

Education must uplift the marginalised: Governor

KUMAR PRABHAT
■ Dumka

Sido Kanhu Murmu University (SKMU), Dumka, celebrated its ninth convocation with grandeur and academic dignity at the city's Convention Centre on Monday. The event brought together dignitaries, scholars and students in a ceremony that reflected both cultural richness and scholastic achievement. Jharkhand Governor and Chancellor of universities Santosh Kumar Gangwar presided over the ceremony.

The proceedings began with Vice-Chancellor Professor Kunul Kandir paying floral tribute to freedom fighters Sido and Kanhu Murmu, followed by a traditional *Iota-paani* welcome symbolising Santhal hospitality. The academic procession, comprising senior university officials, faculty deans and members of the Senate and Syndicate, set a ceremonial tone to the day's proceedings. After the national anthem and university song, Vice-Chancellor Professor Kandir formally welcomed the Chancellor and presented a



report on the institution's progress. He also administered an oath of integrity and diligence to graduating students and research scholars. In his presidential address, Governor and Chancellor Santosh Kumar Gangwar congratulated the degree recipients and reminded them that convocation marks not an

end but a new beginning in the journey of learning. He said a degree represents both personal achievement and collective effort — the sacrifice of parents, the guidance of teachers and the moral values that sustain society. Gangwar emphasised that education attains true meaning only when it serves the

underprivileged. “Students must work for the development of villages, the marginalised and the tribal communities of Jharkhand,” he said. Citing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of making India a developed nation by 2047, the Governor urged graduates to be active participants in nation-building and social transformation.

In total, 65 students received gold medals for academic excellence, while 33 research scholars were conferred doctoral degrees. Among the 78 selected medalists, 67 had registered for the event, with two remaining absent. Of 37 designated PhD awardees, 33 received their degrees in person from the Governor. Registrar Dr Rajiv Ranjan Sharma and Controller of Examinations Dr Reena Neelima Lakra coordinated the formal proceedings, which took place with precision and decorum. Each recipient's name was announced amid applause, marking moments of pride and celebration within the convocation hall.

Addressing the gathering, Vice-Chancellor Professor Kunul Kandir

termed the convocation a celebration of perseverance and academic excellence rooted in the legacy of Sido and Kanhu Murmu. He outlined ongoing initiatives such as the implementation of the National Education Policy, establishment of model colleges and promotion of research culture in the university's affiliated institutions.

He expressed that delivering quality education to students from remote and tribal regions remains SKMU's foremost commitment. Acknowledging the rise in women's participation, he described it as evidence of the university's growing emphasis on inclusiveness and gender balance.

The ceremony concluded with the national anthem as students, faculty and guests stood in unity. Expressing gratitude, Vice-Chancellor Professor Kandir commended the efforts of all organising committees, administrative staff, and student volunteers. The event, he said, symbolised SKMU's progress and its continuing mission to blend education, culture and community service in the heart of Jharkhand.



DLSA hosts seminar on parents and Sr Citizens Welfare Act

NITYANAND DUBEY
■ Garhwa

Following directives from NALSA and JHALSA and under the guidance of Principal District and Sessions Judge cum DLSA Chairman Manoj Prasad, along with Secretary Nibha Ranjan Lakda, an awareness seminar was held at the district hospital. The event aimed to promote the respect, protection and financial support rights of parents and elderly individuals, focusing on the key aspects of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007.

The primary goal of the seminar was to educate various societal groups, particularly the younger generation, about the legal entitlements available to parents and seniors under this legislation.

LADC Praveen Kumar Sahu provided a detailed explanation of how the Act empowers aging parents to seek maintenance from their children or relatives if they are unable to sustain themselves financially.

The discussion covered essential elements such as the application procedure for maintenance (under Section 5), the formation and authority of tribunals, and the classification of neglecting seniors as a

punishable offense. It was also noted that tribunals can mandate a monthly maintenance amount of up to ₹10,000.

DLSA PLV Ravindra Kumar Pathak stressed that the authority is always prepared to offer legal assistance to elderly citizens. The DLSA provides free legal support to help seniors claim their rights under the Act.

He also shed light on welfare initiatives, including the setup of senior care homes and ensuring access to medical services for the elderly.

The speakers urged attendees not only to adhere to the legal requirements but also to embrace their social and ethical duties by treating parents and elders with dignity, care and affection.

Among those present were doctors Prashant Pramod, Jiyaul Haq, Chandrakar, Sushil Kumar Raman, as well as Hospital Manager Sunil Tripathi and PLV Pinki Devi. In addition, PLVs conducted separate seminars at multiple locations across the district to promote the well-being of senior citizens.

This initiative represents a crucial effort in Garhwa district to enhance awareness of elderly rights, enabling them to lead secure and dignified lives.

BSL advances sustainability with Digital Emission monitoring training

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bokaro

Bokaro Steel Plant added another step to its sustainability drive by launching a training programme on the Online Emission Monitoring System on 17 November at the Environment Conservation and Sustainability Department. Over 30 participants from different departments joined the workshop.

BSL currently follows a three-tier environmental monitoring system — regular sampling by its in-house Environmental Lab, third-party checks by a NABL-

accredited and MoEFCC-recognised agency and 24x7 real-time monitoring through 33 stack emission units and three effluent quality monitoring systems.

Experts from Envea India Pvt Ltd conducted the training, emphasising the value of real-time data for timely corrective measures.

DGM (Environment) Nitesh Ranjan outlined the programme's purpose and CGM (Environment) Rajiv Srivastava inaugurated the session in the presence of GM (ECS) Priti Jha and project representative MK Singh.

Press must safeguard its credibility amid rising disinformation: Bokaro DC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bokaro

On National Press Day, 16 November 2025, the Department of Information and Public Relations, Bokaro, organised a thematic discussion on “Preserving Press Credibility Amid Rising Disinformation” at Weston Farm, Naya More. The programme was chaired by Deputy Commissioner Ajay Nath Jha, who inaugurated the event by lighting the ceremonial lamp.

District Public Relations Officer Ravi Kumar opened

the session with a welcome address, highlighting how the rapid spread of misleading content in the digital age has intensified challenges for responsible journalism. He underlined that verification, fairness, and sensitivity remain essential pillars of credible reporting.

Addressing the gathering, Jha said that while misinformation is problematic, disinformation — intentional deception — is far more dangerous for society and national stability. He urged media professionals to avoid the

rush for being “first to break news,” as haste often fuels confusion and undermines trust. In a 24x7 news environment, he said, accuracy must outweigh speed to protect public faith in journalism.

He cautioned that once credibility is compromised, years of hard-earned trust can collapse in moments.

With the growing influence of AI, he added, identifying deliberate falsehoods has become increasingly challenging, making self-analysis and ethical discipline vital.

The DC also announced

that the foundation of the Bokaro Press Club would be laid soon, with the aim of creating a modern and vibrant space for the media fraternity. He expressed hope that next year's National Press Day would be celebrated in the new premises.

Officials of the District Public Relations Office and representatives from various print and electronic media were present, contributing to a meaningful exchange on strengthening press integrity amid evolving technological disruptions.

कार्यालय, जिला परिषद्, कोडरमा

अतिअल्पकालीन नीलामी, आम सूचना (इच्छा की अभिव्यक्ति)
सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि कोडरमा जिला अन्तर्गत मरकन्वो प्रखंड के प्रखंड कार्यालय गेट के सामने नए, पूर्ण रूप से तैयार 08 (आठ) खाली दुकानों की बंदोबस्ती उप विकास आयुक्त-सह-मुख्य कार्यपालक पदाधिकारी, जिला परिषद्, कोडरमा के कार्यालय कक्ष /समागार, जिला ग्रामीण विकास शाखा, कोडरमा में निम्नांकित तिथि को सम्पन्न की जायेगी—

क्र० सं०	स्थल विवरणों	दुकान हेतु प्रति वर्गफीट मासिक न्यूनतम निर्धारित दर	सुरक्षित जमा राशि	तिथि	समय
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	मरकन्वो प्रखंड के प्रखंड कार्यालय गेट के सामने निर्मित 08 (आठ) खाली दुकान	11.00 रूपया	25,000.00	25 / 11 / 2025	03:00 बजे अपराह्न

इच्छुक डाकवक्ता उपरोक्त कॉलम 04 में अंकित राशि का बैंक ड्राफ्ट व आवश्यक दस्तावेज डाक शुरू होने के पूर्व तक कार्यालय में जमा कर नीलामी में भाग ले सकते हैं। उक्त बैंक ड्राफ्ट की राशि उप विकास आयुक्त-सह-मुख्य कार्यपालक पदाधिकारी, जिला परिषद्, कोडरमा के पदनाम से देय होगा एवं बैंक ऑफ महाराष्ट्र, कोडरमा शाखा में भुगतय होगा। नीलामी से संबंधित नियमावली एवं शर्त कार्यालय के सूचना पट्ट एवं कोडरमा जिले के वेबसाइट www.koderma.nic.in पर देखा जा सकता है।

ह० / —
उप विकास आयुक्त-सह-कार्यपालक पदाधिकारी, जिला परिषद्, कोडरमा

PR 366174 Panchayati Raj(25-26)#D

कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय, लघु सिंचाई प्रमण्डल, चाईबासा

अल्पकालीन ई०-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना संख्या- MID/CHAIBASA/ F2-08/2025-26(Untied Fund)

1. कार्य का नाम :-

गुप संख्या	योजना का नाम	जिला	प्रखण्ड	प्राक्कलित राशि (लाख में)	परिमाण का मूल्य (रुपय में)	अग्रघन की राशि (रुपय में)	कार्य समाप्ति की अवधि
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	पुरनिया पंचायत के ग्राम तिलेपी में बाकमुदू चौक से ओबरोबासा तक 3200 फीट पी०सी०सी० पथ, एक स्पेन का पुलिया तथा 150 फीट गार्डरैल का निर्माण।	पश्चिमी सिंहभूम।	तातानगर	97.616	10,000.00	196000.00	7 माह
2.	ईपिलसिंजी पंचायत के ग्राम उकुमडकम से गाझासाई तक पथ एवं पुलिया का निर्माण।	पश्चिमी सिंहभूम।	मंडारी	99.489	10,000.00	199000.00	7 माह
3.	जगन्नाथपुर मुख्य बाजार से मदन मोहन दुकान होते हुए दास टोला तक जाने वाली सड़क का निर्माण।	पश्चिमी सिंहभूम।	जगन्नाथपुर	69.071	10,000.00	139000.00	4 माह
4.	बड़ा पासेया पंचायत के ग्राम बुखोड़ता के टोला ससगलोडग में प्रेमचन्द्र पुरती के घर सामने से नगेन पुरती के घर तक पी०सी०सी० पथ निर्माण।	पश्चिमी सिंहभूम।	जगन्नाथपुर	14.942	2500.00	30000.00	2 माह
5.	तरतारिया पंचायत के ग्राम रिदुसाई के मुख्य सड़क से युग्ना कोदरा के घर होते हुए हरिश्च बोदरा के घर तक 2800 फीट पी०सी०सी० पथ निर्माण।	पश्चिमी सिंहभूम।	नग्गावां	99.104	10000.00	198500.00	7 माह
6.	कटकरा में पुराना भुण्डा टोला से लेकर मुख्य सड़क तक 1000 फीट पक्का पथ निर्माण।	पश्चिमी सिंहभूम।	गोईलकेरा	72.121	10000.00	144500.00	6 माह

- नोट :- केवल ई०-निविदा(Online Mode) ही स्वीकार होगा।
- विस्तृत जानकारी के लिए वेबसाइट WWW.jharkhandtenders.gov.in पर देखें।
 - वेबसाइट पर निविदा प्रकाशन की तिथि एवं समय :- 03.12.2025 के 11:00 बजे प्रकाशित है।
 - ई०-निविदा में भाग लेने की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय :- 09.12.2025 अपराह्न 03:00 बजे तक।
 - ई०-निविदा खोलने की तिथि एवं समय :- 10.12.2025 को 04:00 बजे अपराह्न।
 - परिमाण विपत्र का मूल्य एवं अग्रघन की राशि सूचना प्रीयोगिकी एवं ई-गवर्नेंस विभाग झारखण्ड मंत्रालय, धुर्गा, राँची के आदेश सह ज्ञापक 120, दिनांक 03.10.2023 के अनुरूप (Online) प्राप्त की जायेगी।
 - निविदा आमंत्रित करनेवाले पदाधिकारी का नाम, पता, दूरभाष सं० एवं ईमेल आई डी०- कार्यपालक अभियंता, लघु सिंचाई प्रमण्डल, चाईबासा। 9572468424@gmail.com, eeimidchaibasa@gmail.com, eeimidchai-cemr-jhr@nic.in
 - निविदा के B.O.Q की राशि घट-बढ़ सकती है तदनुसार B.O.Q के मूल्य एवं अग्रघन की राशि में बदलाव होगा।
 - प्राक्कलित राशि का 10 प्रतिशत से अधिक के दर से निविदित (Quoted rate is more than 10% below the schedule rate) के परिणाम में पथ निर्माण विभाग झारखण्ड राँची के पत्रांक 2146(S) दिनांक 09.09.2020 के अनुसार अतिरिक्त जमानत की राशि एकत्रणनाम करने के समय जमा करना अनिवार्य होगा।
 - निविदा निषेधन Double Bid Envelope पद्धति से किया जाएगा Technical Bid में सफल निविदादाता का ही Financial Bid खोला जाएगा। उपायुक्त, पश्चिमी सिंहभूम का पत्रांक 1679, दिनांक 23.12.2022 के अलोक में निविदा खलने के समय चाईबासा जिलान्तर्गत किसी भी प्रमण्डल /विभाग द्वारा आवंटित कार्य एकराशित अवधि बीत जाने के बाद लंबित नहीं होने संबंधी शपथ-पत्र Affidavit देना होगा। निविदा के एक NIT में एक निबंधन पर दो से अधिक कार्य आवंटित नहीं किया जाएगा। वैसे संवेदक जो एकराशनाम में अंकित कार्य पूर्ण करने की तिथि तक योजनाओं का कार्य अधूरा रखे हुए हैं। उन्हें जिला अन्तर्गत चलने वाली किसी भी योजना में तब तक कार्य आवंटित नहीं किया जाएगा जब तक अपने पूर्व के कार्य को समाप्त न कर दें। जिला अन्तर्गत किसी भी विभाग का कार्य लम्बित होने की सूचना यदि इस कार्यालय को प्राप्त होती है तो संबंधित संवेदक को कार्य आवंटित नहीं किया जाएगा।
 - निविदा खोलने के की तिथि से 5 दिनों के अन्दर निविदादाता द्वारा अपनी आपत्ति / दावा दर्ज कराये अन्यथा अवधि बीतने के पश्चात् कोई भी आपत्ति / दावा मान्य नहीं होगा।
 - बिना कारण बताये किसी भी समय निविदा को रद्द करने का अधिकारी अघोहस्ताक्षरी को सुरक्षित रहेगा।
 - निविदा Bid में Qualify करने वाले संवेदकों / फर्म का ही Financial Bid खोला जाएगा।
 - निविदा शुल्क एवं अग्रघन की राशि का ई०-भुगतान संवेदक द्वारा जिस बैंक खाता से किया जाएगा। उसी खाते में अग्रघन की राशि वापस होगी। अगर बैंक खाता को बन्द कर दिया जाता है तो उसकी सारी जवाबदेही संवेदक की होगी।

ह० / —
कार्यपालक अभियंता
लघु सिंचाई प्रमण्डल, चाईबासा
PR 366221 West Singhbhum(25-26)#D

कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय
ग्रामीण विकास विशेष प्रमंडल, लातेहार

अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना (सी०एस०आर० मद)
संख्या — EE/RDSD/LATEHAR/35/2025-26
1. कार्य की विस्तृत विवरणों :-

क्र० सं०	कार्य का नाम	प्राक्कलित राशि	अग्रघन की राशि	परिमाण विपत्र का मूल्य	कार्य पूर्ण करने की अवधि
1	Repair of district Athelete Hostel And extention of kithen shed at district Latehar.	500000	10000	750	2 माह
2	Repair of residential training center Athelete (Boys) Hostel at district Latehar.	500000	10000	750	2 माह

2. निविदा प्रकाशन की तिथि — 18.11.2025
3. ई-निविदा प्राप्त की तिथि एवं समय — दिनांक 19.11.2025 से दिनांक 01.12.2025 को अपराह्न 5:00 बजे तक।
4. ई-निविदा खोलने का स्थान — कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय, ग्रामीण विकास विशेष प्रमण्डल, लातेहार।
5. ई-निविदा खोलने की तिथि एवं समय —03.12.2025 अपराह्न 2:00 बजे
6. ई-निविदा आमंत्रित करने वाले पदाधिकारी का नाम एवं पता :- कार्यपालक अभियंता, ग्रामीण विकास विशेष प्रमण्डल, लातेहार।
7. ई-निविदा प्रकोष्ठ का दूरभाष सं० — 06565796434
8. परिमाण विपत्र की राशि घट-बढ़ सकती है तदनुसार अग्रघन की राशि देय होगी।
9. निविदा शुल्क एवं अग्रघन की राशि केवल Online Mode द्वारा स्वीकार्य होगी।
10. निविदा शुल्क एवं अग्रघन की राशि का ई-भुगतान जिस खाता से किया जायेगा, उसी खाते में अग्रघन की राशि वापस होगी। अगर खाता को बंद कर दिया जाता है तो उसकी सारी जवाबदेही आपकी होगी।
विस्तृत जानकारी के लिये वेबसाइट www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in एवं कार्यालय की सूचना पट्ट पर देखा जा सकता है।

कार्यपालक अभियंता
ग्रामीण विकास विशेष प्रमंडल, लातेहार
PR 366179 Rural Development (25-26)_D



ADITYA BIRLA CAPITAL
PROTECTIVE TRUSTEES CHARGED AMOUNT

ADITYA BIRLA CAPITAL LIMITED
Registered Office : Indian Rayon Compound, Vervaul, Gujarat - 362 266.
Corporate Office : 12th Floor, R Teck Park, Nirlon Complex, Near Hub Mall, Goregaon (East) Mumbai-400 063, MH.

DEMAND NOTICE
UNDER SEC 13(2) OF THE SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 ("THE ACT") READ WITH RULE 3 OF THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002 ("THE RULES")
On account of the amalgamation between Aditya Birla Finance Ltd. and Aditya Birla Capital Ltd. vide the Scheme of Amalgamation dated 11.03.2024 duly recorded in the Order passed by the National Company Law Tribunal - Ahmedabad on 24.03.2025, all SARFAESI actions initiated by Aditya Birla Finance Ltd. in relation to the mortgaged property mentioned, stands transferred to Aditya Birla Capital Ltd., the amalgamated company.
Accordingly the undersigned being the Authorized officer of Aditya Birla Capital Limited (ABCL) under the Act and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) of the Act read with the Rule 3, issued Demand Notice(s) under Section 13(2) of the Act, calling upon the following borrower(s) to repay the amount mentioned in the respective notice(s) within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The undersigned reasonably believes that borrower(s) is / are avoiding the service of the demand notice(s), therefore the service of notice is being effected by affixation and publication as per Rules. The contents of demand notice(s) are extracted herein below:
In connection with the above, Notice is hereby given, once again, to the said Borrower's / Legal Heir(s) / Legal Representative(s) to pay to ABCL, within 60 days from the date of the respective Notice(s), the amount indicated herein below against their respective names, together with further interest as detailed below from the respective dates mentioned below in column (d) till the date of payment and / or realisation, read with the loan agreement and other documents / writings, if any, executed by the said Borrower's. As security for due repayment of the loan, the following Secured Asset(s) have been mortgaged to ABCL by the said Borrower's respectively.

Sr. No.	Name and Address of the Borrower(s)	Demand Notice Date & NPA Date	Description of Immovable Property
1.	Mr. Prakash Devnarayan Mehata, S/o. Devnarayan Mehata, At: Ghaghrahkurd, Ghaghra Road, Punai, Meru, Pargana Champa, Thana No. 121, Daru, Plot No. 899, Khata No. 13, Hazaribagh, Jharkhand- 825402 Contact: 7541979829 Email: Pm0166404@gmail.com	12.11.2025 & 03.11.2025	All That Piece And Parcel Of The Plot Of Land Admeasuring 13 Decimals Forming Plot No- 899, Khatan No-13 In P.s. Ichak, New P.s. Daru, Mouza- Ghaghrahkurd, Thana No. 121, Sub Registry- Hazaribagh, District- Hazaribagh Within The Limits Of Hazaribagh, Pincode- 825402.
2.	Mrs. Lalita Prakash Mehata D/o. Mr. Shrijanjan Prasad Mehata, W/o. Mr. Prakash Devnarayan Mehata, At: Ghaghrahkurd, Ghaghra Road, Punai, Meru, Pargana Champa, Thana No. 121, Daru, Plot No. 899, Khata No. 13, Hazaribagh, Jharkhand- 825402 Contact: 7709116482 Email: Lalita123@gmail.com Loan Ac.No. ABE_RMLA00000763032	Total O/s. Dues Amt. Rs. 20,99,016/- as on 11.11.2025	With Structure Standing, Erected Or Attached Therewith Or Any Part Thereof Whether Presently In Existence Or In The Future Belonging To Or In any Way Appurtenant Thereto.

With further interest, additional Interest at the rate as more particularly stated in respective Demand Notices dated mentioned above, incidental expenses, costs, charges etc incurred till the date of payment and / or realization. If the said Borrower's shall fail to make payment to ABCL as aforesaid, then ABCL shall proceed against the above Secured Asset(s) / Immoveable Property (ies) under Section 13(4) of the said Act and the applicable Rules entirely at the risk of the said Borrower's / Legal Heir(s) / Legal Representative(s) as to the costs and consequences.
The said Borrower's / Legal Heir(s) / Legal Representative(s) are prohibited under the said Act to transfer the aforesaid Secured Asset(s) / Immoveable Property(ies), whether by way of sale, lease or otherwise without the prior written consent of ABCL. That please note that this is a final notice under Sec. 13(2) of the Securitization & Reconstruction of Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (54 of 2002). Needless to say, that ABCL shall be within its right to exercise any or all of the rights referred to above against the borrower(s) entirely at their risk, responsibility & costs.

Place : Hazaribagh, Jharkhand
Date : 18.11.2025
Sd/-
Authorised Officer
Aditya Birla Capital Limited

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jamshepur

A long-standing demand of the residents of Asanbani under Potka block was finally fulfilled as Potka MLA Sanjib Sardar laid the foundation stone for a new health sub-center on Wednesday. The occasion marked a significant milestone in strengthening rural healthcare infrastructure and ensuring accessible medical services for thousands of villagers in the region.

The health sub-center, once operational, is expected to evolve into a major healthcare facility catering to the needs of several surrounding panchayats. For years, villagers have been forced to travel long distances for basic medical treatment, often facing hardships in emergencies. The new facility aims to end that struggle.

Addressing the gathering, MLA Sanjib Sardar said, “Public convenience, safety, and a healthy life are our priorities. Keeping these values in mind, the foundation stone for this health

center has been laid today. Our goal is to ensure that no one in the area has to travel far for treatment.” He added that the upcoming center would be equipped with quality doctors, modern medical tools and round-the-clock services.

Reaffirming the State Government's commitment to grassroots development, Sardar said, “Chief Minister Hemant Soren is committed to the development of villages. Under his leadership, our Government is continuously strengthening rural health services. The Chief Minister has pledged to develop villages, and today its implementation is clearly visible.”

The event witnessed the presence of several local representatives, including JMM Potka Block Committee President Sudhir Soren, District Councilor Hiranmay Das, Mukhiya Anita Sardar, Bhubaneshwar Sardar, Hitesh Bhagat, Chakradhar Mahato, and Bhupati Mahato. A large number of villagers also attended, expressing gratitude for the fulfillment of this long-awaited demand.

Women crafted products from Jharkhand draw attention at IITF

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ranchi/New Delhi

The Jharkhand Pavilion emerged as a major attraction on the fourth day of the India International Trade Fair (IITF) at Pragati Maidan on Monday. This year, the Jharkhand Government has placed special emphasis on promoting products crafted by women, resulting in widespread appreciation for the creativity, skill and tradition showcased by women artisans and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) from across the state.

Women from various districts of Jharkhand have brought handmade textiles, crafts, organic products and traditional artworks to the national stage, providing thousands of them with sustainable livelihood opportunities and strengthening the mission of women's economic empowerment and self-reliance.

One of the biggest highlights of the



Women check handcrafted products at Jharkhand Pavilion, IITF, New Delhi on Monday

pavilion was the live Tasar silk demonstration, where trained women artisans showcased the traditional process of extracting silk from natural tasar cocoons. Visitors witnessed how the cocoons are boiled to draw silk threads, which are later spun into yarn.

Further ahead, "Tamsam" demonstrated the weaving process on a handloom using the same Tasar yarn. This unique experience not only highlighted the rich heritage of Jharkhand's Tasar industry but also underlined the crucial role it plays in providing sustainable income to tribal and rural women. The industry has become an effective bridge connecting traditional skills with modern markets.

Stalls set up by various women SHGs also caught the attention of visitors. The displays included handcrafted garments, Tasar silk apparel, handicrafts, natural and organic products and home décor items. The diversity, premium

quality and traditional craftsmanship reflected Jharkhand's vibrant cultural heritage.

Another prominent attraction was the lac bangles stall run by Jhavar Mal, who has been participating in IITF for the past four years. He shared that nearly 400 women associated with his group craft lac bangles, providing them with a steady livelihood. Every year, he brings fresh and contemporary designs tailored to the preferences of Delhi's women.

This year's Jharkhand Pavilion is not just an exhibition of art and culture — it is a strong statement on how women across the State are contributing significantly to building an economically self-reliant Jharkhand through their skills, traditions and hard work.

The pavilion stands as a testament to the power of women-led entrepreneurship and the cultural richness of Jharkhand that continues to inspire visitors at IITF.

