



Double engine govt helps AP secure massive investments: Union Minister

IFTU stages protest against 10-hour work shift



BLOs boycott SIR work across Kerala after officer's suicide



Ukraine to buy 100 Rafales from France



Eden Turner highlights Gill-Gambhir disconnect

PIONEER IN SHORT

GUIDELINES FOR TRANSFER OF VILLAGE, WARD SECRETARIAT STAFF RELEASED

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FULL REPORT ON P2

STATE GOVT GEARING UP TO RELEASE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

The State government is gearing up to release the second instalment of financial assistance under the Annadata Sukhibhava scheme on November 19. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu will formally release the funds at a state-level programme scheduled to be held in Kamalapuram of Kadapa district. On the same day, the Central government will also release the latest instalment of the PM-Kisan aid, ensuring a combined credit of Rs 7,000 to farmers—Rs 2,000 from the Centre...

FULL REPORT ON P3

SC TERMS LIQUOR TETRA PACKS DANGEROUS AND DECEPTIVE

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...

FULL REPORT ON P4

GUNMEN ABDUCT 25 GIRLS FROM SCHOOL IN NIGERIA

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...

FULL REPORT ON P8

QUOTE OF THE DAY



“THOUGH THE PARTY WAS DEFEATED IN THE JUBILEE HILLS BYE-ELECTION, IT DOESN'T MEAN THAT IT IS OUT AND IT HAS NO STRONG POLITICAL GROUND

— E. T. RAJENDER, TG MALKAJGIRI MP

Ousted Bangladesh PM Hasina sentenced to death

PNS ■ Dhaka

Bangladesh's deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina was on Monday 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.

In its verdict that followed a months-long trial, the country's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) described the 78-year-old Awami League leader as the "mastermind and principal architect" of the violent repression that killed hundreds of protesters. It also handed the death sentence to former home minister



Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal on similar charges. Hasina has been living in India since she fled Bangladesh on August 5 last year in the face of the massive protests. She was earlier declared a fugitive by the court.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

Bangladesh's interim govt urges India to extradite Hasina

Bangladesh's interim government on Monday urged India to immediately extradite deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, hours after a special tribunal sentenced them to death in absentia for "crimes against humanity". "We urge the Indian government to immediately

hand over these two convicted individuals to the Bangladeshi authorities," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement, according to the state-run BSS news agency. It said the existing bilateral extradition agreement between Bangladesh and India marks the transfer of the two convicts as a compulsory responsibility for New Delhi.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

India committed to best interests of Bangladesh people: MEA

PNS ■ New Delhi

Hours after a special tribunal in Bangladesh sentenced ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina to death, India on Monday said it noted the verdict and that it will engage constructively with all stakeholders considering peace, democracy and stability in the neighbouring country. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said India remains committed to the best interests of people of Bangladesh. Hasina was found guilty of crimes against humanity by the country's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) and it sentenced her to death.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

PROMOTION OF INFRA INVESTMENT

RITES, AP Economic Development Board sign MoU

PNS ■ New Delhi

RITES Limited has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Andhra Pradesh Economic Development Board under which it will provide consultancy services to facilitate investments in infrastructure and industrial development across key sectors in the state. Rail India Technical and Economic Service (RITES) Limited is a leading transport infrastructure consultancy and engineering firm under the Railway Ministry. AP Economic Development Board serves as the state's premier agency for promoting investments and enabling ease of doing business.

CONTINUED ON >> P2



42 pilgrims from Telangana dead in Madina bus accident

PNS ■ Hyderabad/Jeddah

Forty-two Indian Umrah pilgrims from Telangana were among 44 people killed in a collision involving their bus and a fuel tanker near Madina in Saudi Arabia in the wee hours of Monday, people familiar with the matter

said. It has been confirmed by local authorities that there is one Indian survivor and he is undergoing medical treatment, they said. It is learnt that two local facilitators on board the bus were also killed in the accident. The mortal remains of the deceased

have been transferred to King Fahad Hospital, King Salman Hospital and Al Miqat Hospital, and officials from the Indian mission in Jeddah are coordinating with the local authorities to handle the situation, the people cited above said.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

Pawan hails Police for nabbing movie piracy mastermind

PNS ■ Amaravati

Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan on Monday congratulated the Hyderabad city police for arresting the alleged mastermind behind a movie piracy network.

Telangana Police had arrested Ravi, a key accused who had allegedly uploaded pirated versions of movies



on his website from abroad, causing significant loss to film producers. He was held

and shutting down these major piracy websites is a welcome development," said Kalyan in a post on X.

He further said that filmmakers have been finding it increasingly difficult to curb piracy networks at a time when releasing a movie itself has become a massive undertaking for the industry.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

Giddalur MRO office put up for sale using OLX ap

PNS ■ Ongole

There is a website called OLX where people can sell or buy second-hand items.

If someone wants to sell anything there, they need to upload a photo of the item and fill in the details, including a suitable price. However, a strange incident took place in Prakasam district. Someone put up the Giddalur Mandal Revenue Office (MRO) office for sale on OLX. They even fixed the price at just Rs 20,000.

The twist here is that the officials themselves had no idea that their office was listed for sale. Once they

came to know, they were shocked, and an inquiry was ordered. An unknown person posted the Giddalur MRO office for sale on OLX for just Rs 20,000. This post went viral on social media. Eventually, the matter reached the attention of



the Giddalur MRO. Shocked, the Tahsildar immediately lodged a complaint with the police. Based on the MRO's complaint, the police registered a case and launched an investigation. They have started searching for the person who posted the advertisement.

Such incidents happened before as well.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

Massive DWCRRA 'loan scam' uncovered

Police in Gudivada register cases against resourcespersons

PNS ■ Gudivada

A major financial fraud involving DWCRRA funds has come to light in Gudivada, where Resource Persons (RPs) allegedly created fake self-help groups and siphoned off several crores of rupees.

The Gudivada II Town Police Station has registered cases of cheating and forgery, and FIRs are said to have been filed against more than 10 individuals. According to preliminary reports, RPs operating in the Gudivada branch of HDFC Bank took advantage of fabricated DWCRRA groups to



obtain nearly Rs 3 crore in loans. Between 60 and 70 fake groups are believed to have been created as part of the racket. Officials from the Municipal MEPMA division and certain bank staff are also alleged to have collaborated in the scam.

