramatic waits at the corner.

India to surf a new start-up swell

The new Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, has got operational teeth through the DPDP Rules. They may transform the digital data economy into a regulated market. They signal the start of a new infrastructure cycle. Broad obligations will become actionable workflows for firms handling personal data. In doing so, they promise to open a market for privacy-technology start-ups while raising a new friction for India's Artificial Intelligence (AI) ambitions.

The DPDP Rules give the digital economy a sharper set of guardrails, which include clearer consent mandates, data minimisation, strict breach-notification obligations, and penalties (up to ₹250 crore for major failures). For businesses, they shift privacy from a compliance checkbox to an operational cost. For tech start-ups, it implies a sizable runway. The Government has given an 18-month transition window but is in talks to compress the period for the larger firms.

Incidents of data breach and misuse are mounting. According to an IBM report (2025), the average organisational cost of a data breach in India is ₹220 million (\$2.7 million), up 13 per cent from the previous year. A state-wise projection of identity-theft and data-breach incidents estimates 8,500 such cases by 2025, with Karnataka expecting 2,500 incidents. In a telling example, a cloud server holding 2.73 lakh bank-transaction records was exposed via unsecured access. In the fintech realm, nearly a quarter of the firms surveyed reported losses over \$1 million from cyber incidents in the past three years. These are symptoms of a digital economy lacking architectural controls, and the DPDP Rules will rectify them.

Not all the industries face the urgency. Those that collect large volumes of sensitive data, track behaviour in real time, or process minors' information have red flags in business models. Financial services, insurers, and fintech top the list. Such firms process vast

troves of KYCs, transactions, and demographic and behavioural data. Not to mention the passwords. Under the new rules, each step of data collection, processing, storage, and deletion must be justified. The shift is less about legal theory and more about systems overhaul.

Healthcare, diagnostics, and tele-medicine are crucial. Medical records are among the most sensitive categories of personal data, and multiple studies show that Indian health-tech firms lag in privacy compliance. The rules force them into new protocols around consent, secondary use of data, and retention limits.

Next comes ed-tech and gaming where data about minors introduces extra layers of complexity. The rules require verified parental consent, and impose stronger safeguards for child-data processing. E-commerce, D2C brands, and retail, which were previously exempt from heavy scrutiny, will find themselves in an unfamiliar terrain as CRM databases, behavioural profiles, and personalised marketing will need to be re-architected. Even mobility, logistics, and ride-hailing track location, and biometric or identity data. They face elevated compliance burdens. The sharper liability means each of these verticals becomes a natural buyer for privacy stacks.

A news report reported the size of India's data-protection market at \$5.34 billion in 2024, and is expected to rise to \$27.77 billion in the future. The global data-privacy software market stands at \$3.84 billion, and is projected to reach \$45.13 billion by 2032. Few regulatory cycles have unlocked such a wide, multidimensional technology market. GST did. UPI did. The DPDP law and rules may follow the same trajectory in data governance.

What makes this moment distinct is that compliance is no longer a back-office activity but an operational requirement. Sectors that handle sensitive

data will need automated consent logs, deletion engines, and breach-response systems. Platforms that handle minors will require parental-consent workflows, and age-verification modules. A privacy-tech ecosystem will emerge because thousands of companies will no longer be able to function without it.

The timing is fascinating. This is the time when the start-up ecosystem is accelerating. As of mid-2025, the number of recognised start-ups in India surpassed 180,000. With state policies supporting such firms, the infrastructure around founding and scaling young

firms is strengthening. Privacy-tech may become the next frontier of enterprise SaaS, following HR, fintech infra, and cloud-native stacks.

This means cohorts of founders, venture funds, and incubators will chase regulation-led markets. Beyond compliance tech, the Rules open adjacent opportunities. Synthetic-data startups will find fertile ground now that raw data collection is constrained. Businesses may rethink models heavy on behavioural tracking, and shift toward "data-light" or "privacy-disciplined" growth engines.

Programmatic-advertising may face CPM inflation or reduced retargeting pools. Brands may migrate to first-party or zero-party data strategies.

Indian cloud and data-centre providers may be the beneficiaries as enterprises prefer domestic storage, encryption frameworks, and audit-compliant infrastructure. Talent markets will tighten. Certified privacy officers, data-governance leads, and audit specialists will command premium salaries. This may result in boosting start-ups that create lightweight, low-cost compliance tools for small firms, and enable the former to scale up the way Tally, Zoho, and Razorpay did.

India added over 350 megawatts of new data-centre capacity between 2022 and 2024. With DPDP enforcement, enterprise cloud migration may accelerate. Local sovereign-cloud architectures may receive fresh interest as firms seek lower-risk environments. There may be a revaluation of business models. Start-ups built on aggressive data capture or cross-app tracking will not enjoy the same growth. Investors often begin pricing regulatory risk into valuations. Data-light or privacy-disciplined models may command premiums. This can reshape the Indian start-up landscape over the next five years.

The rise of privacy-tech does not occur in a vacuum. It intersects with AI ambitions. Studies suggest that 20-30 per cent of model-training cost arises from data cleaning and preparation. With more stringent consent, and deletion obligations the costs will rise. Model retraining cycles may lengthen as users opt out, or request purging of data. Sectors that depend on behaviour-rich data may feel the slowdown. Yet history suggests that the pause may not be permanent. In Europe, firms adopted synthetic data, federated learning, and privacy-preserving machine learning. India may follow the same path. If this happens, the friction can become the catalyst for a more sophisticated AI ecosystem built on cleaner, more trustworthy data.

India's digital economy has expanded faster than its governance norms. The DPDP Rules begin to reverse this imbalance. They create a market where privacy is not an abstract right but an operational discipline. Start-ups that build the tools to operationalise it will shape the next decade of enterprise technology. The rise of privacy-tech is not just a side-story to DPDP, but the centre-piece.

A Contrarian Investor

And steadily flows Marico



this fiscal year remains positive. "The company aims to deliver a double-digit PAT CAGR over the next two years, and we project 13 per cent PAT CAGR over FY25-28E. Given the sustained growth trajectory, we believe the stock's premium valuation is likely to be sustained."

The brokerage houses emphasise the distribution transformation. "Project SETU continues to drive strong execution gains across regions, improving wholesale velocity, widening range-selling and strengthening GT fundamentals," states one of them. This is visible in the category performances. Value-added hair oils improvement was supported by "robust traction in the premium and non-Shanti Amla portfolio." According to Motilal Oswal, value-added hair oils sustained growth recovery, and registered 16 per cent revenue growth. Excluding Amla, where the company faces intense competition, hair oils recorded double-digit volume growth.

One of the biggest highlights of Marico is the sharp expansion of the digital-first portfolio. Elara Securities notes that the "Digital-First portfolio crossed ₹10 billion revenue, up from ₹8.5 billion in the first quarter, with Beardo delivering double-digit EBITDA." Premium personal care

showed strong momentum, and "accelerated its growth trajectory, led by the digital-first portfolio." The company retained leading positions across categories. In oats, "Saffola Oats maintained its leadership as India's No.1 brand."

However, as mentioned earlier, margins were impacted by commodity pressures. The foods business faced temporary hurdles, but the slowdown was "transient and should recover in FY27." According to Emkay "The foods portfolio saw 12 per cent growth, but the growth is likely to be slow in Q3, and expected to revive from Q4." GST changes impacted performance, with demand trends being steady through July-August, and September seeing GST-related disruption. There was a transition impact in early-October.

While the overall international numbers were strong, some markets showed softness. South Africa was among the latter, but it is set to recover in the second half, after a weak performance. According to Motilal Oswal, there are three major risks, which include slowdown in order inflows from key government-focused segments, aggression in bids to procure large-sized projects that would adversely impact margins, and related-

party transactions with parent group entities at lower-than-market valuations, which will weigh on the stock.

However, as Elara Securities states, "Management expects double-digit EBITDA growth in H2 (second half), and ~200 basis points OPM (operating margin) expansion in FY27, while the digital portfolio remains on track to achieve double-digit EBITDA margin by FY27." This optimism stems from the easing of copra prices. Possibly, gross margin has bottomed, and can recover as copra softens.

Elara Securities feels that the long-term view remains positive, as the company has successfully reduced its dependence on the core portfolio, and a sustained scale-up in food and premium personal care segments may result in an upside in margin. Motilal Oswal notes: "We expect the smart infrastructure segment to maintain its growth trajectory, and we expect a gradual improvement in digital industries and mobility. The EBIT margins of both these divisions are lower than Smart Infrastructure's margins."

According to Motilal Oswal, the stock is currently trading at 47.7x/40.2x P/E (price-to-earnings) on FY27/28E earnings. Brokerage houses maintain a buy or neutral rating, but expect the stock price to rise. The market price on November 18 was ₹760. Since March this year, the price has moved from a low of below ₹600 to over ₹750, with a push coming over the past few trading days. Over the past 52 weeks, the difference between the low and high is 30 per cent, which is quite substantial. In the next few days, the company's market cap may cross 1,00,000 crore, and it hovered at just over ₹97,000 crore on November 19. The free float is worth less than ₹40,000 crore.

Another brokerage house, JM Financial, recently named Marico among five stocks that were the "preferred picks" within the FMCG space. Its report explains that while the "operating backdrop" remains a mixed bag, the outlook for the second half in this fiscal year seems encouraging due to festive consumption, and trade. However, valuations seem stretched, with limited room for errors. Hence, investors need to be careful, and look out for volume-driven growth, which will lead to a further re-rating of these stocks.

OUR TAKE

Scaling up biogas: Strengthening India’s energy transition

Challenges and pathways in feedstock, logistics, infrastructure, and financing



VARUN KARAD

India’s biogas sector stands at a pivotal juncture. Under the SATAT initiative, the vision of deploying 5,000 Compressed Biogas (CBG) plants has ignited strong momentum, yet the sector’s full potential remains constrained by fragmented feedstock chains, inefficient logistics, limited infrastructure readiness, and financing challenges. With over 500 million tonnes of agricultural residue and organic waste generated annually, India possesses an immense resource base. Converting this into reliable, commercially viable energy demands an integrated approach that aligns technology choices, local realities, and financial frameworks.

1.Feedstock: The Foundation of Sustainability

India’s diversity in agro-climatic zones demands a state and district-level understanding of feedstock ecosystems. Aggregation cycles differ widely. In northern states like Punjab, the effective collection window has shortened to as little as 15 days, often coinciding with misty weather that heightens fire risks. Central and eastern regions offer slightly longer aggregation periods but lack sufficient machinery to exploit them effectively. Smaller landholdings in states such as Uttar Pradesh further elevate aggregation costs due to higher machine density requirements. Meanwhile, in Punjab and Haryana, machinery is abundant but frequently controlled by unions that influence feedstock pricing.

Challenges: Feedstock aggregators operate without long-term contracts, resulting in speculative spot markets that undermine price stability and com-

plicate project financing. The absence of risk-mitigation structures makes lenders wary, constraining debt availability.