Jamshedpur boy bags Gold at Commonwealth Chess Championship

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jamshedpur

In a proud moment for Jharkhand, Jamshedpur's rising chess prodigy Adhiraj Mitra clinched the Gold Medal at the Commonwealth Chess Championship 2025, held in Malaysia from 7 to 16 November. His remarkable performance has brought immense pride to the city as well as the country's growing chess community.

Competing against some of the strongest young players from across the Commonwealth nations, Adhiraj delivered an exceptional run through nine rounds, securing victory with two draws and remaining unbeaten throughout the tournament. His consistency, strategic depth and calm under pressure helped him dominate the championship and emerge as the clear winner in his category.

Adhiraj, a student of Loyola



School, Jamshedpur, has been steadily rising in the national chess circuit and has now made his mark on the international stage as well. His achievement highlights the growing strength of young chess talent emerging from Jharkhand.

His coach, Dushyant Das, expressed immense pride in Adhiraj's performance. "He has shown extraordinary discipline and sharp understanding of the game. This gold medal is just the begin-

ning of many more achievements to come," he said.

The win has sparked celebrations across the school as well as the city's chess fraternity. Adhiraj's success is being hailed as an inspiration for young players and a testament to the potential of dedicated sports training in Jamshedpur. With this gold medal, Adhiraj Mitra has not only elevated his own standing in international chess but has also brought glory to the State and the nation.

Agriculture minister calls for timely implementation of schemes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ranchi

State Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Cooperative Minister Shilpi Neha Tirkey today unexpectedly visited the Agriculture Directorate. At the Agriculture Directorate, the Minister held a review meeting with officials from the Horticulture Department.

During the review meeting, detailed information was sought on the schemes implemented under the Horticulture Department. The Minister's surprise inspection revealed that department officials were struggling to gather information and data related to the schemes.

Speaking to the media after the meeting, Agriculture Minister Shilpi Neha Tirkey stated that it is not necessary to issue show-cause notices or take action against officials for the slow implementation of schemes; rather, creative thinking and a



Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, and Cooperative Minister, Shilpi Neha Tirkey, during a surprise visit to the Agriculture Directorate in Ranchi on Monday

concrete action plan can also accelerate the implementation of schemes.

The Minister, who arrived for a surprise meeting with officials from the Horticulture Directorate, discussed in detail how to over-

come the obstacles in implementing the schemes. She focused primarily on how to remove these obstacles and implement the schemes on the ground. The Agriculture Minister also provided necessary guidance to the

officials of the Horticulture Directorate in this regard.

It was informed at the meeting that schemes related to mushroom distribution and beekeeping are progressing. The primary objective of this meeting

was to accelerate horticulture schemes in the State and ensure their implementation within the stipulated timeframe.

Departmental officials, including Horticulture Director Madhavi Mishra and Director Vikas Kumar, were present at the meeting.

Agriculture Minister Shilpi Neha Tirkey also conducted a surprise inspection of the Farmer Call Center at the Agriculture Directorate. She observed the process of calling farmers from the call center to inform them about the department's schemes. A farmer was called in the presence of the agriculture minister and asked about his concerns.

On this occasion, the Minister directed officials to train call center operators to keep them updated on the department's schemes. The agriculture minister also urged farmers to call the toll-free number 18001231136 to share their agricultural concerns and seek solutions.

State to get relief from Chill; Temperature to rise by 3–4° C

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ranchi

The effects of snowfall happening in the Himalayan ranges can be felt in Jharkhand as a cold wave gripped the State the past week. However, a rise in the minimum temperature levels is expected in the next few days bringing relief from the chill.

As per the Meteorological Centre, Ranchi, from November 18 onwards, for the next three days the minimum temperature is likely to rise by three to four degrees and no change is expected for the next two days.

The communiqué shared by the MET Centre stated that in the last 24 hours, dry weather prevailed across the State while cold wave conditions were observed in some parts of western and central Jharkhand.

"For the next five days, the weather will remain dry across the State. In the next three days, the minimum temperature will rise by three to four degrees Celsius and thereafter no significant change is expected for two days.

A rise in the minimum temperature is because the northwesterly component is likely to weaken and also due to the incoming easterly winds from the Bay of Bengal. A slight rise in the maximum temperature will also be there. On Tuesday morning some parts of western Jharkhand may have cold wave-like situations," said Director, MET Centre Ranchi, Abhishek Anand. The bulletin released by the MET Centre, Ranchi on Monday evening stated that the minimum temperature in Daltonganj and Bokaro was recorded 5.4 and 5.3 degree below normal at 8.8 and 10.5 degree Celsius respectively.

Cong leaders asked to strengthen booth-level vigil ahead of SIR

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ranchi

A crucial meeting of Jharkhand's MPs, MLAs, ministers and former Lok Sabha-Vidhan Sabha candidates was held on Monday at the Congress Bhavan in Ranchi. The meeting, chaired by Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee (JPCC) President Keshav Mahato Kamlesh, had Jharkhand Congress in-charge K Raju as the chief guest.

Addressing party leaders, Raju termed the upcoming Special Summary Revision (SIR) process in Jharkhand as extremely sensitive and urged all leaders to stay alert. He cautioned that the kind of situation seen in Bihar — where names of 56 lakh voters were reportedly removed from the electoral rolls — must not be allowed to repeat in Jharkhand.



Jharkhand Congress in-charge K Raju addresses party leaders during a meeting in Ranchi on Monday

He directed district Congress presidents to ensure the appointment of Booth Level Agents (BLAs) at all booths by December 15, with active cooperation from MPs, ministers, MLAs and former candidates.

JPCC President Keshav Mahato Kamlesh alleged that

Jharkhand's natural resources have made the state a target for the BJP, which, he said, could adopt "any possible tactic" to gain power. He accused the BJP of attempting to influence the Election Commission and carrying out a "structured campaign" to remove common

voters' names from the voter list in order to gain advantage in upcoming elections.

Kamlesh stressed the need to reach out to the public in advance regarding the SIR process so that people can remain informed and ensure timely enrollment in the voter list. He further instructed that each MP, MLA, minister and former candidate must take responsibility for appointing BLAs at every booth in their respective areas. The process of voter list verification must begin immediately and information about every aspect of SIR should be conveyed to people to ensure their active participation.

Sharing details of the meeting, Satish Paul Munjini said that as per the JPCC president's directive, all MPs, MLAs, ministers and former candi-

dates will oversee BLA appointments at their booths. They will also begin on-the-ground verification of voter lists and spread awareness about each point of the SIR process so the public remains informed and alert.

The meeting was attended by Co-in-charge Dr Bela Prasad, Bhupendra Maravi, Deputy Leader Rajesh Kachhap, Ministers Radhakrishna Kishore, Deepika Pandey, Irfan Ansari, Shilpi Neha Tirkey, MP Kalicharan Munda, MLAs Rameshwar Oraon, Ramchandra Singh, Bhushan Bara, Nishat Alam, Mamta Devi, Sonaram Singh, Sinku Ramchandra Singh, former ministers Banna Gupta, Jaleshwar Mahato, JP Patel, Ajay Nath Shahdeo, Munna Singh, Sudhir Chandrawanshi, Arun Sahu and several other senior Congress leaders.

BJP holds meeting on Atmanirbhar Bharat Sankalp Abhiyan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ranchi

BJP National General Secretary and MP Arun Singh today targeted the State Government and INDIA alliance. Singh was in Jharkhand to attend a review meeting of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Sankalp Abhiyan (Self-Reliant India Sankalp Abhiyan).

Singh stated that the Atmanirbhar Bharat Sankalp Abhiyan is a campaign aimed at building a developed India by 2047 and is progressing rapidly today.

He stated that the JMM/Congress alliance Government in Jharkhand is proclaiming a 2050 target for a developed Jharkhand, but the path it is taking today will take Jharkhand far from development.

He stated that in the last six years, the JMM/Congress Government has not offered any new vision for development.

There is only rampant corruption and looting. There are no teachers in schools, no medicines in



hospitals and children are being given infected blood. DMFT funds are being looted. Scams have been exposed in Bokaro.

Funds are not being spent on public development. The JMM/Congress Government is unable to even fill potholes on roads.

He said that the development and infrastructure we are seeing are all thanks to the Modi Government.

कार्यपालक दंडाधिकारी, मेदिनीनगर

शपथ-पत्र

शपथ-पत्र संख्या 4957, दिनांक - 13.11.2025 के अनुसार मैं, जूही कुमारी, पिता-अजय राम, निवासी-एस०पी० कोठी आबादगंज, पोस्ट व थाना-मदिनीनगर (बालटनमंजो), जिला पलामू राज्य झारखण्ड। यह कि, मेरी पुत्री का जन्म प्रमाण पत्र में पुत्री का नाम जान्वी कुमारी (JANVI KUMARI) जन्म तिथि 14.11.2019 दर्ज है जो सही है। मेरी पुत्री जान्वी कुमारी (JANVI KUMARI) के आधार सं०-6281 8788 1654 में उसका पुराना नाम स्वीटी कुमारी (SWEETY KUMARI) है जो गलत है। पुत्री के आधार में स्वीटी कुमारी (SWEETY KUMARI) के स्थान पर जान्वी कुमारी (JANVI KUMARI) नाम दर्ज कराने के लिए य शपथ पत्र बनाया जा रहा है।

JHARKHAND URJA SANCHARAN NIGAM LIMITED
(CIN No.:U40108JH2013SGC001704)
(Civil Engineering Department)
Regd. Office: JUSNL (SLDC) Building, Kusai Colony, Doranda, Ranchi-834002
e-mail- ceciviljusnl@gmail.com

Expression of Interest (Eoi) Notice

EOI No.-504/PR/JUSNL/2025-26

JUSNL invites expression of interest (Eoi) for preparation of schedule of Rate (SOR) of 2025-26 from interested & prospective bidders / agencies working in the field of construction of Civil infrastructure specialization in grid sub-stations of transmission utility. The details of opening of window for online submission of rates is as below:-

Sl. No.	Description	Date of publication of tender on website	Documents download start date & time	Online rates submission start date	Online rates submission end date	Opening date & time
1	Rate of Infrastructure preparation of SOR 2025-26	20.11.2025 from 11:00 A.M.	20.11.2025 from 12:30 P.M.	20.11.2025 from 12:30 P.M.	10.122025 from 04:00 P.M.	11.12.2025 from 04:30 P.M

Note:- Only e-Tender will be accepted. Further details can be seen on website <http://jharkhandtender.gov.in> and may be contacted on Mobile No. 9304254491. NIC helpline no. 0651 -2400178.

स्वहित एवं राष्ट्रहित में ऊर्जा बचावें। कृपया अपनी शिकयतों को 18003456570(कॉल सेंटर) पर दर्ज करायें।

Sd/-
General Manager (Civil)
PR 366205 Jharkhand Urja Sancharan Nigam Ltd (25-26)D

JHARKHAND STATE POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD
TOWNSHIP ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, HEC, Complex, Dhurwa, Ranchi 834004
Telephone: 0651- 2400850 (FAX)/2400851, 2400852, 2401847, 2400979, 2400139

Expression of Interest (EOI) for

Setting up and operation of Integrated Grievance Redressal Cell (GRC) through a Call Center, Internet, e-mail, SMS and Mobile based portal for Jharkhand State Pollution Control Board, Jharkhand

The Jharkhand State Pollution Control Board invites tender from reputed Agency/Firm for establishment and operation of integrated Grievance Redressal Cell (GRC) for noise pollution through a Call Center, Internet, e-mail, SMS and Web based/ Mobile app portal.

Interested agencies/firms are invited to submit their bids in sealed envelopes through physical submission, either by speed post, registered post, courier, or in person. The detailed terms and conditions of EOI is available at JSPCB Website at <https://jspcb.org.in/>

The Jharkhand State Pollution Control Board reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the Tender proposal at any time without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Sd/-
Member Secretary
Jharkhand State Pollution Control Board, Ranchi

PR 366209 Jharkhand State Pollution Control Board(25-26).D

झारखण्ड सरकार

श्रम, नियोजन, प्रशिक्षण एवं कौशल विकास विभाग

औद्योगिक प्रशिक्षण संस्थान (सामान्य), राँची।

नियुक्ति आमंत्रण शुद्धि-पत्र

सूचना सं०-96 राँची, दिनांक-17/11/2025

इस कार्यालय सूचना संख्या-93, दिनांक-08/11/2025 एवं दैनिक सामाचार पत्रों में प्रकाशित PR 365593 (Labour Employment and Training)25-26*D, दिनांक-09/11/2025 द्वारा औद्योगिक प्रशिक्षण संस्थान (सामान्य), राँची के Scrap मशीन, हेण्ड टूल, उपकरण, वाहन के पार्ट्स, उपकरण, E-Waste एवं Metal Waste का निलामी विभाग द्वारा चयनित एजेंसी भारत सरकार के उपक्रम-MSTC (मेटल स्कैप ट्रेड कॉर्पोरेशन लिमिटेड) के माध्यम से किया जाना है, का निविदा प्राप्त एवं Technical Part खोलने की तिथि-17/11/2025 निर्धारित की गई थी, जिस आंशिक संशोधित कर निविदा दो (02) सौलबंद लिफाफे में Technical एवं Financial अलग-अलग अंकित का हाथों-हाथ या निबंधित डाक द्वारा दिनांक-26/11/2025 को अपराह्न 04:00 बजे तक विस्तारित की जाती है। निविदा का Technical Part दिनांक-29/11/2025 को अपराह्न 04:00 बजे प्रमारी प्राचार्य, औद्योगिक प्रशिक्षण संस्थान (सामान्य), राँची के कार्यालय कक्ष में संस्थान स्तर पर गठित समिति के समक्ष खोली जायेगी तथा Technical Part की अहता पूरी करने वाले Valuers-RVs का ही Financial Part खोला जायेगा।

पत्राचार पता:-
प्रमारी प्राचार्य, औद्योगिक प्रशिक्षण संस्थान (सामान्य), राँची।
नजदीक आई०टी०आई० बस स्टैण्ड, ईटकी रोड, हेडल, राँची-834005।

नोट:-निविदा की अन्य शर्तें पूर्ववत् रहेंगी एवं अन्य जानकारी हेतु औद्योगिक प्रशिक्षण संस्थान (सामान्य), राँची के कार्यालय से सम्पर्क किया जा सकता है।

ह०/-
प्रमारी प्राचार्य,
औद्योगिक प्रशिक्षण संस्थान (सामान्य), राँची।

PR 366230 (Labour Employment and Traning) 25-26 (D)

Ex-Murugappa Group Chairman passes away

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Arunachalam Vellayan, former Chairman of the Murugappa Group and Chairman Emeritus of Coromandel International, died on Monday after a prolonged illness.

Vellayan (72) passed earlier today after a prolonged illness. He is survived by his wife Lalitha Vellayan, his sons Arun Vellayan and Narayanan Vellayan, and grandchildren, the Murugappa Group said in a statement.

For several decades, he provided strategic direction across diversified businesses of the group, helping expand and enhance its reputation as one of India's most respected conglomerates.

He served on the boards of various companies in the Murugappa Group, including as chairman of Coromandel International Ltd and EID Parry Ltd.



Arunachalam Vellayan

He also served on the boards of companies, such as Kanoria Chemicals & Industries Ltd, EXIM Bank and Indian Overseas Bank, the statement said.

Vellayan also led various industry and trade organisations, including Southern India Chamber of Commerce, Fertiliser Association of India, Indian Sugar Mills Association, and All India Cycle Manufacturers Association.

He was the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Indian Institute of Management, Kozhikode (IIM-Kozhikode).

An alumnus of The Doon School, Shriram College of Commerce, Aston University, UK, and University of Warwick Business School, UK, Vellayan was also honoured with Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) by the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University and Aston University, UK.

Karnataka to unveil IT, startup, space policies at BTS 2025

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bengaluru

The Karnataka Government will unveil three policies—IT policy, startup policy, and space technology policy—at the upcoming Bengaluru Tech Summit (BTS) 2025, officials said on Monday.

The 28th edition of BTS, organised by the Department of Electronics, IT and BT and Software Technology Parks of India (STPI), will be inaugurated by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in the presence of Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on November 18.

Speaking at the curtain-raiser, which was held on Monday, Minister for Electronics, IT/IT and Rural Development Priyank Kharage said, "We are glad to reaffirm that the Bengaluru Tech Summit has grown into a truly global innovation platform, fostering discovery and development across the entire technology spectrum—from information technology and biotechnology to deep tech, space, and sustainability."

Priyank added that this

year, the government has organised 'The Future Makers Conclave' at BTS, a high-energy gathering of nearly 10,000 founders, investors, and innovators aimed at shaping the next wave of entrepreneurship.

"The conclave is a flagship meet designed to deliver tangible value for all participants in the startup ecosystem—from budding entrepreneurs and early-stage founders to seasoned entrepreneurs looking to scale up," he said.

"Every attendee will leave with concrete takeaways, whether in capital access, pilot projects, business tools, mentoring, visibility, or networks," he added.

N Manjula, Secretary, Department of Electronics, IT & BT, said, "We will be unveiling three policies, reaffirming Karnataka's deep tech commitment. The space technology policy will be launched during BTS, along with the third version of the IT policy and the second version of the startup policy."

The Karnataka cabinet



Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah

recently approved the Karnataka Space Technology Policy and the Information Technology Policy for 2025-30, offering extensive financial and non-financial incentives to accelerate investments, strengthen innovation, and expand the state's tech footprint beyond Bengaluru. On November 6, the cabinet approved the Karnataka Startup Policy 2025-30, with a total outlay of Rs 518.27 crore over five years, aiming to establish up to 25,000 startups, including

10,000 from clusters outside Bengaluru.

According to a statement, BTS 2025 will feature 10 focused conference tracks, including IT and DeepTech, Electro-Semicon, Digi Health & Biotech, India-USA Tech Conclave, and Global Collaboration and Startup Ecosystem. Sub-tracks include AI Universe, Defence & SpaceTech, Finverse, and Women in Leadership.

"The summit will bring together over 50,000 visitors, including more than

1,000 investors, 15,000 attendees, 500 speakers, and 1,000 exhibitors," the statement said.

"It will host over 80 knowledge sessions, more than 5,000 curated meetings, and welcome participants from 60 countries and all 30 states and Union Territories of India," it added. Themed 'Futurise', the three-day summit will bring together notable speakers, including ISRO Chairman V Narayanan, Amardeep Singh Bhatia, Secretary of DPIIT, and Abhishek Singh, Additional Secretary of MeitY.

BTS 2025 will also feature specialised platforms such as Investor Connect, allowing startups to engage directly with leading investors and industry leaders, and Mentor Connect, which provides one-on-one mentorship with experienced domain experts.

"These platforms aim to catalyse meaningful connections, capital access, and strategic guidance for the next generation of innovators," the statement said.

NMCG clears research, pollution-control projects

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) said on Monday that it has approved a series of major research and infrastructure projects aimed at strengthening scientific river management and accelerating pollution abatement efforts across the Ganga basin.

The decisions were taken at the 67th executive committee (EC) meeting of the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) chaired by its Director General Rajeev Kumar Mital, with a strong focus on data-driven planning, climate resilience and rejuvenation of both the Ganga and Yamuna rivers.

Senior officials from the Department of Water Resources and states participating in the mission attended the meeting, which placed emphasis on research-led interventions.

The EC cleared several

studies that will deepen scientific understanding of the Ganga basin, from monitoring Himalayan glaciers and creating a digital twin of the Ganga to SONAR-based riverbed surveys, managed aquifer recharge through paleochannels, and digitisation of historic geospatial maps, an official statement said.

Officials said the projects mark a shift toward integrating advanced modelling, artificial intelligence (AI) tools and high-resolution datasets into long-term river restoration. As part of the major pollution-abatement measures, the committee approved a ₹361.86 crore project to intercept and divert drains and construct new sewage treatment plants (STPs) for cleaning the Mahananda River in Siliguri, West Bengal.

The project, which includes 25 interception and diversion (I and D) structures, two STPs with capacities of 27 MLD and 22 MLD, and an extensive

network of rising mains and pumping stations, will be implemented under a hybrid annuity-based public-private partnership (PPP) model.

To support Yamuna rejuvenation in Delhi, the EC also cleared the conveyance of treated sewage from the coronation pillar STP to the river.

The plan involves tapping untreated flows from the Jahangirpuri drain, building new pumping stations, laying rising mains and RCC channels, and installing truss bridges for drain crossings to ensure safe discharge of treated effluent, the statement said.

Among the key research approvals, the EC sanctioned a ₹3.98 crore study by the National Institute of Hydrology, Roorkee, on glacier retreat and melt-runoff changes in the Upper Ganga Basin, including risks linked to flash floods and glacial lake outburst floods.

It also approved a high-

resolution SONAR-based bathymetric survey covering 1,100 km of the Ganga from Bijinor to Ballia, aimed at improving sediment management and environmental-flow assessments.

A ₹242.56 lakh project on managed aquifer recharge along paleochannels in the Ganga-Yamuna Doab region was cleared to enhance groundwater security between Kaushambi and Kanpur.

The committee additionally approved ₹3.31 crore for developing a Digital Twin and Water Cycle Atlas for the Ganga basin, and ₹2.62 crore for creating a geospatial database of historical maps to track long-term changes in river morphology and floodplains.

Looking to expand public outreach, the EC sanctioned the 'Youth for Ganga, Youth for Yamuna' initiative to engage over 2.5 lakh students across 200 Delhi-NCR schools.

NCW flags lapses in RG Kar probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Kolkata

The parents of the raped-murdered RG Kar Medical College trainee doctor were among 43 complainants who appeared before the National Commission for Women (NCW) during a mass hearing, 'Maha Jansunwai', held here on Monday to address cases of atrocities against women.

On the sidelines of the first day of the two-day session, NCW member and eminent doctor Archana Majumdar said that the commission would continue to stand by survivors and their families as they "keep knocking on every door for justice" and wait for months or years for redress.

"Everyone knows what happened to the woman in the RG Kar case. Her helpless parents are being treated like shuttlecocks by the state authorities. They pleaded

Everyone knows what happened to the woman in the RG Kar case. Her helpless parents are being treated like shuttlecocks by the state authorities. They pleaded before the NCW, and we believe it is our responsibility to ensure they get real justice

— ARCHANA MAJUMDAR, NCW MEMBER

before the NCW, and we believe it is our responsibility to ensure they get real justice. We had sent our members for inspection to visit the place of occurrence. As only one person has been arrested, there is merit in their argument," she said.

Majumdar added that the parents were unhappy with the pace of the investigation. Expressing dissatisfaction over the state police's communication with the NCW, she said, "They (police) never upload this case on the portal. I had two virtual hearings with two Deputy Commissioner-rank officials two-three months ago, but

they could not give any substantial update."

"At an earlier virtual hearing on the RG Kar case, seven points were asked and recorded and police promised to look into these points. However, no action taken report (ATR) has been initiated based on the flagging of these points and they are not providing us documents requested by me stating the case is sub-judice," the NCW member said.

"Police should not be to harass people and make them move from one place to another. I am not generalising, but this has been the

attitude of police in many instances. Even the mother of the deceased woman was beaten during a march to Nabanna a year after the incident. That complaint has also been lodged with us, but there has been no action by police so far," she said.

Majumdar said the NCW has scheduled another hearing on the RG Kar case in 15 days, involving the parents, police and investigating agencies. "The issues should not be skipped. We are very serious. Even if the matter is sub-judice before the Calcutta High Court, what can be done within the parameters of law must be done," she said.

The father of the victim medic, after meeting Majumdar, said, "We are yet to get any satisfactory reply from police related to several issues. The CBI has also let us down. Let's see what reply Kolkata Police furnishes after 15 days."

Congress slams BJP, MNS for hate-filled politics

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Mumbai

The Congress on Monday said it will not compromise on its ideology and warned that the "divisive and hate-filled politics" of the BJP and MNS are harmful to Mumbai's social harmony and development.

The party announced it will contest the upcoming BMC elections independently while seeking support from like-minded groups.

"The Congress will not compromise on its ideology; the divisive and hate-driven politics of the BJP and MNS are harmful for Mumbai," party spokesperson Sachin Sawant said at a press conference.

"To focus on Mumbai's real issues, it is essential for Congress to contest inde-



Sachin Sawant

pendently. Congress is committed to development with a human face," he added. Sawant said the party remains firmly committed to constitutional values such as democracy, justice, equality and secularism, adding the Congress' ideology

stands in sharp contrast to what he described as the attempt by the BJP-RSS to divide people on the basis of religion, caste and language.

"The BJP is trying to polarise Mumbai by raising issues such as the possibility of a Muslim mayor and

illegal infiltration, instead of addressing core civic concerns like roads, water, healthcare, education, housing and pollution. Such rhetoric disturbs the social atmosphere and affects the city's long-term growth," Sawant said. Slamming the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), Sawant said the Raj Thackeray-led party's politics in the name of Marathi pride has created fear and hostility in the past.

Sawant pointed to incidents of violence against taxi drivers, hawkers and job seekers from other states, and said statements by MNS chief Raj Thackeray on loudspeakers and aggressive slogans threaten Mumbai's multicultural fabric.

"Mumbai continues to face basic civic challenges

and seeks pothole-free roads, clean drinking water, waste management, better public toilets, quality schools, affordable housing and a corruption-free administration. Parties focused on religion, caste or language have failed to address these issues," he said. He added that Mumbai has always welcomed people from across Maharashtra and the rest of the country, and targeting "outsiders" often ends up hurting locals as well.

"The Congress is contesting independently to provide clean, transparent and equitable governance. The current system is handing over the city's land and resources to a select few. The Congress' aim is to ensure development that is inclusive and humane," Sawant asserted.

BJP's Nuapada bypoll victory due to workers' effort, says CM Majhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Bhubaneswar

Rejecting BJD and Congress' allegations of "vote chori", manipulation and booth rigging, Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Monday said the BJP registered a "historic" victory in the Nuapada bypoll due to the tireless efforts of party workers, unity among leaders and a flawless strategy.

Addressing a meeting, Majhi thanked party workers and leaders for playing a crucial role in ensuring the victory of BJP candidate Jay Dholakia by a margin of over 83,000 votes.

"We are thankful to the people of Nuapada. I will

soon visit the district and personally convey my gratitude," he said.