Information has emerged that similar fraudulent groups may exist in Bank of

India, Canara Bank, and Indian Bank branches in Gudivada. Some of the accused are reported to have built houses or even travelled abroad using the embezzled funds. The scam exploited schemes intended for poverty alleviation. RPs allegedly secured loans by bribing officials and misusing identities of women already registered in existing DWCRRA groups. In many cases, women who were already part of a group had their names used again to draw additional loans under the guise of "DWCRRA personal loans."

CONTINUED ON >> P2



Kings Infra signs Rs 2,500-cr aquaculture tech park deal with AP

PNS ■ New Delhi

Kings Infra Ventures Ltd on Monday announced signing of an agreement with the Andhra Pradesh government to develop a Rs 2,500-crore aquaculture technology park near Srikakulam.

The 500-acre facility will be India's first AI-driven aquaculture park, Kings Infra said in a statement, positioning the southern state as a hub for technology-enabled sustainable seafood production.

Kerala-based Kings Infra will invest Rs 500 crore directly in core infrastructure, processing facilities and research and development, with another Rs 2,000 crore expected from ancillary industries, small businesses and renewable energy ventures, the company said.

As per the memorandum of understanding, signed during the recent CII partnership summit held at Visakhapatnam, the project will house hatcheries, indoor farming systems, processing lines

and a marine bio-actives division, all integrated through BlueTechOS, the company's proprietary artificial intelligence operating system to be built and operated from nearby Visakhapatnam.

The park will train 5,000 aquaculture professionals over five years and support multi-species cultivation including shrimp, seabass, grouper and tilapia for year-round production and export. "This Technology Park will unlock new frontiers for the Blue Economy, generate significant economic and employment opportunities, and set global benchmarks for responsible food production," Kings Infra Ventures Ltd Chairman and Managing Director Shaji Baby John said. State MSME Minister Kondapalli Srinivas said the government would provide single-window clearance for land identification and all required approvals.

Andhra Pradesh is India's largest aquaculture-producing state.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

Complacency will not be tolerated: CS to welfare hostel officials

PNS ■ Amaravati

Chief Secretary K Vijayanand expressed serious displeasure over the repeated incidents in welfare hostels across the State. Reviewing public perception reports and the performance of various departments at the RTGS on Monday, he questioned the functioning of hostel wardens and the accountability of officials. Referring to the recent incident at the Rajendrapalem Tribal Girls Ashram School in Alluri Sitarama Raju district, where several students fell ill, the Chief Secretary said such

episodes were unacceptable. "What exactly is happening in these hostels? Why are these incidents recurring? Why are strict actions not being taken?" he asked officials sternly.

Vijayanand pointing out those issues like sanitation, hygienic food, and monitoring students' health were being neglected. "If wardens are not ensuring basic hygiene and safety, what are they doing? Are they not concerned at all? And what are you, the supervising officials, doing without initiating action?" he remarked sharply. He emphasised that



daily water quality tests must be conducted without fail. "All facilities required for water testing are available everywhere. Why are you not using them?" he asked.

Double engine govt helps AP secure massive investments: Union Miniser

PNS ■ Bhimavaram

Union Minister of State for Steel and Heavy Industries Bhupathiraju Srinivasa Varma stated that industrialists have gained complete confidence in the 'double-engine' government in Andhra Pradesh, leading to flow of investment into the state during the CII Summit held in Visakhapatnam.

Speaking at a press conference organised at the BJP office in Bhimavaram on Monday, he said that the 30th CII Summit held in Visakhapatnam was highly successful. He mentioned that industrialists came forward to invest more than Rs 13 lakh crore across 12 sectors, signing 613 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs). These investments are expected to generate around 16.25 lakh jobs in the state. He noted that the highest number of investments were in the



Union Minister of State for Steel and Heavy Industries Bhupathiraju Srinivasa Varma speaking at a press conference in Bhimavaram on Monday

energy and industrial sectors.

He also highlighted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been extending full support for the development of the State and has sanctioned lakhs of crores of rupees for the creation of infrastructure.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's visits to countries like Singapore, UAE, and London, as well as Minister N Lokesh's tour of

Australia to invite industrialists yielded positive results, he added. Even industries that had previously left the state due to the approach of the former government have now signed MoUs to return, Srinivasa Varma revealed.

Srinivasa Varma expressed satisfaction that the steel sector he represents has brought significant advantages to Andhra Pradesh. A massive package of Rs 11,500

crore has been secured from the Central government to bring the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant back onto a profitable path.

He stated that ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India has now come forward to establish a steel plant with an investment of about Rs 1.4 lakh crore at Mutukuru in Anakapalli district. Additionally, he mentioned that another Greenfield Integrated Steel Plant is being set up with an investment of Rs 8,570.50 crore at Kella village in Gummalaksh mipuram mandal of Vizianagaram district. The establishment of these plants will contribute significantly to the state's development and generate employment, the minister said. He added that steel production plays a crucial role in the country's GDP, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is giving high priority to increasing the steel production capacity in India.

TIFR urges people not to meddle with scientific balloons

PNS ■ Amaravati

The Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) on Monday appealed to the people in the State to refrain from meddling with scientific balloons launched from Hyderabad which may land across various districts in the state.

TIFR, under the auspices of the Department of Atomic Energy and ISRO, scheduled to conduct around 10 scientific balloon flights between October 25 and December 31 for high-altitude research.

"The balloon and instrument payloads may land in various districts of Andhra Pradesh... Public, especially villagers, are requested not to tamper with or open any found parachutes, cages, or scientific instruments, as they contain extremely sensitive scientific equipment," said an official press release.

These polyethylene balloons, filled with hydrogen



and carrying sensitive payloads, will ascend to altitudes of up to 42 km before releasing their instruments, it said.

The payloads will descend using large coloured parachutes after completing experiments

and may drift up to 350 km along the Visakhapatnam-Hyderabad-Sholapur belt depending on wind conditions.

TIFR noted that the instruments may land in districts like East and West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, Prakasam, Kurnool, Chittoor, Anantapur, Nellore, Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Kadapa and Visakhapatnam.

The equipment is completely safe unless forcibly opened, said the press release.