Solutions: Project developers must account for state-specific dynamics rather than applying uniform pricing models. Building vendor ecosystems that can deliver long-term feedstock contracts will provide price visibility and reduce project-level volatility. These contracts should include robust force majeure and equitable pricing clauses to protect both parties. Developers can also leverage the centrally funded BAM scheme to procure their own machinery, thereby improving control and reliability of feedstock supply.

2. Logistics: Bridging the Rural-Industrial Divide

Biomass logistics form the operational backbone of any CBG facility. Transporting biomass in baled form beyond 30 kilometres sharply increases costs, often rendering the feedstock unviable. The small average field size across India compounds the challenge, as it limits the productivity of large harvesters and necessitates multiple smaller machines, raising both capital and operating costs.

Storage introduces further complexity. Feedstock must be protected from India’s harsh summers and unpredictable monsoons. Without well-

designed storage yardsequipped with fire-safety systems, proper drainage, and all-weather access roads, developers risk losing significant volumes to fire, moisture, and handling damage. Despite this, there is still no widely accepted benchmark for annual feedstock losses across the sector.

Solutions: Comprehensive logistical planning must begin at the project-concept stage. Developers should map potential collection zones, assess proximity to plant sites, and identify safe



storage areas distanced from residential clusters. Capital investment in storage infrastructure should be treated as integral to plant viability, not an afterthought. Experience shows that haulage and storage costs can be equal to or even exceedthe base feedstock price, underscoring the importance of precision planning and fire-safety discipline.

3. Infrastructure: Translating Policy into Execution

While policy frameworks such as SATAT and GOBARDhan have created a robust foundation, ground-level implementation often lags. Developers face delays in land acquisition, environmental clearances, grid connectivity, and pipeline tie-ins. Many state-level CBG policies are recent, and their on-ground application remains uneven.



One recurring challenge is power reliability. CBG plants, typically located in rural zones, rarely enjoy uninterrupted 24x7 electricity, and some lack access to grid injection points, an issue that can jeopardise project viability. Compounding this, the sector faces a shortage of technically trained manpower to operate and maintain plants efficiently.

Solutions: Developers should conduct

comprehensive due diligence on local policy execution before finalising sites. Project locations must be evaluated for 24x7 power availability, gas grid connectivity, and infrastructure support.

Where grid reliability is weak, integrating dedicated backup systems is essential. Simultaneously, building a skilled workforce through targeted training programs can significantly enhance operational reliability.

4. Financing: De-Risking Green Investment

Access to capital remains a defining barrier to sectoral growth. CBG projects are capital-intensive, have long gestation periods, and depend on variables-feedstock availability, offtake pricing, and plant uptime, which traditional lenders find difficult to quantify.

Unlike solar or wind, biogas generation cannot be simulated with standardised models, making revenue projections inherently complex.

As a result, banks often over-collateralise or decline funding altogether. Several early projects that underperformed have further eroded confidence, creating a cycle of risk aversion. Yet large-scale collateral is impractical for most developers, stalling investment flow.

Solutions: A multi-pronged approach is needed. Developing a formal training curriculum for banking officers can equip them to evaluate biogas proposals through technical and financial lenses.

Blended-finance mechanisms, viability-gap funding, and interest-subvention schemes can substantially enhance project bankability.

Long-term feedstock supply and gas offtake contracts will further assure lenders of predictable cashflows, paving the way for sustainable project financing.

Conclusion:

Building a Scalable and Efficient Ecosystem India’s biogas journey is no longer about pilot projects;it is about building an industry that underpins national energy independence and rural prosperity. Achieving this vision requires a collaborative ecosystem that integrates technological discipline, financial innovation, and policy pragmatism. By localising feedstock strategies, professionalising logistics, strengthening infrastructure readiness, and de-risking finance, India can transform its vast organic-waste reserves into a dependable energy asset. The coming decade offers an opportunity to make biogas not just a renewable alternative but a cornerstone of India’s sustainable energy future.

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Bridging the gap: What India needs to strengthen the maize value chain



RAJAVELLU NK

India needs to dramatically ramp up the productivity of its maize crop to keep pace with growing consumption, as cereal becomes an increasingly key piece of the country’s food, feed and fuel security puzzle.

Maize ranks as India’s third most cultivated cereal crop, following rice and wheat. Often referred as the ‘Queen of Cereals’, its cultivation has by all accounts been a huge success. Maize production and productivity growth have outstripped production and productivity growth for both rice and wheat in the decade from 2012-13 to 2022-23.

Despite some high-performing regions, India’s average maize productivity lags the world’s at 3.5 tonnes per hectare as compared to 6 tonnes on average globally.

The impact of this lack of productivity is beginning to be felt. With demand surging on account of growing food consumption, need for animal feed and now India’s ethanol push, production has begun falling behind.The demand for maize is expected to rise to 45-50 million tonnes in 2030-31 before surging to 86-109 million tonnes in 2047-48, according to a report by NITI Aayog.

A ‘business as usual’ scenario, in which maize productivity continues to trend as it is today, will lead to a shortfall of 2 million tonnes in 2031 widening to 6 million tonnes in 2047-48, the report predicts. However, in a High Yield Growth scenario our farmlands would produce enough maize to meet demand.

India’s self-sufficiency when it comes to maize thus hinges on transitioning productivity away from the ‘Business as Usual’ to a ‘High Yield Growth’ scenario. Achieving this will



require a comprehensive transformation across the entire maize value chain-from root to stem.

The seeds of change need to begin with, well, the maize seed. Maize is a hardy cereal. Its productivity is better than that of rice or wheat, as highlighted above, despite the majority of the maize crop being cultivated on unirrigated land.

Intensifying research and development into the creation of hardier, drought and pest resistant varieties of maize would boost yields even in the current circumstances. But they becomeall the more crucial in a world in which global-warming induced climate change is making coaxing yields from crops increasingly difficult for farmers.

In addition to developing more resistant

varieties of maize, the use of cutting-edge, technology-informed pest management and crop protection measures is also crucial.

Warming temperatures are leading to an increase in pest attacks. Adopting Integrated Pest Management strategies together with the use of technology like sensor-based Internet of Things (IoT) mated to Artificial Intelligence and drones can significantly reduce crop losses. A combination of IoT and AI can precisely calculate inputs and interventions required while drones can aid in early detection of pest or disease outbreaks.

R&D should also focus on developing varieties with greater starch content, especially when it comes to maize meant for ethanol production. India hit its target to achieve 20 per cent ethanol blending in petrol this year, five years

ahead of schedule. The country is now setting its sights even higher, aiming to boost the ethanol component in petrol to 30 per cent by 2030.

Sugarcane and maize are the two primary crops used as feedstock to produce ethanol. Currently 18-20 per cent of India’s maize yields go toward production of ethanol. Boosting the starch content will allow for better ethanol recoverability per unit of maize, improving the crop’s viability as an ethanol feedstock and thereby boosting its share as a source of green fuel.

In doing so, maize, far less water intensive than the thirsty sugarcane crop, will help India conserve water, an increasingly stressed resource, in the country’s pursuit of its emissions reduction goals.

Maize is a highly versatile crop that finds use

in several industries from food, beverages and animal feed, to packaging, adhesives, cosmetics and energy. In that sense, it presents a huge economic opportunity for the country’s farmers.

But that economic potential is often left unrealised due to poor market linkages and inadequate post-harvest storage options.

Majority of the maize farmers in India are small landholders with holdings of less than a hectare on average. Lacking collective bargaining power, they are often reliant on agents and middlemen to take their produce to market, depressing price realisation.

Alongside the creation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), the embrace of digital technology can directly connect farmers with the various industries that rely on maize as a raw material.

Inadequate storage takes a further toll on prices as it leaves the harvested crop vulnerable to moisture, temperature changes and humidity as well as exposure to biotic threats like pests and insects. This affects the quality of the produce and by extension its monetary worth.

Reports suggest that as much as 3-4 per cent of the harvested maize produce is lost to improper post-harvest management. Adopting a scientific approach to storage can dramatically reduce post-harvest losses to 1-2 per cent.

Maize, because of its versatility and application in a range of industries, is a crucial crop not just for India’s food security but also its economic security.

As economic development accelerates, fueling the country’s push to become a fully developed nation by 2047, maize is going to become an increasingly prominent driver of growth. To put it simply, this could be India’s ‘Maize Moment’. We have to ensure, for the sake of our farmers and our national security, that we don’t miss it.

The writer is CEO - Crop Protection Business, Godrej Agrovet Ltd.

Adani gets nod for Jaiprakash Associate takeover

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Adani group has won majority lenders’ vote for take over of debt-laden Jaiprakash Associates as its ₹14,535-crore acquisition proposal included a higher upfront payment than rival bidders, sources said.A Committee of Creditors voted on resolution plans (acquisition proposals) submitted by suitors including Adani Group, Vedanta Ltd and Dalmia Cement (Bharat).

Adani got the maximum 89 per cent votes from creditors, followed by Dalmia Cement (Bharat) and Vedanta Group, they added. The National Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd (NARCL) had the biggest say in the process as it controls about 86 per cent of the Committee of Creditors’ (CoC) voting share. A small group of lenders, including State Bank of India

and ICICI Bank - who together account for less than 3 per cent of CoC’s votes — abstained from voting.

Sources said lenders preferred Adani’s plan primarily because it offered a significantly higher upfront payment compared to competing proposals. The ports-to-energy conglomerate has proposed a total plan value (TPV) of ₹14,535 crore, including ₹6,005 crore upfront and another ₹6,726 crore payable after two years. In net present value terms, the offer is estimated at Rs 12,000 crore.

Vedanta offered ₹3,800 crore upfront payment and ₹12,400 crore in deferred payments over five years, taking the TPV of ₹16,726 crore. Jaiprakash Associates (JAL), which has high quality assets and business interests spanning real estate, cement manufacturing, hospitality, power and engineering and con-

struction, was admitted to the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) in June last year after it defaulted on payments of loans aggregating ₹57,185 crore.

JAL announced in June that it has received five bids, along with earnest money, with Vedanta, Adani Enterprises, Dalmia Cement, Jindal Power, and PNC Infratech making the bids. In September, the CoC conducted an auction under the Swiss challenge process.

JAL has major real estate projects like Jaypee Greens in Greater Noida, a part of Jaypee Greens Wishtown in Noida (both on the outskirts of the national capital), and the Jaypee International Sports City, strategically located near the upcoming Jewar International Airport.

It also has three commercial/industrial office spaces in Delhi-NCR, while its hotel division has five properties in

Delhi-NCR, Mussoorie, and Agra. JAL has four cement plants in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, and a few leased limestone mines in Madhya Pradesh. It also has investments in subsidiaries, including Jaiprakash Power Ventures Ltd, Yamuna Expressway Tolling Ltd, Jaypee Infrastructure Development Ltd, and several other companies.

Sources said the CoC evaluated the resolution plans on the basis of evaluation matrix.

The resolution plan of Adani Enterprise Ltd got the highest score, followed by Dalmia Cement (Bharat) and Vedanta Ltd.

It is understood that the payments in Dalmia’s plans are contingent upon the Supreme Court’s judgement on the pending matter between the JAL and development authority YEIDA.

