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Hon'ble Union Minister of Road Transport & Highways, Govt. of India



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Trump accuses India, China of funding Russia's war

US SLAMS UN AS INEFFECTIVE
 ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

US President Donald Trump delivered a scathing critique of the United Nations and global diplomacy during his address to the 80th United Nations General Assembly, calling out India and China as the "main funders" of Russia's war in Ukraine and mocking the UN for its perceived failures in global conflict resolution. "Let's be honest — China and India are funding this war," Trump said from the iconic UNGA podium. "Without their money flowing in through energy deals, this war would be much harder to sustain."



US President Donald Trump addressing the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday

Beijing are undermining global efforts to end the conflict in Ukraine. Trump's comments come at a time when the US and India are engaged in sensitive trade negotiations, with New Delhi resisting Western pressure to sever its energy ties with Moscow. India has defended its Russian crude imports as a matter of national interest and energy

those to work, Europe and others must stop funding Russia's war machine — that includes China and India." As of August 2025, India remains one of the largest buyers of Russian crude oil, capitalising on discounted prices amid Western sanctions. China continues to be Russia's biggest energy customer. Reiterating his long-standing claim of having ended seven global conflicts during his previous term, Trump again referred to the India-Pakistan conflict, despite India repeatedly denying any external mediation. "I ended seven wars, dealt with the leaders of each and every one of these countries, and never even received a phone call from the United Nations offering to help," Trump said. "All I got from the United Nations was an escalator that stopped halfway up."

We can 'fix': Rubio to India on Russian oil purchases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New York

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has said that Washington is actively working to resolve the "sanctions situation" with India over its continued purchase of Russian oil, even as punitive tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump remain in place. Speaking to NBC News, Rubio expressed frustration at European countries still buying large quantities of Russian energy, calling it "absurd," and pointed to India as a major focus of the Biden administration's efforts to curb energy trade with Moscow.

MHA assigns ministries to handle disasters

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

As the nation grapples with natural calamities, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Tuesday issued a notification designating various ministries and departments to effectively handle disasters. The order was issued with the objective of monitoring, early warning, prevention, mitigation and preparedness to ensure zero or minimum inconvenience and casualties due to the disasters. Under the notification SO 4253(E), the Central Government has designated specific ministries to handle disasters arising from multiple hazards, collaborating with relevant agencies and stakeholders as outlined in Section 36 of the Act. Giving details, as per the notification the Ministry of Defence will handle the avalanche and oil spills, the Ministry of Earth Sciences will provide early warning for the cold wave, cyclone, tornado, earthquake, heat wave, lightning, tsunami, hail storms and heavy rainfall, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare will take care of biological disasters, the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has been given responsibility for frost and cold wave, drought, hailstorm and pest attack, the Ministry of Jal Shakti will handle floods, glacial lake outburst flood and Ministry of Housing will take care of urban floods, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has been given the responsibility for forest fire, industrial and chemical disasters, the Ministry of Mines to handle landslides, the Department of Atomic Energy to handle nuclear and radiological emergencies

DESIGNATED MINISTRIES

- Ministry of Defence to handle oil spills
- Ministry of Earth Sciences will provide early warning for the cold wave, cyclone, tornado, earthquake, heat wave, lightning, tsunami, hail storms and heavy rainfall
- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to take care of biological disasters
- Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has been given responsibility for frost and cold wave, drought, hailstorm and pest attack
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- Urban Affairs will take care of urban floods
- Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has been given the responsibility for forest fire, industrial and chemical disasters
- Ministry of Mines to handle landslides
- Department of Atomic Energy to handle nuclear and radiological emergencies

18 dead due to incessant rains in Kolkata, Maharashtra

SAUGAR SENGUPTA/PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kolkata/Mumbai/Agencies

At least 10 people were killed, nine of them due to electrocution, as torrential overnight rain — among the heaviest in four decades — left Kolkata and adjoining districts paralysed on Tuesday, disrupting air, rail and road transport, shutting educational institutions and prompting the State Government to advance Puja holidays. Meanwhile, eight persons died, while hundreds of houses were damaged over the last four days as rains wreaked havoc in the usually parched Marathwada region of Maharashtra, officials said on Tuesday. The State Cabinet reviewed the situation at a meeting in Mumbai, with Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis assuring that the Government was working to provide relief to farmers and others.



Bollywood actors Shah Rukh Khan, Rani Mukerji and Vikrant Massey and Malayalam film actor Mohanlal posing for pictures during the 71st National Film Awards in New Delhi on Tuesday

Legendary umpire Dickie Bird dies at age of 92



Renowned and much-adored umpire Harold "Dickie" Bird died at the age of 92. Bird officiated in 66 Tests and 69 ODIs in a long career spanning between 1973 and 1996. In fact, Bird's last Test was the 1996 Lord's Test between India and England in which former skipper Rahul Dravid and Sourav Ganguly made their debut in the traditional format.

200 fall ill after consuming buckwheat flour in Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Around 200 people have fallen ill due to food poisoning allegedly after consuming buckwheat flour (*kuttu atta*) during Navratri fasting in northwest Delhi. According to police, the affected residents were from areas including Jahangirpuri, Mahendra Park, Samaypur, Bhalswa Dairy, Lal Bagh and Swaroop Nagar. The alarming situation came to light at around 6.10 am when police at Jahangirpuri received multiple reports of people feeling unwell allegedly after eating food prepared with *Kuttu atta*. Those affected were rushed to BJRM Hospital, where doctors reported that patients complained mainly of vomiting. Police sources said that the Food Safety Department has collected flour samples for testing.

PATANJALI

By reducing the GST rates on most of the daily use products falling in the 12-18% slab to 5%, the Prime Minister Modi ji has given a big gift of savings to crores of countrymen. Calling 'dependence on other countries as the biggest enemy of the country', he has also called upon the countrymen to make India self-reliant by adopting Swadeshi products in daily use.

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Doodh Biscuit

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Old MRP ₹5/-	Old MRP ₹10/-
New MRP ₹4.50/-	New MRP ₹9/-

Marie Biscuit

225 g	70 g
Old MRP ₹30/-	Old MRP ₹10/-
New MRP ₹27/-	New MRP ₹9/-

Amla Juice

1 ltr
Old MRP ₹150/-
New MRP ₹140/-

Aloe Vera Juice

1 ltr
Old MRP ₹220/-
New MRP ₹206/-

Giloy Juice

500 ml
Old MRP ₹90/-
New MRP ₹84/-

Chyawanprash

1 kg
Old MRP ₹360/-
New MRP ₹337/-

Nutrela Vit. B12

60 Cap
Old MRP ₹165/-
New MRP ₹146/-

Dant Kanti Natural

200g
Old MRP ₹120/-
New MRP ₹106/-

Dant Kanti Advance

100g
Old MRP ₹90/-
New MRP ₹80/-

Toothbrush (Active Care)

100g
Old MRP ₹20/-
New MRP ₹18/-

Neem Kanti Body Cleanser

75g
Old MRP ₹25/-
New MRP ₹22/-

Aloevera Kanti Body Cleanser

45g
Old MRP ₹10/-
New MRP ₹9/-

Haldi Chandan Kanti Body Cleanser

45g
Old MRP ₹10/-
New MRP ₹9/-

Kesh Kanti Hair Cleanser Range

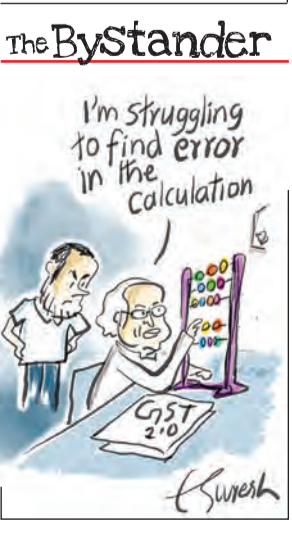
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Govt announces 53 new FTSCs in Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday announced that her Government has announced the establishment of 53 new Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) across the Capital. According to the Chief Minister, these courts will primarily hear cases under the POCSO Act, 2012, and rape cases (Section 376 of IPC/Section 64 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita).

At present, 16 such courts are functioning on a temporary/ad-hoc basis in Delhi, and these will also be converted into permanent courts. The chief minister said the Government has already issued orders to set up the 37 new courts with immediate effect.

The CM shared that more than 17,000 cases related to crimes against women and children are currently pending before the courts. The slow pace of hearings has been delaying justice for victims and



their families. A few months ago, during a high-level meeting of the Task Force on Women's Safety chaired by Lieutenant Governor Vinay Kumar Saxena, this issue was discussed with utmost seriousness. The Lieutenant Governor had issued directions stating that women's safety must remain the top priority and that immediate, concrete steps must be taken in this regard.

Following the Lieutenant Governor's directions, the Law Department consulted

the Delhi High Court, which recommended the creation of 37 additional FTSCs and the permanent status for the existing 16.

The Government has decided to expedite the recruitment of all necessary personnel for the new courts. This includes the appointment of 53 new judicial officers and supporting staff. A proposal has already been sent to the Finance Department, and the appointments are expected to be completed soon.

Man injures two, kills sister-in-law

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A man in Delhi's Khyala on Tuesday hacked his sister-in-law to death with a cleaver, chopped off his niece's finger and attacked another relative, suspecting that they helped his wife elope with another man.

The deceased has been identified as Nusrat (39), who worked as a bouncer. The injured, Akbari (42) and Nusrat's daughter Saniya (20), are undergoing treatment at a hospital, police said.

The complainant in the case, Usman (19), told police that the accused, Istekhar Ahmad alias Babbu (49), attacked the women inside the house, they said.

According to police sources, Babbu, a resident of Loni in Ghaziabad, reached the house around 7 am when Nusrat was asleep.

He had concealed a newly purchased cleaver

inside a tiffin box. When Nusrat woke up and offered him tea, he allegedly took out the weapon and attacked her multiple times on the chest and neck, killing her on the spot, they said.

As her daughter rushed to intervene, the accused chopped off one of her fingers and also assaulted Nusrat's elder sister-in-law Akbari, striking her on the head and neck, the sources added. Preliminary investigation has revealed that the man was suspicious that Nusrat and other relatives of his wife have aided in her eloping with another man.

Nusrat's husband is lodged in the jail making her the sole breadwinner of her family and has four daughters. Before working as a bouncer, she used to work as a civil defence volunteer.

According to the police, a PCR call was received around 8.05 am reporting a murder at JJ Colony in Khyala.

10-year-old girl dies under mysterious circumstances in Noida

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Noida

A 10-year-old class six student reportedly died under mysterious circumstances after she collapsed during the teacher's day event at a prestigious private school earlier this month.

Her family claimed negligence on part of the school while the principal said the student fell ill and school authorities took her to the hospital immediately. Doctors declared her dead after the initial treatment. Digital Video Recorder (DVR) was taken by the police when her parents "approached us. We are cooperating, and statements have been taken."

The girl, Tanishka Sharma, had collapsed at the school in Noida's Sector 31, on September 4. She was taken to a hospital by the school authorities, where she was declared dead.

Weeks later, her mother, Tripta Sharma, posted a video on social media, calling for justice for her daughter.

The school, at the time of the incident, had reportedly said the girl had choked on food. But later, it was told that she collapsed - which raised suspicion among her family members. The post-mortem of the girl reportedly revealed that there were no external injuries, and the cause of death remained uncertain.

The police had said that viscera samples were preserved for forensic analysis.

The girl's family had reportedly accused the school administration of negligence, saying that she was healthy.

Her mother then filed a police complaint seeking an investigation into her daughter's cause of death on September 8. A case has been filed against the school and its staff members.

India-US relations, regional issues dominate parliamentary committee meeting

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs convened today at the Parliament Annexure Building in the capital to discuss a wide range of foreign policy matters, with a special focus on India-Sri Lanka relations. However, the session also saw an unexpected yet significant development with the participation of a visiting delegation of U.S. Congress members.

The American delegation, consisting of five members from the US House of Representatives—all Democrats, four from California—joined the committee to exchange views on Indo-US bilateral ties. Topics such as trade disputes, the H1B visa regime, and diplomatic cooperation were central to the dialogue.

According to sources, during the discussions, one US congressperson addressed concerns raised by Indian lawmakers regarding the recent imposition of higher visa fees and tariffs on Indian goods by the Trump administration.

"Most of the respected members of Parliament are right to ask why President Trump is imposing heavy visa fees and tariffs against India," the congressperson reportedly said. "I can only say it's not good. I believe it's an individual decision that we object to. India is our old and good friend, and we cannot cut ties easily."

Members of the Standing Committee reportedly voiced shared concerns over the unpredictability of current U.S. policies affecting trade and employment. On the sidelines of the meeting, MPs from the Samajwadi Party raised the issue of recent changes to the H1B visa process, saying it had rendered many Indian professionals jobless and placed their futures under threat.

The US lawmakers acknowledged the concern, assuring Indian representatives that they would raise the matter with relevant authorities upon their return to Washington. "We understand how vital this is for both countries," one delegation member is said to have responded.

A senior Congress leader also questioned the Trump administration's decision to host a Pakistani Chief of Army Staff Asim Munir shortly after tensions escalated between India and Pakistan following Operation Sindoor. "On one hand, the US asks us to strengthen our friendship, and on the other, they engage with nations hostile to India," the leader remarked during the meeting.

Chairman of the Standing Committee, Dr Shashi Tharoor, addressed the media after the meeting and described the dialogue as constructive. "We had a very good visit from a US Congressional delegation," Tharoor said. "They showed tremendous interest in India. The most important message that came from them was that many in the US Congress are deeply committed to the India-US strategic partnership. Despite recent setbacks—the H1B visa issues, 50 per cent tariffs,—there is a strong desire to strengthen the relationship."

Meanwhile, criticism of President Trump's broader foreign policy also surfaced during the discussions. Indian MPs mentioned growing concerns over the U.S. administration's stance on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, with some accusing the White House of contributing to global instability while focusing on oil interests.

The meeting concluded on a positive note, with both sides expressing hope for closer cooperation and a renewed focus on resolving pressing bilateral challenges.

Macron calls Trump after motorcade freeze during UNGA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Even French President Emmanuel Macron was not immune to the infamous New York City gridlock during the high-level United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) week, as his motorcade was halted by local police due to security lockdowns for US President Donald Trump's convoy.

A video that has since gone viral on social media shows Macron and his entourage stopped on the sidewalk, waiting for clearance as NYPD officers blocked the street for Trump's incoming motor-

cade. "I'm sorry, President, I'm really sorry. Just that everything has been frozen right now. There is a motorcade coming this way. I'm sorry," a New York police officer tells Macron in the video.

Macron, pointing across the road, responds, "I have to go to the French embassy. If you don't see it, let me cross."

The officer gestures that he can hear the motorcade approaching and insists that the French president must wait.

In a light-hearted moment, Macron is seen smiling and speaking on his phone, saying with a laugh,

"How are you? Guess what, I am waiting in the street because everything is frozen for you." Sirens can be heard in the background, and the call appeared to be with President Trump.

Sources in Macron's entourage confirmed that the two leaders spoke briefly during the delay, using the opportunity to touch base on several international issues. The conversation was described as warm and friendly.

The incident unfolded as President Trump was en route to the United Nations headquarters, triggering what security services call

a "freeze" — a total lockdown of streets and intersections along the president's route. The freezes are standard protocol when the US president travels through Manhattan during UNGA week.

After the brief interruption, Macron continued walking down the sidewalk, chatting on the phone and posing for photos with passersby. France's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Jérôme Bonnafont, was seen taking pictures as Macron smiled with a couple who requested a photo.

President Trump arrived

in New York Monday evening and is scheduled to address the UN General Assembly Tuesday morning, delivering his first speech at the General Debate in his second term as president.

The annual high-level week at the UN not only draws world leaders and diplomats but also cripples Manhattan with security lockdowns, traffic snarls, and intense police presence. Motorcades, temporary barricades, and frozen zones are routine, though it is rare to see a head of state — especially one as high-profile as Macron — caught on the wrong side of the blockade.

Jamia Millia Islamia issues notice to PhD scholar, says fanned communal tempers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) has issued a show cause notice to a PhD scholar, accusing him of "repeated unlawful acts" and inciting students on religious lines during a Batla House encounter protest march on September 19.

There was no immediate response available from the Jamia administration on the

notice. The notice, issued by the Office of the Chief Proctor, stated the scholar had been "apprised about the sensitivity of the issue and the possible repercussions of such a gathering especially inside the university campus" but he ignored warnings.

The varsity alleged that the scholar made a "provoking political speech" in the central canteen on the

campus before leading a march. The scholar was accused of putting up "professionally designed and printed large size posters ... and distributing handbills at the Central Canteen."

He was also termed "a threat to the safety and security of the students, staff and the property of the university." In the written reply, the student challenged the university to substantiate the

allegations with evidence.

"I entirely and completely deny this allegation and appeal to the Proctorial Board to present any audio or video proof of my speech on 19.09.2025 wherein my words have ignited religious sentiments," he wrote.

The student rejected the claim that he facilitated outsiders' entry or blocked traffic outside gate no. 7.

"It was in fact the Chief

Security Advisor who grabbed hold of me while I was still inside Gate No. 7 and threw me outside the campus premises onto the Delhi Police," he said.

The student further argued that the gathering was held after class hours and did not disrupt academic activity.

The All India Students' Association (AISA) alleged that around 20 students, including women, were

"dragged from the campus" and "handed over to police" during their September 19 protest. DCP (Southeast) Hemant Tiwari denied using any excessive force.

"AISA activists came out of Gate No. 7 and tried to march ... Despite repeated requests, they were hell-bent on marching. After due warnings and precautions, they were detained. No one was dragged at all," he said.

FROM PAGE - 3

Trump accuses India, China of funding Russia's war

Trump has previously claimed he deserves a Nobel Peace Prize, and again suggested his diplomatic interventions were more effective than UN efforts.

Trump repeatedly ridiculed the United Nations as ineffective and symbolic, accusing it of inaction in real-world crises.

"What is the purpose of the United Nations if all they do is write a strongly worded letter and never follow up?" he asked. "The UN has such tremendous potential... but it's not even coming close to living up to that potential."

He mocked his experience at UN headquarters, saying, "These are the two things I got from the United Nations—a bad escalator and a bad teleprompter." Trump further accused the United Nations of "funding an assault on Western borders," specifically referencing its support for migrants. "The UN is supporting people that are illegally coming into the United States," he said. "They're providing food, shelter, debit cards and transportation." Though Trump did not name the agency, his remarks appeared aimed at the International Organization for Migration (IOM), a UN-affiliated body that aids vulnerable migrants globally. Opening his speech, Trump declared the dawn of a "Golden Age of America", touting economic revival, energy independence, and a return to "real leadership." However, the tone quickly shifted to confrontation, laying bare Trump's transactional approach to foreign policy and open skepticism of multilateral institutions.