Public are advised to inform the nearest police station, post office or district authorities upon finding such payloads to enable their prompt retrieval.

Scientists will collect the payloads and reward the finder and reimburse communication or travel expenses, it said.

However, no reward will be offered if the equipment is opened or tampered with, the press release added.

Nitish set to take oath as Bihar CM for record 10th term

PNS ■ Patna

The process for the formation of the new NDA government in Bihar began on Monday after Chief Minister Nitish Kumar met Governor Arif Mohammed Khan and recommended the dissolution of the outgoing assembly with effect from November 19.

Kumar, the JD(U) supremo, will again meet the governor on Wednesday and tender his resignation along with a letter of support from all other constituents of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). JD(U) sources said that Kumar would be elected legislature party leader on November 19, a day before taking oath as Bihar CM for a record 10th time at a programme at Gandhi Maidan in Patna.

Other ministers of the new cabinet are also expected to be sworn in during the programme.

Guidelines for transfer of village, ward secretariat staff released

PNS ■ Amaravati

The State government has delivered good news to village and ward Secretariat employees. The government has issued new guidelines for inter-district transfers on spouse grounds. The Village and Ward Secretariat Department released an order on Monday.

According to the latest guidelines, these transfers will be done only on a request basis. Applicants

seeking transfers must submit their applications online. Furthermore, a transfer request will be considered only if either the husband or the wife is a government employee. The guidelines clearly state that spouse-ground transfers do not apply if the spouse is a private employee.

Also, the old districts, which served as the original recruitment units, will continue to remain as the transfer units. Employees who

have disciplinary cases are not eligible for inter-district transfers on spouse grounds. Applications of those who have ACB or Vigilance cases will also not be considered.

There are several rules for the inter-district transfer process of Village and Ward Secretariat employees. A transfer will be granted only if there is a vacancy. The employee who gets transferred will be placed in the last rank of that district.

Candidates will be arranged in serial order based on merit. In case of a tie, service seniority and date of birth will be taken as criteria. When applications are submitted online, they will be certified by the MPDO.

A temporary seniority list will be posted on the portal. If there are any objections, they may be uploaded online. After reviewing them, the HoDs will publish the final seniority list on the portal.

Naturally, ruling parties win byelections: Etela

Says delay in announcing the candidate led to defeat in JH

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Going deep into the causes for the defeat of the BJP candidate in the recently held Jubilee Hills byelection, the party's Malkajgiri MP Etela Rajender said, "The party announced its candidate very late. The delay in announcing the candidate's name was the main reason for the BJP's defeat in the election. All other parties started the election process six months before the poll".

"Though the party was defeated in the Jubilee Hills bye-election, it doesn't mean that it is out and it has no strong political ground," Rajender asserted.

Saying that anything can happen in elections, he recalled that the Congress party, which lost deposits in the Hujurabad and Dubbaka bye elections, had won in the assembly elections. Revealing that after the formation of Telangana, the ruling party won seven bye elections out of nine bye-elections held. In the two bye elections, the BJP had won, Rajender said. He alleged that the ruling party misused power by distributing money and sarees in the Jubilee Hills bye-election. Slamming the government for the pathetic conditions in Hyderabad, Rajender stressed there is an urgent need to speed up the drainage repair works,



keeping in view the growing population. Traffic regulation, improving sanitation, also need immediate attention, said Rajender, adding that he would meet the Chief Minister soon to explain the problem that the people are facing.

EXTREMELY HEART-WRENCING INCIDENT BJP chief Ramchander expresses shock over the bus accident

PNS ■ Hyderabad

BJP State President N Ramchander Rao expressed shock over the bus accident in Saudi Arabia in which Umrah pilgrims belonging to Telangana state were killed. Rao, in a condolence message, expressed deep shock over the incident, which plunged the state into deep sorrow. He stated that the tragic deaths of passengers, including residents of Telangana, in the horrific bus accident in Saudi Arabia, were an extremely heart-wrenching incident.

The victims belonging to Telangana were on Umrah pilgrimage, and were subjected to such a terrible accident that it has

drowned their families in an ocean of grief, he said.

Following the accident, the Union Ministry of External Affairs has initiated swift action. The Indian Embassy has already started operations for the identification

of the bodies, relief measures, and necessary coordination with Saudi authorities. He urged the Telangana government to increase coordination with the center and expedite all necessary relief measures, including the repatriation of the bodies. Reports reaching here stated that 45 pilgrims were burned alive when their bus, in which they were travelling, met with an accident with an oil tanker.



Ousted Bangladesh...

Hours after the verdict, Bangladesh's foreign ministry demanded that Hasina and former home minister Kamal be immediately handed over under an extradition treaty in view of their sentencing. "We call on the Indian government to immediately hand over these two convicted individuals to the Bangladeshi authorities," the foreign ministry said in a statement in Bengali.

"This is also a duty for India, as per the extradition treaty existing between the two countries," it said.

"It would be an extremely unfriendly act and a contempt for justice if any other country were to grant asylum to these individuals convicted of crimes against humanity," the ministry said.

In her reaction, Hasina said the judgement has been made by a "rigged tribunal established and presided over by an unelected government with no democratic mandate."

"They are biased and politically motivated. In their distasteful call for the death penalty, they reveal the brazen and murderous intent of extremist figures within the interim government to remove Bangladesh's last elected prime minister, and to nullify the Awami League as a political force," she said in a statement.

Hasina said she was not afraid to face her 'accusers' in a proper tribunal where the evidence can be weighed and tested fairly.

"That is why I have repeat-

edly challenged the interim government to bring these charges before the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague."

The verdict comes months before parliamentary elections in Bangladesh. Hasina's Awami League party has been barred from contesting the elections scheduled to be held in February.

Reading out the judgment before a heavily guarded courtroom in Dhaka, the ICT said the prosecution proved beyond a reasonable doubt that Hasina was behind the deadly crackdown on student-led protests in July-August last year.

Hasina was handed the death penalty for ordering the use of deadly force against unarmed protesters, making inflammatory statements and authorising operations that led to the killing of several students in Dhaka and surrounding areas.

In recent media interviews, Hasina described the ICT as a "kangaroo court" run by her opponents. UN rights office report had earlier estimated that up to 1,400 people were killed during the month-long agitation, known as the July Uprising.