Recalling earlier years when, according to him, the BJP did not even have polling booth agents in several areas, the chief minister said, "We learned from defeats and reviewed our mistakes. That is why the BJP is successful today."

Accusing the Opposition of spreading misinformation, Majhi said, "Both the BJD and Congress attacked us with lies, fearing defeat. They used abusive words like 'vote chori' and 'beiman' (traitor). But their lies did not work, and the people of Nuapada gave them a befitting reply."

He claimed that an action

like 'Operation Sindoor' was executed in Nuapada, which, he said, "gave rich dividends".

Majhi asserted that the bypoll results had "changed the political landscape" of Odisha. Now Congress says it lost because of a 'Bibhishan' (one who helps the enemy) and that action will be taken against him. If they do so, the party—which has 70 per cent 'Bibhishan'—will be completely destroyed," he remarked.

The chief minister said BJP workers, leaders, MLAs, MPs and ministers worked in coordination throughout the campaign. "The ministers, MLAs and MPs deployed in the area will now prepare a list of local problems. All issues will be resolved," he added.

J&K Deputy CM claims PDP contested Budgam bypoll with BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Baghpat

Jammu and Kashmir Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary on Monday attacked PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti, alleging that her party contested the Budgam assembly bypoll with the BJP.

Choudhary's remarks came days after opposition PDP candidate Aga Syed Muntazir won the bypoll on November 14, defeating ruling National Conference candidate Aga Syed Mehmood.

Speaking to reporters here, he said, "One day, Mehbooba ji speaks in the favour of the BJP, and another day she speaks against it. First, Mehbooba ji should decide whether she is with the BJP or against it."

Referring to the recent bypoll in Budgam, Choudhary said that Mehbooba-led PDP contest-



J&K Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary

ed the election with the BJP. The J&K deputy CM also claimed that the PDP is in a dilemma and is unable to draw the line.

He also said that attempts were made to misguide the voters. "At times, the voters get misguided."

"But the voters never cast votes on the basis of violence in the country or the situation which Pakistan wants to create in India. People are intelligent, and

they know about their voting rights," he said.

Choudhary also said that a promise was made by the Centre that the statehood of J&K will be restored soon.

"The people of Jammu and Kashmir are hoping that the prime minister and the home minister will fulfil their promises. Jammu and Kashmir, which was divided and made a Union Territory, will get back its lost status of a state," he said.

Punjab must remember sacred traditions of Gurus: CM Saini

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Chandigarh

Punjab must remember the sacred traditions of the Gurus while addressing water disputes, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Monday said, pointing out that the state is not receiving its full share of water from the neighbouring state due to the non-construction of the SYL canal.

Saini was speaking at the 32nd meeting of the Northern Zonal Council in Faridabad's Surajkund which was chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah. During the meeting, Saini said that sustained cooperation between states is extremely important for the progress of the nation.

By pooling our resources, sharing knowledge and adopting each other's best practices, we can turn the vision of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' into reality, he said.

Saini said Haryana has made several successful efforts in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

resolve of 'Viksit Bharat 2047'.

According to a Haryana government statement, Saini said while discussing key agenda items that proper arrangements must be ensured for supplying each state its rightful share of water.

Haryana has consistently been giving Delhi more water than its own share. However, due to the non-construction of the SYL canal, Haryana is not receiving its full share of water from Punjab. Once Haryana receives its rightful share of water through SYL, Rajasthan will also get its due share, he said.

Saini said that Punjab is the land of Gurus, the sacred soil where Bhai Kanahaiya served even enemy soldiers on the battlefield by giving them water. Through the Council, he urged Punjab to remember the great traditions of the Gurus while addressing the water dispute.

Notably, Bhai Kanahaiya, who was a disciple of Guru Teg Bahadur, carried a



Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini

'mashk' (leather pouch filled with water) on his shoulder in a battle in Anandpur Sahib and served water to the wounded without any discrimination.

Saini also said that water is a shared resource and keeping it clean is the collective responsibility of all states. Recalling that rivers are revered as mothers in Indian culture, he specifically mentioned the Yamuna and assured that Haryana is making every effort to keep the river clean.

Notably, the SYL canal issue

has been a bone of contention between the two states for the past several years. The canal was conceptualised for the effective sharing of water between the two states from the Ravi and Beas rivers.

The project envisages a 214-kilometre canal, of which a 122-kilometre stretch was to be constructed in Punjab and the remaining 92 kilometres in Haryana.

Haryana has completed the project in its territory but Punjab, which launched the work in 1982, shelved it.

Haryana was carved out of Punjab on November 1, 1966.

Referring to Panjab University, Chandigarh, Saini said that the Haryana government wishes to contribute to it. If some colleges of Haryana get affiliated to the Panjab University, it will benefit both the university and the students of Haryana, he said.

Notably, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann had recently recalled that over two years back, he took a stand against a proposal of affiliation of Haryana colleges with Panjab University, saying the Chandigarh-based university has always been connected with Punjab's legacy and heritage.

Saini, while touching upon other issues at the meeting, said that ensuring the safety of children is everyone's responsibility.

With the implementation of the three new criminal laws in Haryana, cases under the POC SO Act are being disposed of more swiftly, he said.

Commitment to development helps us win elections: PM



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the Bihar election results have sent a clear message to all state Governments that their development policies will determine the future of their parties, whether they belong to “left, right or centre”.

1.36 lakh devotees visit Sabarimala as season opens

Over 1.36 lakh devotees have completed darshan at the Lord Ayyappa Temple since the hill shrine opened on Sunday evening for the ‘mandala-makaravilakku’ pilgrimage season. The auspicious first day of the Malayalam month of ‘Vrischikam’ marks the start of the annual season. Nearly 55,000 pilgrims arrived for darshan on the opening day alone, ADGP S Sreejith said on Monday.



Statue of former six-time CM Virbhadra unveiled in Shimla



Public Works Minister Vikramaditya Singh on Monday unveiled the statue of former six-time CM of Himachal Pradesh Virbhadra Singh in Shimla district's Rohru. The minister said that it were the efforts of Virbhadra that shaped the development of Rohru as well as the entire state.

Congress stands united, would not split: Robert Vadra

Robert Vadra, the businessman husband of Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi on Monday ruled out any potential split in the Congress in the wake of the drubbing received in the Bihar assembly elections, and asserted unity among party leaders and the Opposition bloc. “Whatever the PM says...There will be no split in the Congress. Everyone in the Congress and the Opposition alliance is united,” Vadra.



Regional strength along with national progress is Govt’s clear goal: Amit Shah



Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Haryana CM Nayab Saini during the 32nd Northern Zonal Council meeting in Faridabad on Monday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Faridabad

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday said the Modi Government's goal is very clear — regional strength along with national progress and India's global leadership in every field, which will lead us towards the creation of a great India,” he said.

Addressing the 32nd meeting of the Northern Zonal Council here, Shah also said that all states should work in mutual coordination to resolve water resource management and water-

related problems.

“Our goal is clear — regional strength along with national progress and India's global leadership in every field, which will lead us towards the creation of a great India,” he said.

Chief Ministers Nayab Singh Saini (Haryana), Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu (Himachal Pradesh), Bhagwant Mann (Punjab), Bhajan Lal Sharma (Rajasthan), Rekha Gupta (Delhi), Omar Abdullah (Jammu and Kashmir), Punjab Governor and Administrator

of Chandigarh Gulab Chand Kataria, Lieutenant Governors Manoj Sinha (Jammu and Kashmir), V K Saxena (Delhi) and Kavinder Gupta (Ladakh) attended the meeting, officials said.

The Home Minister said poverty is being eradicated and employment is increasing through cooperation, agriculture and fisheries.

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mantra of *Sahkar Se Samriddhi* (Prosperity through Cooperation), he said the coopera-

PUNJAB CM REITERATES CLAIM ON CHANDIGARH, PU

Faridabad: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Monday reiterated state's claim over Chandigarh, Panjab University and river waters before Union Home Minister Amit Shah at the 32nd meeting of the Northern Zonal Council here. Mann also advocated genuine federal structure in the country at the meeting chaired by Shah.

Flagging the issues, the Chief Minister said the Constitution clearly demarcates areas in which the Union and the states have to function to exercise their respective authority. Unfortunately, there has been a trend towards centralisation of authority in the past 75 years, he said.

Pleading for handing over Chandigarh to the state of Punjab, Mann said that the Rajiv-Longowal Accord, signed on July 24, 1985, between then prime minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, reaffirmed that Chandigarh will be transferred to Punjab.

However, Mann bemoaned that despite all promises, Chandigarh was not transferred to Punjab, which has “bruised the psyche of every Punjabi”. He said that the Centre's recent attempts to restructure the Panjab University's governance have been seen as interference in Punjab's rights and to its state identity and autonomy.

tive sector holds immense potential for employment.

He said that only through growth in employment — especially self-employment — along with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) can the country realise the dream of a developed India.

Shah said the GDP alone is not an indicator of a country's prosperity; true prosperity is achieved only when every individual rises above the poverty line.

He said the Ministry of Cooperation has initiated 57

measures across the country to strengthen the sector. These include computerisation of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS), establishment of three new national-level cooperative societies, and the setting up of Tribhuvan Sahkari University, he said.

The Home Minister said the original spirit and the role of zonal councils is advisory, but in the last decade, they have been accepted as action-oriented platforms and have delivered results.

Army Chief warns Pakistan, calls Operation Sindoor an 88-hour trailer

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi on Monday warned Pakistan, saying Operation Sindoor was an ‘88-hour trailer’ and next time it will be taught to behave responsibly with a neighbour.

Giving this stern message, he also said the situation in Jammu and Kashmir has improved significantly since the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019.

Making these assertions in his address at the Chanakya Dialogue, the Army chief listed the lessons learnt from Operation Sindoor and highlighted how the action and capabilities of the armed forces gave a reality check to the hostile neighbour.

“Operation Sindoor was just a trailer which ended in 88 hours. We are prepared for any circumstances in future. If Pakistan gives a chance, we will teach it how to behave responsibly with a neighbouring nation,” he said.

On lessons learnt from the operation, General Dwivedi underlined three main points — integration between forces, ensuring proper supplies for a draw-out battle, and ensuring decisions are taken at every level of the command chain.

“Whenever some operation happened we learn from it, this time too we



Chief of the Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi speaks during the Chanakya Defence Dialogue in New Delhi on Monday

learned things. One of the things we learned was that the decision we have very less time to take any decision, and take a decision at every level on time,” he said.

The Army chief stressed on integration among the forces, “because today's battles are multi-domain”. “Just the army cannot fight a battle, everyone has to fight together,” he said, mentioning the air force and navy.

“We also cannot say how long a battle will last even today. This time we fought for 88 hours; next time it could be four months too or even four years. Looking at that, do we have enough supplies and weapons to fight that? If we do not have, then we need to prepare for that,” he added.

Talking about how India has “set a new normal” after

the Pahalgam terror attack on April 22, he said, “When a country encourages state-sponsored terrorism, it becomes a matter of concern for India. India talks about progress. If someone creates obstacles in our course, then we will have to take some action against them. When we talk about the new normal, we have said that talks and terror can't go together.”

General Dwivedi added, “All we are asking is to adopt a peaceful process, which we will cooperate with. Until then, we will treat terrorists and their sponsors alike.” He further highlighted the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir, saying that there has been a decline in terrorist incidents in the area following the abrogation of Article 370. “After this, political clarity has come,” he said.

MP expands dog vaccination to protect tigers

GIRISH SHARMA ■ Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh has intensified disease-prevention measures around its flagship tiger landscapes, launching an expanded vaccination campaign for stray and community dogs to curb the spread of Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) and seven other infectious diseases that pose a direct threat to big cats.

Forest officials confirmed that the drive has already begun in multiple districts and will continue in phases across buffers and wildlife corridors.

The initiative covers villages and settlement zones around Panna Tiger Reserve (PTR), Kuno National Park and other sensitive habitats where domestic and wild carnivores frequently interact. The objective is clear: reduce the reservoir of canine infections that can spill over into tiger and leopard populations, undermining conservation gains achieved over two decades.

The forest department's renewed urgency stems from a history of CDV-linked incidents. In 2015, the Indian Veterinary Research Institute in Bareilly confirmed CDV in tissue samples from a deceased big cat in Panna. Subsequent years brought new warnings. In 2024, a tiger



and a leopard in Chhatrapur exhibited symptoms consistent with CDV. Surveillance teams also detected viral signatures among stray canids and small wild carnivores in adjoining landscapes, highlighting a dangerous disease pathway connecting villages, buffer zones and protected forests.

Officials said this year's drive is the most comprehensive yet. Unlike previous rounds, which largely focused on CDV and rabies, the current campaign covers eight diseases — including distemper, parvovirus, adenovirus, leptospirosis and rabies — offering broader protection to both domestic animals and wildlife. The vaccination strategy uses a mix of parenteral injections for community dogs and bait-based delivery for free-roaming strays. During earlier efforts, more than 1,200

vaccine baits were deployed in buffer areas; the new campaign is expected to exceed that number substantially.

Deputy Director of Panna Tiger Reserve Mohit Sood told The Pioneer that the initiative is central to safeguarding the State's big cat populations. “Domestic dogs are the primary disease reservoir in landscapes where villages and forests overlap. If we want to protect tigers, we must first secure the health of dogs living around them,” Sood said, adding, “Even a single CDV outbreak in a tiger corridor can undo years of conservation work. This campaign gives us a critical shield against that risk.”

Canine distemper is a highly contagious viral infection that affects the respiratory, gastrointestinal and neurological systems of dogs, foxes, jackals and large felids. While it poses

no danger to humans, it spreads quickly through direct contact, contaminated food or water and aerosol droplets. When contracted by tigers or leopards, CDV can cause fatal neurological damage, impaired hunting ability and rapid population decline — particularly in small or reintroduced groups.

For Madhya Pradesh, where tiger numbers are stabilising and new populations are being nurtured in Panna, Satpura and Kuno landscapes, disease pressure remains a critical management concern. Officials emphasise that vaccination is only one component of a wider biosecurity strategy. Continuous surveillance, community awareness, reporting networks and regular sampling of wild carnivores are all part of the department's integrated approach.

Sood said the PTR has already mapped out high-risk corridors, including areas where domestic dogs follow villagers into forest edges or scavenge near water sources used by wildlife. “We are prioritising zones where interaction is highest. The success of this programme depends not just on vaccination numbers but on closing transmission loops between villages and the forest,” he said.

Bengal Governor Bose leads bomb squad to search at Raj Bhavan

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

In a daylong drama hitherto unheard off in Bengal, State and central security forces including bomb disposal squads on Monday conducted a thorough search operation inside the Governor's House in Kolkata following orders from Governor CV Ananda Bose.

Bose's order came after Trinamool Congress MP Kalyan Banerjee accused him of harbouring criminal elements from the BJP and supplying them with arms and ammunition to commit violence in the State.

The Governor personally led the live-broadcast search operations inside the colonial Raj Bhavan his official residence after all the staff of the Governor's House were asked to live the campus.

At the end of the two-hour search operation the Governor said “the honourable MP (Kalyan Banerjee) had alleged that I harbor criminals and supply them with guns and bombs... this was



A security officer conducting searches at Raj Bhavan in the presence of West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose in Kolkata on Monday

required since I want to establish that the accusation made against me is baseless and false. I will certainly take legal action against (Banerjee),” even as sources in his office said Bose was contemplating legal steps besides writing a letter to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla. Banerjee poked fun at the entire incident calling it a “childish affair,” wondering whether anyone would keep the bombs while conducting the search.

“This is a childish affair ... Will anyone keep bombs in his house when he calling the police to search one's house?... He is doing all this to draw the attention of (Home Minister) Amit Shah... his marks have gone down before Amit Shah... he wants them to increase them... He could even have called the American President or even the FBI,” Banerjee said.

When told that the Governor was planning to write to Speaker Om Birla

Banerjee welcomed the move saying, “a Governor's affairs cannot be discussed inside the House ... but let him do that ... if he does so then it will give us an opportunity to have a debate on the Governor ... all the political parties will leap up this opportunity ...I am ready to go to jail 50 times for speaking against someone like him... because he always acts like a sidekick of the BJP.”

In a previous transaction Bose said in reference to Bihar elections that elections should be based in Bengal, “on the ballot, not the bullet... a transition which is required urgently in the state,” leading Banerjee to advise the Governor to first stop providing shelter and arms to the BJP's criminals.

“First, tell the governor not to shelter the BJP's criminals in Raj Bhavan. He is keeping offenders there, giving them guns and bombs, and telling them to attack Trinamool workers. Let him stop this first,” the MP said calling Bose an “incompetent Governor” who was acting like a “servant of the BJP.”

Protest erupts in Kolkata over teachers’ job scam

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

With the State elections barely six months away there was more trouble for the Mamata Banerjee Government with a new ‘variety’ of recruitment scam exploding in its face.

Thousands of school job seekers on Monday descended on the streets demanding cancellation of just conducted school services examinations where additional ten marks were allotted for experience to the candidates who had lost their jobs after serving for about ten years following a SC order in the cash-for-job case.

These teachers were appointed in the now-can-

celled 2016 panel where genuine and tainted candidates could not be separated by the SSC despite repeated Court orders. About 26,000 teachers lost their jobs and had to sit for a new recruitment examination — following the Supreme Court order — along with the new candidates. However, in the new scheme of things the SSC allowed additional ten marks to the dismissed teachers for experience. Even as thousands of examinees descended on the streets jamming the SSC building some said, “this is a strange scheme that the Government has designed, while full marks is 70 of which

10 is given for academics and 60 for MCQ tests, many of us have scored 70 out of 70 but strangely the candidates from the previous panel are getting 75 out of total 70 marks on account of the 10 marks they have been pre-allotted for ‘experience’ ... this is a complete anomaly.

The BJP and the Left promptly lapped up the issue saying they would back the job seekers as “this is a new scam this Government has started to hoodwink the SC many tainted teachers have found their way in the new merit list despite the Court order that no tainted person should be allowed to appear in the exams.”

Azam Khan son, Abdullah convicted in dual PAN card case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Rampur (UP)

Less than two months after he was released from Sitapur jail, SP leader Mohammed Azam Khan went back behind bars on Monday when a court convicted and sentenced him to seven years' imprisonment in a 2019 case related to obtaining two PAN cards using different dates of birth.

The special MP-MLA court here also sentenced Azam Khan's son Abdullah Azam to seven years' imprisonment in the same case.

After the sentencing, Khan was taken from the Rampur

court to the district jail under heavy security. While being taken to prison, he said, “What is there to say now? It is the court's decision.” Asked about the court awarding a seven-year sentence each to him and his son, the 77-year-old leader replied, “It is fine. If they have considered me guilty, they have given the punishment.”

Delivering the verdict, Special Magistrate (MP/MLA Court) Shobhit Bansal held both father and son guilty after examining documentary evidence and witness testimonies, Prosecution Officer Rakesh Kumar Maurya, who represented

the prosecution along with advocate Swadesh Sharma, told reporters.

The veteran SP leader was released from the Sitapur jail on September 23 after 23 months. Before this, he was in jail for 27 months.

According to the prosecution, Khan's seven-year jail term has been decreased by the number of days already spent in judicial custody in this case.

Maurya also said the prosecution would review the judgment and may consider filing an appeal if it feels the punishment is inadequate.

Asked whether Azam Khan and Abdullah would be taken

into custody following the conviction, Maurya responded, “Yes, absolutely”.

The case was lodged in 2019 at Rampur's Civil Lines police station by BJP leader Akash Saxena under IPC sections 420 (cheating), 467 (forgery of valuable security), 468 (forgery for cheating), 471 (using forged document) and 120-B (criminal conspiracy).

According to the prosecution, Abdullah obtained a PAN card from the Income Tax Department mentioning January 1, 1993 as his date of birth, which matched the date in his school and High School certificates.

The same date was also used in the records of his State Bank of India account operated by him.

The court held that Abdullah had procured the forged PAN card “in conspiracy with his father” and submitted it in official records.

Maurya said the court awarded varying prison terms under different sections of the IPC. For cheating under Section 420, the court sentenced both accused to three years' simple imprisonment along with a fine of ₹10,000, with an additional three months' imprisonment in case of non-payment.

■ States Focus ■



HARYANA BOOSTS ANTI-TERROR GRID AFTER MODULE BUST

Haryana DGP OP Singh on Monday said the anti-terrorism apparatus in the state's National Capital Region has been further strengthened, a week after a "white collar" terror module was busted with the recovery of explosives mainly from Faridabad. He underlined that alert citizens can play an important role in the fight against terrorism by becoming the eyes and ears of the police. The director general of police (DGP) said central intelligence agencies, Delhi Police, and police officers from Uttar Pradesh engaged in anti-terrorism operations attended a meeting held in Faridabad on Sunday.



DEFENCE SECRETARY VISITS CENTRAL SECTOR POSTS

Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, undertook a comprehensive visit to forward locations in the Central Sector from November 15 to 17, defence ministry said. At Pithoragarh, the Defence Secretary was briefed on major operational matters by the General Officer Commanding, Uttar Bharat Area and Commander 119 (I) Infantry Brigade Group on operational aspects. During his visit to Navidang, he interacted with the concerned Battalion Commanders and Chief Engineer Project Hirak of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO). They apprised him on operational aspects and the progress of critical border infrastructure projects aimed at enhancing strategic mobility and strengthening National security. During the visit, the Defence Secretary was accompanied by Director General Border Roads (DGBR).

Quarry collapse death count climbs to six in UP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Sonbhadra (UP)

Five more bodies have been recovered from the rubble of a stone quarry that collapsed in Uttar Pradesh's Sonbhadra district, taking the death toll to six, an official said on Monday. District Magistrate, Sonbhadra, BN Singh said the bodies were recovered on the intervening night of Sunday and Monday. "One body was recovered in the night. The deceased was identified as Indrajit (30), a resident of Panari, Obra. The other deceased persons have been identified as Santosh Yadav (30), brother of Indrajit, Ravindra alias Nanak (18), Ramkhelavan (32) and Kripashankar." The body of Raju Singh (30) was recovered on Sunday.



NDRF personnel conduct a rescue operation after a portion of a stone quarry collapsed in Sonbhadra, Uttar Pradesh on Monday

Uttar Pradesh minister and local MLA Sanjeev Kumar Gond, who visited the spot in the Billi Markundi mining area after the col-

lapse on Saturday evening, said, "Around a dozen labourers might be trapped under the debris". Additional Director

General of Police (ADG), Varanasi Zone, Piyush Mordia on Sunday said clearing the rubble is taking time due to presence of

ECI orders special revision of Assam voter list, final roll on February 10, 2026

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Election Commission of India on Monday ordered 'Special Revision' of electoral rolls in Assam and the final voter list will be published on February 10, 2026. According to instructions issued by the poll panel for the Chief Electoral Officer of Assam, January 1, 2026 will be the qualifying date for the state to carry out the Special Revision. According to officials, the Special Revision stands somewhere between the annual special summary revision and the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. "It is in a way an upgrade of special summary revision... Instead of enumeration forms, Booth-Level Officers will verify electors on a pre-filled register," a senior functionary explained. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma welcomed the Election Commission's decision to



undertake Special Revision of the electoral rolls in the state and assured the Government 's full cooperation. "The Govt of Assam welcomes the Election Commission of India's decision to undertake a Special Revision of the electoral rolls with 01.01.2026 as the qualifying date," the Chief Minister posted on X. "This will help ensure clean, updated and accurate electoral rolls for all eligible citizens. Assam will extend full cooperation to the @ECISVEEP to complete the revision in a transparent

and time-bound manner," he added. According to the schedule, the door-to-door verification will take place from November 22 to December 20. The integrated draft electoral roll will be published on December 27 and the final roll on February 10 next year. For field verification, the booth level officers (BLOs) will be given a pre-filled BLO register containing the details of existing electors in their respective part for a house-to-house field visit. The household is the basic unit for conducting the

house-to-house survey and to get the said details verified or corrected from the elector or the head of the household. It said the details of D-Voters (doubtful voters) will not be included in the register, as no verification is required in their case. D-Voters are a category of voters in Assam who are disenfranchised by the Government on account of their alleged lack of proper citizenship credentials. D-Voters are determined by special tribunals under the Foreigners Act, 1946, and the person declared as a D-Voter is not given a voter card. All related particulars, such as name, age and photograph, of the D-Voters will be carried forward to the draft electoral roll without any change. Any modification, including removal or deletion, will be done "upon receipt of an order from the competent Foreigners' Tribunal or an appropriate court of law", it underlined.

BLOs boycott SIR work across Kerala after officer's suicide

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Thiruvananthapuram

The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise in Kerala was affected across the state on Monday as Booth-Level Officers (BLOs) boycotted work following the suicide of an officer allegedly due to work strain. Aneesh George (44), a BLO in Payyannur, Kannur, was found hanging at his house on Sunday. Family members and residents alleged that he took the extreme step because of work-related pressure linked to the SIR exercise. Various trade unions of State Government employees, including the Action Council of State Government Employees and Teachers and the Joint Committee of Teacher Service Organisations, held protests at the Chief Electoral Officer's office in Thiruvananthapuram and district collectorates, demanding that authorities refrain from exerting excessive pressure on BLOs and consider postponing the SIR. The Kerala NGO Association also staged protests across the state, demanding that SIR proce-

dures be stopped to prevent further suicides. Meanwhile, the body of George was handed over to his relatives after the post-mortem on Monday. George's family reiterated that he had been under severe work pressure related to the SIR. "He did not even get time to have food and sleep properly. He was under severe strain to complete work assigned as part of the SIR exercise," Saiju, George's brother-in-law, told reporters. Saiju added that George was frequently contacted by senior officers for updates. "Seeing the severe workload, George's father told him not to worry even if he loses his job," he said. Leader of Opposition VD Satheesan said that a preliminary probe indicated that the role of CPI(M) workers in George's suicide should also be examined. "We came to know that George was threatened after a Congress booth-level agent accompanied him for enumeration," he alleged. He also alleged that both the BJP and CPI(M) were attempting to keep traditional Congress voters off the rolls. "While the BJP is implementing SIR with



Kerala Government employees stage a protest outside the ECI office over the alleged stress-induced suicide of a Booth Level Officer involved in the Special Intensive Revision in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala on Monday

ill intent, CPI(M) is carrying it forward in Kerala. We will oppose it strongly, legally and politically," he said. Satheesan urged the state Government and the Election Commission of India (ECI) to ensure the safety of BLOs and conduct a thorough investigation. "A majority of BLOs are women. There are around 700-1,200 voters in a booth,

and BLOs have to visit each house multiple times to meet targets in a short period," he added. Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president Sunny Joseph said a telephonic conversation by George revealed that he was threatened by CPI(M) workers for accompanying Congress booth-level agents during enumeration.