Indian companies consider cyber threats, data privacy as top risk agenda in 2025: Survey

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

Amid growing digital disruptions, talent challenges and regulatory complexity, a survey on Wednesday revealed that most Indian companies consider cyber threats and data privacy as top risk agenda in 2025.

While “Cyber Attacks and Data Breach” remained the top risk for Indian businesses, “Data Privacy Requirements/Non-Compliance” has emerged as a top concern, reflecting the growing influence of global and local regulatory frameworks, according to global professional services firm AON’s its 2025 Global Risk Management Survey.

It also revealed that talent attraction and retention chal-

lenges persist, while “property damage” and “exchange rate fluctuation” are more pronounced in India than the rest of Asia.

“Indian businesses are demonstrating remarkable agility in the face of digital disruption, talent adaptability and geopolitical shifts. As cyber attacks and data privacy risks continue to rise, both in frequency and impact, organisations must not only strengthen their resilience but adapt quickly to these accelerated challenges,” AON CEO, India, Rishi Mehra, said.

By investing in robust risk management strategies and fostering a forward-thinking mindset, Indian companies can better navigate today’s complex environment and position themselves for long-



term success, he added.

The biennial survey is based on insights from nearly 3,000 risk managers, C-suite leaders and executives across 63 countries, including India.

More and more Indian businesses are formalising their risk management strategies with 70 per cent of respondents saying they have established dedicated risk management and insur-

ance departments while 64.9 per cent actively measure the total cost of insurable risk — most noting rising costs.

“Leveraging data-driven insights and benchmarking against industry peers will be key to building resilience and sustaining competitive advantage,” Sushant Sarin, MD and head of strategy and Commercial Risk Solutions for India at Aon, said.

FROM THE WORLD

SOUTH KOREAN Ferry runs aground, 5 hurt

A South Korean ferry carrying nearly 270 people ran aground on rocks off the country's southwest coast on Wednesday, the coast guard said. The Yonhap news agency reported that five people suffered minor injuries but no other casualties have been reported. The incident happened when the ship was sailing from the country's southern island of Jeju to the southwestern port city of Mokpo, a coast guard statement said. It said it received a report of the incident late Wednesday, and that the ship was carrying 267 people, including 246 passengers and 21 crew members. The coast guard said it was mobilising all available assets to rescue those on the ship.

USA Indian arrested for murder

A 22 year old Indian citizen, wanted for murder in home country and who illegally entered the US, has been arrested by border authorities. Vishat Kumar was arrested by US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers at the Port of Buffalo, Peace Bridge border crossing on November 16 after he was denied entry into Canada. Kumar has an Interpol Red Notice against him and is wanted by law enforcement in India for murder, a CBP statement said. Kumar was processed by CBP officers and turned over to officers from Immigration and Customs Enforcement/Enforcement Removal Operations (ICE/ERO). Kumar is currently detained at the Federal Detention Facility in Batavia, New York awaiting removal proceedings from the United States, CBP said. Further investigation revealed Kumar was wanted in India for murder, as indicated by the Interpol Red Notice.

Jaishankar inaugurates two Indian consulates in Russia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Moscow

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday inaugurated two new Indian consulates in Russia, saying their establishment will act as a “catalyst” in increasing bilateral trade to \$100 billion by 2030.

Expanding its diplomatic footprint in Russia, India opened the new Consulates General in the major regional Capitals of Yekaterinburg and Kazan.

Till now, Indian consulates were in St Petersburg and Vladivostok, according to the website of the Indian Embassy in Russia. Out of more than 30,000 Indian students studying in Russia, 10,000 students will benefit from the consular services provided by the two new consulates.

Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko, India's Ambassador to Russia Vinay Kumar, representatives of heads of Government in Kazan and Yekaterinburg and prominent members of the Indian community were present at the function held to mark the opening.

“This is a very important day in the diplomatic history of India in the Russian Federation,” Jaishankar said. The top Indian diplomat alluded to the days when he had served in diplomatic assignments at the Indian embassy in Moscow. “This is an important day for us,



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar addressing a gathering during the inauguration of Consulates General of India in Yekaterinburg and Kazan in Russia

when we are adding two more Consulates General in this country... Over the last few months, consistent work has been underway to establish these consulates,” he said and asserted that India recognises the support received from the Russian Government.

Jaishankar said the opening of these consulates will “not only enhance our diplomatic presence” in Russia, but will act as a “catalyst” to further boost trade, encourage tourism, and bolster economic, scientific, technology, and even academic and cultural ties between the two countries.

“The consulates will contribute to our joint efforts in increasing our bilateral trade to \$100 billion by 2030

as envisaged by the leaders,” he said. Jaishankar said Yekaterinburg in the Ural mountains is often called the “third capital of Russia” due to its industrial importance, and is a “gateway to Siberia”. It is known for its heavy engineering, gem cutting, defence manufacturing, metallurgy, nuclear fuel, chemicals and medical equipment, he said.

“The opening of the consulate will give impetus to enable and to strengthen technological, scientific, economic and trade collaborations between Indian and Russian industries,” the external affairs minister said. Kazan, one of the most visited cities of Russia, hosted the 2024 BRICS

summit, which was also attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. “I had the pleasure of going there myself, after Moscow and St Petersburg, and with good reasons,” Jaishankar said. The region is a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic hub and acts as a “bridge between Russia and the rest of Asia”. The consulate will help strengthen people-to-people ties by encouraging cross-cultural exchanges and ITEC (Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation) participation, he said.

Kazan is well known for its oil production and refining, for fertilisers, automobiles, defence manufacturing, pharmaceuticals and electrical equipment, the minister said.

Pakistan approves PKRs 50 billion for military

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad

Pakistan Government has approved PKRs 50 billion supplementary Budget for the armed forces to strengthen security at international borders, upgrade naval bases, and continue protecting the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The decision was made by the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet in a meeting held on Tuesday, The Express Tribune said, quoting the Finance Ministry.

The ECC meeting, chaired by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, considered proposals related to national security, defence, food security, and petroleum sector reforms, it said. The paper reported that of the total, Pakistani rupees (PKRs) 39 billion has been allocated to the military and just under PKRs 11 billion to the navy.

“The ECC approved a summary from the Defence Division, granting a technical supplementary grant of PKRs 50 billion for various approved Defence Services projects,” the ministry said. These funds are allocated annually for projects outside the regular defence budget. Last fiscal year, the ECC had approved PKRs 45 billion for similar initiatives.

The ECC approved PKRs 19 billion for the Special Security Division South, up 19 per cent over a year ago. The special southern divi-

sion is responsible for protecting the foreign commercial interests in southern regions.

Another PKRs 8 billion was given for the Special Security Division North that was responsible for protecting these in the northern parts. The amount was equal to last year's allocation. The ECC approved PKRs 9.9 billion in lieu of its internal security duty allowance, which was also equal to last year's spending.

An amount of PKRs 2 billion was approved for managing the fencing of the international borders with Afghanistan and Iran. The fences have been erected on the borders with Afghanistan and Iran to check smuggling and illegal movement of the foreign nationals. The ECC approved PKRs 11 billion for the navy for up-gradation of two bases. Pakistan Air Force will get PKRs 150 million for the internal security duty allowance.

In another summary submitted by the Interior Ministry, the ECC approved an additional PKRs 841.6 million as supplementary budget to support border control operations, internal security, and maintenance of law and order by the federal civil armed forces, according to the paper.

The additional PKRs 50 billion is in addition to PKRs 2,550 billion, allocated as defence budget for the year 2025-26 by the Government in June.

Chinese Premier's Li Qiang visit to Zambia

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Lusaka (Zambia)

Chinese Premier Li Qiang will start a two-day visit to the southern African nation of Zambia on Wednesday that will focus on the \$1.4 billion refurbishment of a Cold War-era railway line to further improve China's access to critical minerals.

China is heavily invested in mining in Zambia, which is one of the world's top producers of copper that is integral to the production of electronic devices.

Li, who holds China's No 2 leadership position after President Xi Jinping, will meet with Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema on Thursday. Hichilema said in a statement. The two countries will sign documents to start the upgrade of the Tazara railway line linking Zambia's mines to the Tanzanian port of Dar es Salaam on Africa's east coast.

China, Zambia and Tanzania signed a deal in September giving the state-owned China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation concessions to carry out the upgrade.

The Tazara rail line was built by the three countries in the 1970s to avoid relying on transport links through what was then Rhodesia and South Africa, which were under white minority governments.

The railway has taken on renewed significance for China after a United States-backed project.

Sri Lankan Govt turns heat on Rajapaksa

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Colombo

The Sri Lankan Government on Wednesday launched an attack in parliament against leading Opposition leader Namal Rajapaksa over alleged forgery of his degree.

Rajapaksa, who is the only current active politician from the clan that led the country from 2005 until 2022, said he will respond to the allegations at a rally on Friday.

Nalinda Jayathissa, Government spokesman and the Health Minister, referred to a post in circulation on social media

about the alleged forgery of a degree certificate by Rajapaksa to become a lawyer.

“This report has clearly mentioned that there was no degree certificate from Namal Rajapaksa at the Law College when he had been enrolled as an Attorney At Law,” Jayathissa said.

The minister said the City University in London is not a recognised institution for the Law College in Colombo when Rajapaksa had applied in September of 2009.

“The media reports have cast serious doubts about his degree certificate, we

hope he will explain the truth in parliament,” Jayathissa said.

Speaking in the central town of Kandy, Rajapaksa said he would respond to allegations at the opposition rally to be held day after tomorrow in the populous Colombo suburb of Nugegoda.

“We are holding this rally to nudge the Government. All they have been doing for over a year is political victimising the opponents,” Rajapaksa said.

The November 21 rally will be the first public agitation by opposition groups against the current National People's Power

(NPP) Government since they were elected in September last year.

However, the main Opposition Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) has not blessed the rally and said they would not officially attend it.

Rajapaksa's Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) and their breakaway splinter groups alongside the oldest political party, the United National Party (UNP) of the former President Ranil Wickremesinghe, have made elaborate plans to make it a grand public show against the NPP and President Anura Kumara Dissanayake.

Dutch Govt relinquishes control of Nexperia

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hong Kong

The Dutch Government said it's relinquishing control of Chinese-owned chipmaker Nexperia, easing a standoff between China and the Netherlands that threatened supplies of semiconductors vital for global auto manufacturing.

Economics Affairs Minister Vincent Karremans said on Wednesday that he was suspending an earlier order to take control of Nexperia under a rarely invoked law.

The Dutch Government cited national security concerns and “serious Governance shortcomings” when it took effective control of Nexperia, which is headquartered in the city of Nijmegen but owned by China's Wingtech Technology.

Officials said they were trying to prevent the loss of crucial tech know-how that



could threaten Europe's economic security.

Nexperia chips are widely used by carmakers in North America, Japan and South Korea. Automakers warned in recent weeks that they were running low on the chips, and Honda was forced to shut down a factory in Mexico producing its popular HR-V crossover for North American markets. Karremans said he was suspending his order

issued in late September as a “show of goodwill” in a decision that came after “constructive meetings” with Chinese authorities over the past few days.