With his return to the world stage, Trump made it clear that in his second term, diplomacy would be dictated by deals, not dialogue, and action, not consensus.

MHA assigns ministries to handle disasters

"In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) read with clause (ha) of sub-section (2) of section 35 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 (53 of 2005), the Central Government hereby notifies... The Ministries or Department of the Government of India... Which shall have the responsibility for monitoring, early warning, prevention, mitigation, preparedness and capac-

ity building with regard to disaster arising from various hazards..." the notification said.

The notification formalises a coordinated disaster management framework across India, ensuring that ministries are accountable for monitoring, early warning and mitigation measures specific to various natural and man-made hazards. The notification, signed by Joint Secretary Dr Rajesh Gupta, formalises a coordinated disaster management framework across India, ensuring that ministries are accountable for monitoring, early warning and mitigation measures specific to various natural and man-made hazards.

According to MHA report, in 2025-26 (as of July 30), over 1,600 people and about 52,000 people were killed in hydro-meteorological disasters. Andhra Pradesh had the largest share of casualties with 343 fatalities, followed by Madhya Pradesh with 243 fatalities, and Himachal Pradesh with 195 fatalities. According to statistics from the Disaster Management Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs, 834 lost their lives in natural calamities in 2001-02. The figure increased to 1,995 in 2004-05, and reached more than 2,500 the following year, a growth of 35 per cent. Deaths exceeded 3,700 by 2007-08.

In subsequent years, the number of human lives lost remained between 900 and 2,000 per year, before a sudden spike in 2013-14, when the deaths numbered 5,677, five times more than the previous year. This was because of a cloud-burst in Uttarakhand in June 2013, which caused floods and landslides, mainly in the Kedarnath region. The numbers went up in 2023-24 with 2,616 fatalities, a nearly 65 per cent increase, and then 3,080 fatalities in 2024-25, an 18 per cent increase. Disasters have also resulted in cattle deaths. In 2005-06, over 1.1 lakh cattle were lost, and the figure climbed rapidly during 2006-07 to 4.5 lakh, the maximum reported between 2001-02 and 2024-25. About 1.19 lakh cattle were lost in 2023-24 and approximately 62,000 in 2024-25.

India faced extreme weather events on 322 days in 2024, resulting in over 3,400 deaths. In the first 90 days of 2025 alone, the country experienced extreme events such as floods and heat waves on 87 days. This alarming trend indicates the need for efficient disaster risk management to minimise impact on vulnerable populations.

According to a report by the Geneva-based

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), India recorded 32.3 million (3.23 crore) internal displacements due to disasters, such as floods and storms, between 2015 and 2024, the third highest in the world after China and the Philippines.

We can 'fix': Rubio to India on Russian oil purchases

"We've already seen the measures we've taken with regards to India, although that's something we hope we can fix," Rubio said.

"And the President has the ability to do more, and he's considering doing more because of the direction this has taken."

Rubio was referring to the 25 per cent punitive tariff imposed by President Trump last month on Indian imports - a move that effectively doubled total US tariffs on India to 50 per cent. The White House has maintained that the measure is aimed at pressuring India to scale back its energy ties with Russia, especially as the West seeks to isolate Moscow economically over its war in Ukraine. In a separate interview with ABC News, Rubio confirmed that ongoing trade talks with India are heavily focused on the Russian oil issue. "We had meetings with them again yesterday, and it has to do with their purchase of Russian oil," he said, adding that there has been "a lot of progress."

The trade discussions came amid a renewed diplomatic push by New Delhi and Washington. India's Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal is currently in the U.S. to accelerate negotiations on a bilateral trade agreement, following high-level engagements between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Trump over the past month.

While the U.S. is pressing India to reduce its dependency on Russian energy, other contentious issues remain on the table - including Washington's demand that India open up its agriculture and dairy markets to American companies, which New Delhi continues to reject as a red line. Rubio did not clarify whether the Trump administration's recent move to impose a \$100,000 fee on new H-1B visas - which disproportionately affects Indian engineers and tech professionals - was part of the bilateral conver-

sation. Despite rising tensions, Prime Minister Modi has opted for a restrained response, avoiding direct confrontation with Trump. Instead, he has intensified calls for "swadeshi" or domestically produced goods, widely interpreted as an attempt to reduce India's reliance on foreign imports - including those from the U.S.

The diplomatic and economic dialogue between the world's two largest democracies comes at a critical time, as both nations navigate their strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific, balance relations with Russia and China, and attempt to finalize a trade agreement that could significantly boost bilateral commerce, currently valued at \$191 billion, to a target of \$500 billion by 2030.

Legendary umpire Dickie Bird dies at age of 92

Bird had a long association with Yorkshire, starting his first-class career with the county in 1956 and before ending his career in 1964. Bird made 3,314 runs from 93 matches with two hundreds. The thoughts of everyone at the Yorkshire County Cricket Club are with Dickie's family and friends during this time.

"He will be truly missed by all at the Club having spent an incredible amount of time in support of everyone here and will be remembered as one of the greatest characters in Yorkshire's history," the club said.

Bird was appointed an MBE in 1986 and an OBE in 2012 in recognition of his outstanding contribution to cricket, and formed a famous on field alliance with countryman late David Shepherd, who died in 2009. Bird was also a favourite with the spectators and the players alike for the accuracy of his decisions and idiosyncrasies which included arriving at the match venue as early as 6 am. During a 1974 Test match at Old Trafford against England, Indian legend Sunil Gavaskar got a haircut from Bird because his hair kept getting into his eyes.

The Englishman used a pair of scissors he kept to cut threads from the ball's seam to trim Gavaskar's hair mid-match, later exclaiming: "What all umpires need to carry."

But Bird was always a likeable figure on the field, and the best players of his time held him in high esteem. "They all rated me the best: Sobers, Richards, Lillee and Botham. That means a lot I can tell you," he had admitted once.

Bird remained unmarried but made some great friend circles including late Queen Elizabeth, frequenting to her tea parties, writer Stephen King and a generation of British Prime Ministers such as John Major. Bird wrote two best-sellers - My Autobiography with Keith Lodge and The White Cap and Bails. After retiring from umpiring, Bird kept himself active through quiz sessions, after dinner talks and chat shows, which were highly entertaining.

200 fall ill after consuming buckwheat flour in Delhi

"Teams were rushed to BJRM Hospital, where the chief medical officer informed that around 150 to 200 people had reported to the emergency ward since morning, the police added.

The patients hailing from various areas, including Jahangirpuri, Mahendra Park, Samaypur, Bhalswa Dairy, Lal Bagh and Swaroop Nagar, were found stable and no serious case was reported, the police added. No serious case was reported, they added.

Officials said the suspected food poisoning triggered anxiety in the locality, especially as large numbers of people were observing fasting on the occasion of Navratri. Following the incident, panic spread across the affected areas. People are avoiding buying buckwheat flour, while shopkeepers are trying to assure customers that their products are safe.

Police sources said that the Food Safety Department has collected flour samples for testing. Responsibility will be fixed only after the report comes in, they said.

The police immediately began sensitising shopkeepers, vendors and residents about the matter through beat staff and public address systems to prevent further panic. Police said the matter has been communicated to the Food Department for further necessary action, including a quality check of Kuttu atta being sold in local markets. "We are coordinating with the Food Department and local health officials. People are being made aware at the community level to ensure public safety," the officer said.

As the news spread, several local residents gathered at a shop in Jahangirpuri from where they had purchased the flour and demanded strict action against the shopkeeper.

Early migratory birds flock to rain-filled Sambhar lake



Sambhar Lake in Rajasthan has received high inflow of water due to heavy rainfall this year leading to an early arrival of migratory birds ahead of winter, experts said.

The unusual phenomenon has brought cheer to bird watchers though concerns over avian botulism, a bacterial infection, have also resurfaced.

Odisha to get Ayurveda college in Rairangpur: CM

Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Tuesday announced that an Ayurveda college will be set up at Rairangpur in Mayurbhanj district at a cost of ₹85 crore, and the State will get eight more 'Panchakarma' Centres this year.

A Panchakarma Centre is a facility that provides Ayurvedic healthcare services, focusing on therapeutic cleansing methods.



Valuables shifted to treasury of Puri Jagannath temple



Valuables were shifted back to the treasury of the Jagannath temple in Odisha's Puri on Tuesday, about a year after they were taken out for repair of the structure, officials said. Restrictions were imposed on the entry of devotees to the temple during the process.

CM Vishnu inaugurates 51 Mahatari Sadans in rural areas

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Tuesday inaugurated 51 'Mahatari Sadans' in rural areas dedicated to empowering women in rural areas and making them self-reliant.

Addressing the inaugural programme held at Kareli Badi village in Magarlod development block of Dhamtari district, Sai described the initiative as a landmark step for the progress of mothers and sisters in the State, according to a Government Statement.



10 lives lost due to incessant rains, water logging in Kolkata

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

An untimely cloudburst and consequent rains left at least ten people dead in and around Kolkata which in the night intervening Monday and Tuesday witnessed "worst of its kind" rains in recorded history, weather experts said.

While anything above 100 mm of rains in a concentrated area are usually considered to be a result of cloudburst many pockets of Kolkata witnessed more than 250 mm of rains. The areas that witnessed heavy rains are Ultadanga in northern Kolkata, Topsyia in Central part of the city and up market areas down south like Ballygunge, Rashbehari — near Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's residence — and Alipore, weather office said. Most of Tuesday's victims died due to electrocution, police said. Water had entered Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's house too, she said.

I heard some people have died due to electrocution. It is so unfortunate that people have lost their lives, said Banerjee, asking the Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation Limited (CESC Ltd) to provide jobs to the family members of the deceased. "Even our houses are submerged; we are all suffering. I am feeling so bad for the Pujas pandals as well... is this not the duty of the CESC to be more mindful? ... They will do business here, but not modernise here? They should send people to

the field and fix this," the Chief Minister said.

As Kolkata immersed itself in Durga Puja celebrations, heavy rains submerged large parts of the city with many areas coming under waist-deep water. The high tide in the Hooghly River worsened the matter as water could not be pumped out with the result that most part of the eastern metro remaining under water till late in the evening and large parts of the city witnessing a bandh-like situation with almost entire public transport coming to a standstill save the suburban trains. The metro railways plied far and few between.

As the downpour, continued for several hours, areas like Garia Kamdahari, Jodhpur Park, Kalighat, Rashbehari, Ballygunge, Alipore, Topsyia, Tiljala, Salt Lake Sector V, Ultadanga literally went under water.

Even as political slugfest ensued with the Opposition parties slamming the Trinamool Congress Government for the water logging, the Chief Minister, blamed it on sudden unprecedented cloudburst, overwhelming the city's infrastructure. Urging the leaders to refrain from mud-slinging Banerjee said it was time to work together to get over the crisis.

"We have to come forward together to help the people as many houses are under water, it is not time to pass blames," she said reminding how "tirelessly we have been working for the past several



A rickshaw puller carries passengers through a waterlogged road following rain in Kolkata on Tuesday

PTI

months to face such eventuality." Kolkata Mayor Firhad Hakim said that the weather forecast was for about 100-120 mm of rain whereas in many areas it went beyond 200 mm.

Opposition BJP however accused the TMC-led Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) of corruption and inefficiency, which had led to a poor drainage system. Ministers Chandrima Bhattacharya and

Shashi Panja, however wondered what the BJP had to say about Mumbai which was governed by the saffron outfit.

Overnight torrential rain affected normal work at the Calcutta High Court on Tuesday owing to waterlogged streets and erratic internet network due to the deluge in the city.

The secretaries of the three associations of lawyers at

the high court jointly wrote to the Acting Chief Justice requesting that the Judges take up only those matters where all the parties to the proceedings are present.

The Calcutta High Court Bar Association, Bar Library Club and the Incorporated Law Society of Calcutta also requested that the matters which cannot be taken up due to the absence of any of the parties to the pro-

ceedings may retain their position in the list for hearing of petitions.

Uday Shankar Chatterjee, a practising lawyer at the high court, said that he could not reach owing to the heavy waterlogging of roads and had to return home midway.

"There was more than knee-deep water on the roads and fearing that my car might get stuck, I returned," he said.

RAIN DAMAGES PANDALS, DURGA PUJA PREPARATION IN TROUBLE

Kolkata: The heavy overnight rain in Kolkata forced Durga Puja organisers to defer the inauguration of the idols as the calamities wreaked serious damage to marquees that are complete or nearly so, and pushed back the intricate decoration work by artisans.

The downpour — among the heaviest in nearly four decades — led to widespread flooding across Kolkata, including puja marquees. With four days left for the Durga Puja festivities to begin, the puja organisers are distraught.

Somnath Das, one of the key officials of Santoshpur Lake Pally in south Kolkata, told PTI that the artificial lotus pond created in front of the pandal has been washed away and has to be recreated in two days.

"The replicas of artworks by Bengal School painters like Nandalal Basu, Jamini Roy and Abanindranath Tagore — put up in the pandal courtyard on the pathway to the idol — have been destroyed in the rains. These have been prepared for months with lots of care, and we are not sure how to replace them," Das said.

Aggravating the problem is the power cut in the area since early Tuesday morning, which prevents any welding work necessary to restore the decoration to its previous form, he added.

"Till the power lines are restored and the accumulated waters in the courtyard are finally pumped out, we cannot start work afresh. We have to embark on work on war footing," he said, adding the pandal has been closed for viewers for the next two days.

Around 15 km away in north Kolkata, the Hatibagan Sarbojonin has also closed down its installations for public viewing for one day, as waters accumulated in the lane adjacent to the pandal causing some damage to the interior decorations.

Puja Committee Secretary Saswata Basu said, "Water accumulated in the pathway was drained out and if there is no heavy rainfall anymore, we will be able to tide over the crisis in the next one to two days."

"Our pandal has come up on a built-up area having roofs protecting the idol and the decoration replicating river ghats with flex, models are all put inside which are intact. But some of the decorative items leading to the marquee in the open have suffered damage and we intend to replace them," he said. The puja was inaugurated by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on September 20.

Bikash Majumdar, spokesperson of College Square Durga Puja in the Central part of the city, said the rains have caused extensive damage to the already completed pandal and its interiors.

Eight dead, hundreds of houses damaged in Maharashtra rains

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ Mumbai/Agency

Containing that "300 out of 36 districts in the State" have been badly affected by excessive rainfall and floods, the Opposition Congress on Tuesday rooted for declaration of "wet drought" in the State and disbursement of ₹50,000 per hectare of damaged crops to all affected farmers and ₹5 lakh per hectare to those whose farmland has been washed away.

Eight persons died, while hundreds of houses were damaged over the last four days as rains wreaked havoc in the usually parched Marathwada region of Maharashtra, officials said

on Tuesday. The State cabinet reviewed the situation at a meeting in Mumbai, with Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis assuring that the Government was working to provide relief to farmers and others.

More than 750 houses and crops on over 33,000 hectares were damaged in Dharashiv district, where helicopters and boats had to be deployed to rescue stranded people, they said.

Talking to media persons, Maharashtra Congress chief Harshvardhan Sapkal charged that the BJP-led MahaYuti Government was "indifferent" towards the plight of farmers who have been devastated by exces-



Residents wade through floodwaters from the Sina River which inundated roads and homes following heavy rain in Solapur, Maharashtra on Tuesday

PTI

sive rains, so much so that the guardian ministers had not even inspected the affected crops.

"This year, Maharashtra has received two to three times the average rainfall. Out of 36 districts and 358 talukas, 30 districts and nearly 300 talukas have been affected by excessive rainfall and floods."

"Nearly 14.3 million hectares of farmland have suffered massive damage across the State. With continuous rainfall, farmers are devastated, but the Mahayuti Government is indifferent to their plight. Even guardian ministers have not conducted inspections," Sapkal said.

"At the State cabinet meetings, there has only been hollow talk. The State Government must wake up and provide ₹50,000 per hectare immediately to all affected farmers and ₹5 lakh per hectare to those whose farmland has been washed away," Sapkal said.

Coming down heavily on the Devendra Fadnavis dispensation over its lackadaisical towards mitigating the problems of the flood-affected farmers across the State, Sapkal said: "Owing to heavy rains, the farmers in the districts of Marathwada, Vidarbha, Solapur and Ahilyanagar in western Maharashtra have suffered massive losses.

Congress can take credit for GST if people are happy: BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The BJP on Tuesday said the latest Goods and Services Tax (GST) reforms have provided much relief to the people with a reduction in prices of commodities and took potshots at the Congress over its criticism, saying the Opposition party keeps raising demands because it knows only Prime Minister Narendra Modi can fulfil them if they are in public interest.

On the Congress accusing the Prime Minister of taking credit for the GST rate cuts for the decision taken by the GST Council comprising States, BJP MP and national spokesperson Sambit Patra said the Opposition party is free to take credit for it by putting up banners and hoardings "thanking" PM Modi if they feel people are happy with the reforms.

There is an "atmosphere of festivity" across the country with the GST rate cuts coming into force as prices of various items, including



cars, bikes, electronics goods and medicines, have significantly come down, he said. "People are happy," he told a press conference at the BJP headquarters here, citing media reports and the "feedback" that the NDA leaders, including ministers, received from the people and shopkeepers during their visits to various markets on Monday.

On the Congress terming the latest GST reforms as "limited, inadequate and too

demands from us. It demanded strict action after Pahalgaam (terror attack)... They know that only this Government will take strict action... they can keep demanding. We do not have any objection. Modi ji will fulfil all their demands that are in people's interest," Patra added.

Asked about the Congress accusing Prime Minister Modi of taking "sole ownership" of the latest GST reforms, Patra responded, "They also want to take credit (for GST reforms)? They can take it. We did not stop Rahul Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge, Jairam Ramesh or the Congress from taking credit."

"We have released hoardings, banners and their design. They can also put up their boardings-banners, saying, 'Thank you Modi ji', and claim credit... it's not a fight for claiming credit. People are happy. If they also feel that people are happy, they should join them by putting up their own banners and hoardings," he said.

"The Congress also

Manish Tewari slams nepokids, targets Rahul

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Congress leader Manish Tewari on Tuesday referred to the recent toppling of Government in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal and the recent protests in the Philippines to say that "entitlement is no longer acceptable to Gen X, Y, Z". The BJP latched onto Tewari's use of words like "#nepokids" in his post on X to say, "Senior Congress leader Manish Tewari, member of the G-23 rebel group, takes aim at Rahul Gandhi — the ultimate 'Nepo Kid' of Indian politics."

In his post, Tewari wrote, "The toppling of - President Gotabaya Rajapaksa in Sri Lanka in July 2023, Sheikh Hasina in Bangladesh in July 2024, KP Sharma Oli in Nepal in September 2025 and now the protests against Ferdinand Marcos Jr in Philippines have one word written over them — ENTITLEMENT IS NO LONGER ACCEPTABLE TO GEN X, Y, Z." He also said, "Watch for

my piece on 'The Social Media Trends that toppled or are challenging 'DYNASTIES'. Study #nepokids or #TrillionPesoMarch in the meantime." Tewari cited media reports on the recent protests in Philippines erupting over flood control fraud.