There were some incidents of violence after the court delivered the verdict.

Security agencies used batons and fired tear gas to disperse protesters who tried to demolish the house of Hasina's father and Bangladesh's founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Dhaka.

The ICT, originally set up to try hardened collaborators of

Pakistani forces during the 1971 Liberation War, was amended by the current administration to bring leaders of the past regime, including Hasina, under its jurisdiction.

Most Awami League leaders have either been arrested or have fled the country since the collapse of the Hasina regime.

By inciting violence through provocative statements and taking no punitive measures against the perpetrators who attacked protesting students, Hasina committed crimes against humanity, the ICT said.

She also ordered the use of helicopters and lethal weapons on protestors, it said.

Bangladesh's...

The ministry also said that granting shelter to individuals convicted of crimes against humanity would be considered an "unfriendly" act and a disregard for justice.

The International Crimes Tribunal-Bangladesh (ICT-BD) on Monday sentenced Hasina and Kamal to death in absentia for "crimes against humanity" during last year's student uprising.

Hasina has been living in India since she fled Bangladesh on August 5 last year in the face of the massive protests. She was earlier declared a fugitive by the court. Khan is also believed to be in India.

In December last year, Bangladesh sent India a note verbale, requesting Hasina's

extradition. India confirmed receipt of the formal diplomatic note but did not comment further.

The foreign ministry's statement said that handing over the two is "a mandatory obligation for India" as per the extradition treaty between the two countries.

India committed...

Hasina's aide and former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal was also given a death sentence on similar charges. Hasina, the Awami League leader, has been living in India since she fled Bangladesh on August 5 last year in the face of the massive protests.

"India has noted the verdict announced by the 'International Crimes Tribunal of Bangladesh' concerning former prime minister Sheikh Hasina," the MEA said. "As a close neighbour, India remains committed to the best interests of the people of Bangladesh, including in peace, democracy, inclusion and stability in that country," it said. "We will always engage constructively with all stakeholders to that end," the MEA added.

However, it did not comment on Dhaka's call to extradite Hasina.

RITES, AP Economic...

"Under the MoU, RITES will extend its technical expertise across key infrastructure consultancy domains, including feasibility studies, detailed project reports (DPRS), project

management consultancy, bid management and third party inspection and audit services," the RITES said in a press note.

"The collaboration spans a wide range of sectors such as transport systems, ports, waterways, power, water and wastewater, buildings and industrial infrastructure, among others," it added.

42 pilgrims from...

The accident took place nearly 40 km from Madina at around 11 pm local time (1:30 am, IST), the people said. The bus had stopped on the side of a road, and during this stoppage, an oil tanker collided with the bus, resulting in an explosion, they said. Saudi Authorities are currently investigating the circumstances that led to the accident. The bus was learnt to be on its way from Mecca to Madina. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and other leaders conveyed condolences to the families of the deceased.

The Indian mission in Jeddah has set up a 24x7 control room to coordinate assistance and sent officials to the site of the accident.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday expressed grief over the tragic bus accident in Saudi Arabia that resulted in the deaths of many Umrah pilgrims from neighbouring Telangana.

YSRCP supremo YS Jagan Mohan Reddy expressed shock over the incident.

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy expressed shock over the accident. His office said he has instructed officials to contact the Ministry of External Affairs and the Saudi Embassy regarding this incident and to immediately undertake necessary relief measures.

Pawan hails...

Appreciating the efforts of the Hyderabad Cyber Crime Police team, the deputy chief minister said the operation was successful at a time when piracy gangs had grown bold enough to openly challenge enforcement agencies. The Hyderabad city police commissioner VC Sajjanar's initiative to control betting apps has gained traction across several states, strengthening enforcement and coordination among agencies, he said. The measures taken under Sajjanar's leadership, he said, will benefit not only Telugu cinema but the broader Indian film industry, he added.

Giddaluru MRO office...

On the outskirts of Hyderabad, some land grabbers uploaded ads on OLX claiming to sell lands at cheap rates—complete with photos, land measurements, and GPS pictures.

Massive DWCRA...

Reports indicate that women who agreed to be part of fake groups were

paid between Rs 10,000 and Rs 20,000 in exchange for their Aadhaar, PAN and other documents, which were then used to create fraudulent groups. Each group reportedly secured loans of up to Rs 20 lakh. In one ward, an RP allegedly distributed only Rs 2 lakh of a Rs 20 lakh loan among the actual members and pocketed the remaining Rs 18 lakh. In another case, common funds were diverted to the RP's family members, leaving the women without access to their own savings. Local women allege that the scam has been running for several years without action from authorities. It is claimed that RPs routinely collect bribes of Rs 2,000 to Rs 4,000 from each woman even for genuine loans, while paying beneficiaries small amounts for identity documents used to create fake groups and keeping the bulk of the loan amounts. Many women in several wards have been unable to secure community loans or Srisidhi loans due to the misuse of funds.

While women in other districts have been able to use DWCRA savings to start small businesses and improve their livelihoods, Gudivada's

system has been plagued by widespread corruption. Aside from a few exceptions, many RPs have allegedly made loan fraud their primary objective, operating under what locals describe as a "take the loan, pocket the lakhs" strategy. Each RP reportedly controls 25 to 30 groups and collects Rs 2,500 to Rs 4,000 per member for loan processing. Women say they are threatened with denial of future loans if they refuse to pay these amounts.

Kings Infra...

The company reported a 22.36 per cent year-on-year increase in consolidated net profit to Rs 4.24 crore in the second quarter of the 2025-26 fiscal. Total income rose to Rs 43.45 crore from Rs 30.56 crore in the said review period. "Growth during the quarter was driven primarily by our aquaculture division, supported by strong order flows from Europe, Vietnam, and China," the chairman said in a regulatory filing. Kings Infra Ventures, founded in 1987 and listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange, operates across aquaculture, seafood exports and infrastructure development.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
"E" PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
No. 15/2025-26 Dt: 14.11.2025
1. Name of Work: Re-Construction of Vaddabelli out fall sluice @ 210-4, Barchala Sarita OFS @ Km 214-6 and Katteli OFS @ Km. 244-6 on Vinayachayam Right Bank in Lalukuru, Aduru under Gogannaram Village limits of Mandavada Mandal and Rajakota OFS @ Km. 56-230 on Narsala Left Flood Bank in Andarav. 2. Limits of Barchala Sarita Mandali in G. R. R. Andarav Koneerwa District. Value of work (approx) and time for completion: 1357.43 Lakhs (24 months). 2. Bid Document available Date and Time: 17.11.2025, 11.00 AM to 01.12.2025, 11.00 AM. Further details can be seen at 'e' tender portal at: <https://tender.approcurement.gov.in> Sd/-: K. Gopinath, Superintending Engineer, DPR NO. 1806/CL/ADVT/H1/2022-23, Dt: 17.11.2025. Irrigation Circle, Odalawaram.