“In light of recent developments, The Netherlands has considered it the right moment to take a constructive step by suspending my order under the Goods Availability Act,” he said in a statement.

India to add 500 million residents between 2025-2050: UN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

United Nations

India, along with six other countries, “will shape the future growth of the city population” of the world as they are expected to add more than 500 million city residents between 2025 and 2050, the UN said.

The ‘World Urbanisation Prospects 2025: Summary of Results’, released by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), said that the world is becoming increasingly urban, with cities now home to 45 per cent of the global population of 8.2 billion.

The report said that the growth of the world's city population between now and 2050 will be concentrated in seven countries: India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Bangladesh and Ethiopia.

These seven countries, which host nearly one third

(30 per cent) of the global population in 2025, “will shape the future growth of the city population” and are projected to contribute over half of the global growth of city dwellers by 2050.

Taken together, these seven countries are expected to add more than 500 million city residents between 2025 and 2050, accounting for over half of the projected 986 million increase in the global number of city dwellers over that period.

“The success or failure of urbanisation in these key countries will shape global development outcomes. Their ability to manage city growth sustainably will have profound implications not only for their populations but also for global progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals and climate objectives,” the report said.

The report said that the two most populous countries,



India and China, will also have the largest populations residing in towns between now and 2050. As of 2025, the proportion of people living in towns has reached 44 per cent in India and 40 per cent in China. Together, India and China account for more than 1.2 billion town population, representing over 40 per cent of the population living in towns globally.

However, both countries also have substantial city pop-

ulations, with a combined population of nearly 1.2 billion (627 million in China and 589 million in India in 2025).

Between 1950 and 1975, both countries experienced rapid growth in their city populations, but this pace slowed between 1975 and 2000 and in subsequent years, largely due to declining fertility rates and slower overall population growth.

Despite this deceleration, city population growth has

outpaced town population growth, resulting in a decrease in the share of people living in towns. Each country still has more than 200 million people residing in rural areas, a figure that is expected to remain relatively stable through 2050, it said.

The report said that the number of megacities quadrupled from eight in 1975 to 33 in 2025, with 19 in Asia. Projections indicate that there will be 37 megacities globally by 2050, as the populations of Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Dar es Salaam (United Republic of Tanzania), Hajipur (India) and Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) grow to over 10 million.

Among the 33 megacities with 10 million inhabitants or more in 2025, 19 are in Asia. India alone has five megacities, and China has four.

Worldwide, more than 3,000 cities experienced population decline between 2015 and 2025.



Louvre to set up new cameras, anti-intrusion systems

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Paris

The head of the Louvre Museum said on Wednesday that new surveillance cameras and anti-intrusion systems will soon be installed at the Paris landmark after last month's stunning crown jewels heist.

The cameras – some 100 of them – will be up and running by the end of next year while anti-intrusion systems will start to be put in place within two weeks, Louvre director Laurence des Cars said.

She described the systems as equipment that will prevent intruders from getting close to the museum buildings but did not offer specifics. The new surveillance cameras will try to ensure “complete protection of the museum's surroundings,” she said. She said it was all part of more than 20 emergency measures that will be implemented.



Ex-Treasury Secretary Larry Summers quits OpenAI board

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York

Former US Treasury Secretary Larry Summers is resigning from OpenAI's board of directors, the ChatGPT maker and his office said on Wednesday.

His departure comes after the release of emails showing he maintained a friendly relationship with Jeffrey Epstein long after the financier pleaded guilty to soliciting prostitution from an underage girl in 2008.

“Larry has decided to resign from the OpenAI Board of Directors, and we respect his decision,” the board said in a statement.

“We appreciate his many contributions and the perspective he brought to the Board.”

The announcement arrived one day after Summers said he's stepping back from public commitments.

Trump hosts Saudi Prince at White House

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Washington

A jovial President Donald Trump held a warm and friendly meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at the White House, packed with plenty of handshakes and back pats.

He brushed aside questions about Saudi Arabia's human rights record, praised the prince for his statesmanship and announced hundreds of billions of dollars in new Saudi investment in the United States.

The White House rolled out plenty of pomp for the Saudi royal on Tuesday, dispatching fighter jets that the two leaders watched from a red carpet, parading out an honor guard on horseback and preparing to give a lavish dinner in the East Room.

In a sitdown in the Oval Office that took place just seven years after Prince Mohammad was implicated by US intelligence agencies in the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, Trump and the prince took numerous

questions from reporters — one of whom was repeatedly insulted by Trump — on everything from commerce to the sale of advanced F-35 fighter jets to Riyadh.

Here is a look at some of the takeaways from the visit:

Movement on military cooperation

Trump had previewed his decision to sell F-35s on Sunday but formalised it before the prince on Tuesday when he said the approval was complete and that Israel's fears about maintaining its qualitative military edge in the Middle East would be addressed.

Details of the deal were not immediately clear, but some in the Pentagon and other agencies have opposed the sale because of the potential for advanced technology being shared with China, which also has close ties with Saudi Arabia.

Khashoggi's killing gets swept aside

Tuesday's meeting was the first White House visit for the crown prince since



President Donald Trump shaking hands with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman during a dinner in the East Room of the White House

Khashoggi, a US resident and Washington Post columnist, was killed and dismembered at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Turkey, in 2018.

US intelligence said Prince Mohammad likely approved the slaying.

In a remarkable scene in the Oval Office, the prince, nicknamed MBS, faced questions from reporters, some-

thing not typical for the de facto head of the absolute monarchy where dissent is criminalised.

Lots of pomp and circumstance

Trump greeted Prince Mohammed at the White House's South Lawn entrance with a handshake and arm slung over the prince's shoulder. Trump lit-

erally rolled out the red carpet for the Saudi leader, with a military band on hand and a flyover by US military planes, before showing the crown prince his decorations along the White House Colonnade.

"We have a extremely respected man in the Oval Office today," Trump said at the top of meeting, calling the

prince "a friend of mine for a very long time." Trump also castigated his predecessor, former President Joe Biden, for greeting Prince Mohammed with a fist bump during his 2022 visit to Saudi Arabia.

"When you get out of the plane and you get the future king — and a man who is one of the most respected people in the world — you shake his hand, you don't give him a fist bump, right?" Trump said. "Trump doesn't give a fist bump. I grab that hand" — and he did just that.

Vast but vague commercial and economic deals

Prince Mohammad told Trump that his country would be increasing its financial commitments to the US from \$ 600 billion, which was announced during the president's trip to Riyadh in May, to \$1 trillion.

Details of those deals were not immediately clear but are expected to include investments in a variety of American businesses, including artificial intelligence, as well as the purchase of jet engines and other equipment.

Bus tragedy: Indian delegation arrives in Saudi Arabia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Jeddah

A high-level Indian Government delegation arrived in Saudi Arabia on Wednesday to provide assistance and oversee relief measures in coordination with Saudi authorities following the tragic bus accident involving Indian pilgrims.

The delegation, led by Andhra Pradesh Governor Justice S Abdul Nazeer, arrived in Madina, the Indian Embassy in Riyadh said in a social media post.

India's Ambassador Suhel Khan, Consulate General of India in Jeddah Fahad Suri and Saudi Foreign Ministry officials received the delegation.

"The Governor is leading an Indian delegation to Saudi Arabia following the tragic bus accident in Madina involving Indian Umrah pilgrims, in order to render fullest assistance and oversee relief measures," it said.

Arun Kumar Chatterjee,

Secretary (CPV & OIA), Ministry of External Affairs, is also part of the delegation. The delegation is also expected to participate in the last rites of the deceased. Several Indian Umrah pilgrims, most of them from Telangana, were killed in the horrific bus accident near Saudi Arabia's holy city of Madina early Monday.

More than 40 Indians were travelling on the bus that reportedly collided with an oil tanker around 1.30 am (IST), and most of the deceased appeared to be Indians, officials said a day earlier. The bus was learnt to be on its way from Mecca to Madina.

The Embassy of India, Riyadh and the Consulate General of India, Jeddah, are working closely with the local authorities to expedite the identification of mortal remains.

The Indian Government is also facilitating the travel of the families of the deceased to Saudi Arabia.

Russian barrage kills 10 in Ukraine

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Kyiv

A large Russian drone and missile barrage killed 10 people and injured dozens more in Ukraine overnight, officials said on Wednesday, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was due in Turkey for talks on finding a settlement that might end Russia's invasion of his country.

The nighttime attack hit two nine-story apartment blocks in Ternopil, a city in western Ukraine, according to Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko. Emergency crews were sifting through the rubble in daylight to find any survivors, he said. At least 37 people were reported injured, including 12 children. Russia fired 476 strike and decoy drones, as well as 48 missiles of various types, at Ukrainian targets overnight, Ukraine's air force said.

"Every brazen attack against ordinary life indicates that the pressure on Russia (to stop the war) is insufficient," Zelenskyy wrote on the messaging app Telegram.

The Ukrainian leader said he would meet with Turkey's



Rescue workers clear the rubble of a residential building which was heavily damaged by a Russian strike on Ternopil, Ukraine on Wednesday

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan later Wednesday as part of his efforts to diplomatically isolate Russian President Vladimir Putin and bring more international pressure to bear on him.

"Foremost, we will discuss maximum capabilities to ensure that Ukraine achieves a just peace," Zelenskyy said of his talks with Erdogan, adding that the leaders have "good relations." Zelenskyy also said, "We see some positions and signals from the United States, well, let's

see tomorrow."

He didn't elaborate but tough new American sanctions on Russia's oil industry, devised to push Putin to the negotiating table, are due to take effect on Friday. A senior Turkish official initially said that US special envoy Steve Witkoff would join Zelenskyy in Turkey, but backtracked later in the day and said Witkoff wouldn't be coming.

The Ukrainian city of Ternopil, located around 200 km from the Polish border, sits in a part of relatively

peaceful western Ukraine where many people from the east and south moved to as they fled danger along the front line. Almost 50 people were injured in Russian strikes on three other Ukrainian regions.

Two Eurofighter Typhoon jets and two F-16s were scrambled in Romania when a drone entered the NATO member's airspace during the Russian attacks, Romania's Ministry of National Defence said.

The Polish military said that Polish and allied aircraft were deployed in the middle of the night as a preventive measure. Poland's Rzeszow and Lublin airports were closed temporarily to prioritise military aviation, the Polish Air Navigation Services Agency said.

In northeastern Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, Russian drones injured 46 people, including two girls, the head of the regional military administration, Oleh Syniehubov, wrote on Telegram. Drones hit several city districts, at least 16 residential buildings, an ambulance station, school and other civilian infrastructure, he said.

Nigeria's President postpones G20 trip to focus on abducted schoolgirls

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Maga (Nigeria)

Nigeria's leader promised authorities would intensify efforts to rescue 24 schoolgirls who were abducted by gunmen earlier this week from a school in the country's restive north western region.

The girls were kidnapped from their dorm before dawn on Monday, when gunmen attacked their boarding school, the Government Girls Comprehensive Secondary School in the town of Maga in Nigeria's Kebbi state.