The remarks of Tewari were used by the BJP to attack the Congress, with its leader Amit Malviya terming Gandhi as the "ultimate 'Nepokid' of Indian politics and Sambit Patra saying people of the country have already removed the "nepokid" in 2014.

"Senior Congress leader Manish Tewari, member of the G-23 rebel group, takes aim at Rahul Gandhi — the ultimate 'Nepo Kid' of Indian politics." "Forget Gen Z, even Congress's own veterans are fed up with his regressive politics. The revolt is now from within," Malviya said in his post on X while responding to Tewari. Tewari, a member of the G23 rebel group within the Congress which had questioned the leadership, hit

back saying his remarks should not be viewed as Congress versus BJP, but has serious national security implications for the country. "Gosh I just wish that some people would grow up in life. Everything does not have to be dumbed down to a Cong - BJP he said she said or targeting X or Y."

"What is happening in South Asia and East Asia has serious National Security implications and why it is happening needs to be understood in the correct perspective," Tewari said.

BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra also said, "Manish Tewari has written in his article that GEN Z doesn't want a dynast. That's why there are so many conflicts going on all over the world to remove dynast. He has called it nepo kid."

"People of India are spiritual and awakened also. They did it in 2014 itself. They do not take to the streets to do such things. They do the right thing at the right time in a very disciplined manner," Patra said.

Govt launches Viksit Bharat Buildathon for students

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Ministry of Education and Atal Innovation Mission will conduct a 'Viksit Bharat Buildathon', a nationwide initiative to inspire innovation, creativity and problem-solving among school students, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Tuesday.

The Buildathon, the largest ever school hackathon, will mobilise more than one crore students from 1.5 lakh schools across the country to ideate, design, and develop prototypes under four themes, he said. "We propose to reach out to all schools in the country with classes 6-12, and encourage every child in those schools to be a part of ideation for Viksit Bharat by 2047. Ideation will be based on four themes, namely atmanirbhar Bharat, swadeshi, vocal for local and samridhd Bharat," Pradhan said at a press conference. "The event brings together students, educators, and innovators to build solutions for a self-reliant India, aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047," he added.

According to MoE officials, the Buildathon aims to inspire creative thinking for national development, promote self-reliance and sustainable growth, and engage schools in synchronised innovation.

It also aims to project India as a global innovation capital through a potential world record and celebrate young problem-solvers on national and global platforms, they said. It builds on the success of the School Innovation Marathon 2024, which led to programs like the Student Innovator Programme (SIP) and Student Entrepreneurship Programme (SEP), along with patents and start-up ventures from Atal Tinkering Labs.

States Focus

SRK, Mohanlal, Rani, Vikrant grab 71st National Film Awards



RAJNATH INAUGURATES TATA DEFENCE PLANT IN MOROCCO

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday inaugurated a manufacturing plant set up by Tata Advanced Systems Ltd in Morocco's Berrechid for production of wheeled armoured personnel carriers, defence ministry said here. Spread over 20,000 sq m, the facility is the first-ever Indian defence manufacturing plant in Africa. It is also Morocco's largest such plant.

Under its contract with the Government of Morocco, Tata Advanced Systems will undertake the production and delivery of Wheeled Armoured Platform 8x8 (WhAP 8x8) with initial deliveries scheduled to begin next month. The facility became operational three months ahead of schedule, and production has already commenced.



BJP MP'S WIFE PREETI LOSES ₹14L IN 'DIGITAL ARREST' SCAM

In a swift operation, the Bengaluru police have recovered Rs 14 lakh which BJP Chikkaballapura MP K Sudhakar's wife Preeti had lost in a cyber fraud through 'digital arrest'. According to police, the incident took place on August 26.

Digital arrest is a cyber scam in which fraudsters impersonate police or enforcement agency officials and threaten victims through WhatsApp video calls, claiming they are booked in criminal cases.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday conferred National Awards for acting to Shah Rukh Khan, Vikrant Massey and Rani Mukerji while Malayalam superstar Mohanlal was honoured with the Dadasaheb Phalke lifetime achievement award in a ceremony that doffed its hat to mainstream popular cinema.

Filmmakers Vidhu Vinod Chopra, who took home the best film prize for "12th Fail", and Karan Johar and Apoorva Mehra, who received the award for "Rocky Aur Rani Kii Kahaani" for best popular film providing wholesome entertainment, completed the starry ensemble at the 71st National Film Awards.

The best director award went to Sudipto Sen for "The Kerala Story".

The National Awards for 2023 were announced in August. It's the first National Award for friends and frequent collaborators Shah Rukh and Rani as well as for Vikrant. While Shah Rukh got it for his role in "Jawan", sharing his win with "12th Fail" star Vikrant, Rani bagged it for "Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway".

There were whistles and loud cheers as Rani and Shah Rukh went up to receive their awards at the traditionally sober ceremony. Mohanlal, recognised for a remarkable career spanning five decades and more than 360 films, got a standing ovation from the crowd gathered at the city's Vigyan Bhawan.

"I got to know that when Mohanlal's name was announced for Dadasaheb Phalke, there was wave of happiness among people. It shows that he has made a space for himself in countless people's heart," the president said in her address after the award ceremony.

"He has presented the softest of the soft and toughest of the tough emotions quite naturally," Murmu added in a speech in which she congratulated all the winners and touched on various issues, including the plurality of Indian cinema, Indian sensibility and women-centric films.

"Now we see women in many places in cinema like actors and producers. I have seen films about mothers, women uniting against societal wrongs, and strong women who raise their voices. I salute these filmmakers on behalf of sisters and daughters. Please thank your crews for your success, they are behind it," she said. Just like Indian literature is created in various Indian languages, the president said, Indian cinema is advancing in so many languages, dialects, regions and local environments.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnav spoke of the Make in India initiative of the Government. "Equipment used in the film industry such as big cameras... should be made in India. We will be started a programme on this soon," he said. The minister also stressed on the need to create a live concert economy with proper policy support, uniform guidelines and easy permissions.

As the recipient of the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke, Mohanlal was the only awardee who spoke. He said he was deeply humbled to be the youngest recipient, and "only the second ever" from the state to be bestowed with this national recognition. "This moment is not mine alone. It belongs to the entire Malayalam cinema fraternity. I see this award



President Droupadi Murmu presents the award for Best Actor, to Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan, Vikrant Massey, Rani Mukerji and Malayalam film actor Mohanlal during the 71st National Film Awards in New Delhi on Tuesday

as a collective tribute to our industry, legacy, creativity and resilience," added the 65-year-old movie legend known for landmark films such as "Iruvar", "Vanaprastham", "Pulimurugan" and "Drishyam".

Hindi cinema dominated the awards in the main categories.

Among those presented awards were Meghna Gulzar and Ronnie Screwvala for the biopic on Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw "Sam Bahadur", the best film promoting national, social and environmental values. Vaibhavi Merchant won

the best choreography award for "Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani" song "Dhindhora Baaje". Shilpa Rao was named best female playback singer for "Jawan" track "Chaleya".

Sanya Malhotra-starrer "Kathal: A Jackfruit Mystery" was named the best Hindi film. Regional movies were recognised in categories such as best supporting actor and actress and in technical segments.

The best supporting actor trophy was shared by Vijayaraghavan for Malayalam film "Pookalam" and Muthupettai Somu Bhaskar for Tamil film

"Parking".

The best supporting actress honour went to Urvashi for the Malayalam movie "Ullozhokku" and Janki Bodiwala for Gujarati title "Vash". Both movies won best films in their respective language segments.

Ashish Bende bagged the award for best debut film of a director for Marathi film "Aatmapamphlet".

The best film in AVGC (animation, visual effects, gaming & comic) went to Telugu film "Hanu-Man", which also won the best action direction award. "Animal", another Hindi

blockbuster of 2023, won awards for best sound design, best music director (background music) and a special mention for re-recording mixer.

The National Award for best screenplay was shared between Telugu movie "Baby" and Tamil film "Parking". "Baby" singer PVN S Rohit was recognised as the best male playback singer for the song "Premisthunna".

The best music director for songs went to GV Prakash for Tamil movie "Vaathi". Kasarla Shyam was named best lyricist for Telugu movie "Balagam" song 'Ooru Palleturu'.

Zubeen's last rites performed with full State honours

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

Iconic Singer Zubeen Garg's body was cremated with full State honours in the sylvan surroundings of Kamarkuchi on the outskirts of Assam's Guwahati on Tuesday amid chanting of Vedic hymns as thousands of mourners gathered to bid farewell to the popular crooner. His sister Palme Borthakur and music composer Rahul Gautam, a protege of the singer, lit the pyre, amid gun salutes.

They went around the pyre seven times as priests guided them, and all present at the site, most with moist eyes, stood up to pay their last respect to the singer who mesmerised people with his more than 38,000 songs over three decades.

Zubeen's wife, Garima Saikia Garg, was sitting on the side of the platform where his last rites were performed, and was seen sobbing all through the rituals as the singer's friend and Union Minister Pabitra Margherita consoled her. Garg's 85-year-old ailing father, Mohini Mohan Borthakur, was sitting at a distance surrounded by family members.

Assam Chief Minister



Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sharma paying his last rites to Zubeen Garg at Kamarkuchi, Sonapur near Guwahati

Himanta Biswa Sarma, also a Zubeen fan, was seen standing near the platform where the pyre was lit. As the smoke from the flames flared up, slogans like 'Zubeen, Zubeen' and 'Jai Zubeen da' reverberated in the air, and people were heard singing his song 'Mayabini Ratir buku'. This continued all through the rituals held in an emotionally charged atmosphere.

After the tributes were paid to the popular singer, the Assam Police gave him the gun salute and sounded the bugle. Earlier, the mortal remains of Garg were taken to a platform and placed on the pyre amid chanting of

Vedic hymns and blowing of conch shells. The family performed certain Vedic rituals while Union Ministers Sarbananda Sonowal, Kiren Rijiju and the chief minister placed wood on the pyre. A branch of the sandalwood tree, which Zubeen had planted on his birthday in 2017, was placed on the pyre.

Earlier, the popular singer's body was brought on Sunday and kept at Arjun Bhogeswar Baruah Sports Complex for fans to pay homage. After being brought to Kamarkuchi, his body was placed on a podium, next to the platform where his last rites

were performed. The funeral pyre, constructed on the platform, was covered in a white canopy and decorated with flowers all around it. A team of Assam Police personnel were the pallbearers of the casket carrying Zubeen's mortal remains.

A large number of people gathered around the cremation site since Monday night, and the entire area reverberated with slogans like 'Long Live Zubeen', 'Jai Zubeen da'. People were heard humming his song 'Mayabini Ratir buku', which the singer had once said should be sung at his funeral.

Chief Minister, Sonowal, Margherita and leader of the opposition Debabrata Saikia went down on their knees to pay tributes to the singer. Representatives of the Arunachal Pradesh Government, Assam Sahitya Sabha (ASS), various students' unions, Hatimura Karbi Samaj, Artists Forum, Zubeen Garg Fan Club and others also paid their last respects to Garg.

Meanwhile, the second post-mortem examination of Garg's body was conducted at the Gauhati Medical College Hospital on Tuesday morning.

Vote theft fuels joblessness: Rahul

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday claimed that as long as elections are "stolen", unemployment and corruption will continue to rise, and asserted that young people will no longer tolerate "job theft" and "vote theft".

In a social media post in Hindi, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said unemployment is the biggest problem facing youth in India and it is directly linked to "vote theft".

When a Government wins public trust and comes to power, its first duty is to provide employment and opportunities to the youth, he said.

"But the BJP doesn't win elections honestly — they stay in power by stealing votes and controlling institutions," Gandhi alleged.

That's why unemployment has reached a 45-year high, he said.

"That's why jobs are declining, recruitment processes have collapsed, and the future of youth is being jeopardised. That's why every exam paper leak and every recruitment is linked to stories of corruption," Gandhi said.



"The country's youth work hard, dream, and fight for their future. But (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi is solely focused on his PR, getting celebrities to sing praises for him, and billionaire profits. It has become the Government's identity to shatter the hopes of the youth and leave them frustrated," the former Congress chief said.

"Now, the situation is changing. India's youth understand that the real fight isn't just for jobs, but against vote theft. Because as long as elections are stolen, unemployment and

corruption will continue to rise," he said.

Young people will no longer tolerate "job theft" or "vote theft", Rahul Gandhi asserted.

"The ultimate patriotism now lies in freeing India from unemployment and vote theft," he said.

Rahul Gandhi also shared a split screen video montage of police lathi-charging protesting students seeking jobs on one half of the screen and Prime Minister Modi planting saplings, feeding peacocks and practising Yoga on the other half of the screen.

Sangma condemns attack against nuns and minors in Jamshedpur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Shillong

National People's Party (NPP) working president James K. Sangma on Tuesday condemned attacks against a nun, staff members and 19 minors at Jamshedpur, three days ago.

In a statement, Sangma said these incidents are against the religious freedom and attacks were happened due to unsubstantiated allegations of conversion and trafficking. NPP is major party of NDA, ruling Meghalaya. "I strongly condemn the harassment and unlawful detention of a Catholic nun, two staff members from Catholic Charities Jamshedpur, and 19

minors at Tatanagar railway station on September 21, 2025. This incident represents a disturbing attack on religious freedom based solely on unsubstantiated allegations, claiming trafficking and forced conversion," said Sangma. NPP leader said that minor students were taken for a legitimate training programme on adolescent and skill development.

Protesting on the detention on baseless allegations Sangma demanded authorities to uphold the freedom granted by Constitution. "The reality, as clarified by Father Birendra Tete, was that these minors were invited to participate in a legitimate two-day training

program on adolescent health and skill development. The prolonged detention until 3 AM, despite no evidence of wrongdoing, demonstrates intimidation against religious minorities.

As a party committed to protecting minority rights, the NPP condemns such religious persecution, call upon authorities to uphold constitutional provisions guaranteeing religious freedom and ensuring no community faces harassment for lawful charitable work. NPP stands in solidarity with all religious minorities and will continue to strongly condemn any attempt to undermine our nation's secular fabric.

Ajay Singh's birthday becomes major political gathering

GIRISH SHARMA ■ Bhopal

The birthday celebrations of senior Congress leader and former Leader of Opposition Ajay Singh 'Rahul Bhaiya' on Tuesday turned into a significant political event, as hundreds of supporters gathered at his residence. The real surprise, however, came with the arrival of Amarpatan MLA Dr Rajendra Singh, Ajay Singh's maternal uncle, who personally wished him on his birthday despite the two being perceived for long as belonging to different poles in Vindhya Congress.

For years, Ajay Singh and Dr Rajendra Singh have carried reputations of running parallel power centres in Satna and the



wider Vindhya region. Ajay Singh, heir to the legacy of late Union Minister and Chief Minister Arjun Singh, has wielded influence in Churhat and Rewa districts, while Dr Rajendra Singh has nurtured a strong base in Satna. Their estrangement often deepened factionalism, leaving Congress divided on the

ground and giving BJP a decisive edge in successive elections. Tuesday's gesture is therefore being seen as more than just familial courtesy. It comes close on the heels of another unexpected development—Ajay Singh's meeting with former Chief Minister and Rajya Sabha member Digvijaya Singh,

few days ago. Ajay Singh had famously not been on good terms with Digvijaya Singh for decades, with their rivalry shaping internal Congress equations in Madhya Pradesh. His visit to Digvijaya Singh's residence only a few days ago surprised political circles and indicated a possible thaw.

Taken together, Ajay Singh's outreach to Digvijaya Singh and Dr Rajendra Singh's appearance at his birthday suggest a larger realignment within the party. Observers believe this could be the beginning of a new lobby forming in Congress, potentially aimed at countering the growing clout of Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) chief Jitu Patwari.

**Ram Gopal Varma
acquitted in 2018
cheque bounce case**



A Mumbai court has acquitted filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma in a 2018 cheque bounce case, after the matter was settled between him and the complainant company through a Lok Adalat.

The company filed a cheque bounce complaint against Varma's firm in 2018. Varma was acquitted earlier this month in view of the "compromise memo", as per the court order. A compromise memo (or memorandum of compromise) is a written agreement between parties in a legal dispute that outlines the terms of their settlement, filed in court to be recorded and acted upon by the judge.

Earlier, a Judicial Magistrate (at Andheri) on January 21 found Varma guilty under the Negotiable Instruments Act. The Magistrate sentenced him to three months' imprisonment and ordered him to pay ₹3,72,219 to the complainant within three months.

Aggrieved by the Magistrate's ruling, Varma had filed a criminal appeal before a sessions court (Dindoshi). However, in the previous hearing, both the filmmaker and the complainant company told the court that they had decided to amicably settle the matter through the Lok Adalat. After the matter was settled through the Lok Adalat, the sessions court acquitted Varma and disposed of his appeal.

When in politics, need to be thick-skinned: Delhi HC to Gaurav Bhatia

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday said that an individual who is in politics has to be "thick-skinned" but a distinction has to be made between satire and defamation.

Justice Amit Bansal made the observations while hearing an application by BJP leader and senior advocate Gaurav Bhatia seeking the removal of "defamatory" content from social media over his appearance on a TV news show earlier this month, where he was reportedly seen wearing a kurta "without any pants/pyjama".

The counsel appearing for Bhatia

told the court he was wearing shorts and that the cameraman showed the bottom half of his body by mistake.

Advocate Raghav Awasthi appeared for Bhatia claiming that social media posts related to the incident violate Bhatia's privacy, and the objectionable comments must be removed.

The judge said the court must be very careful while passing an ex parte injunction order, and paired the matter for hearing on September 25. "We have to be very careful. The Supreme Court has said that you should not pass ex parte orders in such cases. We have to be very careful," the



Gaurav Bhatia

judge remarked. The counsel contended that the picture was "taken in the privacy" of his home and should not have been circulated without his consent.

"It was an invasion of my (Bhatia) privacy.

I was sitting in the privacy of my home. Such photos, first of all, may not be circulated without my consent," he said. To this, the judge said, "You have the interview; they did not burgle into your home."

Meanwhile, advocate Mamta Rani Jha, appearing for Google, stated that some of the links sought to be taken down have nothing to do with this incident.

She said that some of the defen-

dants are news publications. The Court also said that it must be very careful while passing an ex parte injunction order.

"We have to be very careful. The Supreme Court has said that you should not pass ex parte orders in such cases. We have to be very careful," the judge remarked. "When you're in politics, you've to be thick-skinned.

We'll have to cull out what's satirical and what's defamatory. So for now we need to distinguish between offensive and satirical comments," the judge said.