ANNADATA SUKHIBHAVA SCHEME

State govt gearing up to release financial assistance to farmers

PM-Kisan Sukhibhava programme funds will also released simultaneously

RAVI KUMAR BOPPANA
PNS ■ Amaravati

The State government is gearing up to release the second instalment of financial assistance under the Annadata Sukhibhava scheme on November 19. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu will formally release the funds at a state-level programme scheduled to be held in Kamalapuram of Kadapa district. On the same day, the Central government will also release the latest instalment of the PM-Kisan aid, ensuring a combined credit of Rs 7,000 to farmers—Rs 2,000 from the Centre and Rs 5,000 from the State.

A total of 46 lakh farmers in State are expected to benefit from the second instalment. The government noted that delivering financial security to farmers and supporting cultivation were

key promises made during the elections. As part of the coalition government's Super Six guarantees, the integrated PM-Kisan – Annadata Sukhibhava programme was introduced. Under this scheme, every eligible farmer will receive Rs 20,000 annually from the State in three instalments, in addition to the Centre's annual support of Rs 6,000. The State will contribute Rs 14,000 each year—Rs 5,000 in the first two instalments and Rs 4,000 in the third—directly to farmers' bank accounts.

The PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi, administered by the Union government, disburses Rs 6,000 per year to farmers in three instalments of Rs 2,000 each, released every four months. The first instalment (April–July), second (August–November), and third (December–March) are credited as per a fixed schedule.



The Annadata Sukhibhava scheme applies only to one individual per family. Farmers have been advised to ensure their Aadhaar numbers are correctly linked in the Webland database by contacting revenue officials if discrepancies arise. Those whose names are missing from the beneficiary list have been asked to approach local agriculture centres for assistance.

Meanwhile, thousands of

eligible farmers across several districts have not yet received scheme benefits due to technical issues. Problems such as incomplete e-KYC, lack of Aadhaar–bank account linkage, and inactive bank accounts have prevented timely credit of funds. To avoid exclusion, the government has offered another chance for such farmers to submit corrected documents and complete pending ver-

fications.

Various reasons were cited for rejection. They include cases where the landowner had passed away but legal heir documentation was pending; land parcels caught in legal disputes or registered as notional accounts in Webland; Aadhaar mismatches during land-data linkage; and ineligibility of individuals earning more than Rs 20,000 per month, current or former public representatives, and those cultivating aquaculture or non-agricultural land. Individuals holding less than 10 cents of land, minors owning agricultural land, and those who had not completed e-KYC were also excluded.

The government stated that all genuine farmers who rectify their records and resubmit necessary documents will be extended the benefits in the upcoming cycle.

Steel Plant workers take to streets against new pay rules

PNS ■ Visakhapatnam

Workers at the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP) have once again launched a protest. A large number of workers gathered in front of the administration building and staged a sit-in protest, leading to tense situations in the area.

The workers demanded that the recently issued circular, stating that wages would be paid based on production, be withdrawn immediately. They also expressed displeasure over the reported comments made by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. Additionally, workers made allegations against the plant management, saying that the management was pointing fingers at workers to cover up its own failures.

The workers accused the VSP management of completely neglecting the supply of quality raw materials and the repair of machinery. They stated that it was unfair for the management to blame workers for their own shortcomings. They questioned whether Ministers and MPs had reduced their salaries when the Centre failed to fulfil the assurances it had given regarding the nation's economy. The workers alleged that efforts were being made to provoke them and suppress the movement. Meanwhile, due to the protests, heavy police security has been deployed around the plant premises.

Recently, the plant management issued a circular linking workers' wages to production. According to the circular, starting from November, wages would be paid based on the plant's production targets. The management mentioned that even though full salaries were paid until September 2025, production targets



were not met, causing financial strain on the plant. Henceforth, full wages would be paid only if targets were achieved; otherwise, deductions would be made. Daily targets would be set for various departments. Notably, special rules were

included for the Materials Management (MM) Department, stating that MM employees' salaries would also depend on the plant's average production. Workers and unions expressed strong anger over the management's decision.

Steel plant will not be privatised: Govt

PNS ■ Amaravati

The State government has made a key announcement regarding Visakhapatnam Steel Plant. It clarified that the plant will not be privatised and that it will continue its journey towards progress. The government expressed confidence that the Steel Plant will be strengthened with the support of the NDA government.

It stated that during last the 17 months since the coalition government came to power, the Centre and the State together have provided Rs 15,000 crore in assistance. The government also explained that the overall capacity utilisation has increased from 48 per cent to 79 per cent in these 17 months. It claimed that no other public sector company in the country has received such a high financial support.

Recently, the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant management issued a circu-

lar, which has caused concern among workers. According to labour unions, the circular states that salaries will be paid based on production levels.

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has already announced that the steel plant will not be privatised. However, with the new orders issued by the management, the controversy has now resurfaced. Labour unions say that for the months of September and October, the management paid employees their full salaries.

But from November onwards, the management is saying that salary payments will be different, according to the unions. The unions express objection to the management's order that salaries will be paid strictly in proportion to production. They claim that the order specifies that only if 100 per cent of the production target is met, employees will receive 100 per cent of their salaries.

IBOMMA CONTROVERSY

Ravi challenged govt, lands behind bars: Father

PNS ■ Visakhapatnam

Many people may not recognise the name Immadhi Ravi. But everyone knows the owner of iBomma TV. That is Immadhi Ravi. iBomma became famous across the two Telugu states because of piracy movies. However, Hyderabad police recently arrested iBomma's operator, Immadhi Ravi. He was arrested by the Cybercrime police, and the issue has now become a hot topic in both Telugu states.