"The conversation revealed that CPI(M) threatened to file a false complaint against George, accusing him of distributing Congress pamphlets at houses. Apart from work strain, this political threat led to his suicide," Joseph said. He added that the Congress party fully supports the protesting BLOs. "We hope that the protest by BLOs will compel the

Election Commission to open its eyes. Despite our repeated requests, the Commission decided to conduct SIR at a time when the local body election had already been announced," he said. Joseph said the party would approach the Supreme Court against the SIR process. "By considering the 2002 voters' list, even I don't have voting rights. Several political leaders will not figure in the voters' list. The Government of India and the Election Commission are eliminating the basic democratic rights of citizens," he alleged. The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) has also decided to approach the Supreme Court seeking a postponement of the Social Impact Register (SIR) process. IUML leader PK Kunhalikutty said the SIR was being carried out in haste, which raised doubts about the exercise. "The procedures that must be conducted with care are being rushed. Even Rahul Gandhi had raised suspicion in Bihar. Why this rush?" he asked. CPI(M) leader EP Jayarajan denied the allegation that party workers had threatened George.

Suwendu slams TMC over SIR, alleges BLO-BDO nexus

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Kolkata

Senior BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari on Monday criticised the TMC Government over the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, alleging a "deep nexus involving a section of BLOs and BDOs" aimed at helping the Trinamool Congress "sabotage" the Election Commission's efforts to weed out "fake voters, illegal migrants". Addressing a press conference at the state BJP headquarters, Adhikari said the SIR exercise had triggered "panic" within the TMC, prompting "abusive comments and open threats", and accused the administration of resisting the EC's scrutiny. Keeping the focus on Bengal, he alleged that the revision process had been met with hostility ever since enumeration began. The Chief Minister and her party colleagues "began hurling abuses", including remarks such as "we will tie them up to a tree", and Mamata Banerjee publicly objected to 1,000 Booth Level Officers being trained by the Election Commission "without her consent", he alleged. The Leader of Opposition in West Bengal Assembly alleged systematic attempts to derail the process on the ground, claiming a "close nexus between I-PAC, some BLOs and certain BDOs". He said the Tamluk BDO

was "misleading BLOs regarding dead and shifted voters", and that in North 24 Parganas district, the SIR in-charge was "forcing BLOs to distribute forms even at vacated addresses". He urged the West Bengal Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) to open a helpline as "many BLOs are not providing enumeration forms for political reasons". BLOs must report death and shifted voters as "unaccounted" on the BLO app, he insisted, demanding that all withheld forms be delivered within 48 hours "so that not a single legal voter is left out". He claimed the BJP had submitted a list of 13.25 lakh "fake voters" and alleged that in 20 Assembly constituencies, 50 to 150 "death voters" were found in each booth. Reiterating the party's position on citizenship, he said: "Legal refugees will be given CAA citizenship. Infiltrators will have their names deleted". He claimed falsification of birth certificates was being facilitated by "some BMOHs and pradhans" and urged the poll panel to act. The EC, he said, should cross-check burial ground records, data from the 'Samabyathi' app and pension rolls to determine the "actual number of death voters". "A fair voter list must come out. Free and fair elections are what the people of Bengal demand," he added.



Ex-maoists, victims unite to run café in Bastar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jagdalpur (Chhattisgarh)

Men and women, who once lived through conflict, either as victims of Naxal violence or as former members of the banned Maoist movement, have come together to run a café in Chhattisgarh's Bastar district. Surrendered cadres who have returned to the mainstream and victims of Naxal violence are employed at the 'Pandum Café' in Jagdalpur, in a joint effort towards reintegration and social healing, officials said. Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Monday inaugurated the Pandum Café at the

Poona Margham Complex in Police Lines, set up by the police and district administration under the state Government's Surrender and Rehabilitation Policy, an official statement said. Sai said the café symbolises the positive socio-economic transformation underway in Bastar and aims to provide a dignified and sustainable livelihood to those who have renounced violence. "Pandum Café reflects hope, progress and peace. Those working here, victims as well as surrendered cadres, are now moving forward on the path of peace," he said. The staff have been trained

in hospitality, café operations, hygiene, food safety and entrepreneurship. As per the statement, Sai interacted with the café team members, including Fagni from Narayanpur, Pushpa Thakur and Birendra Thakur from Sukma, and Ashmati and Premila Baghel from Bastar, and wished them success. Several workers shared emotional accounts of rebuilding their lives. "We lived in darkness in the past. Today, serving society through this café feels like being reborn. Replacing explosives with coffee and earning through honest work has given us dignity," the release

quoted a former Maoist cadre working at the café as saying. Another staff member said the initiative has enabled them to support their families and "dream of a respectful life". "We thought returning to the mainstream would be difficult, but the training and trust shown to us changed everything. Working alongside victims of violence has given us a chance to correct our past and contribute to peace," another colleague said. Officials said the café is being developed as a sustainable socio-economic model and may pave the way for similar rehabilitation initia-

Haryana to begin work on 400-bed hospital

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Gurugram

Haryana Health Minister Kumari Aarti Singh Rao on Monday announced that the construction of a state-of-the-art 400-bed hospital in Gurugram will begin soon. The state Government is preparing to invite tenders for the project. She added that provisions for an additional 200 beds will also be incorporated during the construction phase to allow future expansion. The minister was speaking at the inauguration ceremony of a solar power plant at the Rotary Blood

Bank Centre located on Sector-10 Kadipur Road. During her visit, she inspected the facility, reviewed its services, and interacted with children suffering from thalassemia. She also announced financial assistance of ₹11 lakh for the Rotary Club. Addressing the gathering, the Health Minister said that the Government is committed to strengthening Gurugram's healthcare infrastructure. As part of this initiative, 30 new Urban Arogya Centres will be established across the district. She added that the state recently recruited 1,100 doctors to improve

HARYANA HEALTH MINISTER VISITED THE FACILITY, MET THALASSEMIA PATIENTS, ANNOUNCED ₹11 LAKH AID FOR ROTARY CLUB

healthcare services, and more appointments will follow in the coming months. Highlighting progress in social indicators, she noted that Haryana's sex ratio has shown significant improvement in recent years and expressed gratitude to the public for their support in

achieving this milestone. Earlier in the day, the minister also inaugurated an ultrasound machine at Sohna Civil Hospital and a digital X-ray machine at Farrukhnagar Civil Hospital. Speaking at the event, Gurugram MLA Mukesh Sharma praised the Health Minister, calling her a sensitive and decisive leader who prioritises the concerns of citizens and ensures timely solutions. He said the steps being taken by the minister are directly benefiting lakhs of people across the state by strengthening healthcare services.

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Order Order

SC orders status quo on CPI’s flagpoles on Tamil Nadu public land



The Supreme Court (SC) on Monday agreed to hear a plea filed by the Communist Party of India challenging a Madras High Court order for the removal of permanent flagpoles of political parties from public places in Tamil Nadu. A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta issued notices to the Tamil Nadu Government and others, seeking their responses on the plea and directed that status quo be maintained. The Madras High Court had upheld the order passed by its single judge directing all political parties and community and religious organisations to remove within 12 weeks permanent flagpoles erected by them at public places across Tamil Nadu.

The CPI has approached the Court against the High Court’s Full Bench order of August 13. CPI submitted that the sweeping directions issued by the High Court amounted to “impermissible judicial legislation” and violated Articles 19(1)(a) and 19(1)(c). The CPI has further said that the High Court issued its directions without hearing political parties.

Karisma Kapoor shifts stand on Sunjay Kapur’s will, alleges forged signatures

The legal battle over late industrialist Sunjay Kapur’s will took a dramatic turn as the complainant’s counsel, representing Karisma Kapoor and her children, abruptly shifted their stance in court. After Senior Advocate Rajiv Nayar, appearing for Priya Kapur, described their claims as “bogus and baseless,” the plaintiffs have now pivoted from saying “there was no Will” to alleging “forged signatures.”

Delhi High Court has sought the response of Priya Kapur, the wife of late Sunjay Kapur, on a plea by the children of actor Karisma Kapoor, seeking inspection of the original of the alleged will of their father. Joint Registrar (Judicial) Gagandeep Jindal issued notices to Priya Kapur and Shradha Suri Marwah, the executor of the alleged will, on the plea and asked them to file their replies within three weeks. The matter has now been listed for December 16. In the earlier hearing, Nayar had stated clearly: “A Will cannot be called fake because of spelling errors and they haven’t even disputed Sunjay Kapur’s signature.”



SC terms liquor tetra packs dangerous and deceptive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

What is this — a juice packet? Should liquor in tetra packs be permitted at all? the Supreme Court wondered on Monday, noting that such packaging was “dangerous” and deceiving, as it heard a trademark dispute between two liquor giants of the country.

After a counsel produced the tetra packs of both companies, pointing out the similarities in branding of their products, a bench of Justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi expressed surprise that the Government had allowed liquor to be sold in such packets and said it was a “serious issue”.

The bench was hearing a trademark dispute between John Distilleries Pvt Ltd, which sells the product ‘Original Choice’ whisky and Allied Blenders and Distilleries Pvt Ltd, which produces product ‘Officers Choice’ whisky.

The Supreme Court appointed former Supreme Court judge J Nageswara Rao as mediator to settle the dispute amicably between both the liquor firms, which command a major share in the country’s whisky market.

When senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for John Distilleries Pvt Ltd, pro-



duced the tetra packs of both the companies to the bench, Justice Kant said, “What is this packet? Juice.” Rohatgi said that these are tetra packs of whisky, which are one of the highest-selling products in Karnataka.

The bench said, “Should this at all be permitted. We think this is very dangerous. It can be taken to schools or colleges by the students in their bags. Parents can be easily deceived.”

Justice Kant said this was the first time in his life he was seeing liquor in tetra packs and remarked, “How did the

Governments permit these kinds of packets. If someone files public interest litigation, we would like to examine.”

Rohatgi and senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Allied Blenders and Distilleries Pvt Ltd, said that there are other brands also in the market and Governments are only interested in earning revenue from the sale of these products.

Justice Bagchi said the Governments are trading on the health of the people. “Just understand how

much tons are wasted on health because of earning revenue... Trading on the health of the people,” Justice Bagchi said.

Rohatgi said, “This is how it is. Your lordships may look at this issue later, I have no difficulty.”

The bench, while requesting Justice (retd) Rao to act as mediator, said that having regard to the nature of urgency involved, the mediator may take up the matter on a priority basis and make an endeavour to conclude a settlement process at the earliest.

Former Govt secretary seeks SC-monitored probe into Anil Ambani-RCOM bank frauds

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A public interest litigation (PIL) has been filed before the Supreme Court seeking a court-monitored investigation alleging a massive banking fraud involving Reliance Communications (RCOM), its group entities and its founder Anil Ambani. The petition is filed by EAS Sarma, former Secretary to the Government of India. The petitioner said that that the CBI FIR and ED’s case cover only a fraction of the wrongdoing. The agencies are not investigating the roles of bank officials and regulators despite detailed forensic audits and independent reports pointing to widespread fraud, it states.

The petition filed though noted lawyer Prashant Bhushan says that the

findings of systematic fraud and diversion of funds has been judicially affirmed by a decision of the Bombay High Court. According to the petition, RCOM and its subsidiaries — Reliance Infratel and Reliance Telecom - received loans amounting to ₹31,580 crore between 2013 and 2017 from a consortium of banks led by State Bank of India (SBI).

The plea states that a forensic audit commissioned by SBI allegedly revealed substantial diversion of funds, including thousands of crores used to repay unrelated loans, transfers to related parties, investments in mutual funds and fixed deposits that were immediately liquidated and complex circular routing of money to disguise evergreening of loans. The audit also noted transactions recorded from

bank accounts that had been confirmed as closed, raising concerns of fabrication of financial statements, said the PIL. It is claimed that several shell entities and dubious corporate structures — such as Netizen Engineering and Kunj Bihari Developers — were allegedly used to siphon and launder loan funds. It highlights instances where subsidiaries were used to write off large liabilities through sham preference-share arrangements, allegedly causing losses of over ₹1,800 crore.

The petitioner asserts that these findings demonstrate a deliberate, systematic effort to disguise losses, conceal diversion of public funds and manipulate financial reporting. A central grievance raised in the petition is the nearly five-year delay by SBI in acting upon the forensic audit

report it received in October 2020. The bank filed its complaint only in August 2025, which the petitioner claims gives rise to a prima facie inference of “institutional complicity.” As officers of nationalised banks are treated as public servants under the Prevention of Corruption Act, the petitioner argues that their conduct must be examined as part of the investigation.

The petition also places reliance on subsequent forensic audits and investigations involving other Anil Ambani-led entities. It refers to findings relating to Reliance Capital, which allegedly advanced nearly ₹16,000 crore in inter-corporate deposits to subsidiaries with negative net worth and devalued securities worth over ₹4,000 crore without adequate basis.

SC seeks replies from Centre, others on plea to check airfares

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court (SC) on Monday sought responses from the Centre and others on a plea seeking binding regulatory guidelines to control the “unpredictable fluctuations” in airfare and ancillary charges imposed by private airlines in India. The Supreme Court agreed to hear the petition filed by social activist S Laxminarayanan, who has sought to establish a robust, independent regulator that ensures transparency and passenger protection across the civil aviation sector.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta issued notices to the Centre, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation and the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India seeking their responses on the plea and posted the matter for hearing after four weeks. Senior advocate Ravindra Srivastava and advocates Charu Mathur and Abhinav Verma appeared for the petitioner in the matter.

The plea claimed that all private airlines have, without any credible justification, reduced the free check-in baggage allowance for economy class passengers from 25 kg to 15 kg, “thereby converting what was earlier part of the ticketed service into a new revenue stream”. It said the “new policy of permitting only a single piece for check-in and the absence of any rebate, compensation or benefit to passengers who do not avail themselves of check-in baggage demonstrates the arbitrary and discriminatory nature of the measure”. The petition said that currently, no authority has the power to review or cap airfares or ancillary fees, allowing airlines to exploit consumers through hidden charges and unpredictable pricing.

The plea said the “unregulated, opaque and exploitative conduct of airlines manifesting in arbitrary fare hikes, unilateral reduction of services, absence of on-ground grievance redressal and unjustified dynamic pricing algorithms directly infringes upon citizens’ fundamental rights to equality, freedom of movement and life with dignity”.

It said the absence of regulatory safeguards results in arbitrary fare hikes, especially during festivals or weather disruptions, which disproportionately harm poor and last-minute travellers. The plea said the wealthier few can plan and book in advance, while economically weaker citizens are forced to buy tickets at the peak of surge pricing. “This inequality in access and opportunity strikes at the heart of Article 14 and Article 21,” it said.

While Article 14 of the Constitution deals with equality before law, Article 21 pertains to the protection of life and personal liberty.

It said the State must ensure fare regulation and implement price-capping mechanisms to protect this constitutional guarantee, while claiming that ticket prices for air travel can double or even triple within hours due to opaque, algorithm-driven dynamic pricing mechanisms adopted by the airlines.

The plea cited reports about fare surge during the Maha Kumbh pilgrimage or in the aftermath of a crisis such as the Pahalgam terror incident and sought a direction to the concerned authorities to forth with enforce the provisions of the Bharatiya Vayuyan Adhiniyam, 2024, the Aircraft Rules, 1937 and the civil aviation requirements to ensure fair, transparent and non-exploitative domestic air passenger services.



Lexster Lead Dialogue on Global Arbitration Ecosystem in Dubai

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES
■ New Delhi/Dubai

A substantive panel discussion examining the complexities of multi-party and cross-border disputes in mega project arbitration took place on November 14, 2025, during the recently concluded Dubai Arbitration Week 2025 organised by the Dubai International Arbitration Centre. The event, co-hosted by Lexster Law LLP and Agrawal Law Associates, drew together leading legal practitioners and adjudicators from across the globe. Lexster Law LLP also served as a Gold Sponsor of Dubai Arbitration Week 2025.

The distinguished panelists included Justice Sanjiv Khanna (Former Judge of the Supreme Court of India), HE Essam Al Tamimi (Chairman, Al Tamimi and Company), Mukul Rohatgi (Former Attorney General of India), Anne K Hoffmann (International Arbitrator, Hoffmann Arbitration), Soraya Corm-Bakhos (International Arbitrator, Corm-Bakhos Arbitration) and Mahesh Agarwal (Managing Partner, Agarwal Law Associates).

The discussion was moderated by Shantanu Agarwal (Managing Partner, Lexster Law LLP) and Saurabh Seth (Counsel, Delhi High Court).

Conceptual Clarity in Contractual Structures

Justice Sanjiv Khanna opened the discussion by addressing a fundamental challenge in contemporary mega project disputes: the need for precise conceptual frameworks when analysing interconnected contractual arrangements. He underscored the necessity of distinguishing among a group of contracts, a composite contract and a group of companies — distinctions that remain critical to resolving jurisdictional and substantive disputes.

Justice Khanna further identified multi-party issues such as consolidation joinder, parallel proceedings and non-signatory participation as requiring



(L-R) Shantanu Agarwal, Mukul Rohatgi, Anne Hoffmann, His Excellency Essam Al Tamimi, Soraya Corm-Barkhos, Former Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna, Mahesh Agarwal, Saurabh Seth

principled and coherent judicial approaches. He attributed a significant proportion of contemporary disputes to inadequate contractual drafting, emphasising that careful anticipation of inter-contractual dependencies at the drafting stage remains the most effective preventive mechanism.

India-UAE Relations and Legal Institutional Development

HE Essam Al Tamimi addressed the historical and ongoing partnership between India and the United Arab Emirates, acknowledging the substantial contributions of Indian legal professionals to the UAE’s institutional and economic development.

He characterised this relationship as foundational to the nation’s progress over several decades. Highlighting recent legal reforms, Al Tamimi identified the establishment of common law courts within DIFC and ADGM as exemplary institutional innovations that have enhanced investor confidence by incorporating international adjudicatory standards and robust enforcement

mechanisms. He noted that the UAE’s evolution from a non-signatory to the New York Convention in 2006 to a host jurisdiction for approximately 82 international law firms demonstrates how institutional modernisation attracts global legal talent without diminishing the competitive position of domestic practitioners.

India’s Evolving Arbitration Jurisprudence

Mukul Rohatgi reflected on the transformation of India’s arbitration landscape over recent decades. Under the 1940 Arbitration Act, he observed, disputes were comparatively straightforward, lacking the multi-party contractual structures and multi-seated proceedings characteristic of contemporary projects.

The economic liberalisation of 1993 catalysed a marked shift, introducing complex contractual ecosystems where disputes frequently fragment across multiple arbitral seats and parallel proceedings. Rohatgi highlighted the practical impediments arising from this



(L-R) Saurabh Seth, His Excellency Essam Al Tamimi, Shantanu Agarwal

fragmentation: non-signatory parties typically resist consolidation, preferring parallel arbitrations under distinct contractual arrangements.

This fragmentation often results in protracted litigation through successive court levels before substantive arbitration can commence — a process consuming several years. Rohatgi advocated for unified adjudication mechanisms, proposing that a single composite tribunal could provide the holistic oversight necessary for coherent resolution in complex infrastructure projects involving several parties.

Procedural Coordination and Award Consistency

International Arbitrator Anne K Hoffmann examined the escalating frequency of multi-party arbitrations and the procedural challenges they present. She identified numerous complications that emerge prior to tribunal formation, emphasising that uniform arbitration clauses — particularly regarding seat selection, appointing institution and tri-

bunal composition — are instrumental in facilitating consolidation. Hoffmann cautioned that divergent arbitration provisions across related contracts create substantial coordination difficulties and heighten the risk of inconsistent awards.

She advised counsel to coordinate evidence and submissions comprehensively across related proceedings to mitigate award discrepancies, noting that evidentiary support for claims remains critical regardless of whether full consolidation has been achieved.

Dispute Resolution Architecture in Mega Projects

Soraya Corm-Bakhos provided a systematic analysis of the multi-tiered dispute resolution frameworks typical of large infrastructure projects. She identified the structural complexity introduced by numerous underlying contracts — including construction agreements, joint venture arrangements and layered dispute resolution protocols — which frequently require exhaustion of pre-arbitral procedures before arbitration

commences. Corm-Bakhos noted that the enforceability of such preliminary steps as mandatory conditions precedent often remains contested, generating jurisdictional disputes. She observed that mediation, though frequently positioned as an initial step, proves substantially more effective once parties have exchanged pleadings and expert evidence, at which point they gain realistic perspectives on case viability and settlement prospects.

Contract Design as the Foundation of Dispute Prevention

Mahesh Agarwal emphasised how contractual interdependencies generate cascading disputes across jurisdictions. He identified a fundamental tension between party autonomy — a cornerstone of arbitration — and the procedural coordination necessary for coherent dispute resolution.

While major arbitral institutions have increasingly developed consolidation mechanisms, Agarwal noted that Indian arbitration law currently lacks equivalent statutory provisions, although Indian courts have demonstrated progressive jurisprudential development in related areas.

He concluded by emphasising that strategic contract formulation — particularly standardisation of arbitration clauses, seat, governing law, arbitral language and procedural choices — remains the most effective preventive approach, with the drafting stage determining success or failure in achieving coordinated resolution frameworks.

Drawing a diverse audience of over 120 in-person attendees and more than 500 virtual participants, the session reflected India’s growing engagement with international arbitration networks. The event is an important step towards deepening collaboration between Indian firms like Lexster Law and Agarwal Law Associates and global law firms and advancing India’s ambition to become a global arbitration hub.

Editor's

TAKE

Gen Z rage ignites Mexico's streets

Mexico's future stability hinges on rebuilding trust and enforcing accountability; without this, Gen Z will refuse to accept the status quo

Gen Z's rage knows no bounds. It is spreading across the world like wildfire, and the latest country to witness their fury is Mexico. Protests are not new to Mexico, but this time they are being led by Gen Z. The country is seeing serious demonstrations directed against those in power. Pirate-skull flags, meme-driven mobilisation, and the hallmarks of Gen Z-led protests are now ubiquitous.

The outrage is directed at President Claudia Sheinbaum. Issues of misgovernance and high-handedness have made young people restless, driving them onto the streets. The situation is volatile, and the country is in turmoil, with tensions growing by the day. What sparked these protests was the assassination of Carlos Manzo, the reformist mayor of Uruapan in Michoacán, who was fighting organised crime and was gunned down at a public Day of the Dead event on November 1. Manzo had dared to challenge entrenched cartels, sending security forces deep into their mountain strongholds. His killing proved that even the most determined public servants can be silenced with impunity. The outrage surrounding Manzo's murder quickly crystallised into a larger revolt against a state seen as weakening under the weight of corruption, violence, and institutional fatigue.

While the protests began under the banner of "Generation Z Mexico" – a group claiming to be non-partisan and independent – the demonstrations soon drew people from all walks of life. What unified them was a shared exasperation with a country where the Government bows to powerful cartels. Scenes from Mexico City mirrored those observed in neighbouring countries – Nepal and Bangladesh – with protesters storming palaces and official buildings. Riot police responded with tear gas. Stones flew across Zócalo's historic square. The state's display of force only deepened public anger, as reports emerged of police chasing and beating young demonstrators. For her part, President Sheinbaum has accused right-wing parties of infiltrating and amplifying the unrest, using social media bots to inflate turnout.

Some Gen Z influencers, wary of political co-option, withdrew their support. Meanwhile, voices like former President Vicente Fox and billionaire Ricardo Salinas Pliego openly endorsed the protests, further complicating the question: is this truly a youth-led uprising, or an opposition-engineered storm riding on public frustration? These protests bring Mexico's dilemma to the fore. While the outrage is real and the corruption systemic, the political narratives surrounding the demonstrations risk overshadowing the core issue: Mexico's persistent failure to protect its citizens from criminal violence. If the unrest fizzles out, the underlying issues will continue to simmer – until the next tragedy triggers yet another eruption. But if it evolves into a sustained nationwide movement, as seen in Nepal or Bangladesh, Sheinbaum's Government could face significant pressure to resign, followed by a period of anarchy and chaos that Mexico can ill afford – much like what unfolded in Bangladesh.