The judge, however, said that obscene comments have to be taken down.



SC orders CBI cases against 6 more builders

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday allowed the CBI to register six more regular cases into the "unholy nexus" between banks and developers to dupe homebuyers in real estate projects in Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Mohali and Prayagraj.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant, Ujjal Bhuyan and N Kotiswar Singh allowed the CBI to proceed as per law after Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the agency, mentioned that it has completed preliminary inquiry in projects of the various builders except Supertech Ltd, falling outside Delhi-NCR in Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Mohali and Prayagraj.

The bench noted the submission of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) that, after preliminary inquiry, it has found a cognisable offence being made out and allowed the agency to register regular cases and proceed according to law.

Bhati said the agency is



willing to register six regular cases for speedy investigation and conduct a search and seizure in the matter. The top court directed Bhati to share portions of the sealed cover report with the amicus curiae advocate Rajiv Jain.

The bench on July 22, while allowing the agency to register 22 cases to probe the "unholy nexus" between banks and developers to

dupe homebuyers in Delhi-NCR, has granted six weeks to the CBI to complete the preliminary inquiry for projects outside the national capital region (NCR).

The 22 cases pertained to builders operating in NCR and development authorities in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. Under the subvention scheme, banks disburse the sanctioned amount

directly to the accounts of builders, who are then required to pay EMIs on the sanctioned loan amount until flats are handed over to homebuyers. After builders started defaulting on EMIs to banks, in line with the tripartite agreement, banks demanded the EMIs from homebuyers. The top court had at that time noted that the investigation in the

seventh preliminary enquiry registered by the CBI, which is over projects of the various builders except Supertech Ltd, falling outside NCR in Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Mohali and Prayagraj, was still underway.

The top court is hearing a batch of petitions filed by over 1,200 homebuyers, who booked flats under the subvention plans in various housing projects in NCR, especially Noida, Greater Noida and Gurugram, alleging they were being forced by banks to pay EMIs despite no possession of flats. On March 29, the top court allowed the CBI to register five preliminary enquiries into affairs of builders and projects in Noida, Greater Noida, Gurugram, Yamuna Expressway and Ghaziabad.

It allowed one preliminary enquiry to be registered against realty major Supertech Ltd, against whom 799 homebuyers have moved the top court by way of 84 appeals involving projects in eight different cities. On July 22, the top court had perused the report submitted by the CBI in a sealed cover, suggest-

ing that after conducting preliminary enquiries into the cases to ascertain the commission of a cognisable offence on the part of the builders and financial institutions, 22 regular cases are required to be registered for further investigation.

On April 29, the top court directed the CBI to register seven preliminary enquiries against builders in NCR, including Supertech Limited.

Frowning upon the collusion of development authorities officials, banks, and builders to dupe home buyers, the top court said it has found a prima facie nexus between renowned banks and builders in Noida, Gurugram, Yamuna Expressway, Greater Noida, Mohali, Mumbai, Kolkata and Prayagraj. The amicus curiae had called Supertech Ltd the "main culprit" in defrauding homebuyers, whereas Corporation Bank advanced more than ₹2,700 crore to builders through subvention schemes. The amicus curiae's report has revealed that Supertech Ltd alone had secured a loan amount of ₹5,157.86 crore since 1998.

Allahabad HC stays probe against madrasas

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Prayagraj

The Allahabad High Court has stayed a probe against 558 aided madrasas in Uttar Pradesh by the Economic Offences Wing.

The probe of alleged violation of human rights was being conducted by the Economic Offences Wing in pursuance of a direction issued by the National Human Rights Commission based on a complaint made by a man named Mohammad Talha Ansari against these madrasas. Challenging the direction as well as the inquiry, a petition was filed

before the High Court seeking to quash the orders of the NHRC dated February 28, April 23, and June 11. The petition further prayed for quashing a consequential Government order of April 23 for the inquiry.

On Monday, a bench of justices Saral Srivastava and Amitabh Kumar Rai while staying the orders issued notice to the NHRC as well as to the complainant, fixed November 17 as the next date of hearing.

It was submitted before the court that under Section 12 of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, the functions of the commission are

specifically enumerated.

It was further submitted that Section 36(2) of the Act clearly provides that the commission shall not inquire into any matter after the expiry of one year from the date on which the alleged act constituting violation of human rights is said to have been committed. It was also submitted before the court that under Section 12-A, the commission may inquire suo motu, or on a petition presented by a victim or any person on his behalf, or on the basis of any direction or order of any court. However, in the present case, none of the conditions stipulated

under Section 12-A is attracted. The petition further urged that the complaint is silent regarding the date of the alleged act constituting violation of human rights and since the averments made therein are vague and do not disclose any specific date, it is not possible to ascertain whether the complaint was filed within one year from the date of the alleged violation. Hence, it is submitted that the entire exercise undertaken by the commission is without jurisdiction.

The court directed respondents to file their respective replies within four weeks.

Karnataka HC stays Govt order capping movie ticket prices at ₹200

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bengaluru

The Karnataka High Court stayed enforcement of the Karnataka Cinemas (Regulation) (Amendment) Rules, 2025, which fixed a cap for movie ticket prices at ₹200 across the State. Justice Ravi V Hosmani granted the interim stay on Tuesday while hearing a petition filed by the Multiplex Association of India, along with other cinema stakeholders.

Appearing for the petitioners, Senior Advocate Mukul Rohatgi argued that the Government had arbitrarily introduced a proviso under the Karnataka Cinemas (Regulation) Act to cap ticket prices. "What is the basis for fixing ₹200, if customers want to pay more for enhanced facilities? There is no rationale in imposing a uniform ceiling," Rohatgi submitted.

He pointed out that a similar Government order issued in 2017 was suspended by the High Court and later withdrawn by the state. Rohatgi contended that the law does not provide any power to the state to fix ticket rates, and such a restriction directly affects the right of cinema owners

to conduct their business.

"There cannot be a direction that every ticket should cost ₹200, just as there cannot be an order that all airlines must operate in economy class," he argued.

Supporting the plea, Senior Advocates Uday Holla and Dhyan Chinnappa submitted that the amendment had been brought in by adding a proviso to Rule 55, which deals with ticket booths and not ticket pricing.

Chinnappa stressed that a proviso cannot enlarge the scope of the main provision. He said the amendment amounted to over-reach, as the power to fix prices must flow from clear legislative backing.

Senior Advocate DR Ravishanker, appearing for another theatre operator, argued that movie ticket pricing is a matter of private contract between exhibitors and customers. He maintained that unless the law expressly provides for such regulation, the Government cannot interfere. "Any restriction of this nature must be traceable to legislation and backed by empirical data. Otherwise, it infringes on the right to carry on business under Article 19(1)(g)," he said.

Beyond fame: Personality rights in the deepfake era



VIKAS SINGH

The recent legal actions taken by Aishwarya Rai Bachchan (Aishwarya Rai Bachchan v. AishwaryaWorld.com and Ors, 2025 SCC OnLine Del 5943), Abhishek Bachchan (Abhishek Bachchan v Bollywood Tee Shop, 2025 SCC OnLine Del 5944), Ankur Warikoo (Ankur Warikoo v John Doe, 2025 SCC OnLine Del 3727) and Dr Naresh Trehan (Global Health Ltd. & Anr v John Doe & Ors, CS(COMM) 6/2025) before the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi have rightly thrust the discourse on personality rights into the national spotlight. For years, the concept lingered in our courtrooms, occasionally invoked, but rarely understood in its full constitutional and societal dimension. The alarming rise of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Deepfake technology has now brought it to a rolling boil. What was once a niche concern for the famous has become an urgent, universal threat to the dignity and identity of every citizen. The time for ad hoc, celebrity-driven solutions is over. We are in dire need of a robust legal framework that protects all, not just a privileged few. However, this call for protection is not a plea for censorship. Any new framework must be carefully calibrated to exist within our constitutional protections for free speech, ensuring that the right to dignity does not unjustly silence the right to critique, comment, or lampoon.

In India, the protection of personality rights has not emerged from a dedicated statute. It has been judicially crafted, brick by brick, with the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi leading the way. The journey began with the decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Rajagopal v State of Tamil Nadu (1994) 6 SCC 632, which recognised the right to privacy and control over the commercial exploitation of one's identity. This foundation was built upon in cases like DM Entertainment (P) Ltd v Baby Gift House, 2010 SCC OnLine Del 4790, where the unauthorised creation of dolls resembling singer Daler Mehndi was deemed an infringement of his publicity rights. Landmark orders in favour of titans like Amitabh Bachchan, who secured a pioneering John Doe order to protect his persona against the world at large (Amitabh Bachchan v Rajat Nagi, (2022) 6 HCC (Del) 641), and Anil Kapoor, where the court expanded the scope of personality to include voice, image, gestures, and even dialogue delivery (Anil Kapoor v Simply Life India and Ors, 2023 SCC OnLine Del 6914), have been monumental.

These judgments protect individuals whose personality already possesses immense goodwill and commercial value. In this context, it is only appropriate to closely examine who qualifies as a celebrity in such cases. The Hon'ble High Court of Delhi, in Titan Industries Ltd v Ramkumar Jewellers, 2012 SCC OnLine Del 2382, observed: "A celebrity is defined as a famous or a well-known person. A 'celebrity' is merely a person who 'many' people talk about or know about." This patchwork in law, while effective for them, underscores the broader challenge of addressing deepfake misuse against the general public.

The Information Technology Act, 2000, offers avenues to tackle deepfake misuse through provisions penalising identity theft (Section 66C), cheating by personation (Section 66D), violation of privacy (Section 66E), and the publication of obscene or sexually explicit material (Sections 67 and 67A). However,

these provisions are fundamentally reactive, designed to punish specific cybercrimes after the harm has already spread virally. They lack the specific focus to address the novel challenges of AI-generated media, such as the rapid reputational damage caused by non-obscene yet highly misleading or defamatory deepfakes.

The most common recourse is through the principles of trademark law. When a celebrity's name attains a unique character exclusively associated with them, any unauthorised third-party use is likely to cause public confusion regarding association or endorsement. The courts have consistently held that a celebrity's persona is a marketable commodity, and unauthorised use that suggests an affiliation amounts to passing off.

The Copyright Act, 1957, provides another powerful tool, specifically through the lens of performers' moral rights. Sections 38, 38A, and 38B grant performers special protections, including the Right of Integrity, which empowers a performer to restrain any distortion of their performance that would be prejudicial to their reputation. In the context of deepfakes, an AI-generated video that places an actor in a defamatory or explicit context can be argued as a gross distortion of their persona, thereby maligning their reputation.

Beyond commercial laws, the courts have grounded personality rights in our Constitution itself. In Anil Kapoor v Simply Life India and Ors, 2023 SCC OnLine Del 6914, the Hon'ble High Court at Delhi explicitly linked the misuse of his persona to a violation of Article 21, interpreting Right to Life and Personal Liberty to include the right to dignity and reputation. It was further noted that the Freedom of Speech and Expression under Article 19(1)(a) implicitly includes the right "not" to endorse.

This impressive legal arsenal, however, is riddled with holes for a commoner. Practical hurdles like the anonymity of perpetrators and the prohibitive cost of litigation place justice far beyond the reach of the average Indian. This disparity cannot, and must not, be allowed to persist. The true essence of the right is far broader than its current application; it is the inherent right of every individual to control their own identity, image, voice, and likeness.

The case of Aishwarya Rai Bachchan is particularly instructive. Her suit specifically sought protection against AI-generated deepfake videos that superimposed her face onto sexually explicit content. She was able to secure an injunction because the system is designed to respond to such high-profile violations. The reasons for approaching Delhi High Court are strategic: this High Court has developed a mature jurisprudence on the subject. It has been willing to grant swift, pan-India injunctions crucial for tackling viral online content.

The location is practical for enforcing orders against tech giants with legal offices in the capital. Notably, the Hon'ble High Court of Bombay has also begun engaging with these questions, although the relief granted was narrower and interim in nature (Arijit Singh v Codible Ventures LLP, 2024 SCC OnLine Bom 2445). However, we cannot expect every citizen victimised by a deepfake to have the resources or ability to seek justice in one or two courts. The solution must be decentralised, accessible, and codified into law.

Nations across the globe are grappling with this very issue. Denmark is proposing Danish Copyright Act (Amendment) 2025 to grant individuals exclusive rights over their own body, facial features, and voice. This protection would extend 50

years post-mortem, allow victims to demand takedowns and compensation, and impose severe fines on non-compliant platforms. Italy, the first EU nation with a comprehensive AI law, the Italian Artificial Intelligence Act, 2025, has introduced stringent criminal penalties for harmful AI-generated content, including deepfakes, with prison terms ranging from one to five years.

The EU Artificial Intelligence Act, 2025 mandates that AI-generated content be clearly labelled or tagged, empowering users to distinguish between authentic and synthetic media. Hence, a combination of a rights-based legal foundation, strong criminal deterrents, and mandatory platform transparency is essential.

When the power to digitally replicate and manipulate a person's identity is available at the click of a button, the law must be swift and decisive in its response. A promising new legal path has emerged in India with the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023. This law grants every individual the right to control how their digital personal data, including their image and voice, is processed.

While a person's public photo may be viewable, this does not constitute consent for its use in a deepfake, which is a new form of processing for a different, often malicious, purpose. This allows any person to file a complaint with the Data Protection Board of India, shifting the legal focus from a celebrity's commercial harm to a universal "violation of data rights."

The potential of the deepfake technology for harm is immense, from manipulating voter behaviour to inflicting irreparable psychological trauma. To protect the personality rights of every Indian in this new digital reality, we must move beyond judicial interpretation and enact a standalone law or amend the Information Technology

Act, 2000, to explicitly grant every citizen a Right to Personality. This right must be defined broadly to include their name, image, likeness, voice, and other unique attributes, and it must be a universal right, untethered from fame or commercial value. We must introduce stringent criminal penalties, borrowing from Italy's model, for the creation and dissemination of malicious deepfakes intended to harass, defame, extort, or create non-consensual pornography. Crucially, this legal framework must incorporate clear safe harbours for freedom of speech.

There must be explicit exemptions for parody, satire, caricature, artistic expression, and legitimate news commentary. The Lakshman Rekha must be drawn to protect individuals from targeted harm without censoring constitutionally protected speech. Platforms must be held accountable through a mandatory and time-bound notice and takedown mechanism. All synthetic media published online must be clearly labelled as such. A specialised, fast-track tribunal or a digital ombudsman should be established to handle complaints of personality rights violations.

The rise of deepfake technology represents an inflection point for our society and our laws. We stand at a crossroads where we can either allow this powerful tool to become a weapon for eroding trust and violating human dignity, or we can proactively build the legal guardrails to ensure it is used responsibly. The challenge is formidable, but the mandate is clear: we must forge a new legal consensus that safeguards the most fundamental thing a person has, their own identity. The digital doppelgänger is already here. Our laws must not be left behind.



Editor's TAKE

France rekindles hope for Palestine

France has shown courage by recognising Palestine. Others must follow — not to weaken Israel but to save both Israelis and Palestinians from endless war

Though it may not have any direct effect on Israel or its ongoing Gaza offensive, France's recognition of the Palestinian state is a step in the right direction which may inspire other nations to take a stand and show spine. It was declared earlier but is official now. France's formal recognition of a Palestinian state at the United Nations marks a historic moment in the long, painful saga of the West Asia conflict. President Emmanuel Macron's declaration that "the time for peace has come" is more than symbolic — it is a demand for the international community to acknowledge the human catastrophe unfolding in Gaza and the political stalemate that has denied Palestinians their right to statehood for decades. By joining a growing list of nations — including the UK, Canada, Australia, and Portugal — that have extended recognition, France has challenged the inertia that has long defined world's approach to Palestine.

Predictably, Israel has rejected the move, branding it a "reward" for Hamas's October 7 attack. But that is a hollow argument, given that Gaza residents are on the verge of extinction, facing the daily challenge of survival and starving for basics as Israel rains missiles on the hapless people. Recognition strengthens the Palestinian Authority and legitimate voices seeking peace, while isolating extremist actors on all sides. The implications of France's step are profound. First, it creates momentum for a wider shift in global opinion. As Belgium, Luxembourg, Malta, and others prepare to follow suit, Israel finds itself increasingly isolated on the world arena. Isolation could push Israel towards the only viable path: a two-state solution where both peoples coexist in peace.

Second, recognition reframes the narrative. Macron's decision, amplified by UN Secretary-General António Guterres's warning that Gaza's situation is "morally, legally and politically intolerable," places it back at the centre of international conscience. The European Union's plans for reconstruction funds underscore that recognition must be followed by material support, not just rhetoric.

Now the big question is: where does India stand on this crucial juncture? Historically, India was among the earliest champions of Palestinian self-determination, yet in recent decades its position has tilted closer to Israel, largely for strategic and economic reasons. But silence or neutrality at this juncture will be detrimental for its world image as a champion of human rights and a voice for the Global South.

India should reaffirm its support for a two-state solution, extend recognition to Palestine, and call for an immediate ceasefire. By doing so, it would not only stand on the right side of history but also align itself with the values of justice, dignity, and non-violence. India's voice carries weight; using it now would demonstrate that its pursuit of global power does not come at the expense of principle.

Akhand Bharat: Dream and dilemma

The idea of Akhand Bharat — a united subcontinent — evokes both nostalgia for a shared past and controversy over its modern-day feasibility, rooted in ancient Bharatavarsh and revived during the freedom struggle as a counter to the two-nation theory



ATUL SEHGAL

The idea of Akhand Bharat, or "United India," is one of the most evocative and contested concepts in South Asia. Rooted in ancient history and rekindled during the anti-colonial struggle, it envisions a subcontinental nation encompassing the territories of modern-day India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Tibet, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. For some, it symbolises cultural continuity and civilisational grandeur; for others, it is a utopian dream with little chance of becoming reality. Between nostalgia and controversy lies a debate that blends history, politics, and geopolitics in equal measure. The concept of a unified cultural space called Bharatavarsh can be traced back to ancient Indian texts.