Immadhi Ravi is a native of Visakhapatnam. He studied up to BSc Computers. His father's name is Appa Rao, a former BSNL employee. Reacting to the background of his son Ravi, Appa Rao expressed his feelings. He said he came to know about the arrest only when relatives informed him.

"He left Visakhapatnam 15 years ago. I never thought he would get into such foolish activities. I educated him up to his degree, and after that, I thought he was



living his own life somewhere. We don't have much property. I don't know which countries he went to after leaving Visakhapatnam. I only know he was in Hyderabad. After some days, he married a girl he liked. Later, something happened and they got divorced. He told us only during the divorce. That's all I know. What Ravi did is wrong. Apart from feeling sad about it, what else can we do?" Appa Rao expressed his distress. Appa Rao said: "My boy did wrong. If you challenge the government, will they keep quiet? They will punish

him according to the rules of the law. I won't say 'punish him,' and I won't ask them to 'let him go.'

Police have registered cases against Ravi under the IT Act and Copyright Act. They also said he harmed the film industry through piracy and promoted betting apps. Hyderabad police revealed that Ravi created a total of 65 mirror websites. They found 21,000 movies stored in his hard disk, and stated he earned around Rs 20 crore through piracy. They also mentioned that he had the personal data of 50 lakh people.

NRI donates vehicle to district police

PNS ■ kakinda

An NRI doctor has donated a vehicle worth Rs 14 lakh to the district police for using it for patrolling and emergency purposes.

Dr Divya Sunitha Raj, director Neo Institute of Medical sciences and SHE foundation handed over the vehicle to the SP Bindu Madhav in presence of district Collector Shan Mohan at a brief event held at the

district police office here on Monday.

Both the Collector and the SP flagged off the vehicle and appreciated Dr Divya Sunitha Raj for her concern for society safety and peoples welfare.

Additional SP Armed Reserve S. Srinivas, DSP special Branch KVV Satyanarayana, AR DSP V Sriharirao, Circle Inspectors in the city were among those attended.

IFTU stages protest against 10-hour work shift

PNS ■ kakinda

Workers owing allegiance to the IFTU affiliated unions staged a sit-in in front of the Collectorate here on Monday protesting against increasing of working hours from eight to ten hours and demanding abolition of the GO No. 23 issued by the government.

They raised slogans demanding scrapping of the GO no :23,regularisation of the services of contract, outsour-

ing and workers in APCOS. They also demanded Anganwadi, ASHA, Midday meal scheme workers to be identified as the government employees. Their other demands include constitution of welfare Boards to Auto, motor and Hamali sectors, reinstatement of 5400 retrenched Vizag steel plant workers, permission to be denied to Google, Data and other industries which are harmful to the environment .IFTU state vice presi-



Workers owing allegiance to the IFTU staging a protest in the front of the Collectorate in Kakinada on Monday

They raised slogans demanding scrapping of the GO no : 23,regularisation of the services of contract, outsourcing and workers in APCOS

dent J Venkateswerlu who addressed them alleged that both the state and central governments were acting against the workers interests and patronizing the corporate companies.

MP urges SCR GM to ensure speedy developmental works in Palnadu

PNS ■ Narasaraope

Narasaraopet MP Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu met South Central Railway (SCR) General Manager Sanjay Kumar Srivastava in Secunderabad on Monday, seeking immediate action on several long-pending railway issues concerning Palnadu district. The MP submitted a detailed representation outlining key demands and urged the Railways to expedite necessary measures for public convenience and safety.

During the meeting, the MP requested the speedy initiation of tender processes and early launching of works for the sanctioned Railway Overbridges (ROBs) at LC No. 27 in Pedakurapadu, LC No. 40 in Sattenapalli, and LC No. 81 near Tummalachervu in Piduguralla mandal. He also appealed for the approval of a new ROB at LC No. 53 in Bellamkonda.

Another significant request was the relocation of LC Gate No. 294 between Girijapadu and Merikapudi villages by 150 metres to enhance safety and ease traffic movement. He called for the construction of a footpath behind the Macherla Railway Station, proper drainage facilities, and repairs to the damaged R&B road leading to the station.



The MP further sought improved basic amenities at Gurazala and Rentachintala railway stations. He urged the Railways to add additional coaches to the Macherla–Vijayawada MEMU (Train No. 67228), citing heavy passenger traffic.

He requested stoppages for key trains at Piduguralla Railway Station, including Train No. 12795/12796 (Employees Special), Train No. 17221/17222 LTT Express, and Train No. 12755/12756 Bhavnagar Express. The MP also appealed for stoppages for the Palnadu Express (Train No. 12747/12748) and Delta Express (Train No. 17645/17646) at Pedakurapadu Railway Station. Additionally, he urged enhanced safety measures for late-night passengers travelling through Palnadu region.

LIQUOR SCAM

Rs 5.80 cr tainted money stolen: SIT

PNS ■ Amaravati

An unexpected development has emerged in the multi-crore liquor scam. It has come to light that out of the bribe money collected by a group from liquor distilleries, as much as Rs 5.80 crore, which was stashed in a warehouse, was reportedly stolen. SIT investigations revealed that the individuals, who allegedly stole the money, used the stolen money to purchase several properties in Odisha and Hyderabad. Proposals have been sent to the government seeking permission to attach those assets.

A six-member gang was



formed. On January 13, 2023, they conducted a reconnaissance near a house where the allegedly stolen money was stashed away. Early the next morning at around 3:30 am, taking advantage of Rashmita Behera keeping the doors unlocked, the group entered

the house and stole the cash stored in six cardboard boxes. It is estimated that the stolen amount was around Rs 5.80 crore. The cash was first taken to Mubarak Ali's house; he kept two boxes for himself and gave the remaining four to Irshad Ahmad.

Students' unity march held in Kakinda

PNS ■ kakinda

Students from various colleges in Kakinada took part in a five-kilometer Unity March on Monday to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Carrying tricolor national flags and placards, the participants raised slogans promoting unity and national integration. The march was organised by the Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in collaboration with Mera Yuva Bharat, Kakinada district. It began at the Town Railway Station and concluded at Aditya Women's Degree College, Sambamurthy Nagar.