Constitutionalised coup d'état in Pakistan

Under the cloak of constitutional legitimacy, Munir has consolidated absolute, lifelong control over the armed forces, nuclear command, and the country's institutional architecture, while civilian leaders remain nominal figureheads

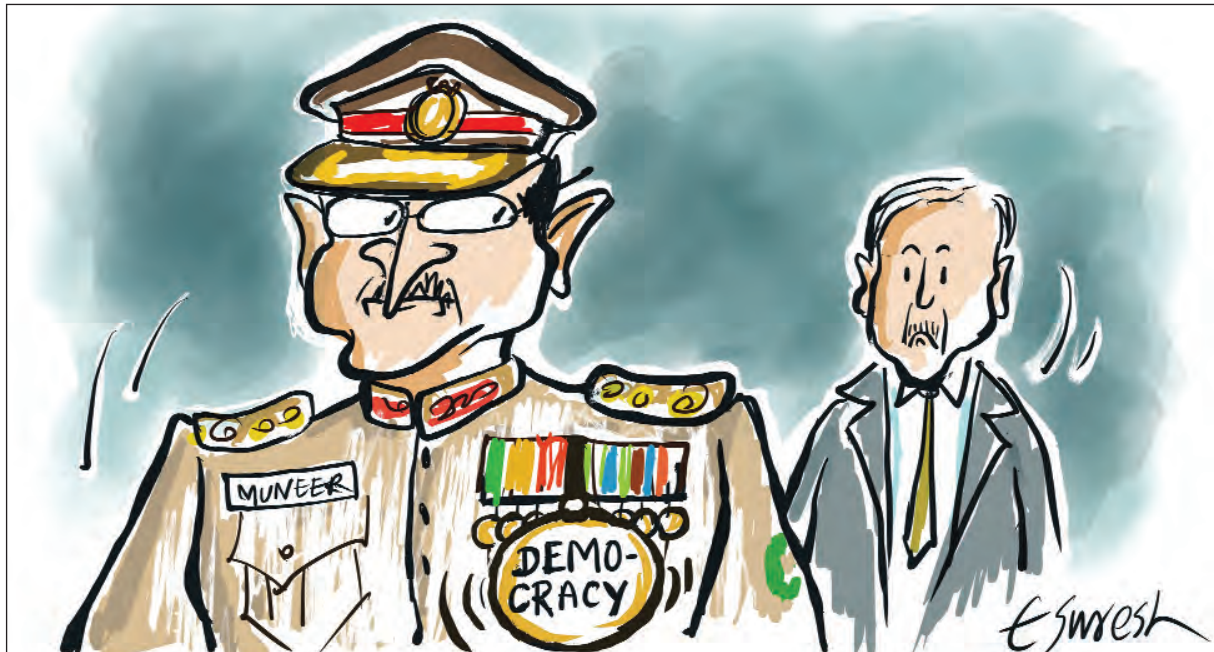


BHOPINDER SINGH

While taking over Pakistan through Martial Law in 1958, Field Marshal Ayub Khan proclaimed, "I have no intention of perpetuating martial law. As soon as conditions permit, a democratic system suited to the genius of our people will be introduced." However, he did not restore the pre-1958 parliamentary democracy. Instead, he prolonged his stay for as long as he could physically sustain (11 years), and then handed over to yet another military general, Yahya Khan. Later, General Zia-ul-Haq also claimed after his military takeover in 1977, "I have no intention of staying in power a day longer than is necessary. Elections will be held in October 1977." He too suffered convenient amnesia and continued for over 11 years before dying mysteriously in an air crash. Later, General Pervez Musharraf was to make a similar promise in his inaugural address following a coup: "I have no political ambitions. I will restore true democracy in this country." He too ruled for nine years until he was forcibly removed.

Today, Pakistan is yet again caught in a vortex of militaristic manipulation that amounts to the usurpation of complete power, albeit under the cover of constitutional ratification. Following the footsteps of militaristic overreach as initiated by the first self-appointed Field Marshal, Ayub Khan, the current, similarly self-appointed Field Marshal, Asim Munir, has tightened his vicelike grip over the Pakistani narrative via the infamous 27th Amendment to the Pakistani Constitution. Herein, besides doing away with the post of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (JCSC), and instead anointing himself also as the Chief of Defence Forces (CDF-thereby controlling even the Navy and the Air Force), the Field Marshal will be granted permanent immunity from prosecution for life and will retain the rank and privileges for life. He also gets to choose the army-based Commander of the National Strategic Command, thereby retaining the vital levers over the critical nuclear wherewithal. Effectively, the Field Marshal has privileged his absolute control over all major elements of governance for life, with no accountability.

But, unlike the ham-handed coup d'états of the past, the five-star Field Marshal Asim Munir has been far more guarded, wily, and surreptitious in his takeover approach. By empowering himself beyond questioning, he has effectively ensured that he and subsequent military chiefs have the protective cover of the Pakistani Constitution to rule de facto, without any official responsibility, as the ceremonially senior-most and highest posts of the executive will ostensibly be held by the civilian President and the Prime Minister, respectively. For all practi-



TODAY, PAKISTAN IS YET AGAIN CAUGHT IN A VORTEX OF MILITARISTIC MANIPULATION THAT TANTAMOUNT TO USURPATION OF COMPLETE POWER, ALBEIT, UNDER THE COVER OF CONSTITUTIONAL RATIFICATION

The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lieutenant Governor of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Puducherry

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cal purposes, the well-established principle in a participative democracy – that the military is subservient to the civilian government-remains a farcical pipedream.

The remit of the 27th Amendment also simultaneously destroys the powers of other institutions of authority, ie, the Supreme Court, the last remaining vestige of checks and balances, as that too would be brought under the will of the executive powers (which in any case will always remain beholden to the military "establishment"). Therefore, the courts could be expected to be populated by "friendly judges" who will do the bidding of the government, thereby curbing independent and unbiased decisions. With all such suppression of the institutions of checks and balances, and the concurrent valorisation of the Pakistani "establishment", the Field Marshal will have the final say on all matters of governance.

Already, the Field Marshal is making surreal dashes from Washington DC to Riyadh to Ankara, making some extraconstitutional pitches – for example, the images of the Field Marshal brandishing and pitching rare metals in a suitcase to a clearly excited Donald Trump. This led Asim Munir to earn the dubious honour of Donald Trump calling him "my favourite Field Marshal." This further signals the approval of the Pakistani constitutional coup d'état by the United States of America, and the obliging sheikhdoms will merrily toe the same line. The only other key player in the Pakistani calculus, ie, the Chinese, would also be more than happy to let the Field

Marshal run the show, as he would remain their most effective bet to protect the Chinese investments in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The unnatural and unhappy alliance between the two erstwhile political rivals, ie, Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz faction (PML-N) and Pakistan People's Party (PPP), would meekly continue with the current coalition arrangement, as their own disrepute in the eyes of the masses, and the parallel popularity of the incarcerated leadership of Imran Khan's Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), will be an existential fear.

It is a fact that, should the Pakistani military pull the rug from the current coalition government and allow free and fair elections, Imran Khan would romp home-thus the current coalition would remain pliant, beholden, and subservient to the will of Field Marshal Asim Munir.

Thus, with little or no opposition to their operational mandate, given the constitutional cover, the absence of any political opposition, and the acquiescence of all international stakeholders, Field Marshal Asim Munir will rule with utter immunity and impunity.

With plausible deniability for any wrongdoing (for which the civilian government will bear the blame), the democratic government in Pakistan will run Pakistan in theory, not in practice, as all roadblocks for a coup d'état-like situation favouring the Pakistani military are in place. Democracy in Pakistan will exist only in name.

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People take part in a rowing competition on the Hooghly River, in West Bengal. PHOTO: PTI

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

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The silent paycheque cage we choose daily



SAKSHI SETHI

2ND OPINION

THE PIONEER

Modern society has perfected the art of imprisonment – so gracefully, so tastefully – that most people never realise they are trapped. Today's cage does not clang with metal bars. It arrives instead as a gentle digital message: "Your salary has been credited." A monthly lullaby that pacifies ambition far more effectively than any medieval fortress ever could.

Walk into any workplace and you will witness a quiet, universal contradiction. Teachers shaping future citizens, doctors delivering hope, engineers building the digital tomorrow, bankers balancing economies, designers sketching dreams, and service workers handling tempers-all moving in unison towards the same destination: the pay-

cheque. It is a golden leash, polished with benefits, bonuses, and just enough comfort to keep its wearers obediently tethered.

The trap begins innocently. A young graduate steps into the workforce brimming with energy, ready to change the world. Fast-forward a few years, and that same individual now bargains for leave like a petitioner seeking royal mercy and plans life around the date their salary appears in the bank. Passion slowly dissolves between monthly bills, EMIs, and rising expenses. Consider the teacher – once a torch-bearer of imagination – now drowning in paperwork, circulars, and administrative drudgery. They may dream of pursuing research or writing books, but the monthly credit alert leans in and whispers, "Not practical." In corporate corridors, the employee stares at the clock as though it were a countdown to freedom.

Their ergonomic chair becomes a throne of captivity; their KPIs rise as their enthusiasm falls. The doctor, among society's noblest professionals, is caught in the same web. Between legal pressures, night shifts, and hospital targets, the paycheque slowly transforms from a reward into a sedative. Nurses, standing through double shifts, carry identical smiles for comfort and survival. Service industry workers-hotel staff, retail clerks, flight attendants – move through demanding shifts, their uniforms serving as armour against unreasonable customers and shrinking

patience. Even the creative class is not spared. Writers churn out content for algorithms rather than artistry. Designers compress their vision to fit client whims. Musicians teach on weekends to subsidise the passion that cannot reliably pay rent. Sooner or later, every dreamer bows before the billing cycle.

This is capitalism's most refined psychological trick-not coercion, but dependence. A system that persuades individuals that stepping outside is reckless, irresponsible, or foolish. The paycheque does not merely compensate; it conditions. It trains people to accept mediocrity, stomach unfair workloads, and exchange spontaneity for predictability.

Meanwhile, society glorifies this captivity, praising the "stable job" as the pinnacle of adult life. We applaud those who sacrifice weekends and answer emails at midnight, calling it dedication. But exhaustion is not honour, and captivity is not commitment. Almost everyone carries a private dream – a café on a quiet street, an art studio, a research degree, a sabbatical, a life where Monday does not feel like punishment. Yet each time it surfaces, the dutiful paycheque asks, "Who will pay the bills?" And the dream retreats. The modern cage may be invisible, but its bars-routine, fear, and comfort-are not unbreakable. A cage loses its power the moment someone realises the door was open all along.

The writer is an educator and a councillor

RTI SAFEGUARDS DIMINISH UNDER NEW DPDP RULES

Although the original provisions of the RTI Act struck a careful balance between privacy and transparency while incorporating essential safeguards, the recent Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) amendment has unfortunately stripped away these protections without addressing the serious shortcomings that remain in the Parent Act.

The notification of the DPDP rules on November 14, 2025 has deepened these concerns. Over time, the RTI framework has been weakened by unwarranted amendments, excessive executive control, and increasingly restrictive judicial interpretations. Since its enactment, repeated efforts seem aimed at diluting its spirit and obstructing meaningful public access to information. In any democracy, the right to seek

and access information is essential to maintaining transparency, openness and accountability. A system of governance cannot endure if citizens are deprived of the power to question those in authority. As Justice V R. Krishna Iyer observed with characteristic clarity: "A government which functions in secrecy not only violates democratic decency, but also buries itself with its own burial." The DPDP amendment's erosion of RTI safeguards is a troubling setback for participatory governance.

By narrowing transparency instead of strengthening it, citizens are left with fewer tools to hold power accountable. Protecting democratic values now requires an urgent restoration of a robust RTI framework.

R SIVAKUMAR | CHENNAI

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bihar's people claim their victory

In the 1990s, thousands of children in Bihar were sent to distant boarding schools simply to escape the constant fear of kidnapping.

Families were compelled to part with ancestral land merely to secure routine clerical posts through bribes, while millions studied under lanterns and petromax lamps, desperately trying to break free from the suffocation of the so-called jungle raj. Corruption, favouritism, contractor mafias, and the collapse of institutional authority dragged the state backwards by decades. Ordinary citizens lived with fear, helplessness, and uncertainty, forcing an entire generation to migrate in search of dignity and opportunity.

Today, many of those who once fled Bihar have built stable, successful lives across India and abroad. As they look at their screens and witness these election results, a quiet, meaningful smile emerges.

This moment represents far more than the defeat of a political family or an entrenched legacy. It signifies the triumph of the ordinary Bihari who suffered injustice, endured humiliation, and persevered with unbroken hope. This is genuine victory – the victory of people who refused to allow despair to dictate their future.

India's defeat demands serious reflection

Apropos the report "India's spin gamble backfires as South Africa wins first Test" (November 17). India's sobering defeat in the opening Test at Eden Gardens demands rigorous introspection. Being bowled out for 93 while chasing a modest 124 is not a routine collapse; it exposes deeper problems regarding selection, application, and temperament. After failing to chase 147 at Wankhede last year, India have again faltered on a surface that required patience rather than misplaced aggression. The absence of accountability is particularly troubling. With Shubman Gill injured, the team effectively fielded only four specialist batters, relying excessively on all-rounders still adapting to Test cricket's mental demands.

Questionable bowling management let South Africa extend their lead, with puzzling choices such as under-bowling Kuldeep Yadav and ignoring Washington Sundar altogether. Bavuma and Bosch showed the value of discipline – something India's middle order sorely lacked. The collapse, marked by loose strokes from Pant, Jurel, and Axar, stood in stark contrast to South Africa's composed approach. Unless India confront these recurring flaws with clarity and resolve, such defeats will continue to overshadow their home dominance.

Geopolitics drives tariff reversal

Apropos the editorial "Trump's agri tariff rollback signals reset" (November 17). The reversal of United States tariffs on a broad range of Indian agricultural products represents a moment when geopolitical strategy and domestic pressures have intersected. For Indian farmers and exporters, especially those dealing in spices, tea, coffee, and processed foods, the move restores a long-awaited sense of stability and fairness. It also acknowledges India's reputation for reliable, high-quality exports and the extensive networks that sustain them.

However, the timing indicates that Washington's decision is driven not merely by diplomatic goodwill but also by rising food prices, voter discontent, and electoral urgency. In that sense, this softening of tariffs is less a benevolent gesture and more a recognition that punitive measures often damage supply chains and political relationships. The key question now is whether this shift will lead to a more predictable and durable trade environment.

India must seize this opportunity to strengthen quality standards, diversify its agricultural export base, and push for consistent long-term clarity. A thoughtful approach on both sides could convert a short-term tactical move into a genuinely stable partnership.

Pakistan: The making of a new military state

The meteoric rise of Field Marshal Asim Munir — Pakistan’s second-ever field marshal — marks more than another chapter in the country’s long cycle of military dominance. His ascent signals a deeper institutional shift, merging state authority with an overt Islamic ideological framework and reshaping the core architecture of Pakistan’s power structure

FIRST
Column



NILANTHA
ILANGAMUWA

While Pakistan and Bangladesh wrestle with their fragile relationship under the interim government led by Yunus, the International Tribunal is set to deliver its verdict on Monday, November 17, formally exposing the alleged “sins” of Sheikh Hasina’s rule. Hasina may face the harshest consequences imaginable, and her potential extradition from India threatens to inflame political passions for years, while social tensions are likely to spiral, carrying dangerous regional implications. Yet, amid this chaos, the most alarming development is the meteoric rise of Field Marshal Asim Munir, Pakistan’s second-ever field marshal, who now operates above the law, consolidating power with an audacity that recalls the darkest chapters of Pakistan’s military past. The country appears to be repeating the cycles of power seen under the late Field Marshal Ayub Khan, with the civilian leadership increasingly marginalised as the military consolidates authority. Munir’s ascent is more than symbolic; it is an institutional shift, codified through the 27th Constitutional Amendment, which enshrines military supremacy in Pakistan’s legal architecture while weakening judicial oversight and eroding democratic norms.

Pakistan’s trajectory under Munir bears echoes of historical precedent. As Ayub Khan recounted in his autobiography, military intervention was repeatedly justified as a stabilising force in times of perceived political chaos. Yet, as history demonstrates, Pakistan’s oscillation between military dictatorship and fragile civilian governance has rarely delivered sustainable reform or economic development. The CIA’s declassified analysis of Pakistan in the 1970s warned that “the military, while professionally competent, is inherently prone to internalising ideological and political objectives beyond its remit,” prescient words that resonate alarmingly today under Munir. Whereas past army chiefs, even Musharraf, attempted to balance professional military traditions with political ambition, Munir is pursuing an explicitly ideological agenda, transforming the Pakistani armed forces into a force fighting for Islam as much as for the nation.



ISLAMABAD’S
PORTRAYAL OF
AN INDIAN-
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BANGLADESH-
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CRISES IN
SOUTH ASIA

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This shift is no longer subtle. The Pakistani defence establishment under Munir has institutionalised terms like Fitna al-Khawarij and Fitna al-Hindustan, branding insurgents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan as heretical or Indian proxies. In Munir’s own words, the military must confront these “internal threats” through a religious lens, positioning Pakistan as the protector of the Muslim Ummah while simultaneously framing domestic conflicts as extensions of historic Islamic struggles. By co-opting centuries-old concepts from early Islamic history, Munir projects an image of Pakistan as a state under siege from both heretical internal actors and a hostile external India. While the rhetorical appeal resonates with sections of the Pakistani populace, it dangerously blurs the line between counter-insurgency and ideological warfare.

The implications of Munir’s rise extend far beyond domestic politics. Pakistan’s foreign policy, historically fixated on India, is increasingly intertwined with efforts to construct regional alliances that challenge New Delhi’s influence. Reports suggest that Islamabad is exploring deeper cooperation with Dhaka under the interim government, ostensibly to counterbalance Indian ambitions. The Financial Times noted that Munir, along with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, has been actively courting powers such as China, Saudi Arabia and even the United

States, while simultaneously framing Pakistan’s mineral wealth and strategic ports like Pasni as sites for foreign investment. Yet, beneath this geopolitical manoeuvring lies a darker reality: the potential proliferation of Islamist extremist organisations nurtured under the guise of strategic alignment. Pakistan’s track record demonstrates the inherent danger of weaponising ideology for political leverage, a pattern that has repeatedly generated instability both internally and across the region.

The Pakistani military’s Islamisation under Munir recalls the ambitions of General Zia-ul-Haq, whose coup in 1977 dismantled democratic institutions and laid the foundations for a deeply Islamist state. Analysts such as Makhdoom Ali Khan have remarked: “What General Zia-ul-Haq may have dreamt of, and what General

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Pervez Musharraf could not achieve, will soon be an accomplished fact.” Munir, a Hafiz-e-Quran, has emphasised the religious legitimacy of military campaigns, framing them as moral and ideological imperatives. The creation of a constitutional backdoor through the 27th Amendment formalises his authority, grants him lifetime protection and the Field Marshal rank, and establishes the Chief of Defence Forces as the paramount military authority, effectively sidelining civilian oversight.

The judiciary, meanwhile, is being systematically curtailed. The Federal

Constitutional Court (FCC) assumes constitutional primacy over the Supreme Court, while the Supreme Court is relegated to civil and criminal appellate functions. Senior counsel have observed that the SC is now left “with a limited jurisdiction of deciding ordinary civil, criminal, and statutory appeals”, effectively reducing it to a “Supreme District Court”. Tariq Mehmood Khokhar warned that the FCC is “empowered by disempowering the Supreme Court”, consolidating both military and executive control over constitutional interpretation. Dawn reported that these reforms have been lauded by supporters as a forward-looking model, yet for sceptics, they represent an erosion of checks and balances that has long been the only bulwark against authoritarian overreach.

Meanwhile, Pakistan’s economy remains precarious. According to the Financial Times, despite claims of investment inflows and resource wealth, the country continues to struggle with a poverty rate above 25 per cent, low capital formation, and a foreign investor climate undermined by historical instability.

The military’s deepening involvement in business, combined with ideological militarisation, may further deter meaningful economic reform. Muhammad Aurangzeb, Pakistan’s finance minister, has acknowledged the “existential issue” of growth that barely matches population increase, raising questions about the sus-

tainability of Munir’s ambitious geopolitical and domestic projects. The potential consequences for the region are profound. Islamabad’s portrayal of an Indian-backed insurgency in its western provinces, along with efforts to foster a Bangladesh-Pakistan axis, risks triggering unprecedented crises in South Asia. Munir’s rhetorical framing of conflicts as a defence of Islam may embolden extremist organisations, both domestic and transnational, increasing the likelihood of cross-border terrorism. The May 2025 four-day conflict between India and Pakistan, during which Munir publicly credited the ceasefire to Donald Trump and even nominated him for a Nobel Peace Prize, highlights the unpredictable consequences of a military-led foreign policy driven by ideology rather than strategic calculation.

As reports suggest, Munir’s elevation to Field Marshal and Chief of Defence Forces cements his unassailable position, giving him autonomy over the military and, by extension, significant influence over Pakistan’s foreign relations. Critically, Pakistan is not an exception in the history of militarisation.

From Ayub Khan to Musharraf, every military takeover has promised stability, reform or modernisation, yet invariably delivered repression, economic mismanagement and heightened regional tension. Historical lessons prove that the militarisation of state institutions often generates the opposite of the intended outcomes: weakened governance, erosion of civil society and the proliferation of extremism. The current trajectory under Munir suggests a repeat of these patterns, now intensified by the infusion of ideological rigour and constitutional legitimacy.

However, one cannot disregard that India’s hegemonic ambitions, regional arrogance, and strategic failures further complicate the equation. New Delhi’s insistence on projecting influence over Bangladesh and Nepal, combined with its self-assured posturing vis-à-vis Pakistan, contributes to an environment in which Islamabad is incentivised to consolidate internal authority and project power externally. Yet history demonstrates that attempting to create strategic depth through ideological militarisation or cross-border alliances often backfires. As TS Eliot’s words might suggest, this transformation is not occurring “with a bang but with a whimper”, yet the consequences are likely to reverberate loudly across the subcontinent for decades.

Red Fort blast in Delhi: A wake-up call to reshape strategies on a real-time basis



ANIL
ANAND

Transparency is certainly not the hallmark of the Narendra Modi government. This is true in its normal functioning, when there is ample elbow room to take the countrypersons into confidence. And when it comes to crunch situations such as the Delhi blasts at the threshold of Lal Qila—the symbol associated with India’s freedom and the podium for Independence Day celebrations—the word transparency goes for a toss.

The heinous act of blasts that claimed 13 innocent lives has shaken Delhi. Why so? Because it has ruptured the decade-long peace which the national capital had been enjoying.

It has also raised serious questions about the claims made by the authorities concerned, including the Prime Minister and the Home Minister, that terror acts — particularly with focus on Kashmir — had been stubbed out and that terrorism in all its formats was gasping for its last breath. A terror strike in the heart of Delhi, that too near a strong national symbol such as Lal Qila, accompanied by disturbing reports of about 2,000 kilograms of high-grade explosives having been recovered in the National Capital Region (NCR), barely 20 kilometres from the seat of power, certainly worries these authorities and forces them into a real-time-based appraisal of the entire situation, rather than indulging in high-octane claims. The terror attack, which, as per the claims of the competent authorities, has a Kashmir link and has taken place after the restoration — after six years — of the ‘Durbar Move’ (shifting of the capital on a six-month basis from Jammu, the winter capital, to Kashmir, the summer capital, and vice versa) on intense public pressure, particularly from Jammu, the stronghold of the BJP — a development related to the dilution of Article 370 on August 5, 2019 — has put the ruling dispensation’s credibility at stake.

Touted as a panacea for all the ills plaguing Jammu and Kashmir, including the onslaught of terrorism, the government’s claims justifying the constitutional developments in Jammu and Kashmir, including its division and demotion to two Union Territories, have been exposed by the terror attack. It should compel the Modi government to think afresh on the entire gamut of policy governing not only Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh but also national security as a whole.

Notwithstanding the near fool-proof security network, Delhi, being the national capital and power centre, has always been a target for Punjab, Kashmir, or North-East-centric terrorist groups seeking to challenge the powers that be. The latest



PHOTO: PANKAJ KUMAR

act of terrorism — as the Union Cabinet has declared it — is meant to throw a gauntlet and challenge the might of India at its very power centre. There is no doubt that this must have set the political leadership and the security apparatus thinking about its fallout, emerging challenges, and countervailing strategies.

The biggest lesson and in fact the eye-opener for the ruling BJP should be not to mingle its political agenda with issues related to national security. The political agenda or ideological issues are, most of the time, not in consonance with either the ground realities or the situational challenges.

Lesson one that the government should draw from the Lal Qila blast is that the ruling dispensation must function on a real-time basis to tackle serious issues. Transparency is the key word in adopting such an approach, accompanied by taking the nation into confidence to prevent speculation and kite-flying. The problem becomes even more complicated, as is the case presently, when the higher quarters in the government seek refuge in leaking “source-based” stories.

Why not come upfront? That is in the interest of the nation. Otherwise, speculations can lead to complications and provide ample space for anti-India forces to fish in troubled waters. Not only the government but the media should also refrain from running or writing such stories despite professional compulsions and tight timelines to meet. Lesson two is that, as far as possible, the political and ideological agenda should be separated from the national agenda. Issues such as national security and its offshoots—such as Kashmir and the North-East—should not be viewed entirely from a political perspective. A case in point is the fledgling situation prevailing in Manipur and the ruling BJP at the Centre again indulging in political permutations and combinations to reinstall its government in the state despite public opinion to the contrary.

The same spirit prevailed when the Narendra Modi government hurriedly brought the State Reorganisation Bill to Parliament in 2019 to change the constitutional status of Jammu and

Kashmir. In a first-of-its-kind development in independent India, a state was demoted to a Union Territory, and all democratic rights, including the people’s right to elect their own local government, were curtailed. Be it Manipur, Jammu and Kashmir, or Ladakh, public sentiment should remain at the centre of any policy formulation. Ignoring or suppressing this sentiment is always fraught with dangerous consequences. This has been witnessed in the past, and the Delhi blast of 2025 is a warning in that direction.

Lesson three — and nothing new about it-is that in situations like Jammu and Kashmir, the external and internal dimensions of the issue, though intertwined, have to be viewed through different prisms on a real-time basis. Otherwise, there is a danger of falling into the trap of external forces inimical to India’s interests.

Lastly, lesson four is that no act of terrorism should be viewed through the prism of religion. Doing so will

not only undermine the country’s multi-cultural and multi-religious harmony, which is already under severe strain, but will also provide a platform for anti-India forces. A democratically elected government has no option but to avoid sitting on self-professed laurels if these are not in consonance with the ground realities. A real-time-based assessment—accepting both success and failure—and avoiding a “might is right” approach should be the positive way forward. The answer does not always lie in the jugglery of statistics, which the current ruling dispensation excels at, but in accepting the ground reality and reshaping strategies accordingly. The disturbance of urban calm in multi-cultural Delhi should act as an immediate eye-opener. Transparency—to substantiate the claims of busting terror networks and recovering a huge quantity of explosives—should be the buzzword to avoid speculation and the resultant confusion.

The Pioneer
SINCE 1865

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A new age of global warfare



BALRAJ
MEHTA

Discussing the Russia-Ukraine war — or even the tragic events in Gaza — has become so routine that the very act of analysing them feels almost mundane. Yet this normalisation of brutality hides a far more discomfiting truth. Beneath the surface of daily headlines and geopolitical commentary lies the unsettling reality that the world, despite the existence of the United Nations and numerous international institutions, remains a jungle where might still prevails over right.