Local police said the gunmen scaled the fence to enter the dorm and exchanged gunfire with police officers guarding the school before seizing the girls and killing a staff member. No group has claimed responsibility for



the attack, but analysts and locals say gangs often target schools, travellers and remote villagers in kidnappings for ransom. Authorities say the gunmen are mostly former herders who have taken up arms against farming communities after clashes between them over strained resources.

Hawau Usman, a 15 year-old student who was among those abducted, had

managed to escape. "They kept moving, and when they left, I ran back to the school," Usman told media on Tuesday. "I knocked on the principal's house, but no one answered," she said, adding that she later found refuge at a teacher's house.

President Bola Tinubu said in a statement released late Tuesday that he has "directed the security agencies to act swiftly and bring the girls back to Kebbi State."

Africa hosts its first G20

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Johannesburg

In South Africa's oldest township, volunteers in wetsuits jump into the thigh-deep water of the polluted Jukskei River to untangle a net that's designed to trap garbage but damaged by heavy rains. Without the nets, the shacks of low-lying Alexandra on the outskirts of Johannesburg could face disastrous flooding.

World leaders with the Group of 20 rich and developing nations will meet this weekend in Johannesburg for the bloc's first summit in Africa. Host South Africa wants to prioritise issues affecting poor countries, including responses to disasters made worse by climate change. South Africa will urge rich countries and international financial institutions to help more — a plea also being made at global climate talks in Brazil.

Alexandra's over half a million residents live within steps of South Africa's richest financial district, Sandton.

But flooding often submerges bridges, leaving the township's children unable to get to school. It is a "big hazard," said Semadi Manganye, a resident and co-founder of the volunteer group, the Alexandra Water Warriors.

"The ravages of the climate are directly linked to the ravages of inequality," Binaifer Nowrojee, president of the Open Society Foundations, a non-governmental organisation promoting democracy and governance, told to media.

"Countries are facing the destructive choice between growing their economies and taking climate action."

The World Bank says the poorest countries were hit by nearly eight times as many natural disasters in the decade from 2010-2020 as they were from 1980-1990.

Southern Africa has been struck by strong tropical storms in the past decade, killing thousands of people and leaving nations with unbearable rebuilding costs.

Israel's military carries out airstrikes in Lebanon

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Sidon (Lebanon)

The Israeli military carried out airstrikes in southern Lebanon on Wednesday on what it said was Hezbollah infrastructure after a drone strike earlier in the day killed one person and wounded several others, including students on a bus.

The new wave of strikes came as tensions between Israel and militants are escalating. An airstrike Tuesday night killed 13 people in the Palestinian refugee camp of Ein el-Hilweh, the deadliest of Israeli attacks since a ceasefire in the Israel-Hezbollah war a year ago.

The Israeli military warned Wednesday afternoon it would strike targets in several villages in southern Lebanon, describing them as Hezbollah infrastructure, and called on people to



ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Abuja (Nigeria)

Gunmen attacked a church in Nigeria and killed two people, authorities said, as the country faces Trump administration threats of US military intervention over allegations that Christians are persecuted there.

No group has claimed responsibility for Tuesday night's attack in Eruku town in central Nigeria. Police responded to gunfire and found one person fatally shot inside the church and another

nearby, Kwara State police spokesperson Adetoun Ejire-Adeyemi said in a statement.

Kwara State Governor Abdul Rahman AbdulRazaq in a statement on Wednesday praised Nigerian President Bola Tinubu for the deployment of 900 additional troops there.

President Donald Trump earlier this month asserted that Christianity faces an "existential threat" in Nigeria and told the Pentagon to begin preparing for possible military action in the West African nation.

Over 300 held after Myanmar junta raids online scam centre



ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Bangkok

Myanmar's military Government extended its crackdown on online scam activities to a second major location, detaining hundreds of foreigners and seizing thousands of mobile phones used to carry out the fraud, State media reported on Wednesday.

Myanmar is notorious for hosting cyberscam operations responsible for bilking people all over the world, which usually involve gaining victims' confidence online with romantic ploys and bogus investment schemes. Authorities raided a major scam centre in mid-October called KK Park on the outskirts of Myawaddy, a major trading town on the border with Thailand.

On Tuesday, the army

raided a scam compound in the town of Shwe Kokko, also near Myawaddy, military spokesman Maj Gen Zaw Min Tun said in a statement published Wednesday in Myanma Alinn and other state newspapers.

He said authorities detained 346 foreigners and confiscated nearly 10,000 mobile phones along with other related equipment, while blocking people who were trying flee across the border. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime has estimated that hundreds of industrial-scale scam centres based primarily in Southeast Asia generate just under \$40 billion in annual profits.

Myanmar's military Government says it began its crackdown on cross-border online scams and illegal gambling in early September.



move away from the locations. More than an hour later, the strikes began in the villages of Shehour and Deir Kifa. There was no immediate word on casualties.

Earlier on Wednesday, an Israeli airstrike on a car in the southern Lebanese village of Tiri killed one person and wounded 11, including students aboard a

nearby bus, the Lebanese Health Ministry and State media said.

State-run National News Agency said the school bus happened to be passing near the car that was hit. The bus driver and several students were wounded, the report said. The Israeli military later said it killed a Hezbollah operative in the drone strike.



Indonesia raises alert for Mount Semeru volcano

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Brussels

Indonesian authorities raised the alert for Mount Semeru volcano to the highest level on Wednesday after a series of eruptions. The volcano lies on the country's most densely populated island.

Mount Semeru in East Java province unleashed avalanches of searing clouds of hot ash and a mixture of rock, lava and gas that travelled up to 7 kilometres down its slopes several times since midday to dusk, while a column of hot clouds rose 2 kilometres into the air, Indonesia's Geology Agency said in a statement.

The eruption throughout the day blanketed several villages with falling ash and forcing authorities to raise the volcano's alert level twice, from the third-highest level to the highest, the agency said.



Europe could get Cypriot natural gas by 2027: President

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Nicosia (Cyprus)

Some of the estimated 20 trillion cubic feet of natural gas discovered in waters off Cyprus could reach European markets as soon as 2027, the Cypriot president said on Wednesday, as Europe looks for more ways to wean itself off Russian energy. President Nikos Christodoulides said that the first quantity of natural gas that could be exported abroad will come from the so-called Cronos deposit, which is operated by a consortium made up of Italian company Eni and French firm TotalEnergies.

Christodoulides told an energy conference that the consortium would make its final decision to move ahead with the project next year, with Cronos gas potentially reaching a processing plant in the Egyptian port city of Damietta for liquefaction and transportation to European markets by ship in 2027.

PROSPECT

Khadi showcases *Aatmanirbhar Bharat* at IITF; KVIC chief interacts with artisans



The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is prominently participating in the 44th India International Trade Fair (IITF) 2025 at Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan. The 'Khadi India Pavilion', set up in Hall No. 6, showcases the diverse products of the "New Khadi of New India" and embodies the spirit of the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' campaign.

On Wednesday, KVIC Chairman Manoj Kumar visited the pavilion and engaged directly with Khadi artisans from across the country, entrepreneurs established under the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), and representatives from SFURTI clusters. He motivated them to support the Government of India's "Vocal for Local" campaign.

Kumar stated that the pavilion, featuring 150 stalls, was designed in line with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision of 'Har Ghar Swadeshi, Ghar Ghar Swadeshi' and 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat'. Over 40 per cent of the stalls are dedicated to Khadi institutions, with the rest displaying village industries and PMEGP products. Visitors observed live demonstrations of the indigenous *charkha*, electric pottery wheel and oil extraction.

NTPC marks the conclusion of Vigilance Awareness Week campaign 2025



NTPC Limited, India's largest integrated power utility, successfully concluded the Vigilance Awareness Week (VAW) campaign 2025 across all its offices and projects, reiterating its commitment to ethical governance and transparency.

The three-month-long campaign, running since August 18, 2025, was observed under the theme "Vigilance: Our Shared Responsibility." NTPC stations and offices hosted an engaging line-up of walkathons, pledges, competitions, awareness sessions and public outreach drives to reinforce the message of integrity and ethical conduct within the organisation and surrounding communities.

Fortis Vasant Kunj saves 640 gram 'micro preemie' after 90 days

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Fortis Hospital, Vasant Kunj, has achieved a rare medical milestone, successfully saving the life of a premature baby delivered at just 24 weeks' gestation, weighing a mere 640 grams-barely the size of a palm. This case is being hailed as a "micro preemie miracle," as the tiny baby's survival against overwhelming odds is extraordinary, born at the very edge of modern neonatal viability.

The newborn, delivered 16 weeks ahead of term, presented formidable and immediate life-threatening challenges. The infant did not cry at birth and had an alarmingly low heart rate. The paediatricians and specialist team at Fortis Vasant Kunj immediately initiated expert resuscitation, followed by round-the-clock intensive monitoring and life support.

Complicating the condition, the baby's lungs were severely underdeveloped, making independent breathing impossible. The infant required advanced, prolonged ventilatory support



and critical medications, with the medical team vigilantly adjusting every parameter to sustain life.

Further compounding the complexity, the baby's kidneys were not fully developed and during the first week, the newborn experienced a critical weight loss, dropping to just 550 grams. Through continuous specialised treatment and dedicated care, the medical team successfully managed these issues, stabilising the infant.

Dr Rahul Nagpal, Principal Director and Head of Paediatrics and Neonatology at Fortis Hospital, Vasant

Ecuador cacao exhibition opens in Patna

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Ambassador of Ecuador to India, Fernando Bucheli, inaugurated the first-ever exhibition in India dedicated to the origin of Ecuadorian cacao, hosted at the Bihar Museum in the city of Patna, widely regarded as the finest museum in the country.

The exhibition will remain open for 45 days and is expected to be visited by thousands of people. The exhibition is organised into four sections:

1. Ecuador and its biodiversity, featuring a visual presentation of its four natural regions — the Galápagos Islands, the Pacific Coast, the Andes and the Amazon.
2. The ancestral history of cacao, highlighting groundbreaking research conducted in Ecuador's Amazon region.
- Excavations at the archaeological site Santa Ana – La Florida, led by Ecuadorian archaeologist Dr Valdez — who traveled from Ecuador for



the inauguration — confirm that the Ecuadorian Amazon is the birth-place of cacao. Scientific studies have shown that cacao was first domesticated in this region over 5,000 years ago, beginning a remarkable journey that ultimate-

ly made Ecuador one of the world's leading producers of premium cacao.

3. Traditional handicrafts, showcasing artisanal creations from Ecuador's diverse natural regions, reflecting the cultural



richness of the country.

4. Contemporary art, featuring paintings by Ecuadorian artist Henry Rodas — also present at the event — inspired by Ecuador's landscapes, identity and the deep cultural symbolism of cacao.

Ambassador Bucheli emphasised that this exhibition serves as a cultural bridge between Ecuador and India and a meaningful opportunity to continue working together on future initiatives that bring both nations closer.

Reliance Power board approves new management team

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Reliance Power, one of India's leading private-sector power companies has announced the formation of a Board of Management to strengthen Governance and strategic business oversight. The decision was made at a board meeting held on 19th November 2025.