This vision was not always political in nature but rather civilisational — an acknowledgment of shared traditions, religions, and exchanges across the subcontinent. The Mauryan Empire under Chandragupta and Ashoka came closest to achieving political unity in the 3rd century BCE. Ashoka's reign, marked by both conquest and the spread of Buddhism, is often invoked as an early precedent for Akhand Bharat. Centuries later, during India's freedom struggle, the notion resurfaced in response to the demand for Partition. Leaders like Vinayak Damodar Savarkar articulated Akhand Bharat as a counter-idea, rejecting the two-nation theory that ultimately shaped the 1947 division. Partition, however, redrew the map, birthing Pakistan and eventually Bangladesh, and institutionalising political fragmentation. For many, that moment extinguished the dream of unity. Yet organisations like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) have kept the ideal alive, framing it as both a cultural memory and a political aspiration. To them, Akhand Bharat symbolises not merely geography but the recovery of a civilisational whole. The modern-day hurdles to Akhand Bharat are formidable. Foremost is the sovereignty of established nation-states. Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and others are independent countries with their own constitutions, national identities, and geopolitical orientations. Any attempt at annexation or absorption would constitute aggression under international law. The backlash over a mural in India's new Parliament building in 2023, interpreted by neighbours as depicting Akhand Bharat, underscored the sensitivity of the issue. Demographics present another obstacle. A reunified South Asia would dramatically reshape the religious balance, with Muslims forming a much larger share of the population. Sceptics argue this could inflame sectarian divisions



The Pioneer SINCE 1865

AKHAND BHARAT REMAINS AN EMOTIVE IDEAL, OSCILLATING BETWEEN NOSTALGIA AND CONTROVERSY. POLITICALLY, ITS REALISATION APPEARS IMPROBABLE IN THE NEAR FUTURE, GIVEN ENTRENCHED NATIONAL IDENTITIES, RELIGIOUS DIVIDES, AND INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARIES

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rather than heal them, given the violent legacy of Partition and the persistence of communal tensions. Critics also emphasise that, over the past 75 years, religious and cultural divides have deepened, making consensus-based unification highly unlikely.

Yet this scepticism rests partly on political manipulation. Religious fault lines, critics suggest, are often exploited by political elites and foreign powers. On the ground, people across the region share customs, languages, cuisines, and music. Seen through this lens, civilisational unity remains intact, even if political unity appears distant. The geopolitical context adds further complexity. India and Pakistan's rivalry — entrenched by wars, terrorism, and the Kashmir dispute — makes even the thought of integration appear dangerous.

Analysts caution that any push for forced reunification could destabilise the nuclearised region. However, proponents of Akhand Bharat counter that the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, the decline of cross-border terrorism, and India's military assertiveness — illustrated in later operations against Pakistan — have changed the balance of power. They argue that the nuclear threat is less of a deterrent than it once was, and that peaceful economic integration could bring shared prosperity. If political unification remains elusive, cultural and economic cooperation offers a more realistic path.

Instead of seeing Akhand Bharat as a territorial project, it can be reimagined as a civilisational and cultural framework. South Asia's nations share more than borders: they are bound by cricket, cinema, literature, folklore, and cuisine. These shared elements can become the foundation for greater trust and regional harmony. Institutions like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), though underperforming, demon-

strate the potential for collective action on issues such as poverty alleviation, climate change, and trade. Strengthening such platforms could allow countries to pursue common goals without threatening sovereignty. Enhanced trade corridors, student exchange programmes, and cultural festivals could gradually weave together a sense of regional identity.

Seen this way, Akhand Bharat is not about conquest but cooperation. It need not be imposed by force or framed in terms of territorial expansion. Rather, it can evolve organically through economic interdependence, cultural revival, and people-to-people connections. Over time, such integration might pave the way for closer political alignment, though that remains a long-term possibility rather than an immediate goal.

Akhand Bharat remains an emotive ideal, oscillating between nostalgia and controversy. Politically, its realisation appears improbable in the near future, given entrenched national identities, religious divides, and international boundaries. Yet as a cultural and civilisational vision, it holds resonance. By shifting focus from annexation to cooperation, South Asia can reclaim aspects of its shared past while building a more peaceful and prosperous future. The challenge, then, is to separate myth from possibility. The dream of political reunification may never materialise in its literal form, but the essence of Akhand Bharat — a recognition of common heritage — can still inspire regional collaboration. The nations of South Asia, by embracing their shared roots and respecting their differences, can turn division into dialogue and rivalry into partnership. Such a future may not carry the dramatic weight of empire, but it promises stability, prosperity, and dignity for over a billion people.

PIC TALK



An elderly woman offers prayers to Goddess Durga at a railway station, in West Bengal.

PHOTO: PTI

Nine nights of celebration, nine lessons for life



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

THE PIONEER 2ND OPINION

India is often described as a land of festivals. From harvest gatherings in villages to grand city processions, celebrations form the heartbeat of our culture. Among these, Navratri holds a unique place. For nine days and nights, communities across the nation come alive with colour, music, and devotion. From the garba in Gujarat to the Durga Puja pandals of Bengal, the festival brings people together in a spirit of unity. But while we witness the grandeur, it is equally important to reflect on what Navratri really teaches us. Yet, beyond the rituals and celebrations lies a profound message which very few of us know about. What is it? Not many of us know that the festival of Navratri is not just about worshipping the goddess, but about remembering the role of feminine power in sustaining

society. In a country where respect for women is deeply woven into our cultural roots, Navratri is a reminder that progress cannot be measured by material success alone.

True prosperity flows when we honour values such as purity, compassion, strength, and wisdom. Traditional stories retold during Navratri carry this message in a symbolic form. The tale of Goddess Durga defeating Mahishashur is not merely a myth, but an allegory. Mahishashur represents the arrogance and ignorance that destroy harmony, while Maa Durga embodies courage and righteousness. Hence, her victory shows that whenever society slips into imbalance, it is the rise of inner virtues that restores peace. This symbolism is also reflected in the rituals we follow during Navratri. Lighting the akhand jyoti represents knowledge that removes the darkness of ignorance. Worshipping young girls is not just ritualistic; it is an affirmation that innocence, purity, and future potential must be valued. Fasting is not simply about dietary control but about learning self-restraint. Thus, each tradition, when understood, becomes a practical lesson for living. Navratri also highlights the spirit of community. It is rare to see such large gatherings where music, prayer, and dance blend seamlessly. Whether it is garba in the West, Golu displays in the South, or Durga pandals in the East, the essence is the same — that of celebration of col-

lective harmony. In an age where individualism often dominates, Navratri reminds us of the strength of togetherness. It tells us that culture is not preserved in isolation but in shared experience. For the youth especially, Navratri offers both joy and guidance. While dance and festivities bring energy, the stories and rituals provide direction. They teach that beauty lies not in appearances but in values, and that true power is the ability to rise above negativity. In this way, Navratri links the joy of celebration with the seriousness of character-building. As Bharat moves forward, it is vital that festivals retain this dual role of celebration and reflection. If we focus only on rituals and forget their meaning, they risk becoming empty customs. Looked at more deeply, they become instruments for shaping a balanced society.

Navratri is one such occasion where devotion, culture, and wisdom converge. This year, as we witness the colours and music of Navratri, let us not forget its essence. The goddess we worship lives in every act of kindness, every choice of courage, and every moment of wisdom. By respecting women, nurturing values, and uniting as communities, we truly honour the spirit of the festival.

The writer is a spiritual educator and a popular columnist for publications across India, Nepal, and the UK

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KOLKATA: DURGA PUJA BOOSTS CULTURE, ECONOMY & HERITAGE

The inclusion of Kolkata Durga Puja on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity has enabled centuries-old nostalgia to transcend geographical borders. Its recognition in international forums was expected to provide a boost to traditional craftsmanship, performing arts, and social customs.

Moreover, this mega festival contributes significantly to the local economy, accounting for approximately 2.58 per cent of the state's GDP. Yet, the shadow of global uncertainties, including the tariff war, highlights the precarious situation for small traders, businesses, and craft industries, who always await favourable turnover during this festive season. The ripple effects of a thriving Puja economy provide ample opportunities for

employment and skill generation. Around three lakh jobs are created during the Puja festival each year. Traditional crafts, which are on the brink of extinction due to lack of funding and patronage, experience their heyday during this time. Heritage crafts such as idol-making in Kumartuli, Sholapith ornamentation, and pandal decorations need protection — not only to conserve heritage but also to retain a potent channel for employment generation.

Additionally, providing support to indigenous artisans through funding, social security schemes, and easing intellectual property protocols would go a long way in transforming the scenario and ensuring the sustainability of these invaluable cultural traditions.

PRASUN DUTTA | WEST BENGAL

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Young cricketers steal the spotlight

The Indian team, especially its youngsters, has been stealing the show with tremendous cricketing skills in recent tournaments — batting, bowling, and fielding alike. It feels as though India has built a 'cricketing machine' producing smart, intelligent youngsters ready to excel in any format of the game. Time and again, they have turned up in high-pressure matches, delivering impactful performances even when senior players faltered.

Many youngsters have shone in their debut matches, becoming game-changers and match-winners. Shubman Gill, Abhishek Sharma, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Tilak Varma, Arshdeep Singh, and others have left an indelible mark. Their rise sends a clear signal to seniors — they must perform well to retain their place.

This year has seen India perform brilliantly both at home and abroad. The high-voltage English series displayed fine teamwork, while the Asia Cup T20 has brought consistent excellence.

The IPL and other structured tournaments have opened doors for deserving talent, helping them choose cricket, get selected, and perform at their best. This system is worth emulating in other sports.

SREELEKHA PS | TELANGANA

Rahul Gandhi links jobs to votes

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on September 23 delivered a scathing critique of the Narendra Modi Government, warning that India's youth face despair amid soaring unemployment and alleged electoral malpractice. He claimed the biggest problem today is unemployment, directly tied to "vote theft". According to him, the BJP remains in power by manipulating institutions and elections, pushing unemployment to its highest level in 45 years. Jobs are shrinking, recruitment has collapsed, and the future of youth is being darkened. Rahul Gandhi asserted that until elections are free and fair, unemployment and corruption will keep rising. "The youth will neither tolerate job looting nor vote theft," he said, framing the fight against unemployment and electoral fraud as the greatest patriotism.

The Congress party has intensified its campaign on 'vote chori', with Gandhi hinting at explosive disclosures, referring to a looming "hydrogen bomb" of revelations regarding irregularities. The battle is no longer just political — it is about saving democracy and securing the future of young India. Rahul Gandhi's address underscores that tackling unemployment and electoral malpractice is crucial to safeguarding India's democracy and the future of its youth.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

Taliban's war against women

While the Stone Age showed no definitive evidence of discrimination against women, inequality grew with agriculture and private property, eventually creating male-dominated societies.

Today, nowhere is this taken to such extremes as in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. Women are forbidden to work, attend high school, leave home without a male guardian, or join cultural life.

The latest Taliban decree has banned books written by female authors and outlawed teaching human rights or sexual harassment. Nearly 140 books by women were removed from university curricula, alongside 540 others deemed "anti-Taliban". Even internet access is being cut — fibre-optic services were banned across ten provinces to "prevent immorality". University subjects linked to women have also been targeted, including gender studies, women's communication, and women's sociology. The Taliban appear bent on erasing women from intellectual, public, and private life. If their logic is followed to its end, the next step might be to prevent the very birth of girls. Such brutal misogyny has no parallel in today's world. The Taliban's actions starkly highlight the extreme oppression of women, threatening their rights, education, and very existence.

JANG BAHADUR SINGH | JAMSHEDPUR



Science behind heat waves in West and cloudbursts in Asia

The planet is warming and as the evaporation from the surfaces of water bodies increases, so does the water-holding capacity of the warm air. Apart from plundering nature in the Himalayas, we must restrict further warming of the planet by transitioning away from fossil fuel consumption

FIRST
Column



BK SINGH



The Pioneer
SINCE 1865

The writer is Retired Head of Karnataka Forest Force and presently teaches Economics in Karnataka Forest Academy

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While the IMD announced the retreat of the north-east monsoon of the season, Dehradun and Mandi experienced massive cloudbursts killing dozens of people and damaging buildings, roads and bridges. The hill town of Mussoorie remained cut off from Dehradun for over 48 hours. This monsoon, from Kullu to Kalimpong, Kishtwar to Karnaprayag, landslides, flash floods and ground subsidence sharpened the focus on how India's expanding infrastructure like highways, tunnels, ropeways, and hydropower dams is affecting the fragile Himalayan terrains.

Earlier, on 5th August, three dozen buildings of Dharali village near Gangotri in Uttarkashi were flattened in a flash flood within 20 seconds. The mudslide had hit an Army unit around 7 km downstream at Harshil, too. A massive mass of water and slush hit the structures — hotels, homestays, guesthouses and houses — with enough energy to flatten them. Though Dharali received 33 mm of rain in 24 hours, heavy precipitation in upper hill ranges/catchments brought down a heavy mass of slush and water. The average altitudinal difference between the place of such precipitation and Dharali is one km, and even 1000 tonnes of water and slush through this fall generates 10 gigajoules of energy, enough to flatten any structure on its way. The energy can be calculated using a simple physics formula of mass × acceleration due to gravity × altitudinal difference.

Devbhumi has seen frequent cloudbursts in the recent past — the Kedarnath tragedy that claimed nearly 3000 lives in 2013, the unprecedented level of debris flow in Rishiganga and Dhauliganga in 2021 that killed over 200 workers stuck in the under-construction Tapovan-Vishnugad hydropower project, the havoc caused in Joshimath in 2023 and many more chilling reminders.

The Char Dham all-weather road widening project passes through the Bhagirathi Eco-Sensitive Zone (BESZ). An area of 4157 sq km between Gangotri and Uttarkashi town notified as BESZ is for the preservation of the river's ecology and watershed near its origin. In violation of BESZ protection norms, multistorey buildings and hotels are construct-

ed in Maneri and Jamak villages near Uttarkashi on the bank of the river Ganga. The scrutiny committee of BESZ has found that the valley's slopes are unstable and suggested an alternate design. The recent catastrophe is exactly as predicted by experts. The Uttarkashi-Gangotri NH widening project involves the felling of 13,000 trees in BESZ. There are 238 glaciers in BESZ and climate change is accelerating their retreat. Six thousand deodar trees in the stretch connecting Jhala and Gangotri have already been cut down and another 6000 are in the pipeline to face the axe. Besides tourism, the stated purpose of the wide roads is to augment defence supplies to the China border. Nevertheless, the entire Char Dham project should have been considered as one project of nearly 900 km of widening and in that scenario an Environmental Impact Assessment could not have been avoided. Obtaining forest clearances on a piecemeal basis should also have been avoided, so that the trees axed/proposed to be axed are available in one place and the issue can be considered in totality. The Supreme Court recently expressed

concern over uncontrolled constructions and the inflow of tourists in Himachal Pradesh, saying that the day is not far off when the state vanishes from the map of the country. Revenue earning should not be the only criterion. The death of more than 300 people since 20th June in Himachal Pradesh due to flooding and landslides led to the state suspending any new construction without prior approval. J&K also had its share of tragedy in the season; landslides and flooding killed 46 pilgrims, injuring over 100 while another 100 went missing at Chishoti (90 km from Kishtwar). Several structures and vehicles were washed away in the flash flood. Pilgrims trek 8.5 km from Chishoti to the Machail Mata shrine. The yatra that commenced on 25th July was suspended after the tragedy. The camp set up for the pilgrims, including the community kitchen, was in the flood plain of the stream, and all structures along with people were completely washed away. In a warming world, when cloudbursts and incessant rains are frequent and destructive, should the camp be set up in the flood plains of rivers and streams? A week later flooding and

landslides killed fifty people in Katra and the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine remained closed for pilgrims for 22 days. Later Punjab saw one of the worst floods in living memory. Two thousand three hundred villages in all 23 districts of the state were inundated, inflicting severe damage to roads, buildings, schools, hospitals and, most importantly, agricultural crops. Nearly one hundred persons perished in the flood and the cost of reconstruction — ₹12,000 crores — is the initial assessment, which is likely to go up in subsequent assessments when the flood recedes. The World Meteorological Department in a recent report has said, "The global water cycle has become extremely erratic and extreme with wild swings between droughts and floods, spelling big trouble for economies and societies." While cloudbursts, flooding and landslides have caused havoc in Pakistan, India, Japan, China, Indonesia and many other South East Asian countries, the heatwaves and wildfires have engulfed European nations, mainly Spain, Portugal, Italy, Turkey, France etc. and even the US. A landslide wiped out a village in Sudan's

Darfur, killing more than 1000 people.

The sudden stratospheric warming causes an Arctic jet stream collapse, resulting in the weakening and disruption of the Polar Vortex. This disruption allows frigid Arctic air to spill southward, causing cold outbreaks in the mid-latitude region, keeping the Arctic region warmer than average. In addition, Tropospheric Rossby Waves also propagate upwards into the stratosphere causing the jet stream to break down. The ridges of the wavy jet stream push warm air northwards. A collapsing jet stream allows persistent high-pressure systems to bring extreme heat and drought in one region, and a 'trough' with a low-pressure system to bring torrential rains. This explains the heatwaves and wildfires in Europe and North America and extreme wet weather in India.

Westerly jet streams are fast-flowing air currents that blow from west to east. They are driven by the earth's rotation and the temperature gradient between poles and tropics. They bring western disturbances i.e. storms from the Mediterranean into northern India causing rain and snow. During this year's monsoon season, the IMD repeatedly pointed out that there had been interferences between the westerly and the north-east monsoon, which has provided more favourable conditions for rainfall. The planet is warming and the evaporation from the surfaces of water bodies increases, as does the water-holding capacity of the warm air. Thus, an increased quantity of water is available in the form of cloud in the atmosphere. Whenever the conditions are favourable, such a huge quantity is dumped on the surface of the earth, which is understood as cloudbursts.

The Himalayas are younger mountains compared to mountains in central Indian landscapes and the Western Ghats and are more fragile and vulnerable to erosion and landslides. Streams and rivers can even change course and bring more surprises. The abrupt swelling of the Kheerganga river in Uttarkashi and its changing course along the path it had followed a hundred years ago led to the washing away of all structures along with humans. All the old courses of the river should be considered as flood plains and can at the most be used for agriculture. No permanent structures, roads and bridges should be permitted in such areas. Apart from plundering nature in the Himalayas, we must restrict further warming of the planet by transitioning away from fossil fuel consumption.

Green Hydrogen: India's sustainable green fuel for accelerating Green Economy



T SENTHIL SIVA SUBRAMANIAN

Hydrogen ranks at the top, the first and lightest element in the periodic table, produced from one of the important constituents of Pancha Mahabhutas, H₂O [Jala], which makes up the whole universe. India is strongly committed to achieving 500 GW of non-fossil fuel-based energy capacity by 2030 through pioneering initiatives and several innovation and awareness programmes in collaboration with Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), industries, start-ups, sector skill councils, academic institutions, and MSMEs. Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR), BARC, BHEL, Reliance Industries Limited, Hyundai, and different industries are indigenously developing Swadeshi green hydrogen technologies. The ambitious and promising initiatives like the National Green Hydrogen Mission and National Biofuels Mission empower green and biohydrogen production. India is envisioning establishing green hydrogen innovation clusters, valleys, research, and innovation hubs. India has launched Green Credit Programmes which facilitate the green economy.