The global order, weakened by the arrogance of a few powerful nations and the passivity of many others, is decaying from within. It now stands in desperate need of a structural reset. The Ukraine conflict, in particular, has rewritten many assumptions about modern warfare. The kinetic dimensions of this war have already reshaped global understandings of how battles will be fought in the years ahead. These tactics and technologies are being studied intensely and will eventually be applied with even greater precision and coordination. In many ways, we are witnessing a new phase of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA)—one in which artificial intelligence has just made its formidable entry.

An RMA marks a fundamental transformation in the way wars are conceived and executed. It is driven by advances in science and technology, by organisational restructuring, and by doctrinal changes that reflect new forms of strategy. An RMA does not simply make militaries more efficient; it propels them into an entirely new sphere of warfare defined by speed, surprise, and unprecedented impact. With cutting-edge tools for command, control, communication, intelligence, and real-time precision targeting, militaries become capable of inflicting decisive blows before an adversary even understands what is unfolding. History offers ample examples of such shifts.

The induction of railways, telegraphs, steamships, and rifles transformed conflicts from the Napoleonic era to the American Revolution. World War I saw the rise of aircraft, submarines, and machine guns. World War II brought mechanised warfare guided by radio and radar, culminating in the nuclear strikes on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Until recently, the refinement of nuclear weapons, satellites, missiles, encrypted systems, and stealth platforms continued to redefine military posturing. Then, almost abruptly, came India’s own Operation

Sindoor — a turning point that pushed the country to think beyond conventional paradigms. The operation underscored a timeless military truth: nations must prepare for future wars rather than fight the last one. Its swift suspension after four days — having achieved the intended strategic end state against a declared nuclear power — reflected years of preparation for precisely such an offensive.

It was a signal that India has been quietly building new competencies, and that further refinement of these capabilities is not merely desirable but essential. Going ahead, several trends are likely to dominate the future of warfare. Artificial intelligence will play a central role in data synthesis, surveillance, reconnaissance, and autonomous decision-making. UAVs, drones, directed-energy weapons, loitering munitions, and near-undetectable missiles or underwater vehicles will deliver precise and devastating strikes deep inside enemy territory. Cyber warfare will become a preferred tool for espionage, sabotage, and coercion. Trade wars — through tariffs, asset freezes, and exclusion from global financial networks — will be wielded with scant regard for treaties. Information warfare will intensify, fuelled by deepfakes and sophisticated propaganda machines.

Even targeted assassinations, social disruptions, and the exploitation of Gen Z vulnerabilities may become instruments of statecraft. For India, achieving mastery across these domains is not optional — it is imperative. Safeguarding national and civilisational interests at this critical stage of our developmental journey demands massive investments in technology, manufacturing, research, and human capital.

We will need thousands of bright professionals across R&D, testing, production, and deployment. Encouragingly, many national initiatives are already underway. In this context, the new Trump tariffs — seen by some purely as a challenge — could actually be a blessing in disguise. They offer India an opportunity to strengthen domestic ecosystems, retain skilled talent, attract the diaspora, and channel national energy into long-term capability-building. Such moments of recalibration seldom come twice.

Equally important is doctrinal adaptation within the armed forces, coupled with greater alignment among political leadership, bureaucratic machinery, scientific communities, defence establishments, and strategic thinkers. This will require continuous dialogue, deep understanding, and sustained national commitment. An updated and officially declared National Security Strategy — as a single, coherent policy document — would be an important and timely step in that direction.

The Pioneer
SINCE 1865

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E-GOLD WORLD



You may think that it is the best way to hold gold. Unlike the bullion assets in the bank lockers, there are no bulky and physical bars, coins, and jewellery. In contrast to the gold-based Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs), and derivatives, there is no paper trail. However, there is an assurance and guarantee that you possess a certain amount of gold, which appears in the form of a digital statement. More importantly, whenever you express the wish, the equivalent physical quantity will appear at your doorstep.

Welcome to the world of e-gold, or digital gold, which is being sold by several online platforms as a substitute for physical and paper metal. However, as the stock market regulator, SEBI, and experts warn, this gold can vanish as instantly as it digitally adds to an individual's portfolio. According to a recent SEBI circular, these offerings are "entirely different from SEBI-regulated gold products, as they are neither notified as securities, nor supervised as commodity derivatives." They remain in the nowhere-land of non-regulation.

This implies that most unregulated products, digital gold products "function completely outside SEBI's regulatory purview and may carry substantial risks, including counterparty and operational vulnerabilities." There are no legal protections against frauds, or illegalities, and the sellers cannot be convicted. In this shadowy world, the onus is on the buyers. As the SEBI circular warns, "none of the investor protection safeguards available in the securities market will apply to investments made in digital gold, or e-gold." These are products that can leave the investors out in the cold.

Instead, the regulator recommends that investors who feel the desire to invest in gold need to explore legal avenues that include ETFs, derivatives, electronic gold receipts and, of course, physical gold. The first three can be purchased and sold on the exchanges, are "accessible through SEBI-registered intermediaries, and operate strictly within SEBI's regulatory framework." The fourth is available through government, and private channels, which are allowed to sell them. There is no need for people to go to unregulated platforms.

SEBI's angst stems from the fact that the digital gold products have gained explosive popularity fuelled by instant UPI-based buying, and low entry barriers. There are other advantages too. For example, they are convenient, and accessible. You can invest anytime via a phone, UPI, or broker apps, with no jeweller visits. Gold is anyway the favourite of the Indian household since it acts as an inflation hedge, and reduces market risks. Digital gold, like other legal products, offers instant liquidity, and one can sell immediately at live market prices without searching for the buyers.

The entry amounts are low, or lower than the ETFs, derivatives, and physical gold, since e-gold can be purchased with tiny sums, and in low quantities. The purity of the digital gold, if delivered physically as per demand, is backed by 24-karat 99.9 per cent purity. As mentioned above, the virtual gold is easily convertible into physical coins, bars, or biscuits, with home delivery. There are no worries related to storage. Insured vaults at the platforms' ends eliminate the security and safety risks of storing physical gold.

Except for one overriding and expansive risk. Digital gold can vanish in a poof, as easily as it arrives in a jiffy through a digital statement. Ajay Menon, MD & CEO (wealth management), Motilal Oswal Financial Services, strongly endorses the regulator's concerns. "It may appear attractive when a digital statement claims that 'you own X grams of gold.' However, SEBI has rightly highlighted the risks associated with digital gold. If something goes wrong, there are no regulatory protections. Should the company shut down tomorrow, your gold could simply vanish," he explains.

Moreover, the so-called convenience, ease, accessibility, and liquidity have another component: It is marketed with embedded and significant hidden costs. "You pay three per cent GST at the time of purchase, a 2-3 per cent spread on buy/sell prices, and capital gains tax when you sell. If you request physical delivery, additional delivery and making charges apply," states Menon. The profit margins, thereby, are reduced for the investors. So, do the calculations carefully before plunging into this virtual world.

"Digital gold-related UPI transactions jumped from 50.9 million in January 2025 to 99.8 million in August 2025, a massive behavioural shift," Menon notes. Obviously, the trend is linked to the overall enthusiasm for gold, and gold products. Sandip Raichura, director, PL Capital, offers a perspective on gold price trajectory. "Gold has recovered from a pullback towards what we believe could be a \$4,800 target in the next few months. Our stop loss remains near \$3,550, giving a 2:1 risk-reward at current levels," he says.

Experts like Raichura add that the weakening US economic data may accelerate the trend. "Job losses in October, and multi-year lows in consumer sentiment suggest deeper weakness than what Mr Powell (head of the US Federal Reserve) expected. If the upcoming data confirms this, it may provide another upward impulse to gold prices," he feels. This may further propel the purchase of digital gold, and e-gold, which may exemplify the risks for the investors. SEBI, which has red-flagged several challenges in other areas, is concerned about the possible implications in the future.

The Pioneer

RANCHI | TUESDAY | NOVEMBER 18, 2025



BUSINESS10

Jobs cause a possible stock effect

It is a cause-and-effect that seems quite correlated. Obviously, when you bring two things together, a pattern or trend emerges sometimes because the human mind is wired to find the latter. Thus, often the cause becomes the effect, and vice versa, or correlation is confused with a deeper connect. As the famed Rumi said ages ago, "What you thought was the effect, is but the cause." In a sense, what we consider the end point becomes the beginning for something else. A fruit is the effect of the plant (cause), which is the effect of the roots (cause). More importantly, the gardener tends to the plant (effect) because of the fruit (cause). This can go on and on.

In this context, let us examine the roots of a graph that is viral on social media. A curious and enterprising analyst plotted the rise of the American S&P stock index against new jobs in the US since 2000. He or she found a revealing link. Until 2022-23, the two graphs moved in tandem, like they were conjoined by an umbilical cord. They behave like twins joined at the hips, with each one unable to move out of sync, or get away from each other. When the S&P goes up, so does the creation of new jobs. The opposite happens when the index comes down. Maybe it is the opposite, the rise in jobs is followed by a similar movement in the index, and vice versa.

There can be logical explanations to the trend. For example, one can argue that companies hire more people when the business opportunities are excellent, which leads to higher production, and more profits. In fact, since firms are highly sensitive to costs, they hire only when demand goes up, and benefit from both the shortages, and higher future sales. In both cases, the stock prices either follow the rise in volumes, and profits, or rise earlier in anticipation of the future

positive effects. One can conversely argue that stock valuations go up due to external reasons such as policy changes, lower interest rates, and low inflation, which arms the business owners with money sources (public issues, and loans) that enables them to increase capacities, and hire more people.

However, the individual who traced the original graphs on a single chart, gave it a technological twist. According to him or her, the breaking point, or the catalyst point, when the two graphs begin to diverge from each other, is 2022-23, or the introduction of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in workplaces. This logic puts the onus on the launch of ChatGPT, which became a routine tool for managers, and executives. AI increased productivity through tech shifts, made many workers redundant, and enabled firms to sack them. This is why stocks flew, as productivity gains earned more profits, but there was a contraction in the creation of new jobs. Technology trumped manual work, firms opted for the former in several jobs, and employees were the ones who buckled under the disruption.

A recent flash survey by CNBC finds that nine out of 10 human resource leaders expect AI to reshape jobs next year, and more than two-thirds feel it is "currently having an impact at their firms." More than a sixth contend that half or more than half of the jobs were affected, and half of them think that the impact was less than 50 per cent. In fact, the use and abuse of AI is so rampant that HR leaders plan to reduce workforce just because they "need to cut costs," and the new tech tool is a perfect excuse to do so. Neither inflation, tariffs, reduced demand, or AI's efficiency gains matter. This explains just under 30 per cent expect the headcount to go down in

2026.

No one can deny that AI, and ChatGPT, or its competing tools, as is evident from recent workplace experiences, will reduce the need for workers. It will replace several forms of jobs that are routine and repetitive, especially among the entry-level workers. Various estimates contend that globally 300 million jobs will vanish because of the new technology. Yet, there are some who feel that AI will create new jobs, which will require new skills or re-skilling, whose number will be higher than the job losses. Hence, the S&P index, and new job data will converge in the future. The current trend is a short-term one, and an interim phenomenon. There will be no AI apocalypse at the workplaces, but sections of the society will get hurt.

This column wants to maintain that there are no causes and effects between AI, job losses, and the stock market index. It is a coincidental correlation. Technology is one of the drivers that drove down jobs. In the post-Covid era, hundreds of millions lost jobs, and a similar number, and more, worked from home. When normally returned, firms realised that they could do more with less, more work with less employees. Most of the ones that they had sacked were never recalled. Of the ones who worked from home, many were pressured to work in a hybrid mode, at a lesser salary, and as consultants. Pronto, the workforce was reduced, and the need to hire workers slowed down. Less workers were hired in the next few years.

At the same time, coincidentally, while revenues dipped, profits zoomed during the two Covid years. One of the reasons was the huge reduction in costs, especially manpower, and administrative and other expenses related to the workforce. This jacked up the stock markets, which boomed within weeks and months after the great fall in March 2025 (in India). Expectations in future financials improved, and stock valuations hit the roof, as did the indices. S&P was no exception. The combined effect was that the index skyrocketed, and demand for new jobs tanked. The divergence in the graphs was inevitable, which merely coincided with the launch of ChatGPT. As mentioned earlier, tech did aid the job-cutting process.

One can think of other factors that de-linked the graphs. Firms opted for China+1 strategy to replace China in case of similar disruptions. This implied that unless they were lucky to find locations like India, or the Philippines, which were cheap, they shifted to the expensive Latin America, East Europe, or North Americas. Manpower was more expensive in these regions, and firms chose to spend more on technology, and rely less on labour. Spending on machines was a one-time cost, which gave tax and other breaks. High-cost workers were a regular drain. This contributed to lower hires, even as the stock markets boomed. In fact, such cost controls helped the latter trend.

A Contrarian Investor

Is this the Initial Panic Omen?

As the indices go up, as do specific stocks, only the brave and risk-takers enter the fray. As they make money, and stocks continue to go up, others join in. This is around the time when promoters decide that this is the best time to raise money, given the high valuations. The IPO frenzy starts, backed by ever-higher indices, which leads to a herd mentality among investors, who cannot afford the already-listed stocks because of the high prices, and join the IPO gangs and queues. The IPO madness is in full flow, as the indices jump further. Obviously, a bubble forms, expands, and reaches its stretched shape.

It is time for the crash. Although the indices may move up on an average over the next few years, the herd mentality, and madness of the crowd forces an immediate shock. Too much money chasing too few stocks. Prices out of sync with profits. Valuations stretched, and waiting for a pinprick. It is now a matter of a whiff of bad news. Until now, for months, even years,

bad news was discarded, and dumped, and a faint smell of good news was highlighted and celebrated with higher price movements. The opposite happens at the height of the bubble. The moment something seemingly-bad happens, the bottom gives way, floor crashes, and the ceiling dashes into the investors' heads. Only a few escape. The majority is pinned to the ground, buried under the debris of dead hopes, dreams, and desires.

Do not think for a moment that this is unexpected. A few critical voices warn of the impending doom. No one wants to hear them. Although publicly, the experts goad investors, and scream that everything is fine, they are scared. So are the investors, but do not back away because of the FOMO factor. No one wants to miss out on the fun unless and until they are scared. The promoters want their IPOs before the crash. Investors want to get in, and get out to benefit from the listing gains. Merchant bankers, investment bankers,

and institutional bankers want to have stakes in the next Google, or Microsoft. Policy-makers do not want to rock the status quo. Economists are oblivious to the crazed environment.

This writer saw this bizarre phenomenon from close quarters in the late 1999, and early 2000 during the dotcom boom in the US. The valuations were as weird as they are now. IPOs were dime-a-day, as start-ups, and their founders dreamt of racking up valuations of billions of dollars, and becoming billionaires. The discussions at the social gathering, including the New Year's party, was about the hundreds of millions that one made, or will make, and the real estate purchased at ridiculous prices. Yet, every angel investor, venture capitalist, private equity player, founder, and pundit I met spoke about the crash. For the dozens of people interviewed, it was not a matter of if, but when. It will happen, they said, but they did not know when, so they went ahead with what they did.

An introduction to one of the post-2008 editions of 'The Great Crash,' a seminal book of John Kenneth Galbraith, explains, "But there is here a basic and recurrent process. It comes with rising prices, whether of stocks, real estate, works of art or anything else. This increase attracts attention and buyers, which produces the further effect of even higher prices. Expectations are thus justified by the very action that sends prices up. The process continues; optimism with its market effect is the order of the day. Prices go up even more. Then, for reasons that will be endlessly debated, comes the end. The descent is always more sudden than the increase; a balloon that has been punctured does not deflate in an orderly way."

The initial air of the balloon is filled with facts, data, and realistic assumptions. Later, hot air creeps in, as desires, hopes, and optimism engulfs the investors. This turns into smoke, smog, and fog as the herd gathers pace, and runs blindly towards the edge of the mountain, ready to fall off the cliff. At the stages of the hot air, and the great run one witnesses the hundreds of IPOs, with the founders aiming to be the next dollar-billionaires. Everything is crazy, and hazy, and those who can intervene seem to be in a daze.



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman sat down with The Pioneer’s Printer and Publisher Kushan Mitra, Chief Executive Officer Prakash V and J Gopikrishnan and to understand the current business activities and growth plans of The Pioneer media group. She was also invited to be the Chief Guest of The Pioneer India Finance and Innovation Forum (India FIF) that will be hosted in Mumbai from February 25-27, 2026. The event will focus on the core sectors of the economy and will be a space where finance, policy and innovation converge.



GST 2.0, Indo-Japan partnership redraw India’s auto industry map

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

India’s automotive industry, which contributes 7.1% to the country’s GDP and nearly half of its manufacturing output, is entering a new growth phase backed by regulatory reform and strong foreign collaboration. The sector produced 28 million vehicles in 2024, up 8 per cent year-on-year, while exports surpassed 4.5 million units, according to a whitepaper by Grant Thornton Bharat and the Indo-Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IJCCI).

Titled “Navigating Change: GST 2.0, Customs, and FTA Impacts on the India-Japan Auto Sector,” the report outlines how taxation reform, customs changes, and trade partnerships are reshaping the industry’s competitiveness. With USD 43.3 billion in cumulative investments, Japan remains India’s fifth-largest foreign investor and a key force in the automotive ecosystem.

The rollout of GST 2.0 in September 2025 has streamlined tax structures and boosted affordability across vehicle categories. Under the revised regime, small cars and motorcycles under 350cc attract 18 per cent GST, down from 28 per cent plus cess, trimming prices by up to ₹1 lakh for select models. Premium vehicles now face a 40 per cent flat rate, while electric vehicles continue at 5 per cent, reaffirming policy support for clean mobility.

Automakers have already recorded a surge in bookings, with the small car

AUTOMAKERS HAVE ALREADY RECORDED A SURGE IN BOOKINGS, WITH THE SMALL CAR SEGMENT REPORTING NEARLY 50 PER CENT GROWTH. THE UNION BUDGET 2025 COMPLEMENTED GST CHANGES WITH SUPPLY-CHAIN MEASURES, INCLUDING CUSTOMS DUTY EXEMPTIONS ON LITHIUM-ION BATTERY SCRAP AND CRITICAL MINERALS LIKE LEAD AND COPPER.

segment reporting nearly 50 per cent growth. The Union Budget 2025 complemented GST changes with supply-chain measures, including customs duty exemptions on lithium-ion battery scrap and critical minerals like lead and copper. These steps aim to strengthen domestic manufacturing, secure raw materials, and expand employment in the EV value chain.

“The convergence of GST 2.0 and targeted customs incentives marks a defining moment for India’s automotive sector,” said Sohrab Bararia, Partner, India Investment Advisory, Grant Thornton Bharat. He noted that the reforms enhance cost competitiveness and reinforce India’s position as a manufacturing and export hub for Japanese

automakers.

The India-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and the India-Japan Digital Partnership (IJDP) are also driving collaboration in electric and connected vehicles, as well as AI-led manufacturing. Skill programmes such as the Japan-India Institute for Manufacturing (JIM) and Japanese Endowed Courses (JEC) have trained over 30,000 Indian engineers to Japanese manufacturing standards, creating a talent base for advanced production.

Trade schemes like MOOWR, EPCG, Advance Authorisation, and RoDTEP continue to underpin export competitiveness by supporting duty-free or concessional imports of capital goods and components.

“There is strong synergy between India and Japan in hybrid and electric vehicles and precision components,” said Suguna Ramamoorthy, Secretary General, IJCCI. “Reforms under GST 2.0 and CEPA strengthen R&D and joint production while advancing the Atmanirbhar Bharat vision.”

During the first nine months of FY2025, India’s car exports to Japan reached USD 616.45 million, while auto component exports stood at USD 171.72 million. Industry observers believe sustained policy alignment and India-Japan collaboration will define the next phase of growth, driving competitiveness, technology transfer, and a more sustainable mobility future.

Fitch: Sanctions on Russian oil unlikely to hit Indian oil marketing companies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

US sanctions on Rosneft and Lukoil, along with the EU’s ban on refined products derived from Russian crude, are unlikely to materially dent the margins or credit profiles of India’s state-run oil marketing companies, Fitch Ratings said.

The ratings agency warned, however, that the eventual impact will hinge on how long the sanctions last and how strictly they are enforced. Russian crude made up about a third of India’s oil imports between January and August 2025, and its discounted rates have been a key boost to OMC profitability. Fitch expects the companies to adhere to sanctions, though some refiners may continue sourcing unsanctioned Russian barrels.

Traditionally reliant on Middle Eastern oil, India significantly increased its imports from Russia following the February 2022 Ukraine invasion. Western sanctions and reduced European demand made Russian oil available at steep discounts. As a result, India’s Russian crude imports surged from under 1 per cent to nearly 40 per cent of its total crude oil imports in a short span.

The US, however, last month imposed sanctions on Russian oil producers Rosneft and Lukoil, who



accounted for 75 per cent of oil sold to India. Indian refiners have stopped buying oil from them but others can still continue to sell.

“Fitch Ratings believes US sanctions on two of Russia’s largest crude oil producers, Rosneft and Lukoil, and the EU’s ban on refined imports derived from Russian crude, are unlikely to have a significant effect on the refining margins or credit profiles of our rated Indian oil marketing companies (OMCs),” the rating agency said in a note.

Fitch said sanctions-related disruptions should suppress global demand for products linked to affected crude, widening refined product spreads and helping offset the loss of discounted Russian

barrels. Refiners still processing Russian crude could benefit from deeper discounts. Abundant spare global crude capacity should also keep a lid on oil prices; Fitch forecasts Brent at USD 65 per cent in 2026, down from USD 70 in 2025.

Private refiners with significant EU exposure may face greater compliance risks, as tracing crude origins becomes more complex once grades are blended. Such firms may shift exports to alternative markets, adjust crude slates or invest in tighter traceability systems.

Indian OMCs posted EBITDA broadly in line with or slightly above expectations in H1 FY26, supported by softer crude and strong gasoil

spreads. Gross refining margins averaged USD 6–7 per barrel, compared with USD 4.5–7 per barrel in FY25.

Fitch expects GRMs to hold near mid-cycle levels of around USD 6 per barrel in FY27, aided by firm domestic fuel demand and high utilisation rates.

A government-approved Rs 30,000 crore support package for Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum and Hindustan Petroleum in 2Q FY26 will help offset losses from selling subsidised LPG below cost and strengthen liquidity.

Fitch said the Issuer Default Ratings of all three OMCs remain anchored by strong state linkages and a high likelihood of sovereign support if required.

India signs 1-year deal to import 2.2m tonnes of LPG from US

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Indian state-run oil companies have signed a one-year deal to import cooking gas LPG from the United States in 2026, marking a push by New Delhi to expand energy purchases from Washington.

The move is seen as an attempt to narrow India’s trade surplus with the US – a sticking point for President Donald Trump, who has slapped a 50 per cent tariff on Indian goods entering America.

“Indian PSU oil companies have successfully concluded a one-year structured contract to import around 2.2 million tonnes of LPG from the US Gulf Coast for the contract year 2026,” an official statement said on Monday.

The quantity contracted is close to 10 per cent of India’s annual LPG imports and marks the first such structured US LPG contract for the Indian market.

While India is either self-sufficient or has surplus production in most fuels like petrol, diesel and jet fuel, it imports about 65 per cent of its LPG consumption of 31 million tonnes. In 2024, about 90 per cent of the 20.4 million tonnes of LPG imports came from UAE, Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

It sporadically imported cargos from the US but this is the first time it has entered



into a structured contract.

State-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) will import about 48 very-large gas carriers of LPG in 2026. The supplies will be made by super majors Chevron, Phillips and TotalEnergies Trading SA.

India has offered to raise energy imports from the US as part of the bilateral trade deal that has been under discussions for the past couple of months. New Delhi buys about 8 per cent of its crude oil – the raw material for making petrol and diesel – from the US.

In the first half of 2025, India imported about 271,000 barrels per day (bpd) of US crude, up 51 per cent from 180,000 bpd in H1 2024.

Scope for raising crude imports from the US is

limited given that shipments take 45 days sea voyage to reach Indian shores – a period during which ships can make six sorties from the Middle East.

Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri took to X to announce the LPG deal.

“A historic first! One of the largest and the world’s fastest growing LPG markets opens up to the United States,” he said.

“In our endeavour to provide secure affordable supplies of LPG to the people of India, we have been diversifying our LPG sourcing. In a significant development, Indian PSU oil companies have successfully concluded a 1 year deal for imports of around 2.2 MTPA LPG, close to 10 per cent of our annual imports – for the contract year 2026, to be sourced from the US Gulf Coast – the first structured contract of US

LPG for the Indian market,” he said.

This purchase is based on using Mount Belvieu as the benchmark for LPG purchases, he said adding a team from the three PSUs had visited the US and engaged in discussions with major US producers over the last few months, which have been concluded now.

He touted poor Ujjwala consumers – who make up for a third of all LPG users in the country – receiving cooking gas cylinders at just ₹500-550 while the actual cost was over ₹1,100. “Government of India incurred the cost of over ₹40,000 crore last year in order to ensure our mothers and sisters did not feel the burden of rising international LPG prices”

The price of LPG for non-Ujjwala users currently is ₹853 per 14.2-kg cylinder.

For the US contract, the pricing shift – using Mount Belvieu as a benchmark – brings greater transparency and global linkage into India’s procurement model. For consumers, this diversification strengthens the ability to shield households from global price spikes.

“The Minister emphasised that this new sourcing arrangement for 2026 is another step in strengthening India’s energy security while ensuring affordable access to clean cooking fuel for millions of households,” the statement added.

Unemployment rate remains steady at 5.2 pc in October: Govt survey

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

The rate of unemployment for those aged 15 and above remained steady at 5.2 per cent in October, according to a government survey released on Monday.

Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). The UR was 5.1 per cent in April as per the first PLFS bulletin released in May 2025.

“The UR among persons of age 15 years and above remained unchanged at 5.2 per cent between September,

with a moderate rise in urban UR from 6.8 per cent to 7.0 per cent, resulted in overall stability in the pace of joblessness among persons aged 15 years and above.