The newly constituted BOM will comprise the company's CEO, key managerial personnel and senior business leaders. The move aims to create sharper oversight mechanisms, promote agility and ensure the company is well-positioned for future growth.

According to the company, the initiative is part of its ongoing commitment to adopting best-in-class Governance practices that support long term value cre-

ation for all stakeholders.

Reliance Power also highlighted growth opportunities within its subsidiary through Reliance NU Energies. The company has emerged as the largest player in Solar and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) on a competitive bid basis with a total awarded capacity of up to 4 gigawatts of solar and up to 6.5 gigawatts of BESS, reflecting India's push towards clean energy and the Government's ambitious renewable energy targets.

Reliance Power, a part of the Reliance Group has an operating portfolio of 5,305 megawatts including 3,960 megawatts from Sasan Power Limited, the world's largest integrated coal-based power plant. Sasan Power has consistently ranked as one of India's best-performing power plants over the past seven years.



Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday visited the Swahid Smarak Khetra (Martyrs' Column) at Boragaon and reviewed the final preparations ahead of the inauguration of this iconic structure on December 10, observed as Swahid Divas.

Chouhan inaugurates ₹2,225 Cr rural road projects

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare and Rural Development Shivraj Singh Chouhan inaugurated rural road projects worth ₹2,225 crore, expansion of the National Makhana Development Board, direct payment of benefits under the *Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi* and multiple development initiatives at the State-level ceremony held in Dhamtari on Wednesday.

The event witnessed the nationwide release of the 21st installment of the *Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi* by Prime Minister Narendra Modi from Coimbatore, along with the transfer of ₹500 crore directly into the bank accounts of 25 lakh farmers of Chhattisgarh. The presence of thousands of farmers and rural representatives marked the ceremony as a defining moment in the State's development trajectory.

The programme was attended by

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, Speaker Dr Raman Singh, Union Minister of State Tokhan Sahu, Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma, State Agriculture Minister Ramvichar Netam, Ministers Dayaldas Baghel and Tankram Verma and several public representatives.

Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan presented documents related to the approval of rural road projects worth ₹2,225 crore under the *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana*. These projects will connect nearly 780 villages of Chhattisgarh with all-weather paved roads and lead to the construction of over 2,500 kilometres of new rural roads. He said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, infrastructure development in rural India has received unprecedented momentum, and the expansion of road connectivity will significantly empower economic activities in the region.

Chouhan announced that Chhattisgarh will now be included



under the National Makhana Development Board. He said that this decision will provide major opportunities to the State's farmers in production, processing, value addition, and access to national markets.

Chouhan also underlined the deci-

sive action taken against Naxalism in Chhattisgarh. He stated that coordinated anti-Naxal operations under the guidance of Union Home Minister Amit Shah have significantly reduced Naxal violence, bringing it to its "final stage."

Centre push for expansion of 'Aspirational Toilets'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal on Wednesday called for global cooperation on *swachhata* and sustainability. "Across India and around the world, better and cleaner toilet systems are being put in place. In our country too, mindsets are changing and must change. After all, cleanliness is not judged by a tidy home or bedroom, but by the condition of one's toilet," Khattar said speaking at the World Toilet Summit 2025 hosted by the Sulabh International Social Service Organisation.

He stressed the need for wastewater treatment, reuse, cleaner toilets and faster behavioural change. He also underscored early sanitation habits in children and the importance of waste-to-wealth and circularity under *Swachh Bharat* Mission-Urban.

On the occasion Jal Shakti Minister C R Paatil said the transformation reflects both nationwide participation and sustained Government backing. He said the Centre support-



ed States in building more than 12 crore toilets across rural and urban India. "The responsibility lay with the state Governments and the Centre assisted by constructing 12 crore toilets across the country," Patil said. The minister added that the massive toilet coverage has triggered a behavioural shift.

Nearly 5.67 lakh villages across the country have been declared ODF Plus, recording a 467 per cent increase from 1 lakh in 2022, accord-

ing to official data released by the *Jal Shakti* ministry on the occasion of World Toilet Day on Wednesday. "Crores of people who earlier practised open defecation have now stopped doing so," he said, crediting the *Swachh Bharat* Mission for turning sanitation into a mass movement.

The minister said that improved sanitation has also protected children. "Cleanliness has saved the lives of around 3,00,000 children," Patil

said, noting that the Government will continue to fund the upkeep of the sanitation infrastructure. Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry has asked urban local bodies to expand public toilet infrastructure at tourist hubs, high-footfall zones and religious sites under the *Swachh Bharat* Mission 2.0, a statement said on Wednesday. The Mission has recommended that these upgraded facilities be classified as "Aspirational Toilets", reflecting a shift towards modern, user-centric and environmentally sustainable sanitation amenities.

In the statement, the ministry said the initiative aims to significantly improve the public toilet experience through smart features, accessible design, gender-neutral and child-friendly amenities and green technologies. Welcoming delegates at the event, Kumar Dilip, president of Sulabh International, highlighted India's pioneering contributions in sanitation innovation and community-led dignity. The session also saw the release of "The World Toilet Organisation 25th Anniversary Commemorative Book".

राष्ट्रीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान, कुरुक्षेत्र
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
(Under the Ministry of Education, Govt. of India)
KURUKSHETRA-136119 (HARYANA)

Advt. No.: 28/2025
CONVOCATION - 2025

The 20th Convocation of NIT Kurukshetra will be held on **30th November, 2025**. Hon'ble Vice-President of India Shri C.P. Radhakrishnan will be the Chief Guest of the Convocation.

All eligible degree recipients are invited to attend the Convocation. The final list of the degree recipients is uploaded on the Institute website shortly. For registration schedule and other details related to the Convocation, please visit the Institute website www.nitkkr.ac.in regularly.

Registrar I/c

BRIEFLY

AFGHANISTAN CRUSH INDIA IN U-19 TRI-SERIES GAME



Afghanistan produced an all-round show to crush India B by a huge margin of 71 runs in the U-19 Tri-Series also involving India A, here at the COE Ground on Wednesday.

After being bowled out for 168 in 45.2 overs in which Naman Pushpak claimed 4/45 in his 10 overs, Afghanistan U-19 came back strongly to record their first win of the competition and take the top spot.

India B, who had lost to the 'A' side earlier, are languishing at the bottom of the table with two consecutive defeats.

Ishan Sood (8-0-24-2) was impressive for India B with the ball but a fine 58 (76 balls, 7x4s) from Afghanistan Number 3 Faisal Shinozada and Azizullah Maikhil's 42 took the Afghans to 168.

In reply, India B fell apart despite opening batter Yuvraj Gohil holding one end strongly with a fine knock of 60 (80 balls, 8x4s, 1x6s).

But all other India B batters were dismissed for single-digit scores as they were bundled out for a mere 97 in 29.3 overs, with Abdul Aziz claiming 6/38 in his 10 overs. Salam Khan and Wahidullah Zadran claimed two wickets apiece.

INDIA U-19 WORLD CUP CAMPAIGN BEGINS JANUARY 15



India will take on the USA in the 2026 Men's U-19 World Cup opener, with the tournament to be staged in Zimbabwe and Namibia from January 15 to February 6.

The competition will feature 16 teams divided into groups of four in the first stage, with a total of 41 matches to be played over 23 days.

India is placed in Group A alongside the USA, Bangladesh and New Zealand. Group B will have Zimbabwe, Pakistan, England and Scotland, whereas Group C will have defending champions Australia, Ireland, Japan and Sri Lanka.

The fourth and final Group D consists of Tanzania, the West Indies, Afghanistan and South Africa.

The ICC announced the schedule of the tournament on its website on Wednesday. The event will mark the debut of Tanzania, as well as a return for Japan, which had featured in the 2020 edition.

India will play their tournament opener against the USA on January 15, followed by contests against Bangladesh and New Zealand on January 17 and 24, respectively. Each of India's matches will be played at the Queens Sports Club in Bulawayo.

Mumbai, J&K complete formalities to notch easy wins

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Mumbai

Mumbai needed just over half-an-hour to complete the formalities as they beat minnows Puducherry by an innings and 222 runs on the final day to top Group D in the Ranji Trophy on Wednesday.

Following on after conceding a mammoth 498-run first innings lead to their formidable opponents, Puducherry added just 45 runs in 8.3 overs for the loss of four wickets on the fourth morning to be all out for 276. Puducherry were staring at a defeat after beginning the day on 231 for 6. Tushar Deshpande scalped two wickets while Captain Shardul Thakur and Ayush Mhatre got one each as Mumbai got the job done in quick time.

Both Deshpande and Thakur ended the match with five wickets apiece while Siddhesh Lad and Akash Anand scored centuries in Mumbai's huge first innings total of 630 for 5 declared.

Mumbai collected seven points from their third win, while Puducherry got none.

Jammu & Kashmir hammer Hyderabad

In Jammu, Abid Mushtaq spun J&K to an incredible win as Hyderabad were bowled out for 190 while chasing 472. It was Jammu &



Kashmir's third win. The wrecker-in-chief was the left-arm spinner Abid Mushtaq, who finished with figures of 7 for 68. It was his ninth five-wicket haul in first-class cricket.

This match also ended in quick time on the fourth morning, with Hyderabad losing their remaining three second innings wickets in 5.2 overs while adding just 21 runs. They had resumed the day at 169 for 7.

Mushtaq picked all three wickets to add to his earlier four in the Hyderabad second innings. Jammu and Kashmir collected six points from the win, while Hyderabad got none.

Gill not fit but desperate to play: Sources

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Guwahati

Shubman Gill has travelled to Guwahati with the rest of the India squad for the second Test against South Africa, but the neck injury that is on the mend is unlikely to fully heal before the game begins on Saturday.

However, it is understood that the skipper will try his best to prove his fitness during training sessions on Thursday and Friday. The squad has landed in the city.

If sources in the Indian team are to be believed, the 26-year-old Gill is far from being 100 per cent fit, with the pain in the nape of his neck still lingering, although its intensity has reduced considerably. "Shubman has been responding well to the medical treatment provided and will travel to Guwahati with the team on 19th November, 2025," read a statement from BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia.

"He will continue to be monitored by the BCCI medical team and a decision on his participation in the 2nd Test will be taken accordingly," he added, continuing the suspense on the batting star's availability.

While he might be clinically fit, the rigours of five-day cricket could aggravate the



issue and result in a longer lay-off. With the series on line and off-spinner Simon Harmer posing a significant threat after the Kolkata Test, a competent right-hander who can take on spin is a necessity.

The current coaching staff and selection committee don't have a lot of faith in the likes of Sarfaraz Khan, Karun Nair or Abhimanyu Easwaran, even though all three handle spin well. Their

simple logic is: even though both Sai Sudharsan and Devdutt Padikkal are left-handers, bringing in someone from outside would signal a massive lack of trust in the youngsters' ability to handle pressure.

However, Sudharsan has looked far from convincing, and there is a school of thought that Dhruv Jurel, with his tighter technique, might be a better fit at number 3. In this backdrop,

Gill, known to train even on optional days, might just want to be fit enough to bat, as even a half-fit skipper is seen as more effective than Sudharsan, Easwaran or Sarfaraz. Also, as a new captain still earning his stripes in the dressing room, missing a Test at this nascent stage of his leadership is the last thing he would want.