Green hydrogen valley
India has successfully transformed from the old era — Indus Valley — to the modern era — Green Hydrogen Valley — through pioneering initiatives by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) and Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India. The green hydrogen policy of Andhra Pradesh plays a significant role in establishing the green hydrogen valley — Amaravati Declaration — thereby initiating green energy corridors and skilling ecosystems. India is aiming to establish a Green Global Capability Centre (GCC) that generates the largest talent skill pool in the green energy sector. India attains global ground-breaking recognition in green energy among G20 nations through fulfilling its Paris Commitments, thereby realising the vision and dreams of Honourable Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi: "Self-Reliance in the Energy sector."

"Let us work together to accelerate the development and deployment of Green Hydrogen and to generate green jobs."

Green hydrogen success stories in India
India's strong foothold step towards net zero carbon neutrality is our nation's first Make-in-India Green Hydrogen Plant in Gujarat. India's premier organisations like National Thermal Power Corporation, one of the leading players in the

world energy sector, have established a zero-emission campus [NETRA — NTPC Energy Technology Research Alliance] at Greater Noida, contributing to carbon neutrality through green hydrogen production using a steam electrolyser in collaboration with Ohmium, a green energy start-up. The Government of Tamil Nadu, in partnership with Hyundai Motor India Limited and the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, successfully launched the custom design of the Hyundai HTWO Innovation Centre.

India has made a successful journey from establishing a hydrogen station in 2005 to 14 fuel-cell buses covering a massive 70,000 kilometres on trial runs, which displays the success story in the field of green mobility. To achieve the renewable energy ambitious target of 2030, Indian Railways has taken a major and bold step to launch "Hydrogen for Heritage," a pioneering initiative to launch hydrogen-powered trains, catalysing the potential of carbon neutrality and zero-emission technologies. India is poised to capture the two-wheeler segment in green hydrogen through the concept of Lab to Market, supported by the Government of India, academic institutions, MSMEs, and start-ups, especially frugal innovations like Swadeshi hydrogen-fuelled e-bikes, which would benefit every citizen in India.

Ohmium established India's first Green Hydrogen Electrolyser Gigafactory in Bengaluru, with the objective of manufacturing Proton Exchange Membrane (PEM) hydrogen electrolysers. India has embarked on its green journey by establishing the world's first integrated green hydrogen and green ammonia plant in Bikaner, Rajasthan, by ACME. The Indian Meteorological Department has established its state-of-the-art Hydrogen Factory at Agra. MNRE has launched the Green Hydrogen Certification Scheme of India (GHCI), ensuring robust consumer transparency, carbon traceability, and market credibility. Global financial institutions like the World Bank, IREDA, KfW, and IIFCL are exploring possibilities of innovative strategies and blended policies, mechanisms to empower green credit lines.

Hydrogen innovation in India — A case study
ANRF has paved the way for green hydrogen research in India. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Technology, IIT Delhi, has developed smart sensor systems using extremely sensitive 1D and 2D nano devices by utilising palladium (Pd) and gold (Au) through plasmonic technology for the detection of hydrogen gas. JNCASR has developed advanced technologies like metal-free donor-acceptor based covalent-organic frameworks for piezo-catalytic splitting of H₂O. Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) has constructed a demonstration

pilot plant to produce hydrogen by the Iodine-Sulfur (I-S) process. Academic institutions like Nitte Meenakshi Institute of Technology, Bengaluru, designed and developed green hydrogen production systems using renewable photovoltaic and wind energy sources to generate electricity 24x7 using seawater electrolysis. The institution is planning to empower in-house production of green hydrogen fuel for unmanned aerial vehicles for different potential applications.

Skill ecosystem and innovation launch pads
The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, in collaboration with MNRE, is developing National Skill Qualification Frameworks (NSQF)-Level 4 courses on Green Hydrogen Production Technician for Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), certified by the National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVT). The skill council for green jobs under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, in collaboration with MNRE, is conducting PMKVY 4.0 training on green hydrogen. The green council has developed NSQF Level 3/4/5 qualification programmes on different job roles such as green hydrogen plant junior technician, green hydrogen plant technician, and green hydrogen plant entrepreneur, respectively. The National Institute of Solar Energy under MNRE has established incubation start-up launch pad programmes to empower young researchers, innovators, and entrepreneurs to actively work in the green energy sector, thereby developing green hydrogen technologies to a Technology Readiness Level (TRL) of 7/8.

Empower green hydrogen
The Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, has established a Centre of Excellence in Process Safety and Risk Management in collaboration with Nayara and Gexcon to capitalise on the potential of talented human resources in the green energy sector. Industry associations like the Hydrogen Association of India, which has its registered office in Indian Oil Corporation, Faridabad, Green Hydrogen Association (GH2 India), IESA (India Energy Storage Alliance), Indo-German Energy Forum, PHD Chamber of Commerce (Centre of Excellence for Green Hydrogen), have been actively empowering the growth of green hydrogen in India. India is marching towards establishing a plethora of green energy initiatives like green corridors, green hubs, green innovation clusters, green GCCs, green skill programmes, green internships, hands-on project-based learning, experiential learning, and green apprenticeships, thereby building Viksit Green Bharat @2047.

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Burnt dreams reflect India's broken gender promise



APS MALHOTRA

If it wasn't such a tragedy, so base, the two steps forward, one step backward movement in which gender equality is stuck for so long would be a cruel farce, at least from my perspective. Because just when I begin to think that we may never witness its diabolical manifestations, a gruesome incident occurs that rudely jolts me from my reverie.

As happened recently, when a young, aspirational, married woman was burnt to death, within the larger NCR area — close to the centre of power. The visuals that played repetitively on sundry platforms nauseated me with their graphic content, as if it were a macabre game in a sinister circus. The incident laid bare — once again — the mindset that follows women in our society, at each step, sometimes surreptitiously, often blatantly, from the womb up to the grave. It scalded my conscience as never before; flames of bristling rage overpowered my rational thinking, and for a while, as I placed myself alongside the victim, the likely perpetrator of the heinous crime became my sworn enemy.

It was while grappling with this painful episode that my mind went back to 1996-1998, when, as a young man in my early twenties, I was on a sterling professional assignment. Even then, I was aware that the monster looming over gender equality, threatening to devour it, was present everywhere — from the hinterland to the urban hubs. But I was unaware of the depth to which it infested our social fabric, till I encountered one

of the most bizarre and repulsive trivialisations of females. It happened one day, when I casually asked my business associate — in his mid-thirties and scion of one of the richest and most influential families of the area, with wide-ranging business interests — about his family. Dispassionately, he replied: "two minuses and one plus" — as if he was an ace mathematician. For a few moments I was utterly confused; but then I sought clarification as to what equation he was alluding to: "I have two daughters and one son"! It felt as if someone had punched me in the solar plexus; nevertheless, I gained composure quickly, and gave him a piece of my mind, although till now, I have not been able to fathom as to where his wife fitted in his equation — maybe

zero. After a few days, and ever since, I have mulled as to where we should start cleaning the stinking stables. I concluded — like several others — that the push for women's empowerment, respect, safety, and equality must come from the basic unit in which we live — the family.

It is here that sons must be brought up in a manner that sensitivity and respect for women get ingrained in their character, to become a part of their personality. Moreover, coming from a family where women — including my mother — have had long and meaningful stints as teachers, I have always felt that schools, respected as temples of learning, can be game changers if subjects like gender equality become part of the syllabus from an early age. But sadly, till this happens, the epidemic of 'pluses' and 'minuses' afflicting our social and moral fabric for so long will keep on rearing its ugly head.

The writer works with an oil and gas PSU

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GOYAL AND GREER



India's Commerce and Industry Minister, Piyush Goyal, met the US trade representative, Jamieson Greer, in Washington. Experts contend that the meeting will accelerate the bilateral trade talks and yield a much-needed breakthrough. Those who are in know confide that a deal is already on the table. "India has agreed to many of the US' demands, and so has the latter to the former's concerns. It is now a matter of finalising the import duties on a few more-sensitive American products," says one of them. This explains why Goyal earlier hinted that a pact would be in place by November this year. The deal may be announced in late-November or early December.

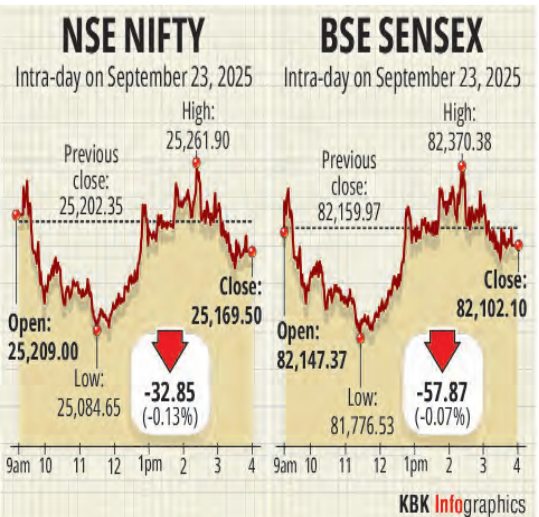
November or December will be perfect timing to announce it. By then, the crucial festive season of Dussehra-Diwali, and other festivals will be done. America will get ready for the Christmas-New year celebrations, and its buying season. Indian consumers, enthused and excited by GST cuts, will finish their immediate shopping, vacations and entertainment. They will be in a good mood, with praises for the Government, which took a bold step on GST. American consumers will feel happy that when New Delhi cuts tariffs, Washington will do the same and Indian imports (medicines and others) will become cheaper. More importantly, the local price slashes due to lower GST tax rates will set the tariff cat among the tax pigeons. For, they will logically set the tempo and momentum for similar cuts in import duties. This is because generally local taxes on specific products and import duties on them move in tandem.

The reasoning is reasonable. If domestic tariffs are cut, local prices fall, which gives undue advantages to local manufacturers vis-à-vis imports, if the duties on them remain high. In such a scenario, the landed prices of imports are higher than local goods. Hence, it is inevitable to correct the situation, and correspondingly reduce the import duties. Except, of course, in cases where the Government has deliberately kept the import tariffs high to offer protection to local producers. Now, think carefully and understand slowly. As GST across products and categories are down, import duties across the same need to be cut similarly. The stage is set for the India-US deal.

Under the bilateral pact, which is going through finishing touches, New Delhi will accede to Washington's demand to cut tariffs on American manufactured products. This is a long-standing demand of the US. In cases, the entry barrier may be zero, while others will attract 5-20 per cent. Indian policy-makers can explain this to the Indian industry. They had no option given that GST rates are down, mostly zero or five per cent, and they had to offer the same rates, five and zero per cent, to the Americans. There will be no need to justify this to the Indian consumers, who will be mightily pleased that both local and imported products will be cheaper.

Once New Delhi accepts lower entry tariff barriers for American goods, the only issue it will need to contend with will relate to agriculture and dairy products. In these categories, it will put its foot down, and contend that the politics of the central regime is at stake. It cannot move backwards on these two fronts, since they will alienate the electorate and anger vote banks. Washington, as an interim measure, is more likely to agree, if it sees open, easy and cheaper entry for hundreds of its manufactured products. It will send a huge message within the US electoral constituents. The US president Donald Trump has repeatedly maintained that he would 'Make America Great Again' by boosting its manufacturing. Access to a large market like India is like putting the best foot forward.

Where does this leave the oft-repeated slogans such as self-reliance, buy-Indian-shun-foreign, chip-to-ship and *Atma Nirbhar*? There will be ready and impressive answers. If India reduces the tariffs for American goods, the US will reciprocate and lower the existing 50 per cent tariff to maybe 20 per cent or less. This will allow the Government to claim that now Indians can ship more goods to the US. This will boost local manufacturing, and help woo foreign investments. In the case of India-China trade, while the deficit remains lopsided against India, a new era will attract Chinese investments to set up large self-reliant plants locally. Both will provide a fresh filip to 'Make in India,' which is one of the foundations of a future self-reliant Bharat. It is time to remove those irritating chips on the shoulders, especially in the short run.



Poker-faced tango and waltz

OUR TAKE

If the negotiations were multilateral, rather than bilateral, consensual, rather than dictated by a single leader, and competitive, rather than one-sided and biased, the representatives of the various nations could have sat around a table, and played trade-tariff poker. As the hands changed, some people would capitulate and fold, others would raise their bets, and the casino owner could show his power, influence, anger, love, hate, desperation, frustration, deceit and revenge by simply changing the rules of the game.

In the process, while the casino would never lose, as it never does in real poker, it would force realignments between the various players. Age-old enemies, who were defined by their centuries-old hatred for each other, would smile at each other, and give signals about joining hands or combining their money power. Friends-turned-enemies could become friends and vice versa. In this modern game, where winning is crucial, or at least not losing is, no one would be able to predict friendships, partnerships and alliances.

Welcome to the table to watch a new wondrous variation of poker. For thousands of years, the emperors who ruled Japan and China thought that theirs was the centre of the Earth, and the whole world, rather the universe, revolved around their palaces. They had everything they needed, and the rest of the barbarous world had nothing to offer. Logically, Japan and China hated each other, and wished to subjugate the other. This was evident when Japan plundered China during the second world war, and captured the latter's capital. Ironic as it may seem, while the Soviet Union initially signed a

Sino-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, it switched sides and stopped aid to China, after the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact in 1941. It was the US, which saved China under the Lend-Lease Act, and became its main financial and military supporter, after Japan attacked Pearl Harbour. Of course, China claims that its Revolutionary Army won grand victories against Japan, and launched a full-scale winter offensive to checkmate and stalemate Japan.

How the tables have turned. Sorry, the cards and bets have changed. Since the end of World War II, the Capitalist US tried to cosy up to the Communist China, but in vain. The friendship turned vicious, even as China attained dictatorial contours, aggressively and successfully wooed American investments and retained its independence from the so-called western hegemony. The West was happy that the Soviet Union and China drifted apart, even as Japan rode on an industrial wave, only to fall into a western clutch.

Today, Japan hates America, although the former cannot say or show it publicly. Tokyo is inching towards Beijing, which it too it cannot claim publicly. American and China hate each other, so much so that they secretly respect each other's economic power. Russia and China are the best of pals. Now, experts talk about a new Quad, India-China-Russia-and-a-reluctant-Japan, to replace the old one, India-Japan-US-Australia. Poker geopolitics is no longer poker-faced. We know the cards that nations hold. We do not know which ones they will discard or the kinds of bets they will place in the future.

Let us look westwards and think of the Anglo-American relationship. Britain estab-

lished America. Rather, Britishers did, initially. Although it was an Italian, Christopher Columbus, who discovered the Americas when he voyaged westwards across the Atlantic Ocean. Then, the Americans fought with the Britishers, as the former's tea party was spoiled, with the aid of the French, who hated the English. In the twentieth century, the US helped the Britain-France allies to defeat Germany, not once but twice, during the world wars.

In the process, America almost-decimated Britain, as the former imperialism was untangled, which had earlier provided the latter with enormous global power and dominance. As Britain weakened, the US and Soviet Union established their spheres of influence, and became bitter enemies during the Cold War. After the Berlin Wall came down, so did the Soviet empire, as a much-smaller Russia adopted the capitalist ways. But it harboured the Communist dream. Today, Russia and America seem to be engaged in some unique form of

under-the-poker-table footsie, sometimes caressing each other, and kicking each other violently at other times. The timing is random and chaotic. The US president Donald Trump and Russia's supreme Vladimir Putin are in a love-hate-love-hate relationship, with both showing love and hurling abuses. America pressurises the European Union members like France and Germany, but embraces Britain. Recently, Trump received a royal welcome in Britain.

By imposing sweeping duties and threatening tariffs across a wide range of products, and countries, Washington has forced partners and adversaries to reassess trade, security and diplomatic choices. The result is a jigsaw pattern, where former foes are coming close for a common cause, and traditional friends hedging toward rivals. Cooperation, conflict and confrontation shift daily. Poker faces are vanishing as the card players race to grab allies.

US tariff pressures pushed India to lean into alternative friendships, even if they are short-term ones. The most visible of them are the expanded ties with Russia on energy and closer economic conversations with China. There is a group tango going on, apart from the card game, where regional countries that were historically at odds with each other, but which either share China-linked security concerns with the US, or do not like Russia, find an economic, business and strategic partner in India. New Delhi is truly sandwiched between Moscow, Beijing, Tokyo and Washington.

Recently, after months of agony, the White House exchanged pleasantries with New Delhi. Indian ministers winged their way to the US to finally finalise a bilateral trade deal. Until it is inked, which experts contend will happen sooner than later, India will continue to waltz across the trade-tariff dance floor, while rubbing shoulders with the US and seeking suitable partners. So, while the players sit around the table to play poker, they take breaks to dance tango and waltz, with either a single partner or multiple ones.

Russia, like the Bear, resides in diverse habitats, sometimes in a tango with India, China and the US, following omnivorous diets in terms of diplomacy and trade, yet reflecting a solitary behaviour. Thus, Moscow is both an energy supplier and diplomatic interlocutor to the West, and a foil, as it expands territorial influence that alarms Washington and its European allies. China, like the Dragon, breathes fire, even as it turns over for belly rubs.

Caught in this game is India's neighbour, Pakistan, which turns left and right or looks eastwards and westwards, as if to follow the path of an invisible tennis ball being lobbed by the two powerful players, China and America. While political masters in Islamabad seek a comfortable shelter under the Dragon's wings, Uncle Sam extends a hand of support through luncheon meetings and business deals. When the US applies pressure, Pakistan seeks cushions and political patronage elsewhere. When Washington requires help to counter the combined might of Moscow and Beijing, Islamabad recalibrates its strategy to include cooperation with the West.



Stalked Jaguar, land-locked Rover

GST 2.0, which slashed prices across product categories, will benefit the automobile industry. Tata Motors has passed on the benefits to its customers, with price cuts for passenger and commercial vehicles. According to Girish Wagh, executive director, Tata Motors, "The reduction in GST on commercial vehicles to 18 per cent is a bold and timely step towards revitalising India's transport and logistics backbone. With a rich legacy of trust and an expansive portfolio of future-ready vehicles and mobility solutions, we continue to be the partner of choice for those who move India forward, empowering businesses, enabling mobility and fuelling growth."

For the company, it is not just about price cuts, although they are substantial. In the case of heavy commercial vehicles, the prices will come down between ₹3,00,000 and ₹5,00,000. For buses and vans, the range is between ₹1,20,000 and ₹4,35,000. Pickups can be cheaper by just over ₹1,00,000. However, Tata Motors seeks to transform the commercial vehicle segment, which drives India's economic heartbeat and pulse rate, as it moves goods, supports trade and links communities nationwide.

Now with the vehicle price cuts, the company hopes to slash the Total Cost of Ownership for transporters, fleet operators and small businesses. The strategy is designed to accelerate fleet upgrades and expand access to modern, and cleaner mobility solutions, which will help the operators to lower expenses, boost efficiency, and enhance profitability over the medium term. Hence, the initial prices of the vehicles is a beginning. The end is ownership expenses.