It stated that UR among females aged 15 years and above declined to 5.4 per cent in October 2025 from 5.5 per cent observed during September 2025.

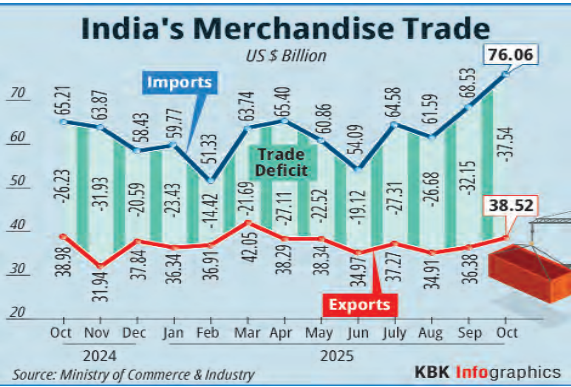
The drop in UR among rural female, from 4.3 per cent in September 2025 to 4.0 per cent in October 2025, mainly contributed towards the decline in overall female joblessness rate.

Among males, the rate of unemployment remained stable at 5.1 per cent in October 2025 as compared to previous month.

A minor decrease in rural male UR, from 4.7 per cent in September 2025 to 4.6 per cent in October 2025, was offset by a slight uptick in urban male UR from 6.0 per cent to 6.1 per cent during the same period, which contributed to overall stability.

2025 and October, 2025,” an official statement said.

According to the statement, a marginal decline in the rural unemployment rate, from 4.6 per cent in September 2025 to 4.4 per cent in October 2025, coupled



India’s exports drop 11.8 pc to USD 34.38 bn in Oct

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India’s exports contracted 11.8 per cent to USD 34.38 billion in October, showed government data released on Monday.

Imports jumped 16.63 per cent to USD 76.06 billion.

The country’s trade deficit stood at USD 41.68 billion during the reporting month. Imports surged due to increased shipments of gold and silver.

Gold imports jumped to USD 14.72 bn in the last month against USD 4.92 bn recorded in the same month last year.

The country’s exports to the United States declined to USD 6.3 bn in October as against USD 6.9 bn registered in the year-ago month, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal told reporters here.

During April-October this fiscal, exports increased marginally by 0.63 per cent to USD 254.25 billion. At the same time, imports rose 6.37 per cent to USD 451.08 billion, the commerce ministry data showed.

One-in-four Indian firm surveyed report cyber losses: PwC report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Nearly a quarter of Indian enterprises surveyed reported losses exceeding USD 1 million (about ₹8.8 crore) from cyber breaches over the past three years, with the risk particularly high among companies earning USD 5 billion or more in annual revenue.

Cyber budgets are rising, albeit at a cautious pace, with 87 per cent of organisations in India planning to increase their cybersecurity spending over the next 12 months, according to a PwC report.

The PwC 2026 Global Digital Trust Insights survey, based on responses from 138 Indian business and technology executives, found that investment in AI tops budget priorities at 46 per cent, followed by cloud security at 33 per cent.

“...25 per cent of busi-

nesses say their most damaging data breach in the past three years cost their organisation at least USD 1 million, with exposure highest among enterprises generating USD 5 billion or more in revenue (45 per



cent).

“This year, 87 per cent of leaders of Indian organisations expect their cyber budgets to grow in the coming year, and nearly one-third of them plan to boost spending by more

report noted.

More than half (60 per cent) of security leaders are prioritising AI threat-hunting capabilities, while nearly 47 per cent are focusing on other AI-driven functions such as agentic AI.

FROM THE WORLD

PAKISTAN

Jaffar Express targeted again

The frequently-targeted Jaffar Express passenger train narrowly escaped an explosion in Pakistan's Balochistan province, a day after it resumed operations following nearly a week of suspension due to security concerns. Insurgents targeted the train in the Nasirabad area of the province on Sunday, months after it came under a deadly insurgent attack that left 26 people dead.

Suspected insurgents detonated explosives planted on the railway track on the route taken by the Jaffar Express from Quetta to Peshawar, officials said. The explosion caused damage to a portion of the track, but the train escaped without any damage.

Nasirabad Senior SP Ghulam Sarwar said in a telephonic conversation that security forces reached the area and launched a search for the insurgents.

USA

Trump to meet Mayor Mamdani

President Donald Trump indicated on Sunday that he plans to meet with New York City's mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani and said they'll "work something out," in what could be a detente for the Republican president and Democratic political star who have cast each other as political foils.

Trump has for months slammed Mamdani, falsely labeling him as a communist . He also threatened to deport Mamdani, who was born in Uganda and became a naturalised American citizen and to pull federal money from the city.

Mamdani rose from an obscure State lawmaker to become a social media star and symbol of the resistance against Trump during his campaign. He campaigned on an array of progressive policies and a message that was stark in its opposition to the aggressive, anti-immigrant agenda Trump has rolled out in his second White House term.

Ukraine to buy 100 Rafales from France

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Paris

Ukraine on Monday signed a letter of intent to buy up to 100 Rafale warplanes from France, the Ukrainian Embassy and the French president's office said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and French President Emmanuel Macron signed the document stating that Ukraine is considering the possibility of buying French defense equipment, including Rafale jet fighters, Macron's office said. It did not provide further details.

Zelenskyy was on his ninth visit to Paris since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. His talks are meant to strengthen Ukraine's defenses as the country enters another winter under Russian bombardment of its energy infrastructure and other targets.

On Monday morning, Macron and Zelenskyy visited an air base in the Paris outskirts, before heading to the headquarters of a multinational force, dubbed the "coalition of the willing," that France and Britain have been preparing with more than 30 other nations to police an eventual ceasefire in Ukraine.

French officials say the force could be deployed immediately after a ceasefire and would be stationed



French President Emmanuel and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy hug after signing an agreement

away from the front lines in an effort to help dissuade renewed Russian attacks. Russian President Vladimir Putin has so far rejected calls for a ceasefire as his troops make creeping gains on the battlefield.

Zelenskyy wrote on X on Sunday that he looked

forward to a "historic deal with France in Paris to strengthen our combat aviation and air defense." He made a stop in Greece on his way to France to sign an agreement to supply Ukraine with US liquefied natural gas. Last month, Ukraine and Sweden signed

an agreement exploring the possibility of Ukraine buying up to 150 Swedish-made Gripen fighter jets over the next decade or more. Ukraine has already received American-made F-16s and French Mirages. France is among major suppliers of defense assistance to

Ukraine, including air defense systems and fighter jets. According to Mandon, Ukraine needs immediate additional air defenses to fend off attacks by Russia, which on average targets the country with about 1,700 drones per week plus missiles.

German Government lifts Israel arms ban



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz arriving for the cabinet meeting at the Chancellery in Berlin, Germany

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Berlin

The German Government said Monday that it's lifting its restrictions on exports of military equipment to Israel, weeks after the ceasefire between Israel and the Hamas militant group. Chancellor Friedrich Merz said in early August that Berlin wouldn't authorize any exports of military equipment to Israel that could be used in Gaza "until further notice."

That was a response to a decision by the Israeli Cabinet to take over Gaza City.

A spokesperson for Merz, Sebastian Hille, said that the restrictions will be lifted from Nov. 24. "Since Oct. 10, we have had a ceasefire in Gaza and it has fundamentally stabilized,"

Hille told reporters at a regular government news conference. "That is the basis for this decision."

"We expect everyone to keep to the agreements that were reached — that includes the ceasefire holding, that includes humanitarian aid being provided on a large scale and the process continuing to run in an orderly way, as agreed," he added.

Once the restrictions are lifted, Germany will examine military exports on a case-by-base basis, as is its standard practice with such exports, he said.

Merz's decision in August was a remarkable move by a country that is a particularly staunch ally of Israel. The Israeli foreign minister welcomed its lifting Monday in a post on social network X.

Gunmen abduct 25 girls from school in Nigeria

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Abuja

Gunmen attacked a high school in northwestern Nigeria before dawn on Monday and abducted 25 schoolgirls, police said.

One staffer at the school was killed and another was wounded in what was the latest incident of school abductions in Nigeria's northern region. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the abductions from the boarding school in Kebbi State. According to police, the incident took place at 4.00 am and the girls were abducted from their dorms. The boarding school is in Maga, in the State's Danko-Wasagu area, police spokesperson Nafi'u Abubakar Kotarkoshi said.

The assailants were armed with "sophisticated weapons" and exchanged fire with guards before abducting the girls,



FILE PHOTO

Kotarkoshi said. "A combined team is currently combing suspected escape routes and surrounding forests in a coordinated search and rescue operation aimed at recovering the abducted students and arresting the perpetrators," the spokesperson

added. This is the latest school abduction in Nigeria's northern region, where armed groups have targeted school children since 2014, when the militant Boko Haram group abducted 276 students from Chibok in Borno state. Kidnappings

have become common in parts of northern Nigeria, where dozens of armed groups take advantage of a limited security presence to carry out attacks on villages and along major roads. Most victims are released only after the payment of ransoms that sometimes run into the thousands of dollars. In March 2024, more than 130 schoolchildren were rescued after spending more than two weeks in captivity in the Nigerian state of Kaduna.

The mass abduction of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok marked the beginning of a new era of fear — with nearly 100 of the girls still in captivity in 2024. Since the Chibok abductions, at least 1,500 students have been kidnapped, as armed groups increasingly find in abductions a lucrative way to fund other crimes and control villages in the nation's mineral-rich but poorly policed region.

Landslide kills 6, injures 19 in Vietnam

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Hanoi

A landslide buried a passenger bus on a treacherous mountain pass in Vietnam, killing six people and injuring 19 others, as more heavy rain was forecast into the week. The earth and rocks collapsed onto the bus late Sunday as it was travelling through the Khanh Le pass in the central highlands, State media reported.

The winding, 33-kilometre stretch carved into steep mountainsides is scenic and popular with tourists but prone to landslides in the rainy season.

The landslide crushed the front of the bus, trapping many passengers. Rescuers struggled for hours to reach the scene as heavy rain had also caused landslides on both sides of the pass, cutting off access. Rescue teams were only able to reach the bus after midnight, state media said. The



bus was carrying 32 people from Vietnam's financial capital, Ho Chi Minh City and was travelling from Da Lat in Vietnam's central highlands to the coastal city of Nha Trang.

The injured passengers were taken to a nearby hospital. State media said two of the dead bodies were still trapped under the debris as

the treacherous terrain hindered the work.

Heavy rain is pounding central Vietnam, which earlier was hit hard by Typhoon Kalmaegi. Rainfall through Wednesday is expected to reach 30-60 centimeters in parts of central Vietnam, with some areas likely to exceed 85 centimeters.

US absence threatens South Africa's G20 legacy: Experts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Johannesburg

Although South Africa has said the G20 Leaders' Summit in Johannesburg this weekend will continue despite the absence of the US, there may be longer-term consequences for the host nation, experts have cautioned. US President Donald Trump announced earlier that there would be no US participation at the Summit, citing allegations of white farmer genocide and illegal expropriation of land from them by the Government. Both the South African Government and white leaders have rejected these allegations as being false.

President Cyril Ramaphosa confirmed on Friday that the G20 Leaders' Summit will proceed as planned on November 22-23, despite the US absence. "President Trump has decided not to come, and he's pulled out all

PRESIDENT CYRIL CONFIRMED THAT THE G20 LEADERS' SUMMIT WILL PROCEED AS PLANNED ON NOVEMBER 22-23, DESPITE THE US ABSENCE

the US representatives. But we have said that boycott politics never work," Ramaphosa said on the sidelines of an event here.

"The summit will go on. We are not going to stop because they are not here. We will continue and we will take fundamental decisions on matters that affect the people of the world," Ramaphosa said, adding that nearly 40 other Heads of State and Government will be at the Summit.

However, analysts and researchers believe that the US absence may have a

broader impact on South Africa, especially relating to finance and development.

"The US sponsors most of the international initiatives, like climate change. They use a huge amount of money for the operation of the United Nations and other financial institutions like the World Trade Organisation," Dr Nampula Mphahlele, a researcher on South African foreign policy, told the local daily The Star. "If the US is boycotting (the G20), then it sends a strong message of the future of multilateralism and how the G20 is going to operate moving forward," Mphahlele said.

She said that it was unlikely South Africa would lose its G20 seat, given that a country's inclusion is voted on by members and not just by one person or country. However, the US might continue excluding South Africa from certain activities, as invitations are often required to

attend G20 meetings, such as the finance ministers' meeting and the working groups. Dr Nolutshando Phungula, an international relations expert from the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, told the newspaper that Trump's decision was sending a message through an effective exercise of soft power. "This is evident in the absence of the Argentinian president, who has also declined the invitation and has cited that he will send a representative," she said.

According to her, the boycott speaks to deeper tensions between Pretoria and Washington and is sure to impact trade and diplomatic relations. "It also has implications for those countries that are associated with the US. As you saw, Argentina is currently receiving financial support from the US, so obviously it has to be seen to be standing in solidarity with the US," she said.



Air Force officials during the bilateral air exercise Garuda 25 between Indian Air Force and French Air and Space Force

PTI



Singapore Minister warns of rising AI-enabled extremism

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Singapore

Extremist groups use AI to amplify the reach and sophistication of radical content, making it difficult for young minds to distinguish truth from manipulation, a Singapore minister said on Monday. Speaking at a seminar, acting minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs Faishal Ibrahim said that Artificial Intelligence (AI) has also featured in several youth self-radicalisation cases in the multi-racial city-state. Extremist groups now use AI to create persuasive propaganda and even impersonate trusted voices, Faishal was quoted as saying by The Straits Times newspaper. He said that the reach and sophistication of racial content can be enhanced with AI, making it more difficult for younger people to distinguish truth from manipulation.



ICC prosecutors seek life sentence for Janjaweed leader

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ The Hague

Prosecutors at the International Criminal Court (ICC) on Monday asked for a life sentence for a leader of the feared Janjaweed militia convicted of playing a major role in a campaign of atrocities committed in the Sudanese region of Darfur more than 20 years ago — including ordering mass executions and bludgeoning two prisoners to death with an ax. "You literally have an axe murderer before you," prosecutor Julian Nicholls told judges in The Hague as Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al-Rahman, also known as Ali Kushayb, looked on. Last month, Abd-Al-Rahman was convicted of 27 counts, including mass murders and rapes, for leading Janjaweed militia forces that went on a campaign of killing and destruction in 2003-2004. It was the first time the court had convicted a suspect of crimes in Darfur.

Sheikh Hasina: The rise, reign and ruin of Bangladesh’s Iron Lady

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi/Dhaka

For nearly two decades, Sheikh Hasina's name moved with the pulse of Bangladesh, sometimes steady, sometimes storm-tossed.

To her supporters, she is the architect of a modern, developing Bangladesh; to her critics, she was an autocrat whose appetite for power blinded her to the cries of the streets.

Few, however, could have imagined that the very tribunal the 77-year-old deposed Prime Minister once created to try hardened war collaborators would one day place her in the dock.

On Monday, when the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) pronounced the death sentence against Hasina in absentia, it marked the most dramatic turn yet in the story of the world's longest-serving female head of Government.

Hasina was born on September 28, 1947, in Tungipara in the then East Pakistan, into a family that would come to define Bangladesh's identity. Her father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, led Bangladesh to independence with India's help in 1971 and became its founding father.

She studied at the University of Dhaka, earning a master's degree in Bengali literature and became deeply engaged in student politics. In 1968, Hasina married nuclear scientist MA Wazed Miah, whose low-profile, scholarly life stood in contrast to the turbulence of Bangladeshi politics. Wazed



Police use stun grenades to disperse protesters gathering outside the demolished residence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh's former leader and the father of the country's ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina following the verdict against her in Dhaka, Bangladesh

remained a steady presence in Hasina's life until he died in 2009 at the age of 67. They have a son, Sajeeb Wazed Joy and a daughter, Saima Wazed Putil.

Hasina's political destiny hardened after the August 1975 military coup, in which her father, mother, three brothers, and several other family members were assassinated. She and her younger sister Rehana survived only because they were abroad. India, under then Prime

Minister Indira Gandhi, granted her asylum. After six years, in May 1981, Hasina returned to Bangladesh, where she was elected in absentia as the general secretary of the Awami League.

When Hasina returned in 1981 to lead the Awami League, she found her rival already waiting: Khaleda Zia, widow of slain President Ziaur Rahman.

The 'Battling Begums', as they came to be known, fought electoral and ideo-

logical wars that defined Bangladesh's politics for more than three decades.

Hasina first became Prime Minister in 1996, defeating Zia in a fiercely contested election. She lost power in 2001 but returned with a landslide in 2008, beginning, what her critics say, a long stretch of dominance.

Under her leadership, the Awami League swept the 2008 general election; the 2014 election, which was boycotted by Zia's Bangladesh

Nationalist Party (BNP); and the 2018 election, giving Hasina one of the world's longest tenures for a female leader. During her premiership, Bangladesh saw rapid economic growth, major infrastructure achievements like the Padma Bridge, and advances in poverty reduction. The country also became a global garment powerhouse under her watch.

But the accolades came alongside accusations of

clampdowns on dissent, curbs on the media, arrests of opposition leaders and the expansion of state security powers. In 2024, student-led demonstrations, which initially erupted in protest over quotas in Government jobs for children of independence war veterans, later exploded into a nationwide uprising against Hasina's regime.

The crackdown that followed unleashed spirals of violence, ultimately ousting Hasina from power and

SECURITY PERSONNEL USE TEAR GAS TO DISPERSE PROTESTERS NEAR MUJIBUR RAHMAN'S HOUSE

Dhaka: Security agencies used batons and fired tear gas on Monday to disperse protesters who tried to demolish the house of deposed premier Sheikh Hasina's father and Bangladesh's founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the capital. "Several stun grenades were used to disperse the protesters," Masud Alam, deputy commissioner of Ramna Division Police, was quoted as saying by the Daily Star newspaper. The paper reported that several protesters and security personnel were injured during the baton-charge and brick-hurling clashes.

Mujibur Rahman, fondly called Bangabandhu, was killed in a military coup on August 15, 1975, along with most of his family members, including his 10-year-old youngest son, Sheikh Russell. A large part of Rahman's private residence, which was

turned into a museum, was levelled following the ouster of the Awami League regime of Hasina last year.

On Monday, Hasina was sentenced to death in absentia by a special tribunal for "crimes against humanity" over her Government's brutal crackdown on student-led protests last year.

Even before the verdict was announced, a large group of protesters tried to move two excavators towards Dhanmondi 32, where Rahman's house is located. They were stopped by security personnel, who used batons to disperse protesters, the paper said. Some protesters regrouped near Square Hospital on Panthapath, where law enforcers fired several rounds of tear gas.

Traffic on Mirpur Road in Dhaka and the surrounding areas was suspended, and most shops in the neighbourhood were closed.

forcing her to flee to India.

Following Hasina's ouster, the interim Government led by Muhammad Yunus reconstituted the ICT, once her instrument for prosecuting war criminals, to bring charges of crimes against humanity related to the 2024 crackdown against her.

A UN rights office report estimated that up to 1,400 people were killed during last year's student protest between July 15 and August 15 during what came to be known as the July Uprising, as her Government ordered a

Outrage in Israel: Netanyahu to oversee October 7 probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Tel Aviv

After repeated delays, Israel's Government has agreed to launch an investigation into the Government failures that led to the Hamas-led attack on October 7, 2023, that triggered the war in Gaza.

But questions about the investigation's independence drew accusations Monday that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is trying to evade personal responsibility in the worst attack in Israel's history.

Israel has traditionally appointed an independent state commission of inquiry, led by a retired judge, following major Governmental failures. Netanyahu has resisted calls for such an investigation into the October 7 failures, saying only that he would answer all questions when the war is over. In Sunday's decision, he said the ceasefire that went into effect on October 10 allows the Government to start the investigation.

His Cabinet approved the formation of a watered-down "Government committee." Netanyahu will oversee the makeup of the team governing the inquiry, in effect putting him in charge of the probe. More details about the inquiry are to be announced in 45 days.

Public criticism

Israel's opposition leader, Yair Lapid, called the decision insulting to the victims of October 7 and to the hundreds of soldiers who have died in the war. "The Government is doing everything it can to run from the



truth and evade responsibility," Lapid said.

The Government is "establishing a commission that will investigate itself," noted the Movement for Quality Government in Israel, which is critical of Netanyahu. "This is not an investigative commission, this is a cover-up commission." In the October 7 attack, Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people and took over 250 others hostage. Nearly 500 soldiers have been killed in fighting since then, while Palestinian health officials say over 69,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's retaliatory offensive against Hamas. According to a poll by the Jerusalem-based think tank Israel Democracy Institute last month, nearly three-quarters of the public support a fully independent commission of inquiry.

Even among Netanyahu's right-wing base, 68 per cent favoured an independent commission. The survey questioned 1,000 people and had a margin of error of 3.1 percentage points.

Thousands of people demonstrated on Saturday night in Tel Aviv, many calling for an independent probe. Netanyahu, who is on trial for corruption charges

unrelated to the war, says Israel's judiciary has too much power and has asserted that an independent inquiry would not have "the broadest possible public support." "The only way to ensure public trust in the work of the commission is broad agreement regarding the composition of the commission," he said.

The Israeli military and other security bodies have conducted a number of investigations into their failures on October 7. But the new investigation also will look at Governmental decision-making and assumptions that created the conditions for the attack to occur.

Many security figures have said that Netanyahu's attempt to overhaul the country's judicial system, which triggered mass demonstrations and public divisions before the war, sent a message of weakness that encouraged Israel's enemies to attack.

Netanyahu rejects the accusations. Many Israelis believe the mistakes of October 7 extend beyond the military, and they blame Netanyahu for what they view as a failed strategy of deterrence and containment in the years before the attack.

Bangladesh's tribunal sentences ex-home minister Kamal to death for crimes against humanity

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Dhaka/New Delhi

Deposed Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's aide, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, was on Monday sentenced to death in absentia by a tribunal for crimes against humanity during last year's student uprising.

The International Crimes Tribunal-Bangladesh also sentenced former inspector general of police Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, who turned state witness, to five years of imprisonment in the same case. Delivering the

Jaishankar arrives in Russia on three-day visit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Moscow

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday arrived in Russia on a three-day visit to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Heads of State Council meeting.

At the airport, Jaishankar was received by Indian Ambassador Vinay Kumar and Alexei Pavlovsky, Director of the Second Asian Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia.

Later in the day, he will hold talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. They are expected to discuss bilateral, regional and international issues, including cooperation within the SCO, BRICS, the UN, and the G-20, State-run TASS news agency reported.



Former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal

Ethiopia confirms 3 Marburg virus deaths

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Addis Ababa

Ethiopia on Monday confirmed three deaths from the Marburg hemorrhagic virus that has been detected in an area neighbouring South Sudan.

Health Minister Mekdes Daba said Ethiopia's Government, which declared a Marburg outbreak on Friday, had conducted tests in 17 suspected cases in the country's south. The outbreak was reported in the Omo region.

The minister said there were no active cases but the Government was taking preventive measures.

A team from the World Health Organisation and the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention has been dispatched to support with testing and outbreak control. South Sudan's health ministry on Sunday issued a public health advisory



sory to residents of four counties to wash their hands frequently and avoid contact with bodily fluids to prevent the spread of the virus. Africa CDC Director-General Jean Kaseya last week called the outbreak a concern because South Sudan has a "fragile health system."

Like Ebola, the Marburg virus originates in fruit bats and spreads between people through close contact with the bodily fluids of infected individuals or with contaminated surfaces, such as soiled bed-

sheets. Without treatment, Marburg can be fatal in up to 88 per cent of people who fall ill.

Symptoms include fever, muscle pains, diarrhoea, vomiting and, in some cases, death from severe blood loss. There is no authorised vaccine or treatment for Marburg.

Marburg outbreaks and individual cases have in the past been recorded in Rwanda, Tanzania, Equatorial Guinea, Angola, Congo, Kenya, South Africa, Uganda and Ghana, according to WHO.



PPP lawmaker elected new PoK premier

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Islamabad

A Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) lawmaker was on Monday elected as the "prime minister" of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir after the regional assembly adopted a no-confidence motion against incumbent Chaudhry Anwarul Haq of Tehreek-i-Insaf. Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore is the fourth premier in the sitting assembly since its installation in 2021. He received the support of 36 lawmakers, including 27 from PPP and 9 from Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz. The assembly has 52 members, and a simple majority of 27 lawmakers is needed to elect a new leader. The no-trust motion was tabled on Monday by PPP lawmaker Qasim Majeed. On Sunday, two PTI lawmakers joined PPP, raising its strength to 29. In October, PPP's ranks swelled to 27 after 10 PTI lawmakers joined it.



Republicans should vote to release Epstein files: Trump

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Washington

President Donald Trump said House Republicans should vote to release the files in the Jeffrey Epstein case, a startling reversal after previously fighting the proposal as a growing number of those in his own party supported it. "We have nothing to hide, and it's time to move on from this Democrat Hoax perpetrated by Radical Left Lunatics in order to deflect from the Great Success of the Republican Party," Trump wrote on social media late Sunday after landing at Joint Base Andrews following a weekend in Florida. Trump's statement followed a fierce fight within the GOP over the files, including an increasingly nasty split with Georgia Rep Marjorie Taylor Greene, who had long been one of his fiercest supporters.

BRIEFLY

INDIA NEEDS GOOD COACHES OF FOOTBALL: LOTHAR



Only best coaches can produce good football players and India will need to bring in legends and former players of the game to train their coaches, says German football legend Lothar Matthaus.

Matthaus said India, the world's most populated country, cannot be in a situation where it does not play in the football World Cup while smaller countries like Cape Verde make it to the global event.

"You get good footballers only when they learn from the best coaches. India needs good coaches to produce better footballers," Matthaus, a member of Germany's 1990 World Cup-winning team, told the media here on Sunday. "A good teacher makes a good student. And when you have a bad teacher, or a bad professor, you don't get good students. To start, you bring the legends, ex-players and reputed coaches to India to teach your coaches. Then these coaches can help the new generation of players. You have to start this at the school level." Matthaus cited the example of Cape Verde, which will play in next year's World Cup despite having only a million people as their population.