There is another aspect to the story. Gill probably needs at least 10 days to fully

GILL WILL TRAVEL TO GUWAHATI: BCCI

New Delhi: India skipper Shubman Gill will travel to Guwahati for the second Test against South Africa despite his participation being in doubt due to a neck injury, the BCCI announced on Wednesday.

The 26-year-old Gill suffered the injury on the second day of the first Test that India lost by 30 runs in Kolkata. He could not bat after retiring hurt in the first innings and was even hospitalised.

The second Test starts on November 22.

"Shubman has been responding well to the medical treatment provided and will travel to Guwahati with the team on 19th November, 2025," BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia said

in a statement. "He will continue to be monitored by the BCCI medical team and a decision on his participation in the 2nd Test will be taken accordingly," he added, continuing the suspense over Gill's availability.

With Gill's participation highly unlikely, all-rounder Nitish Reddy has been taken out of the ongoing India A series against South Africa A in Rajkot.

The Andhra batting all-rounder reached Kolkata on Monday evening but did not take part in Tuesday's net session.

With a Test century to his name and being a right-hander, Reddy could be in contention for a place in the playing eleven at Guwahati if Gill is ruled out.

Rohit Sharma slips to 2nd among ODI batters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Dubai

Indian star Rohit Sharma dropped down to second place after a brief reign at the top with New Zealander Daryl Mitchell dislodging him in the ICC ODI batters' rankings issued on Wednesday.

Mitchell became the second New Zealander to hold the Number 1 spot for ODI batters on the back of an excellent century against the West Indies.

He scored his seventh ODI century during the opening game in the series against the Caribbean side, and that proved enough for the inform right-hander to overtake Rohit at the top and claim the premier position for the first time in his career.

Mitchell currently has 782 rating points, one more than Rohit, whose reign at the top spot lasted around three weeks.

It means Mitchell is now just the second player from New Zealand to hold the top ranking for ODI batters, joining Kiwi great Glenn Turner, who previously held the spot back in 1979.

Fellow New Zealanders Martin Crowe, Andrew Jones, Roger Twose, Nathan Astle, Kane Williamson, Martin



Guptill, and Ross Taylor all spent time inside the top five of the ODI batter rankings during their illustrious careers, but only Turner and now Mitchell have ever held the No.1 spot.

Ibrahim Zadran of Afghanistan also dropped down one place to third, while Shubman Gill (4th), Virat Kohli (5th) and Shreyas Iyer (8th) are in the top-10.

There were also big gains for a host of Pakistan players following their ODI series against Sri Lanka, with Mohammad Rizwan (up five places to equal 22nd) and Fakhar Zaman (up five runs

to equal 26th) making eye-catching improvements on the list for ODI batters.

Pakistan registered an impressive 3-0 series sweep during the three-match rubber against their Asian rival, with spinner Abrar Ahmed (up 11 places to ninth) and pacer Haris Rauf (up five spots to 23rd) being the big winners on the latest rankings for ODI bowlers that are still led by Afghanistan tweaker Rashid Khan.

Meanwhile, the completion of the opening Test between India and South Africa in Kolkata saw a host

of players from both sides climb the latest Test rankings for batters, with Proteas skipper Temba Bavuma moving to the top five for the first time in his career following his excellent hand of 55 not out in the second innings of the match.

India counterpart Shubman Gill rose two spots to 11th despite picking up an injury during the same match, while Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto moved up four places to equal 34th following his century in the first Test against Ireland in Sylhet.

India pacer Jasprit Bumrah held on to his spot as the Number 1 Test bowler after six wickets during the first Test at Eden Gardens, with teammates Kuldeep Yadav (up two spots to a career-best 13th) and Ravindra Jadeja (up four places to 15th) among the players to make some inroads.

South Africa duo Marco Jansen (up one spot to 11th) and Simon Harmer (up 20 places to 24th) also rose in the list for Test bowlers following decent hauls against India.

Jansen also gained one place to move to fifth on the latest rankings for Test all-rounders.



Hardik and Bumrah likely to skip SA ODIs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Guwahati

With next year's T20 World Cup taking precedence, all-rounder Hardik Pandya, currently recuperating from a quadriceps injury, is unlikely to feature in the upcoming ODI series against South Africa starting November 30, and is expected to focus solely on the shortest format for now.

In keeping with workload management for frontline pacers, spearhead Jasprit Bumrah is also likely to be rested from the three-match ODI series, which carries little significance in the build-up to the T20 showpiece.

Hardik sustained a quadriceps injury during the Asia Cup T20 in Dubai last September and incidentally missed the final against Pakistan.

"Hardik is recovering well from his quadriceps injury at

the moment. He is at the Centre of Excellence doing his RTP (Return To Play) routines. As of now, returning from a quadriceps injury, he needs to build up his workload and playing 50 overs will be risky. Till the T20 World Cup, the BCCI medical team and Hardik would focus on T20Is," a BCCI source said on conditions of anonymity.

It is understood that Hardik will first prove his match fitness for Baroda in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, and the Mumbai Indians skipper would then play the T20I series against South Africa and New Zealand.

There are three ODIs against New Zealand as well, but 50-over cricket holds limited importance until the T20 World Cup. Post the next IPL, the focus for senior players will shift to the 2027 ODI World Cup cycle.

Bhut stars with 7 wickets as Saurashtra beat Goa

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Rajkot

Left-arm spinner Parth Bhut wreaked havoc to grab a match haul of 9 for 127, including seven wickets in the second essay, to help Saurashtra beat Goa by an innings and 47 runs in a Ranji Trophy Group C match on Wednesday.

Bhut, who had figures of 2/71 in the first innings, claimed seven for 56 in the second essay to single-handedly bowl out Goa for 180 in 54.5 overs following on.

Resuming their second innings at 77 for 2, Bhut ran through Goa's middle and lower order, and he was ably supported by skipper Jaydev Unadkat (2/29) and Dharmendrasinh Jadeja (1/34). Arjun Tendulkar (13) was Bhut's final wicket, out LBW.

Opener Manthan Khutkar (36), first innings centurion Abhinav Tejrana (34) and Captain Snehal Kauthankar (25) got starts for Goa before fizzling out.

Earlier, Goa rode on Tejrana's 118 to score 358 all out in reply to Saurashtra's mammoth first innings score of 587 for 7 declared.

The win gave Saurashtra seven points.



A sturdy batting effort from Madhya Pradesh's lower order denied Kerala an outright win, with the match ending in a stale draw in Indore.

Resuming at 218 for 3, Sachin Baby (122 off 217 balls; 9x4s, 2x6s) and Baba Aparajith (105 retired hurt off 149 balls; 11x4s, 3x6s) scored fine centuries as Kerala declared their second innings on 314 for 5, setting a target of 404 runs for MP.

In reply, Kerala reduced the hosts to 126 for 8 and were in contention for an outright win.

But the duo of Aryan Pandey (23 not out off 85 balls) and Kumar Kartikeya (16 not out off 54) produced stubborn resistance to earn

a hard-fought draw for MP.

The duo negotiated more than 20 overs in their unbeaten ninth-wicket stand as MP finished on 167 for 8, denying Kerala victory. Saransh Jain top-scored for MP with 31 off 59 balls.

Left-arm spinner Sreehari Nair (4/51) was the pick of the bowlers for Kerala. Kerala took home three points from the contest, while MP had to be content with one point.

Brief Scores:
At Rajkot: Saurashtra 587/7 declared beat Goa 358 all out in 106.2 overs and 180 all out in 54.5 overs (Manthan Khutkar 36, Abhinav Tejrana 34; Parth Bhut 2/71) by an innings and 47 runs.

South Africa A humble India A by 73 runs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Rajkot

Teen batting sensation Lhuan-dre Pretorius stole the show with a scintillating hundred as South Africa A came up with an all-round performance to earn a consolatory 73-run win over India A in the third unofficial ODI on Wednesday. The big victory helped the visitors avoid a series whitewash after India won the first two matches.

Besides Pretorius (123 off 98 balls), his opening partner Rivaldo Moonsamy also struck a fine century (107 off 130 balls) while sharing 241 runs to help South Africa post a formidable 325 for six in the allotted 50 overs. In reply, India A were all out for 252 in 49.1 overs.

India A never got a partnership going and barring Ayush Badoni's run-a-ball 66 and Ishan Kishan's 67-ball 53, none of the home team batters could make a mark in the stiff chase of 326.

The duo of Badoni and Kishan joined forces with India A in a spot of bother at 82 for four in 17 overs. But after having added 88 runs, Kishan, seeking to make a case for a return to India's white-ball teams, was sent back by Nqabayomzi Peter (4/48), who also dismissed Badoni to signal the end of India A's resistance.

Deaflympics: Abhinav, Pranjali win air pistol mixed team gold



India's shooters Abhinav Deswal, Pranjali Dhumal clinch gold in 10m Mixed Team Air Pistol at Tokyo Deaflympics 2025

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Tokyo

Abhinav Deswal and Pranjali Prashant Dhumal clinched the gold medal in the 10m Air Pistol event, while Kushagra Singh Rajawat won bronze in the 50m Rifle Prone competition as Indian shooters continued their fine run at the 25th Deaflympics on Wednesday.

The Indian shooters have won a total of 11 medals so far in the competition.

Abhinav and Pranjali

notched up a dominating 16-6 win over Ya-Ju Kao and Ming-Jui Hsu of Chinese Taipei to finish on top.

In the second event of the day, Kushagra won the bronze with a final score of 224.3. Ukraine's Dmytro Petrenko won the gold by shooting 251.0, breaking the Deaf World and Olympic Records. Colin Mueller of Germany won the silver medal with a score of 245.4.

Abhinav and Pranjali maintained their commanding position from the start of the gold medal match and

never gave their opponents any chance for a comeback.

The pair had earlier equalled their own Deaf World and Olympic record in qualification. They shot a combined score of 569-20x with Abhinav firing 287-12x (97.95,95) and Pranjali 282-8x (95.94,93) to finish on top in qualification. Both shooters had also won silver medals in the individual event on Monday. The second Indian pair, consisting of women's individual champion Anuya Prasad and Rudar Vinod Kumar, could only manage a

seventh-place finish in qualification with a combined score of 553-10x.

Anuya shot 280-5x (93.91,96) and Rudar 273-5x (92.90,91). Mahla Samiee and Bijan Ghaffari of Iran won the bronze medal, overcoming Ukraine's Sofiia Olenych and Oleksandr Kolodii.

Mahit Sandhu and Natasha Joshi will be in action on Thursday in the 50m 3 Positions women's event.

Mahit has already won a gold and silver in the 10m Air Rifle Mixed team and individual events, respectively.

Five Indians enter second round of Australian Open badminton

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Sydney

Five Indian shuttlers, including Lakshya Sen and HS Prannoy, dished out impressive performances to reach the men's singles second round at the \$475,000 Australian Open Super 500 event on Wednesday.