For Tata Motors, this has a dual impact. Domestic commercial vehicles and mass-market passenger vehicles will benefit from the simpler GST rates, and potentially-lower working-capital lock-ups. The 40 per cent slab on luxury cars may weigh on the Jaguar-Land Rover (JLR) portfolio. Apart from the India-related price pressures, there are global factors at work in the premium segment.

"China has raised tax rates for luxury vehicles, which has increased the tax incidence on models by 10 per cent. Given the weak demand macro in China and an even weaker dealer profitability, JLR has decided to absorb bulk of the impact of the same in the near term," explain the analysts at Motilal Oswal Financial Services, who wrote a recent report on the company's performance.

The stock traded within a range in the past one month, with a low of ₹669, and high of ₹720. Over the past 12 months, the share price fluctuated wildly, between ₹1,142 and ₹536, or



more than 100 per cent difference between the two prices. Motilal Oswal, however, maintains a "Neutral" stance with a June 2027 target price of ₹631. Another brokerage house, Deven Choksey, retains its "Accumulate" rating with a higher target price of ₹722. According to it, medium-term electric vehicle growth, and the strategic Iveco acquisition will help the company. On September 22, the stock closed at ₹696.

Motilal Oswal projects Tata Motors' consolidated revenue at ₹4,538 billion in FY26, and ₹4,827 billion in FY27, with EBITDA of ₹472 billion and ₹547 billion, respectively. Adjusted FY26 profit will be ₹168 billion, implying an EPS (Earnings Per Share) of ₹45.8. Net automotive debt jumped to ₹135 billion in Q1-FY26 from a net cash position just a quarter earlier, and the "bulk of this net debt has increased at JLR and currently stands at ₹106 billion."

Deven Choksey estimates Q1-FY26 revenue at ₹1,044 billion, down 2.5 per cent YoY

(Year-on-Year and a steep EBITDA margin contraction to 9.3 per cent from 14 per cent a year ago. "Consolidated adjusted net profit declined by 34.6 per cent YoY to ₹34.8 billion," its report stated, largely due to US tariffs and weak domestic demand for the passenger vehicles. The GST changes may help future sales and volumes in the lower-priced car segments.

The margins in the commercial vehicle segment remained "resilient at 12.2 per cent (+60 basis points YoY) supported by better realisations and higher exports." The management expects the industry growth of about five per cent in FY26, helped by festive demand and a normal monsoon. GST cuts may push it further.

Passenger vehicle EBITDA margin slipped to four per cent amid "softer demand, higher input costs and increased promotional spends." As mentioned earlier, global luxury demand softened. "JLR EBIT margin declined

490 basis points YoY to a multi-quarter low of four per cent," as it was hit by US tariffs, higher warranty costs and weak Europe/China demand. The management feels that the EBIT margin in FY26 will be 5-7 per cent with near-zero free cash flow.

However, the key risks continue to be volatile global tariffs. Even if India strikes a bilateral deal with the US, the China-America trade stand-off may continue. This will result in slower demand for luxury vehicles, both in India and China. An additional area of concern is commodity cost swings. Analysts warn about the "continued weak demand" in key regions, which is likely to put pressure on margins. Rising net debt, execution risk in the Iveco acquisition and potential GST 2.0 tax hikes on premium imports add to the uncertainty.

Despite near-term pressures, brokerage houses see structural positives. Deven Choksey feels that a "diversified segment strength, global portfolio expansion, and operating efficiency gains position Tata Motors for sustainable growth in the medium term." The management is banking on a huge recovery in the domestic commercial vehicle market, higher penetration of electric vehicles and Iveco integration that will offset the JLR volatility.

The company expects the market share in the commercial vehicle segment to inch up four per cent to 40 per cent by 2027, and go up by three per cent to 16 per cent in passenger cars during the same period. The company sold 10,000 cars on the first Navratri day, the day of the GST cuts. The shutdown at JLR plants is still not over. According to a recent report, which came before the GST slashes, of 35 analyst firms, half had 'Buy' rating, 11 maintained 'Hold,' and the remaining 'Sell' rating. However, this will change in the post GST 2.0 era. However, domestic sales of passenger cars, and the global performance of JLR portfolio will define and refine whether Tata Motors accelerates or stutters.



GST 2.0 kick-off: A record-smashing Day One

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Monday, 22nd September 2025, a date that will be etched in the memory of shopkeepers, auto dealers, and every Indian household as the day GST 2.0 took off with thunderous applause from consumers. As the first pooja of Navratri rang out across India, the Modi Government rolled out GST 2.0; the real Diwali gift to the people of India. Arriving in perfect sync with the first day of Navratri, the reformed tax regime gave the common man a direct reason to rejoice, lower prices, simplified slabs and immediate relief on daily essentials.

RECORD BREAKING AUTOMOBILE SECTOR

The automobile sector stole the spotlight with historic numbers. Under the new GST structure, smaller sub-4 metre cars were moved into the 18% slab, while the compensation cess on automobiles was completely removed. Tata Motors on Tuesday said its dealers retailed around 10,000 passenger vehicles on the first day of Navratri, which coincided with the kicking in of the reduced GST rates regime, while also recording over 25,000 customer enquiries at its passenger vehicle dealerships across the country. It joined the likes of Maruti

Suzuki, which retailed around 30,000 units and Hyundai about 11,000 dealer billings, its highest single-day performance in the last five years, on Monday.

"We have seen that a lot of inquiries are happening. A lot of customers are coming into

Chandra said, "The start to this festive season has been extremely encouraging. The recent GST reduction and special festive offers have sparked an extraordinary wave of consumer interest and enthusiasm." Chandra, who is also the

and small cars due to affordability issues will be "a thing of the past".

"For long, we've been having issues regarding the entry-level two-wheelers and entry-level four-wheelers but with this (GST) rejig, I think that is going to kick start the

where shoppers rushed to stock up on fashion, home essentials and festive must-haves.

Flipkart and Amazon kicked off their festive sale events on Monday for loyalty programme users, with sellers and brands reporting

customers, yesterday our stores saw a significant rise in activity, with delivery volumes reaching nearly twice the usual daily average."

This increase was anticipated, given that sales over the past few weeks had

AC) sales surpassing 7,000 units while posting 50 per cent growth in the offline channel, a strong reflection of the positive consumer sentiment and market traction," he added.

Godrej Enterprises Group, Business Head and EVP at

reduction is happening on shop floors to educate consumers, in close collaboration with trade partners, Nandi said, "The industry is hopeful of good festive sales as we progress into the festive season."

Similarly, a spokesperson of LG Electronics India Ltd said while it is "too early to share specific data as 22nd Sep was the first day of the new GST rates coming into effect. But early trends are definitely encouraging and point to positive consumer sentiment, the momentum of which we expect will continue going forward as well."

Infinite Retail, a Tata group entity, which owns consumer electronics retail chain Croma said revision in GST rates has provided a timely boost and we expect demand during the festive season to settle in.

"Categories like televisions and domestic appliances have seen an increase in demand post 22nd (September), with customers showing a strong preference for premium products and larger screen sizes. We are fully passing on the GST benefits to our customers," said its Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director Shibashish Roy.

THE REAL DIWALI GIFT GST 2.0 delivered instant relief and sparked consumer joy from Day One. It reduced household expenses, revived demand across industries, and ignited the festive season with record-breaking sales. From cars and electronics to groceries and fashion, every sector felt the surge.

This was more than tax reform. It was a festival of savings, a boost to demand, and the real Diwali gift from PM Modi to the people of India.



our showrooms and they want to shop. We are super gung ho about the fact that the growth is there and all of us are going to be part of this whole growth story," Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) President CS Vigneshwar told PTI. He was responding to a query on consumer sentiments and how the festive season sales have taken off after the new reduced GST regime came into effect from Monday.

Expressing similar sentiments, Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) President Shailesh

MD of Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd and Tata Passenger Electric Mobility Ltd, further said in just the first two days, auto dealerships nationwide are witnessing unprecedented walk-ins, a surge in enquiries and record deliveries across most segments.

"We are hopeful that this celebratory momentum will continue, making this festive season one of the most memorable for the industry and consumers alike," he added.

For the automotive sector, Vigneshwar said with GST 2.0, the structural issues faced by entry-level two-wheelers

entry level. The entry level had the most amount of impact in terms of what was happening and what was not...The prices have fallen the biggest in the entry-level segments, both for two-wheelers and four-wheelers, and it will start doing well," he added.

For countless families, GST 2.0 transformed long-postponed dreams into reality. Automobiles became not just more accessible, but a true festive purchase.

E-COMMERCE CARTS FILLED ONLINE The excitement extended to the digital marketplace,

strong early traction boosted by the GST cut.

Fashion brand "The Pant Project" saw a 15-20 per cent jump over last year, while Shadow Etail, a seller on both marketplaces, saw traffic in the home essentials segment surge 151 per cent from last week. Fashion brands like Snitch reported 40 per cent jump in online orders.

ACs AND TVs FLY OFF SHELVES UNDER GST 2.0

In the consumer durables and appliances segment, Vijay Sales Director, Nilesh Gupta, said, "Although Mondays typically draw fewer

remained below 50 per cent, he said, adding, "We expect momentum to build from this point forward, as consumers now enjoy greater flexibility in discretionary spending and are likely to make multi-product purchases." Panasonic Life Solutions India Pvt Ltd Business Head-AC Group Abhishek Verma said the company's AC business has registered a record start to the festive season, fueled by the GST reduction on ACs from 28 per cent to 18 per cent and attractive consumer offers.

"The company achieved single-day RAC (residential

Appliances Business Kamal Nandi noted that while it is too soon to be able to estimate sales impact owing to GST reduction, trade has been positive with some stores opening for longer hours as well. "It has been raining in many parts of the country as well. In parts where it hasn't rained much, we have seen more traction across appliances at modern trade outlets in city markets. However, it will be prudent to wait longer to be able to assess the market sentiments," he said.

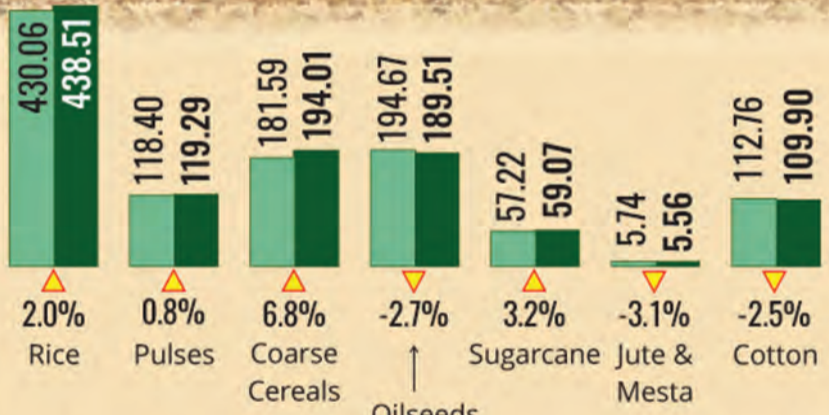
Stating that a lot of communication around GST

Acreage of Major Kharif Crops

Total sown area in lakh hectare

As on September 19

2024 1,100.42
2025 1,115.86 1.4%



Source: Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare

KBK Infographics

Storage Status of Major Reservoirs

Storage capacity of 161 major reservoirs:

182.479 Billion Cubic Metres (BCM)

Water available as on Sep 18, 2025

163.909 BCM (89.82% of capacity)

Northern Region	Eastern Region	Western Region
Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan	Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Tripura and West Bengal	Goa, Gujarat and Maharashtra
Reservoirs: 11	Reservoirs: 27	Reservoirs: 50
Total capacity: 19.836 BCM	Total capacity: 21.759 BCM	Total capacity: 37.357 BCM
Availability	Availability	Availability
18.672 BCM (94.13%)	17.089 BCM (78.54%)	35.123 BCM (94.02%)
Last year: 68.47%	Last year: 84.07%	Last year: 93.28%
Central Region	Southern Region	
Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand	Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Telangana	
Reservoirs: 28	Reservoirs: 45	
Total capacity: 48.588 BCM	Total capacity: 54.939 BCM	
Availability	Availability	
44.187 BCM (90.94%)	48.838 BCM (88.90%)	
Last year: 90.64%	Last year: 86.62%	

Source: Central Water Commission

KBK Infographics

Domestic 2W sales growth estimated at 6-9 pc in FY26: ICRA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Two-wheeler sales in India are estimated to grow by 6-9 per cent in FY26 as compared to the previous fiscal, riding on the recent GST rate reduction, which is anticipated to support affordability and stimulate demand, besides steady replacement demand, urban recovery and healthy rural incomes driven by a normal monsoon, ratings agency ICRA said on Tuesday.

Domestic wholesale volumes grew by 7.2 per cent on a YoY basis in August 2025 to 18 lakh units, as OEMs maintained healthy dispatches ahead of the festive season, ICRA said in a statement.

Retail sales, however, grew by a marginal 2.2 per cent

YoY, with growth constrained by excess rains and some purchase deferral linked to the GST rate cut; a pick-up is expected during the upcoming festive season, it added.

ICRA further said it estimates two-wheeler domestic volumes to grow by 6-9 per cent YoY in FY2026.

"This projection is supported by steady replacement demand, an expected urban demand recovery, healthy rural incomes driven by a normal monsoon and the recent GST rate reduction, which is anticipated to support affordability and stimulate demand," it noted.

In the electric two-wheeler segment, the ratings agency said retail volumes stood at 1,04,725 units in August 2025, showing modest sequential growth of 1.8 per cent, with penetration remaining in the



6-7 per cent range.

On the tractors segment, ICRA said the recent GST rate cut on tractors to 5 per cent is expected to further support demand, particularly during the upcoming festive season. The segment has demon-

strated robust performance, with wholesale volumes reporting a significant growth of 28.2 per cent YoY in August 2025, building on a cumulative growth of 11.7 per cent YoY for the first five months of FY2026, it added.

"Tractor volumes are estimated to grow at a moderate pace of 4-7 per cent in FY2026. This growth is firmly backed by above-normal monsoons, which are expected to support agricultural production," ICRA said.

It further said, "The early onset of monsoon has led to the country receiving rainfall at 108 per cent of the long period average until September 17, 2025. Consequently, tractor demand remained strong in August, with retail volumes rising by 30.1 per cent YoY, driven by positive farmer sentiments and adequate rainfall."

The industry also anticipates potential pre-buying ahead of the TREM V emission norms proposed to take effect from April 1, 2026, it added.

India to be among top 10 countries on Global Innovation Index: Shah

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Gandhinagar

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said India's ranking on the Global Innovation Index has gone up from 91 to 38 in the last decade and expressed confidence that it would secure a position among the top 10 in the next three years.

The Startup India campaign launched under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership has started showing results as India now has the third largest startup ecosystem globally and has made the country's youth job creators from job seekers, he said. Shah was speaking at the inauguration of the Gujarat Government's Startup Conclave here.

"Recently, the Global Innovation Index was announced. In 2015, our ranking on this index was 91 but we have jumped to 38th rank in 2025. This indicates the potential that our people have. I am a firm believer that India will be among the top 10 countries in the next three years and dominate innovation in the world looking at the performance and abilities of our youth," he said.

The Startup India scheme

is the Indian Government's flagship initiative launched in 2016 to promote innovation and create a robust startup ecosystem, transforming India from a job-seeking to a job-creating nation.

"In 2014, we just had 500 startups. Today, we have 1.92 lakh startups registered with DPIIT (Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade). In 2014, we had four unicorns and now we have 120 such establishments whose combined market value is over USD 350 million," Shah said.

Today, out of the total startups, 52 per cent are in tier-II and tier-III cities. Of the total startups, 48 per cent are initiated by women, he said.

Startup ecosystem has employed 17,000 lakh people. On an average, 17,000 startups have been set up annually and 9,000 of these are in tier-II and tier-III cities, the Union minister said.

Startup India campaign has made our youth job creators from job seekers, he said. Shah said at the time of launch of Startup India scheme, the Government was aware that it will not be a success if proper environment is not created for the same.

Rupee depreciation against dollar to help exporters in short run

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Indian rupee slipping below the record 88.75 level against the US dollar will help enhance price competitiveness of Indian products in the international markets, but exporters cautioned that fluctuations could pose challenges at import front. Import-dependent sectors such as gems and jewellery, petroleum and electronics may see lower benefits due to a rise in input costs, they said.

The rupee depreciated 47 paise to hit an all-time low of 88.75 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, amid sustained outflow of foreign funds on the back of a steep hike in US H-1B visa fee that is expected to give a big blow to Indian IT services exports.

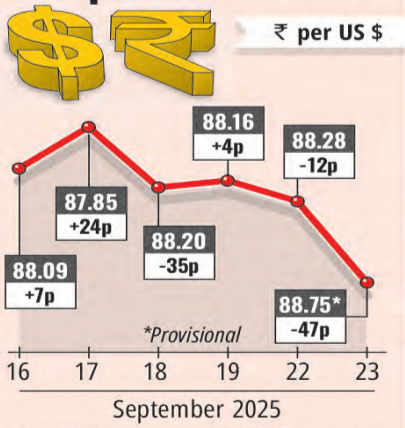
"The depreciation will definitely help exporters in the short run. But we need stability in the value against the USD," Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President SC Ralhan said.

Sharing similar views, Mumbai-based exporter and Technocraft Industries Ltd Founder Chairman S K Saraf said this will benefit the country's exports as domestic goods will become little competitive at a time when the US has imposed high tariffs.

"Our hardships will get mitigated to a certain extent. I expect that the rupee will reach 100 per dollar in the next 4-5 months. I think 100 will be the new normal," Saraf said. Another trader said that the development would make imports of items from crude oil to electronic goods, overseas education and foreign travel costlier.

The primary and immediate impact of a depreciating rupee is on the importers who will have to shell out more for the same

Rupee vs Dollar



(Inverted scale) KBK Infographics

quantity and price. However, it is a boon for the exporters as they receive more rupees in exchange for dollars. India is 85 per cent dependent on foreign oil to meet its needs for fuels, such as petrol, diesel and jet fuel. The basket of Indian imports includes crude oil, coal, plastic material, chemicals, electronic goods, vegetable oil, fertiliser, machinery, gold, pearls, precious and semi-precious stones, and iron and steel. Kanpur-based Growmore International Ltd MD Yadendra Singh Sachan said that a balanced rupee value helps both exporters and importers. "Any volatility in the value is not good for both," Sachan said. The country's merchandise exports rose 6.72 per cent to USD 35.1 billion in August. During April-August 2025-26, exports increased to \$184.13 billion, while imports rose 2.13 per cent to \$306.52 billion.