PAIGE GRECO, PARALYMPIC GOLD MEDALIST, DIES AT 28



Australian cyclist Paige Greco, a Paralympic gold medalist, has died. She was 28.

A joint statement by the Australian Paralympic Committee and Australian cycling federation said that Greco "passed away in her Adelaide home after experiencing a sudden medical episode" on Sunday. "Paige meant everything to us," her mother Natalie Greco said. "Her kindness, her determination and her warmth touched our family every single day. She brought so much joy and pride into our lives, and the pain of her passing is something we will carry forever. "While we are devastated by her loss, we are incredibly proud of the person she was and the way she represented Australia."

Former Chelsea player Oscar discharged from hospital after heart scare

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Sao Paulo

Former Chelsea midfielder Oscar has been released from hospital, five days after being admitted with a heart issue.

Oscar's current club, Sao Paulo said in a statement that the player had been discharged on Sunday.

It added that extensive tests had revealed Oscar had "experienced an episode of vasovagal syncope," a common cause in fainting after a sudden drop in blood pressure or heart rate.

"Stable and clinically well throughout his hospital stay, the athlete will now follow a medical program of rest for the next few days," the statement continued.

Oscar was taken by ambulance to Einstein Hospital Israelita on Tuesday after collapsing during pre-season testing. He was reportedly unconscious for about two minutes and his club said at the time that he "presented a complication with cardiac changes."

The 34-year-old has a contract with Sao Paulo until 2027. He returned to his boyhood club on a free transfer last December after a long spell in China.

Lad, Thakur shines as Mumbai dominate in Ranji

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Mumbai

Siddhesh Lad's career-best 170 and skipper Shardul Thakur's three-wicket burst underlined Mumbai's domination as the hosts reduced Pondicherry to 43 for 4 after piling up 630/5 declared on Day Two of their Ranji Trophy Elite Group D clash on Monday.

Thakur struck twice in first three balls and returned 3/17, following up on a minute-a-mile fifty earlier in the day as his side left Pondicherry staring at a mountain to climb. The visitors are trailing by 587 runs in the first innings.

Thakur cleaned up Neyan Kangayan (0) in the first ball of the innings and trapped Paras Ratnaparkhe (0) in the third, while having Anand Singh Bais (5) caught behind in a fiery spell with the new ball on a flat wicket here at the Wankhede Stadium.

Earlier, Lad struck his 13th first-class hundred, his third of the season and second on the trot to make 170 off 285 balls with 19 fours and four sixes as Mumbai made merry on a batting-friendly pitch against an insipid Pondicherry attack.

Akash Anand (107 not out) notched up his third FC ton in nine matches, but India batter Sarfaraz Khan missed out, falling for a 113-ball 67 (6x4s, 1x6s). Thakur smacked a characteristic 32-ball 56 with four sixes and three fours before retiring hurt. While putting on 160 runs for the fourth wicket with



Sarfaraz, Lad was in his elements, scoring runs on both sides of the wickets. Hitting two sixes each over long-on and long-off, he also pierced gaps at will to carve out a flawless innings.

Lad consolidated Mumbai's hold on the game as he added another 110 runs for the fifth wicket with Anand against an exhausted Pondicherry attack, who had each of their five bowlers including skipper Sagar Udeshi giving away more than 100 runs.

Sarfaraz took off his helmet and celebrated crossing the fifty-run mark like batters do

after making tons, but poked on one outside off to be caught behind, having batted well for his maiden half-century of the season.

Mumbai did not take the foot off the pedal as Anand and Thakur then tore apart a tiring Pondicherry attack, adding 100 runs off only 68 balls in their bid to bat out the rivals.

Thakur was severe on anything short and wide while smacking powerful sixes on the leg side. Anand cracked eight fours to make 107 not out off 122 balls.

Anand said there is enough in the Wankhede track for the

bowlers provided they were able to make the effort, while praising Pondicherry spinners for their efforts.

"There is enough help for everyone, for pacers and even for spinners. If you bat well, you have value for strokes also. It's a wicket where if you bend your back as a bowler, you have help throughout the day. That is what we aim to do," he told media.

In Jammu, hosts Jammu and Kashmir took complete control of the clash against Hyderabad by extending their overall lead to 324 runs.

J&K were 275 for four when stumps were drawn with

opener Qamran Iqbal (50), Abdul Samad (77 not out) and Kanhaiya Wadhwan (82 not out) hitting their half-centuries.

Having taken 49-run lead on the first day where 16 wickets fell, J&K produced a tidy effort with the bat to gain complete control of the game against Hyderabad who have not lost a game so far this season.

Hosts Rajasthan were bolstered by centuries from Mahipal Lomror (128 not out) and Kartik Sharma (120) on the second day after Sachin Yadav (130) and Kunal Singh Rathore (102) hit triple figure

scores on Day One, to reach 570/7 declared against Delhi. Delhi were 8 for no loss when stumps were drawn, trailing by a massive 562 runs.

At the Amtar Cricket Ground in Nadaun, Himachal Pradesh were 37/1 after Chhattisgarh declared their first innings at a massive score of 585 for six, following centuries from Anuj Tiwary (162), Amandeep Khare (101 not out), Mayank Verma (112) and Sanjeet Desai's 84.

Brief Scores:

At Mumbai: 630/5 in 147 overs (Musheer Khan 84, Akhil Herwadkar 86, Siddhesh Lad 170, Sarfaraz Khan 67, Akash Anand 107 not out, Shardul Thakur 56 ret'd hurt; Sabhay Chadha 2/146) lead Pondicherry 43/4 in 12 overs (Mohit Kale 13 not out; Shardul Thakur 3/17, Tushar Deshpande 1/7) by 587 runs.

At Jammu: Jammu and Kashmir 170 & 275/4 in 71 overs (Qamran Iqbal 50, Abdul Samad Samad 77 not out, Kanhaiya Wadhawan 82 not out; Rakshan Readdi 2/56) lead Hyderabad 121 by 324 runs.

At Rajasamand: Rajasthan 570/7d in 161 overs (Sachin Yadav 130, Kunal Singh Rathore 102, Mahipal Lomror, Kartik Sharma 120; Simarjeet Singh 3/81) lead Delhi 8/0 in 4 overs by 562 runs.

At Nadaun: Chhattisgarh 585/6d in 158 overs (Ayush Pandey 59, Anuj Tiwary 162, Sanjeet Desai 84, Mayank Verma 112; Mayank Dagar 2/124) lead Himachal Pradesh 37/1 in 11 overs by 548 runs.

Reddy's maiden ton boosts Andhra against Jharkhand

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Jamshedpur

Opener Abhishek Reddy weathered a potent Jharkhand bowling attack by scoring a timely unbeaten century as Andhra made a strong bid to overhaul the hosts' first-innings total on day two of the Ranji Trophy Group A match on Monday.

Jharkhand, whose innings folded up at 328 in 112.3 overs early during the day, saw themselves sweating and grimacing at stumps after 31-year-old Reddy struck his maiden century (103 not out off 156 balls) to guide Andhra to 224 for 2.

Andhra need just 104 runs to take the first-innings lead with eight wickets still intact.

Reddy, who has struck back-to-back half-centuries against Odisha and Tamil Nadu this season, came up with a valuable century



knock just when his team needed stability at the top against a side that has emerged triumphant on the back of some brilliant bowling from Sahil Raj and Rishi Raj.

Reddy, who started his domestic career with Karnataka way back in 2015, took almost a decade to

score his maiden century.

He shared a 94-run stand for the opening wicket with India Test keeper-batter Srikar Bharat (51) before batting stoutly with Shaik Rasheed (58) for a 122-run stand for the second wicket to put Andhra in a strong position.

Relying heavily on his

ground strokes, Reddy struck 11 boundaries and just one maximum as Andhra made a strong bid to dislodge Jharkhand from the No.2 spot on the points table.

While Jharkhand are on 16 points after four games, Andhra are third with 14 points.

At stumps, young spin all-rounder Tripurana Vijay (6 not out) was giving Reddy company.

The morning session didn't bring huge cheers for Jharkhand with their last-four wickets falling for the addition of just 69 runs. Overnight batter Sahil Raj laboured to 50 (86 balls) as he added 43 runs on the second day before he was the last player to be dismissed.

Andhra's veteran pacer KV Sasikanth (4/67) and left-arm spinner Saurab Kumar (4/77) did well to restrict their opponents.

India finishes third in shooting championships



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Cairo

Olympian Gurbhinder Singh came agonisingly close to becoming the world champion in men's 25m Centre Fire Pistol event but eventually got a silver after losing on inner 10s to Ukraine's Pavlo Korostylov at the Olympic Shooting Range here.

This was Gurbhinder's second individual medal in the World Championships, the first also being a silver won back in 2018 at Changwon in the 25m Standard Pistol event. Yann Pierre Louis Fridrici of France won the bronze here.

India thus ended their World Championship campaign in third place with a total of 13 medals, including three gold, six silver and two bronze behind China. The Chinese team mustered 12 gold, seven silver and two bronze.

South Korea secured seven gold, three silver and four bronze medals to end third in

the overall standings.

Gurbhinder shot a total of 584-18x over two days of competition in the precision and rapid stages, while Korostylov shot 29 inner 10s and a perfect score of 100 in the final rapid round to edge away with the gold medal.

The Indian shooter, who was placed ninth after the precision stage with a score of 288-8x (95,97,96), bounced back on the second day to shoot a brilliant score of 296-10x (98,99,99) in the rapid stage to clinch the silver medal.

The Ukrainian, who was leading after the precision stage with a score of 291-14x, shot 293-15x in the rapid stage to level Gurbhinder's score and win the gold on inner 10s.

Harpreet Singh, who was in contention for a medal after the precision stage with a score of 291-10x that placed him second, could only manage 286-6x in the rapid stage which saw him eventually finish in ninth place.

Smaran hits double ton to put Karnataka in driver's seat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Hubli (Karnataka)

Promising Ravichandran Smaran hit an unbeaten 227 and was being supported well by the lower-order to put Karnataka in the driver's seat on the second day of their Ranji Trophy Group B match against Chandigarh on Monday.

Resuming at the overnight personal score of 110 with Karnataka at 298 for 5, Smaran stitched crucial partnerships with Shreyas Gopal (62), Vidyadhar Patel (30) and Shikhar Shetty



(59) as Karnataka declared at a mammoth 547 for 8 in 160 overs.

Smaran first stitched 141 runs for the sixth wicket Gopal and then shared unconquered 120 with Patel to take Karnataka to the imposing total.

Smaran decorated his 362-ball knock with 16 boundaries and two hits over the fence.

For Chandigarh, medium pacer Jagjit Singh (2/70), off-spinner Vishu Kashyap (2/141) and left-arm spinner Nishunk Birla (2/159) shared six wickets between them.

At stumps on the second day, Chandigarh were struggling at 72 for 4 in reply to Karnataka's mammoth score.

Opener Arjun Azad made 32. At the close of play, skipper Manan Vohra was batting on 14.

Leg-spinner Gopal was the pick of the bowlers for Karnataka with figures of 3 for 18. Maharashtra enjoy slight upperhand over Punjab.

In Chandigarh, Punjab finished the second day at 125 for 4 in reply to Maharashtra's 350 all out.

Sinner beats Alcaraz to retain ATP Finals title before his home fans

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Turin

The final installment of the "Sincaraz" rivalry for 2025 went to Jannik Sinner.

The second-ranked Sinner beat top-ranked Carlos Alcaraz 7-6 (4), 7-5 for the ATP Finals trophy on Sunday in the sixth meeting this year between the two players who are dominating men's tennis.

Sinner defended the title before his home Italian fans for only his second victory over Alcaraz this year after also beating the Spaniard in the Wimbledon final.

"It was an incredible season," Sinner said. "To finish it this way, before my Italian fans, is very special for me."

Alcaraz had already

secured the year-ending No. 1 ranking and was contesting his first final at the event for the year's top eight players.

Alcaraz still leads his career meetings with Sinner, 10-6.

Sinner and Alcaraz have met in the last three Grand Slam finals. Alcaraz beat Sinner in a fifth-set tiebreaker to win the French Open; Sinner gained a measure of revenge at Wimbledon; then Alcaraz again came out on top at the U.S. Open.

They also clashed this year in the Italian Open final (won by Alcaraz) and the Cincinnati Open final (won by Alcaraz when Sinner retired due to illness).

"I hope you are going to be ready for next year because I will be ready to hopefully play more finals against you,"

Alcaraz said during the trophy ceremony.

To which Sinner added that he hopes they have "great, great battles ahead of us."

Sinner also won the Australian Open — beating Alexander Zverev in the final — so he and Alcaraz each won two majors this year.

In all, Alcaraz has won six majors and Sinner has won four.

St. SinnerAlready early in the first set, the pro-Sinner crowd chanted its customary "Ole, Ole, Ole, Ole; Sin-ner, Sin-ner."

One fan even held up an image of Sinner depicted as a saint.

Sinner saved a set point at 5-6 in the tight first set with a big second serve that Alcaraz couldn't return. Then



the Italian took control of the tiebreaker by running down a drop shot and responding with a lob that led to an over-head put away.

"I'm extremely happy with how I handled the situation," Sinner said of saving the set point.

Added Alcaraz, "He came

up with a second serve 185-190 kph (115-118 mph) that surprised me."

Alcaraz's thighAlcaraz had his right thigh treated by a

trainer on two occasions — and got it wrapped after the first set.

"Didn't affect me too much, to be honest, because I could run well," Alcaraz said. Alcaraz broke Sinner's serve in the opening game of the second set but Sinner then evened it at 3-3.

Sinner then got the crowd going again in the next game when he won a long rally and held his finger to his ear — signaling for more noise inside the Inalpi Arena.

Sinner broke Alcaraz again to close it out when the Spaniard missed a backhand wide — then fell down to the court on his back in relief.

"It was a huge emotion," said Sinner, who was banned for three months earlier in the year after settling a doping case.

Eden turner highlights Gill-Gambhir disconnect

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Kolkata

The pitch row triggered by India's embarrassing 30-run loss to South Africa while chasing a modest 124 has also opened up a larger question — are young skipper Shubman Gill and coach Gautam Gambhir on the same page on what construes ideal home conditions? The collapse, India's lowest failed chase at home, has left behind deeper fault lines than a dry Eden Gardens wicket can conceal. Just a month ago, on the eve of the West Indies Test series in Ahmedabad, Gill had been emphatic that the team has moved away from the philosophy of preferring "rank turners". "...We would be looking to play on wickets that offer both to the batsmen and to the bowlers," Gill had said, outlining a vision of balanced surfaces.

Yet India walked into the series against the reigning World Test champions on a pitch that was the exact opposite of what their captain advocated.

The Eden strip was left unwatered for more than a week and was kept under cover in the evening. The result was a dry, flaky surface that disintegrated from session one in a match that lasted barely eight sessions, producing 38 wickets, with spinners taking 22 and pacers 16. If the team had moved away from rank turners, Eden suggested the opposite. Gambhir was unapologetic and had no qualms declaring that the pitch was exactly what the



Shubman Gill and coach Gautam Gambhir

team management wanted. "If you don't play well this is what happens. There were no demons in the wicket," he asserted.

Ask Aiden Markram, who was undone by a ball from Jasprit Bumrah that leapt from the off-stump line in the first hour of the opening day, or KL Rahul, who was bamboozled by a Marco Jansen delivery that reared up sharply in the fourth innings — and they would disagree.

Gambhir insisted seamers were the ones doing the damage.

"Ultimately, if we had

won this Test match, you wouldn't even be talking about this pitch," he said in his usual combative style.

The messaging gap, however, is evident. Gill had asked for balance. The coach wanted exactly what transpired. The captain didn't even get to play owing to neck spasms that needed hospitalisation, putting him in doubt for the second Test in Guwahati from November 22.

Gill took no part beyond day 1 owing to the neck spasm sustained while playing a slog-sweep boundary off Simon Harmer. In his

absence, Indian batting displayed neither discipline nor adaptability.

India have now lost four of their last six Tests at home — a trend that has shred the aura of invincibility that the team enjoyed in its backyard.

Under Gambhir, India have eight wins from 18 Tests — four of them have come against lowly Bangladesh and West Indies.

The script here resembled India's 0-3 humiliation against New Zealand at home last year, a series in which Ajaz Patel (11 in Mumbai), Mitchell Santner

(13 in Pune) exposed the side's frailties on turning tracks. That series derailed India's World Test Championship run, and the Eden defeat now sits in the same bracket. This loss also flipped India's WTC standings. South Africa climbed to third with two wins in three; India dropped to fourth with just two wins in eight Tests in the new cycle.

From the moment India landed in Kolkata on Tuesday, the focus was obsessively on the pitch. Meetings with curator Sujan Mukherjee became frequent. Historically rich in

memorable Tests — including the iconic 2001 Laxman-Dravid miracle — Eden hosted a surface that drew even Harbhajan Singh's ire.

"They have completely destroyed Test cricket. RIP Test cricket," Harbhajan said.

Cheteshwar Pujara dismissed talk of transition as excuse-making.

"Losing at home cannot be accepted, transition or not," he said.

India had the Test in their pocket at stumps on day two. South Africa were 93/7, effectively 63 ahead, with Temba Bavuma on 29 (78 balls) and debutant Corbin Bosch on 1.

Conditions on a Kolkata morning typically favour seam with cool breeze from the Ganges. Common sense demanded that Bumrah start at the Club House End, where he took a first-innings five-for.

Instead, he was introduced as late as the ninth over from the other end and by then Bosch looked settled, Bavuma had grown roots, and the lead stretched past the psychological 100-run mark.

Indian batting implosion It mirrors tactical confusion, and over-curated pitches, without batting depth to sustain it.

After Guwahati — where they now cannot win the series regardless of result — India will not play at home till the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in January 2027.

Before that, they tour Sri Lanka (August) and New Zealand (October next year) and their task is cut out in the WTC campaign now.

Split captaincy wise amid pressure on Gill: Mukund



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Former India opener Abhinav Mukund believes the pressure on Shubman Gill has reached a critical point as he called for split captaincy in the wake of India's opening Test defeat to South Africa.

With Gill absent in the second innings due to neck spasm, India were bowled out for 93 in their chase of 124. South Africa sealed a 30-run win inside three days for their first Test victory in India in 15 years.

"At home, everyone expects India to win — no questions asked," Mukund said on The Great Indian Cricket Show on Doordarshan.

Gill suffered the spasm during a slog sweep in the first innings and retired hurt on four as his absence compounded India's batting woes. Gill's workload has also become a topic of debate.

Immediately after leading India to a 2-0 Test series sweep over West Indies at home, Gill flew to Australia to captain the ODI side, also featuring in the T20Is before returning to lead India in the opening Test just four days after the Brisbane T20I.

He has been playing non-stop cricket across formats since the IPL and then he was made the Test skipper and led India to a remarkable 2-2 draw in England in a five-match gruelling series.

"I think Shubman has it in him to become an all-format captain, but I don't think India should have an all-format captain anymore," said Mukund, who has played seven Tests.

"Split captaincy is a smart move. Shubman Gill has been given the responsibility to take on the mantle in Tests and he will be under big pressure."

"This is a crucial series," he noted, "and the England series was a big confidence booster for India."

Something is wrong if a strong squad is losing at home: Pujara

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Former India Test batter Cheteshwar Pujara has strongly rejected the notion that India's crushing defeat to South Africa in the first Test at Eden Gardens can be blamed to a transition phase.

Pujara contended that while overseas losses during a rebuilding period can be understood, losing at home — especially with a squad that includes proven first-class performers — is unacceptable.

He pointed to players such as Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Washington Sundar and Shubman Gill as evidence of India's depth and potential in the longer format.

"I don't agree with the view that India's defeat at home can be attributed to a transitional phase. While it's understandable to face setbacks abroad during a transition period, the current Indian side pos-



sesses ample talent and strong first-class records -- players like Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Washington Sundar, and Shubman Gill have all proven themselves," Pujara told Jio Hotstar.

"If the team is losing in home conditions despite this, it suggests that something else is wrong. Had this match been played on a good pitch, India's chances of winning would've been much higher."

While India head coach

Gautam Gambhir did not find any fault with the pitch where wickets fell in heap, Pujara said such tracks are not good for India.

"The nature of such wickets reduces our winning percentage and brings the opposition on a level footing. Even an India A team, given the depth of talent, could challenge South Africa at home. So it's not lack of ability. Therefore, blaming transition for this defeat in India isn't justifiable," he said.

No matter who sits out, SA still wins: Rabada

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Kolkata

South African pacer Kagiso Rabada, who missed the first Test against India here due to a rib injury, is in awe of his team's ability to rebound from setbacks and "find a way to win" no matter who is left out.

The reigning World Test Championship winners completed a 30-run win inside three days over India in the opening Test here defending a modest 123 on Sunday. The win, which was their first on Indian soil in 15 years, gave them an unsailable 1-0 lead in the two-match series.

"No matter who sits out, we can still find a way to win. (Skipper) Temba (Bavuma) has been crucial for us, but he hasn't played every game. I haven't played this game," Rabada said in a video shared by Cricket South Africa.

Bavuma returned to the playing XI after missing their preceding two Tests in Pakistan, where South Africa bounced back to draw the series 1-1.

"That doesn't matter. Whoever is gonna get out on the field, we believe that they can do the job," Rabada said.

The visitors outplayed the hosts on a dry wicket here with variable bounce and turn. Rabada hailed South Africa's individual performances, including skipper Bavuma's match-winning 55 in the second innings that gave the travelling bowlers something to fight for.

"We had a good start in the first innings with Aiden (Markram) and (Ryan) Rickelton. They set the tone. Marco (Jansen) stood up, Bosch (Corbin Bosch) stood up at crucial times. Everyone chipped in and really, that's the hallmark of what this team is made of," Rabada said.

It remains to be seen if Rabada, who had to undergo multiple scans in the lead-up to the first Test, would be available for the second Test to be played in Guwahati from November 22-26.

Rabada said the victory in a low-scoring thriller at Kolkata would rank among



the top three wins for South Africa this season.

"(The victory is) definitely right up there. With the types of wins that we've had this season, it's hard to say, because we've had some pretty epic wins, but this one is definitely (in the) top three," he said.

"That was typical Test cricket (contest)... I mean, just the ebbs and flows of

the game. We found ourselves on the back foot, and then somehow managed to finish on the front foot.

"It was quite nerve-wracking on the side, and I'm just itching to want to get out. I don't know what to say. It's just. It's just, like, an emotional roller coaster, and I'm glad that we finished on the right side," Rabada added.

Pat to captain SRH for third straight IPL season



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Hyderabad

Australia's premier fast bowler Pat Cummins was on Monday appointed as captain of Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) for third consecutive IPL season.

SRH confirmed Cummins role as leader on its 'X' handle with his pictures without divulging details.

Cummins has officially been ruled out of the first Ashes Test in Perth due to his back injury but he is expected to be ready for the

second match in Brisbane. Steven Smith will captain Australia in the opening Test against England which begins on November 21. The second Test in Brisbane begins on December 4.

Cummins took over SRH's captaincy from South African Aiden Markram in 2024 after he was bought by the franchise for a whopping ₹20.50 crore in the 2024 IPL players auction following Australia's success in the World Test Championship and the 2023 50-over World Cup.

FIDE World Cup: Arjun draws easy with black pieces

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Panaji (Goa)

Seeking to qualify for the Candidates' event, India's top-rated Arjun Erigaisi walked off with an easy draw with his Chinese counterpart Wei Yi in the first game of the quarterfinals on Monday.

On what turned out to be an easy day for Arjun, Alexander Donchenko finally realised about things being

rosy everyday. The German had been on a dream run which is likely to end now as Nodirbek Yakubboev won an exciting game one with white pieces. If Yakubboev is able to hold the German in the next game to a draw he will be through to the semifinal.

For Arjun the opening was important and it did not pose any issues. The young Indian generation is re-writing the theoretical aspects of the

IN THE ONLY OTHER REMAINING MATCH SAMUEL SHANKLAND OF UNITED STATES ALSO PLAYED OUT A DRAW WITH RUSSIAN ANDREY ESIPENKO

game and Arjun is no exception. As it turned out of a routine Ruy Lopez theory, Arjun equalised with a thematic pawn sacrifice earlier

in the middle game.

When Wei Yi returned the favour the position was already dead-equal and the players shook hands to split the point in a mere 31 moves.

Javokhir Sindarov of Uzbekistan played out a draw with Jose Eduardo Martinez Alcantara of Mexico in a well contested game. The Uzbek was never under real threat and could be seen as a potential semifinalist out of this contest. In the only other

remaining match Samuel Shankland of United States also played out a draw with Russian Andrey Esipenko.

Complete results quarter-finals game 1: Javokhir Sindarov (Uzb) drew with Jose Eduardo Martinez Alcantara (Mex); Wei Yi (Chn) drew with Arjun Erigaisi (Ind); Sam Shankland (Usa) drew with Andrey Esipenko (Fid); Nodirbek Yakubboev (Uzb) beat Alexander Donchenko (Ger).

India pins hopes on Satwik, Chirag as Lakshya, Prannoy seek form

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Sydney

With India's singles stars still searching for rhythm, the spotlight will once again be on Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty as the top-seeded men's doubles pair eyes its first title of the season at the Australian Open Super 500 starting here on Tuesday.



The Asian Games champions have been the bright spots in an otherwise troubled season for Indian badminton, weaving together a second World Championships bronze and back-to-back runner-up finishes at the Hong Kong Super 500 and China Masters Super 750. The two, who spent 18 weeks as world No. 1, had slipped to No.

27 in May but fought their way back to No. 3. They will be eager to put together another strong run ahead of the World Tour Finals. The Commonwealth Games champions will open against Chinese Taipei's Chang Ko-Chi and Po Li-Wei.

Bruised by injuries and lean patches but intermittently shining with flashes of brilliance, India's top singles

stars, including Lakshya Sen and HS Prannoy, will hope to find the consistent rhythm that has eluded them for much of the year.

Lakshya seemed to have rediscovered his form with a final appearance at the Hong Kong Open after enduring a run of poor results since his heartbreaking fourth-place finish at the Paris Olympics.