Lakshya, a 2021 World Championships bronze-medallist, outplayed Chinese Taipei's Su Li Yang 21-17 21-13, while Prannoy, a runner-up here in 2023, recovered from a poor opening game to beat world No. 85 Yohanes Saut Marcellyno 6-21 21-12 21-17 in 57 minutes in the first round match.

Commonwealth Games champion Lakshya will next face either Chi Yu Jen or Wang Tzu Wei.

The 33-year-old Prannoy, an Asian Games bronze-



medallist and a 2023 World Championships bronze winner, will meet eighth seed Alwi Farhan of Indonesia.

World Number 32 Ayush Shetty, who claimed his

maiden Super 300 title at the US Open earlier this year, eased past Canada's Sam Yuan 21-11 21-15 in 33 minutes.

The 20-year-old from Karnataka, a bronze-medallist at the 2023 World Junior

Championships, will take on fourth seed Kodai Naraoka of Japan. Tharun Manneapalli, a semifinalist at the Macau Open, overcame Denmark's Magnus Johannesen 21-13 17-21 21-19 in a 66-minute battle.

Zizou Berghs leads Belgium past France into Davis Cup semifinals

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Bologna (Italy)

Zizou Berghs beat Arthur Rinderknech 6-3, 7-6 (4) to send Belgium into the Davis Cup semifinals with a 2-0 victory over 10-time champion France. Belgium had lost its last four meetings with France, including in the 2017 final. It will face either Number 1 Italy or Austria on Friday. The last two quarter-finals will be held Thursday - Number 2 Germany will face Argentina, and Spain will take on the Number 4-seeded Czech Republic.

Berghs was in control throughout against the top French player and sealed the match with a superb forehand winner down the line on Tuesday. Earlier, Raphael Collignon rallied past Corentin Moutet 2-6, 7-5, 7-5 to give Belgium a 1-0 lead. Ties are played as a best-of-three matches, so the doubles was not played.

Both nations were back at this stage of the team competition since it was revamped in 2019. The Davis Cup Final 8 in Bologna is the sixth edition of the event to have the champion decided at a neutral site. Moutet played solid tennis until the 12th game of the second set when he hit two double faults and fluffed an easy point at the net after trying a between-the-legs shot, dropping his serve as Collignon forced a decider.

World Cup effect: Harmanpreet expected to triple brand portfolio



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

A barrier-breaking World Cup triumph has led to brands showing unprecedented interest in women cricketers, including Captain Harmanpreet Kaur, whose endorsement portfolio is expected to triple in the coming months.

Harmanpreet, who famously caught Nadine de Klerk to complete India's victory over South Africa in the final, was associated with more than eight brands before the World Cup. That is already changing, said her manager, Noopur Kashyap. "Harman was involved in over 8-10 brand endorsements before the World Cup. But post World Cup, Harmanpreet is expected to triple the value and number. Brands from the non-sporting

traditional sports sector have approached and are willing to explore opportunities with her and indicating a broader acceptance," Kashyap said.

The 2017 final appearance was a shot in the arm for women's cricket in India, but the title win eight years later has taken the sport's popularity and brand interest to another level, said Kashyap. "As an athlete business manager, I have observed that there has been a marked increase in the interest and investment in women's cricket, especially after winning the World Cup. "The change is evident in the surge of brand endorsements, demand and acknowledgement. Earlier, the diversification in the sponsorship categories was limited, and now we see a huge change of mindset."

Brands had a tendency to focus on the physical appearance of female cricketers, but that is also gradually changing, she said.

Many brands are aligning their messaging with themes of equality, empowerment, and inspiration.

"The narrative is shifting, and brands are beginning to recognise the value of showcasing female cricketers as strong, capable, and accomplished athletes in their own right," she said.

"By doing so, they are not only changing the narrative around female athletes but also contributing to a more inclusive and supportive sports culture," Kashyap added.

Harmanpreet has had a rather hectic time off the field since the World Cup, hopping from one city to another for media and brand engagements.

FIDE World Cup: Arjun loses to Wei Yi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Panaji

Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi was knocked out of the FIDE World Cup, losing to Wei Yi of China 1.5-2.5 in the first set of tiebreak games on Wednesday. It was a shocker for Arjun who ran out of luck in the rapid tiebreak games wherein the Chinese put pressure in the first game before eventually drawing while in the second Arjun just lost control and will have to go back home.

Having drawn both the games under Classical chess, Arjun was black in the first game of rapid and employed the French defense. It did not turn out to be a great choice however as Arjun was soon on the backfoot losing a rook for a minor piece.

Wei Yi had huge advantage according to the computers but Arjun posed stiff resistance in the quest of the Chinese despite being low on material. Eventually Wei Yi fumbled in the ensuing endgame and Arjun drew.

In the second rapid game the Indian did not have much luck despite playing with white pieces. Wei Yei got a tangible position in the middle game and had his light squared Bishop firmly posted on the sixth rank that eventually caused a lot of problems.

Arjun lost one pawn in the endgame and even though the complications remained, Wei Yi got the technicalities in his favour with some timely pawn advances. Arjun was finally checkmated.

Nikhat, Jaismine and four other Indian boxers march into finals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Greater Noida

Two-time World Champion Nikhat Zareen battled through a scrappy bout to storm into the gold medal round, joining Jaismine Lamboria and four other home boxers who also cruised to the finals on day four of the World Boxing Cup Finals on Wednesday.

Jadumani Singh Mandengbam (50kg), Pawan Bartwal (55kg), Sachin Siwach (60kg) and Hitesh Gulia (70kg) also entered the finals, ensuring India will have a whopping 15 boxers vying for gold on Thursday.

Nikhat, who returned from over a year-long hiatus

forced by a shoulder injury at the World Championships in September earlier this year, continued to show signs of rust as she was made to work hard for her unanimous decision win by Uzbek Ganieva Gulsevar in a messy 51kg semifinal.

The victory ended her 20-month medal drought. Her last international podium finish came at the Strandja Memorial in February last year.

"I'm very happy after Paris Olympics my medal account has opened. From here it's only upwards and onwards. I was filled with nostalgia, I had become world champion in front of the home crowd and

today I won my semifinal," Nikhat, who had won the 2023 World Championship in New Delhi, said after the bout. She will take on Chinese Taipei's Guo Yi Xuan in the final.

"I'm now looking forward for the final against Chinese Taipei to face her and win a gold for India."

Playing directly in the semifinal after receiving a first-round bye, the 29-year-old struggled to find rhythm early, landing just enough to convince four judges in the opening round.

The next six minutes were punctuated by clinches, stumbles and broken exchanges as both boxers tussled for control with the Indian emerging victorious.

Greatbatch elected new president of NZC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Christchurch

Former New Zealand Test player, coach and selector Mark Greatbatch has been elected as the new president of New Zealand Cricket (NZC), the board said on Wednesday.

Greatbatch, who played 41 Tests and 84 ODIs for his country between 1988 and 1996, replaces Lesley Murdoch, who completed her three-year term.

"I want to convey my enormous gratitude to Lesley for her professionalism as the NZC President over the past three years, and for her great support for the game as well as the organisation," said Board chair Diana Puketapu-Lyndon in a statement.

"I also want to welcome



and congratulate Mark as our new President and wish him well in the role. "We are fortunate in New Zealand cricket to have such strong figures wanting to contribute and give back to the game."

On the Board, Sarah Beaman rotated off at the end of her three-year term and opted against re-standing. Kevin Malloy rotated off and was re-elected for a third term. "My thanks also to Sarah, who decided against standing for re-election, and whose contribution and insights have been invaluable to the Board over her term," said Puketapu-Lyndon.

The meeting also elected three life members — former Test players Rebecca Rolls, Martin Snedden, and Ewen Chatfield. Meanwhile, NZC had returned a surplus of

New Zealand dollars 8 million in 2024. Puketapu-Lyndon said the organisation was in sound financial order, with reserves at a record \$37m, supported by strong broadcasting agreements, high-value playing programmes, and a solid commercial base.

NZC's financial position is a strong one. A small net surplus represents a significant outperformance against budget, reflecting prudent management and disciplined oversight — through what was a challenging operating environment.

"The position underlines the organisation's stability and resilience and should provide confidence in its ability to continue investing in the game's long-term growth and sustainability."

Spain, Belgium, Switzerland, Scotland and Austria secure automatic World Cup spots

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Glasgow

A stunning bicycle kick and two stoppage-time goals sealed Scotland's dramatic return to the World Cup after a 28-year wait.

Austria needed a late equaliser to also make it back to soccer's showcase event for the first time since 1998, while top-ranked Spain clinched its spot after equalising Italy's 31-match unbeaten record in competitive games in Europe.

Belgium and Switzerland also secured their places for the 2026 World Cup as European qualifying finished

on Tuesday. Five automatic spots were still available in Europe. Scotland beat 10-man Denmark 4-2 in a winner-take-all match in Group C, with Scott McTominay scoring a superb bicycle kick goal three minutes into the match, sending the Hampden Park crowd into raptures. A draw would have given Denmark the group win and the Danes were in good position after Patrick Dorgu equalized in the 82nd, but Kieran Tierney put the hosts ahead again three minutes into added time. Kenny McLean then sealed Scotland's qualification eight minutes into



stoppage time when he chipped goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel from the halfway line.

"We've been on a journey. I spoke to them about it pre-match, about how this is the opportunity we've waited for. What a night, eh?" Scotland coach Steve Clarke said. "This was the chance, one game. This was like a playoff final. We put everything on the line. There's always one last step, and it's always the hardest."

Denmark, which saw Rasmus Kristensen sent off in the 62nd, finished second in the group, two points behind Scotland.

A 1-1 home draw against

Bosnia and Herzegovina was enough for Austria to win Group H and return to the World Cup after a 28-year wait, while Belgium routed Liechtenstein 7-0. Switzerland qualified after a 1-1 draw at Kosovo.

The 12 group winners qualified directly, while the runners-up will participate in playoffs along with the four best-ranked group winners of the 2024-25 Nations League that did not finish first or second in their groups. The playoffs will be played on March 26 and March 31. The World Cup will be played in the US, Mexico and Canada from June 11 to July 19.

NORTHERN RAILWAY

NOTIFICATION

Applications are invited from Retired Railway Staff for Re-engagement on monthly remuneration basis for the Signal and Telecom department in Moradabad Division Northern Railway for various categories as mentioned below:-

S. No.	Department	Category	Level	No. of post re-engaged
1	Signal & Telecom/MB	SSE/Signal	8	01
2		SSE/Signal	7	02
3		JE/Signal	6	08
4		SSE/Tele	8	02
5		SSE/Tele	7	02
6		JE/Tele	6	11
TOTAL			26	

Detailed notification is available on www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in The application on prescribed Performa appended as Annexure-A may be submitted by the retired employee & sent to Sr. Divisional Personnel Officer Northern Railway , DRM office Moradabad by registered post or submitted personally at Single Window System (EGRS), Personnel Branch Northern Railway DRM Office Moradabad from the date of notification and no application will be entertained after 15.12.2025.

3596/25

Sr. Divisional Personnel Officer
N.R.ly. Moradabad

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