Trainee Collector Manisha flagged off the rally, which passed through Bhanugudi Junction, Kokila Restaurant Centre, and Mother Teresa Junction before culminating in a public meeting at the college. Addressing the gathering, Trainee Collector Manisha urged citizens—especially the youth—to follow

Sardar Patel's ideals and contribute to strengthening national unity and integrity, thereby helping in the building of an Akhanda Bharat. DMHO Dr. J. Narasimha Naik, District Youth Welfare Officer Thirri Gopi, My Bharat staff, and NSS Programme Coordinator Dr Syam Kumar also participated in the march.

YSRCP stages massive protest at YSR statue

PNS ■ kakinda

The district unit of the YSRCP staged a massive protest in front of the former Chief Minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy's statue at Balaji cheruvu centre here on Monday, condemning the attack on the YSRCP office at Hindupur.

Former MLA Dwarampudi Chandrasekhara Reddy exhibited his strength by mobilizing a large number of party leaders and cadre.

District president and former Minister Dadiseti Raja led the protest demonstration. Kakinada city party president Sunkara Siva Prasanna Vidya Sagar, former MP Vanga Geeta Viswanath, former MP Thota Narasimham, YSRCP Prathipadu constituency in-charge and son of Mudragada Padmanabham Mudragada Giri, Peddapuram incharge Davuluri Dorababu, state women's wing vice presi-



YSRCP leaders and activists taking part in a massive protest in Kakinada on Monday

dent Jammalamadaka Nagamani, State women's wing secretary Ragireddi Chandrakala Deepthi Kumar, City women's wing president Pasupuleti Venkatalakshmi Sekhar, former Zilla Parishad chairman Vipparty Venugopal and large number of party workers took part in the massive protest.

The traffic police diverted the traffic to other routes thereby the protest event passed off peacefully.



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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 Joyimalya 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 L 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 (retired) 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 wrong-doing. 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 upon the forensic audit

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.

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).

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 Sathesnan 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

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.



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.

Sathesnan 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.

Suvendu slams TMC over SIR, alleges BLO-BDO nexus

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Kolkata

Senior BJP leader Suvendu 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.

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

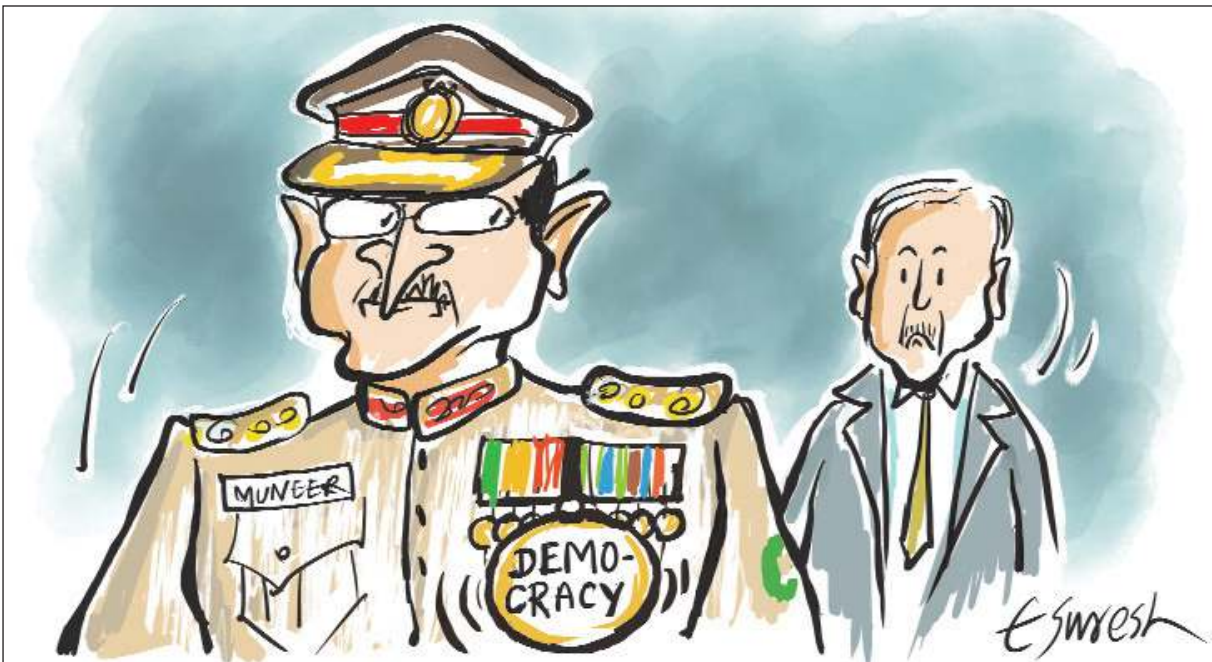


BHOPINDER SINGH

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 (CJCS), 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.

The Pioneer
SINCE 1865

PIC TALK



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



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 torchbearer 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 paycheck 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 paycheck 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 paycheck 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

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

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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

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

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.

AVUSHMAN PANDEY | LUCKNOW

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.

SANJAY CHOPRA | MOHALI

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.

A MYLSAMI | COIMBATORE



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-
BACKED
INSURGENCY IN
ITS WESTERN
PROVINCES,
ALONG WITH
EFFORTS TO
FOSTER A
BANGLADESH-
PAKISTAN AXIS,
RISKS
TRIGGERING
UNPRECEDENTED
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

The Pioneer
SINCE 1865

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 mangle 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

The Pioneer
SINCE 1865

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.

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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.

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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

AP

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

AP

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
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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 Noluthando 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 Putul.

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

sweeping security crackdown. On Monday, after months of proceedings she never attended, the tribunal handed down the unthinkable: Hasina, four-time Prime Minister and political heir of Bangladesh's founding leader, was sentenced to death.

Now, in exile in India, Hasina, often dubbed the 'Iron Lady' of Bangladesh, watches from across the border as the nation she helped build, and often ruled with a firm hand, grapples with the legacy her rise and fall has left behind.

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



Former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal

FILE PHOTO

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.

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 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.

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.



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.





Students performed wearing tribal dress during Tribal Development Corporation Chairman and directors swearing ceremony in Vijayawada on Monday.



Priests perform Pooja during Last Karthika Somavaram (Monday) at a Sivalayam in Vijayawada.



Amjad Habib, the renowned celebrity hair stylist and founder of Amjad Habib Premium Salons, is proud to announce the expansion of Amjad Habib Premium Salons through franchising in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. With a rich history spanning 100 years, our salons are now open in Andhrapradesh at Rajahmundry plans for further business expansion in and around Andhrapradesh. We are open for franchising in all major potential locations. Amjad Habib: Celebrity Hair Stylist & Founder, former personal hair stylist for Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam for 16 years, and stylist to many Bollywood celebrities.



Sonoco Products Company ("Sonoco") (NYSE: SON), a global leader in sustainable packaging solutions, today announced the grand inauguration of its new office for Sonoco Performance Hub operations in Hyderabad, India. Rajeev Ankireddypalli, Vice President and Chief Information Officer, Sonoco, added, "Hyderabad has proven to be an outstanding base for our global technology operations. Aditya Gandhi, Vice President and Chief Accounting Officer said, "the Finance Center of Excellence (CoE) in Hyderabad will help us build capability. Arvind Chittora, Managing Director, Sonoco Performance Hub, said, "In just eight months, we've built a talented and diverse team of over 145 professionals who are helping shape the future of Sonoco's digital and technology journey.


The Department of Ophthalmology at MediCiti Institute of Medical Sciences (MIMS) conducted a high-level Continued Professional Development (CPD) Program that was well attended by students and faculty. The event featured distinguished experts including Dr. G. N. Rao, Founder-Chairman of L V Prasad Eye Institute (LVPEI); Dr. Narsing Rao, Dr. Padmaja Kumari Rani, Head of Teleophthalmology at LVPEI. The lamp lighting ceremony was welcomed by Professor K Sivaramakrishna, President, Share Medical Care Foundation, who introduced the attendees to the gathering. Later, Dr. Madhu K Mohan, Chairman, Share Medical Care Foundation, said that the collaboration.



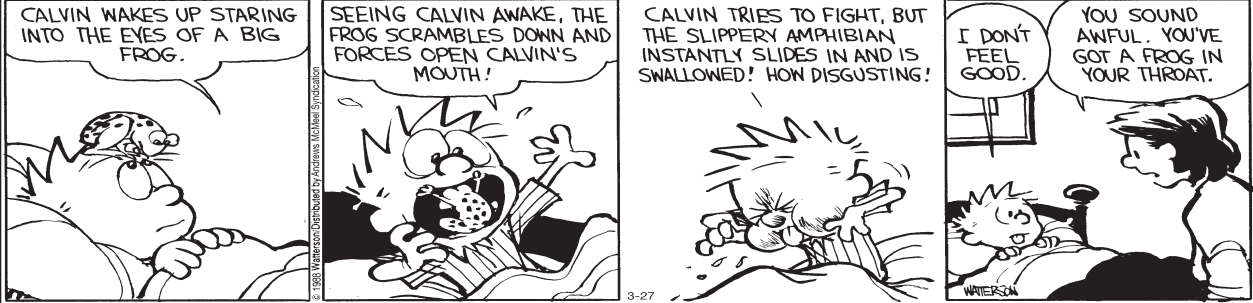
Tata AutoComp Systems, a leading automotive component manufacturer, has won the coveted Deming Prize for the third time in the last two years. The Deming Prize is a global award recognizing organizations for excellence in Total Quality Management and continuous improvement. Commenting on this stupendous achievement, Arvind Goel, Vice-Chairman Tata AutoComp Systems Limited, said - "Winning back-to-back Deming Prizes in 2024 and 2025. Manoj Kolhatkar, MD & CEO - Tata AutoComp Systems Limited added - "Total Quality Management is a people's movement, and the Deming Prize

FUN


ARCHIE



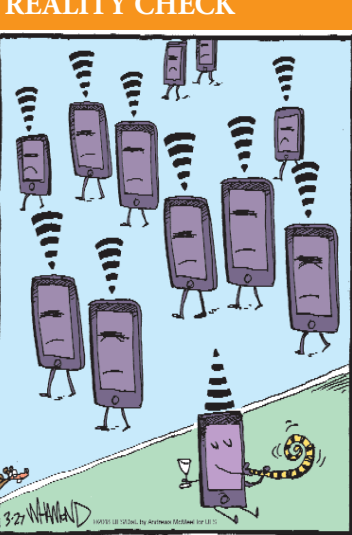
CALVIN AND HOBBS




GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP




CROSSWORD

JUNIOR CROSSWORD 778

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13				
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NANCY



SUDOKU


Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

GINGER MEGGS



CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- An aircraft sometimes used for rescuing people
- Lubricated
- A sorcerer's power
- A country in Europe
- This makes music in a church
- Very bad
- People in China and other countries eat with these

DOWN

- In good health
- Discover
- The sound of an explosion
- A male deer
- A large reptile that lives in rivers in hot countries

SOLUTION 777

B	I	T	T	E	R				
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BLASÉ CAPITAL
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 jewellery 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.

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. Whether 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 normalcy 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 2020 (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.



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 con- strues ideal home condi- tions? 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 prefer- ring "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 bal- anced 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 ses- sions, 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 bound- ary off Simon Harmer. In his

absence, Indian batting dis- played neither discipline nor adaptability.

India have now lost four of their last six Tests at home — a trend that has shred the aura of invincibil- ity 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 resem- bled 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 stand- ings. 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 fre- quent. Historically rich in

memorable Tests — includ- ing 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 dis- missed 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 intro- duced 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 confu- sion, 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 com- pounded 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 remark- able 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 responsibil- ity 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 evi- dence 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 some- thing 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 justifi- able," 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 un- asailable 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 perfor- mances, 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, Boschi (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 our- selves on the back foot, and then somehow managed to finish on the front foot.

"It was quite nerve-wrack- ing 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 emo- tional 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 whop- ping ₹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 counter- part 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 excep- tion. As it turned out of a routine Ruy Lopez theory, Arjun equalised with a the- matic 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 poten- tial 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 quar- terfinals 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 champi- ons have been the bright spots in an otherwise trou- bled season for Indian bad- minton, 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 intermit- tently 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.