FROM THE WORLD

HUNGARY
Urban rival fails to get relief

A European Parliament committee rejected on a bid by the Hungarian prime minister that would lift immunity from prosecution for one of its lawmakers who is Viktor Orban's main political rival. Peter Magyar, who heads Hungary's largest opposition party, Tiszza, represents the most serious challenge to Orban since the right-wing populist leader took power in 2010. Orban's Government had requested that Magyar's immunity be lifted so he could face charges for alleged offences that include theft of a mobile phone in a Budapest nightclub and defamation against a member of Orban's Fidesz party.

EGYPT
Leadership race begins

Pro-democracy activist Alaa Abd el-Fattah was released from prison late Monday after being granted a presidential pardon, according to his campaign. He and five other prisoners had been pardoned Monday after the National Council for Human Rights acted on behalf of their families and urged President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi to consider the prisoners' situation on "health and humanitarian grounds." el-Fattah was released from Wadi Natron Prison after being imprisoned almost all of the past 12 years and was now in his home in Cairo.

Bangladesh ready for elections in February: Yunus

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New York

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus announced that Bangladesh is fully prepared to hold a free, fair, and peaceful general election in the first half of February, following a high-level meeting with United States Special Envoy for South and Central Asia, Sergio Gor, in New York on Monday. "The election will be held in February. It will be free, fair, and peaceful. The country is fully prepared," Yunus said after his discussion with Gor and the US ambassador-designate to India. The meeting underscored growing diplomatic engagement between Dhaka and Washington, with both sides reaffirming their commitment to strengthening bilateral ties. Gor praised the chief adviser's leadership during the political transition and expressed US support for Bangladesh's efforts to uphold democratic processes.

The talks covered a wide range of regional and global issues, including trade and economic cooperation, South Asian regional integration, the stalled SAARC process, the Rohingya refugee crisis, and the spread of disinformation targeting Bangladesh. Professor Yunus highlighted the urgent need for regional cooperation, especially reviving the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which has not held a summit in over a decade due to geopolitical tensions. "We have intensified our efforts to revive SAARC. We believe regional unity is critical for long-term stability and economic prosperity," he said. The chief adviser also signalled Bangladesh's interest in joining ASEAN, saying integration with Southeast Asia's dynamic economies would accelerate national development. He emphasised regional connectivity, particularly with Nepal, Bhutan, and

India's seven Northeastern states, arguing that stronger cross-border trade and infrastructure could unlock new growth corridors. "We can accelerate our economic growth through closer regional cooperation," Yunus said. Yunus urged continued American support for the over one million Rohingya refugees currently residing in camps in Cox's Bazar. The US envoy assured that life-saving humanitarian aid would continue, recognizing the burden Bangladesh continues to bear on behalf of the international community. The chief adviser extended a formal invitation to Sergio Gor to visit Bangladesh, expressing hope that stronger diplomatic engagement would follow. In a related development, Professor Yunus also met with United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo. During the meeting, Yunus reaffirmed his



Government's commitment to holding a credible and peaceful election and requested increased UN support in the areas of election monitoring and humanitarian aid. UN Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo welcomed the interim Government's inclusive and democratic approach and assured continued UN engagement in supporting Bangladesh's democratic and humanitarian goals. Muhammad Yunus is set to hold a series of high-level bilateral and multilateral meetings on the sidelines of the UNGA throughout the week. On Monday evening (New York time), the chief adviser is scheduled to attend a special high-level event titled "Social Business, Youth and Technology," organised by the Global Committee on Social Business for Sustainable Development Goals. The event will focus on leveraging innovation and youth-driven entrepreneurship in achieving the SDGs by 2030.

Russia willing to extend arms deal with US: Putin

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday declared his readiness to adhere to nuclear arms limits for one more year under the last remaining nuclear pact with the United States that expires in February, and he urged Washington to follow suit. Putin said allowing the New START agreement signed in 2010 to expire would be destabilising and could fuel proliferation of nuclear weapons. His televised remarks came at a time of heightened tensions between Russia and the West, and with concerns rising that fighting in Ukraine could spread beyond its borders. "To avoid provoking a further strategic arms race and to ensure an acceptable level of predictability and restraint, we believe it is just



tified to try to maintain the status quo established by the New START Treaty during the current, rather turbulent period," Putin said while speaking from the Kremlin. He said Russia is prepared to stick by the treaty's limits for one more year after it expires on February 5, 2026. Arms control advocates long have voiced concern about the treaty's looming expiration and the lack of dialogue to secure a successor deal, warning about the possibility of a new nuclear arms race and increased risk of a nuclear conflict. Putin said maintaining limits on nuclear weapons could also be an important step in "creating an atmosphere conducive to substantive strategic dialogue with the US." The New START, signed by then US President Barack

Obama and Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev, limits each country to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers. The pact also stipulates the need for on-site inspections to verify compliance, although inspections were halted in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic and never resumed. The treaty was originally supposed to expire in 2021, but was extended for five more years. Putin emphasised that Russia expected the US to follow its example and stick to the treaty's limits. "We believe this measure will only be viable if the United States acts in a similar manner," Putin said. Daryl G. Kimball, the director of the Washington-based Arms Control Association, welcomed Putin's statement on X as "an important and positive move."

US restrictions on Iran diplomats shopping for luxury goods

ASSOCIATED PRESS
New York

The Trump administration has barred Iranian diplomats based in or visiting New York from shopping at wholesale club stores like Costco and purchasing luxury goods in the United States without specific permission from the State Department. "We will not allow the Iranian regime to allow its clerical elites to have a shopping spree in New York while the Iranian people endure poverty, crumbling infrastructure, and dire shortages of water and electricity," the department said in a statement. In notices to be published this week in the Federal Register, the department's

Office of Foreign Missions determined that diplomatic memberships in wholesale club stores as well as diplomats' ability to buy items such as watches, furs, jewelry, handbags, wallets, perfumes, tobacco, alcohol and cars are a "benefit" requiring US Government approval. However, the only country whose diplomats were specifically targeted is Iran. Stores like Costco have been a favourite of Iranian diplomats posted to and visiting New York because they are able to buy large quantities of products not available in their economically isolated country for relatively cheap prices and send them home. "By preventing Iranian

regime officials from exploiting diplomatic travel to the UN as a means to obtain goods unavailable to the Iranian public, we are sending a clear message: When the United States says it stands with the people of Iran, we mean it," the State Department said. The move is another step in the Trump administration's crackdown on visas, including for leaders and diplomats seeking to serve as representatives at the United Nations. While world leaders are gathering this week for the high-profile annual meeting at the international body, the new US Restrictions permanently apply to any Iranian diplomats representing their country at the UN year-round.

US sanctions on wife of Brazilian judge who sentenced Jair Bolsonaro

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Sao Paolo

The US Government has sanctioned the wife of the Brazilian Supreme Court justice who led the investigation into former President Jair Bolsonaro, who was sentenced this month to 27 years in prison for attempting a coup in the South American nation. The Trump administration also revoked the US visa of another Brazilian official, Solicitor-General Jorge Messias, who criticized the decision on his social media channels. The wife of Justice Alexandre de Moraes, Viviane



Barci de Moraes, was sanctioned under the Global Magnitsky Act used by the United States against human rights abusers. Her husband was targeted by the same measure as he oversaw the case against Bolsonaro. This is the latest chapter in a unilateral wave of attacks

from the Trump administration against Brazil, which includes sanctions against other authorities and tariffs of 50% on many of the country's exports to the US. Local media also reported that other judges who worked with de Moraes at the Supreme Court had also lost

their US visas, which they did not individually confirm. A holding company of the de Moraes family was also sanctioned under the Magnitsky Act. De Moraes said in a statement that Brazilian institutions "are strong and sound" and will not be affected by the attacks from the Trump administration. He added the measures against his wife "attack international law, Brazil's sovereignty and the judiciary's independence." The US State Department said de Moraes "has used his position to weaponise courts, authorise arbitrary pretrial detentions, and suppress freedom of expression."

Effort to strip Costa Rica President of immunity fails

ASSOCIATED PRESS
San Jose (Costa Rica)

Costa Rica's Congress fell short on Monday of the supermajority required to strip President Rodrigo Chaves of immunity in order to prosecute him on corruption charges. Prosecutors allege that President Rodrigo Chaves pressured a video producer who had been awarded a contract by the Central American Bank for Economic Integration to give a portion of that money to a former campaign adviser. Chaves has denied any wrongdoing and says he is the victim of a politically motivated prosecution. Costa Rica's congress debated Monday whether to strip a sitting president of his immunity for the first time in the Central American nation's history because of corruption allegations. Prosecutors allege that President Rodrigo Chaves pressured a video producer who had been awarded a contract by the Central American Bank for Economic Integration to give a portion of that money to a former campaign adviser. Chaves has denied any wrongdoing and says he is the victim of a politically motivated prosecution. The country's Supreme Court and a panel of three lawmakers have already allowed the case to proceed to Monday's expected vote by the unicameral Legislative Assembly. But it will require a supermajority - 38 of 57 deputies - for Chaves to lose his immunity. That outcome is far from assured. Some opposition lawmakers have already said they will not support lifting the president's immunity. Combined with members of Chaves' Social Democratic Progress Party, those supporting his prosecution may fall short of the necessary votes.

Gang-controlled slum in Haiti targeted by drone, 8 kids killed, 6 injured

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Port-Au-Prince (Haiti)

Explosive drones targeting a suspected gang leader killed at least eight children inside a slum in Haiti's capital and seriously wounded six others, relatives and activists told The Associated Press on Monday, as they blamed police for the attack. The explosions happened Saturday night in Cité Soleil, which is controlled by Viv Ansanm, a powerful gang coalition that the U.S. has designated as a foreign terrorist organisation. One of its leaders, Jimmy Barbézier, best known as Barbécue, vowed to avenge the attacks, with a total of at least 13 people killed, according to residents. "This is my daughter," said Claudia Bobrun, 30, as she showed the AP a video of her 8-year-old girl lying in a pool of blood. Tears rolled down her face as she replayed the video. Michelis Florville, 60, said the explosion killed two of his grandchildren, ages 3 and 7, and his 32-year-old son. "People were running right and left," he recalled, noting that he was standing near where one explosion occurred. Meanwhile, Nanouse Mertelia, 37, said she was inside her house on Saturday night and ran out to see what happened after hearing an explosion. Her son had left their home several minutes earlier to get something to eat. She found him on the ground, his leg and arm blown off. "Come get me, come get me,

please mama," she said he told her, but he had lost too much blood. "By the time we got to the hospital, he died." Haiti's National Human Rights Defense Network accused police of launching two kamikaze drones in the Simon Pelé community of Cité Soleil as suspected gang leader Albert Steevenson, known as Djouma, prepared to celebrate his birthday. The group said that Steevenson was distributing gifts to children when the attack occurred. Romain Le Cour, head of Haiti Observatory at the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime, said the attack raises "urgent questions of accountability." "It has now been 48 hours since the incident, and the authorities have yet to issue any official communication or assume public responsibility. Who, ultimately, will assume responsibility for this attack: The prime minister? The transitional presidential council? Private security companies? The leadership of Haiti National Police?" he asked. Le Cour said the attacks would only reinforce the gang coalition's anti-Government narrative at a critical juncture. "They are also likely to deepen public mistrust in state institutions and accelerate the erosion of Governmental legitimacy," he said. Lionel Lazzare, a spokesman for Haiti's National Police, did not immediately return a message seeking comment.

New Zealand woman convicted of murdering her two children, leaving bodies in suitcases

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Wellington (New Zealand)

A jury in New Zealand on Tuesday found a woman

guilty of murdering her two children and leaving their bodies in suitcases for years before they were discovered. The verdict meant the jury

at the High Court in Auckland rejected a defense of insanity made by lawyers for Hakyung Lee, who fled to South Korea after the killings before being extradited to face trial. The swift verdict arrived hours after jurors were sent to deliberate on Tuesday morning. Lee was charged with killing Minu Jo, 6, and Yuna Jo, 8, in June 2018. The children's remains were found inside luggage at an abandoned storage unit in Auckland in August 2022.

Lee, who is a New Zealand citizen, had travelled to South Korea and changed her name in 2018, shortly after the children are believed to have been killed. She was born in South Korea and went by the name Ji Eun Lee previously. Lee, 45, was extradited from South Korea in November 2022. She denied the charges, with her lawyers arguing that she was insane at the time of the murders. The children were killed seven months after Lee's husband died from cancer.

PUBLIC NOTICE
General Public: Is hereby informed that Property No. I-81, measuring about 100 Sq. Yds., Lalpal Nagar-II, New Delhi-110024, in the absence of original SMC (Surviving Member Certificate) is under lawful ownership/claim of my clients: (1) Shri Varun Vermani & (2) Shri Arun Vermani, both s/o Shri Vinod Vermani, R/o 229, Block A-6, Paschim Vihar, New Delhi-110063. Through this Notice, the general public is hereby informed that if any person, individual, institution, or authority has any claim, objection, lien, mortgage, or encumbrance whatsoever on the above-mentioned property, they must notify the undersigned in writing, along with supporting documents, within 15 (fifteen) days from the date of this publication, at the address and/or mobile number mentioned below. If no claim is received within the stipulated period, it shall be presumed that no one has any claim/objection over the said property, and my clients shall be free to proceed further to obtain a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the concerned authorities, and they shall also be free to sell/gift or otherwise transfer the said property in any manner they like. Kapil Gupta (Advocate) (Enrol. No. D189007 BCD) R/o 156, Sidhartha Enclave, New Delhi-110014. Mob. 9811583350 (Arun Vermani 989995949) Email- kapil.gupta.adv@gmail.com

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given on behalf of NIRMALA KUMARI who is purchasing PLOT NO. 4, ADMEASURING 40 SQ. YDS., KHASRA NO. 248 AND 7, SITUATED AT VILAGE DABRI, ABADI KNOWN AS M-BLOCK, VASHISTH PARK WEST, NEW DELHI from Mr. Tapeswar Mishra (GPA holder) and Mrs. Ram Sakhi Devi w/o Tapeswar Mishra (ATS holder). Mr. Tapeswar Mishra and Mrs. Ram Sakhi Devi owned the same vide Notarized General Power of Attorney dated 15.02.1980 executed by Mr. Barwan, Ragbir and Meer Singh in favour of Tapeswar Mishra and Agreement to sell and Will dated 15.02.1980 executed by Mr. Barwan, Ragbir and Meer Singh in favour of Mrs. Ram Sakhi Devi w/o Tapeswar Mishra. Now NIRMALA KUMARI intend to purchase and mortgage the subject property against financial assistance from ADITYA BIRLA HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED. To ensure a clear title and comply with the requirements of the Bank/NBFC, the public is hereby issued, if any person has any claim, right, title, or interest in the said property, they should submit their objections in writing to the address below within 15 days from the date of this notice failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all types of Encumbrances, lien etc. Lucern Legal LLP Plot No.136, (Basement) Uday Park, New Delhi-110048, Contact # 011-40643516

कार्यालय, नगर पालिक निगम, कोरबा (छत्तीसगढ़)
ई-प्रोक्चरमेंट निविदा सूचना
दिनांक 19.09.2025
क. / निर्माण / 2025
एकीकृत पंजीयन प्रणाली अंतर्गत सक्षम श्रेणी में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से निम्नलिखित निर्माण कार्य हेतु (Online) आनलाइन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है:-
क. कार्य का विवरण अनुमानित लागत (रु.लाख में) निविदा डालने की अंतिम तिथि
1. वार्ड 56 अंतर्गत दर्री जोन पी.एच.वाई साईट से लाटा तालाब तक आर.सी.सी. नाला निर्माण कार्य (अधोसंरचना पट) (प्रथम निविदा) 199.96 10.10.2025 (T.No.176121)
उपरोक्त कार्यों की निविदा की जानकारी ई-प्रोक्चरमेंट वेब पोर्टल <http://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> से डाउनलोड की जा सकती है, साथ ही निगम के वेब साईट www.korbamunicipal.in पर भी देखी जा सकती है।
।। स्वच्छ भारत निर्माण में योगदान दें ।।
हस्ता/-
अधीक्षण अधिकारी
नगर पालिक निगम
कोरबा (छत्तीसगढ़)

PUBLIC NOTICE
TO WHOMSOEVER IT MAY CONCERN Under the Instructions of my client M/S. SHEETA RODAY W/O SH. RAJIV KUMAR RODAY R/O 312, Second Floor, Ashok Nagar, Tikik Nagar, Delhi. The general public is hereby informed that our client is interested in sale of property bearing no. 30/12, Upper Ground Floor, Tihar-2 known and recognized as Ashok Nagar, Tikik Nagar, Delhi area measuring 190 Sq. Yards and 25% undivided rights in the still parking and common rights of usage of the bathroom in the still alongwith proportionate rights in the land underneath. The above property is transferred by Smt. Seema Rani in favour of my client vide a registered will dated 15.12.2023 registration no. 2024/25/108 in book no. 111, volume no. 427, page no. on page 127 to 136 on this date 15-Jan-2024 day Monday. If anyone has a claim on the above property or any issue in any respect with respect to subject property, they may contact my client within 14 days from the date of publication of this notice. Any misuse of the aforementioned documents will be addressed strictly in accordance with law. ABHJEUET SINGH, ADVOCATE 8/29 LOF EAST PATEL NAGAR NEW DELHI-110098 *91-3871983263

Afghan nationals involved in 70 pc attacks by TTP: Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA | Islamabad

Pakistani authorities have claimed that 70 per cent of terrorists involved in recent attacks carried out by the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) were Afghan nationals, a steep rise from the 5-10 per cent recorded in earlier years, according to a media report. Pakistan's special representative on Afghanistan, Muhammad Sadiq, made the claim at a recent closed-door meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) on Afghanistan held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The Express Tribune newspaper reported on Monday, citing sources.



NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-Tender Notice
The Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/PS, Northern Railway, Delhi Division, New Delhi invites e-tender for the following work:
1 Name of work with its location Provision of Catering Services at Major Static Unit i.e. Food Plaza/ Court at Hazrat Nizamuddin railway station of A-1 Category at Location of erstwhile cocomesum in Circulating Area/Concourse in the Main City Side Entry of station near Gate No. 1 for a period of Nine years.
2 Details of IREPS E-tender Notice Number Location Ctg/FoodPlazaN2M03-2025 Circulating Area/Concourse at Entry Gate no. 1 of Main City Side at Hazrat Nizamuddin station
3 Date of Tender Opening 14.10.2025 upto 1500 hrs.
4 Approximate cost of work As per NIT on ireps.gov.in
5 Cost of Tender document including 18% GST As per NIT on ireps.gov.in
6 Earnest Money Deposit www.ireps.gov.in
7 Website particulars where complete details of tender document can be seen : <https://ireps.gov.in/>
No.: 23AC/NR-NRHCDC(SCM)/428/2025 Dated: 23.09.2025 2933/2025
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Drones over Copenhagen airport affect flights

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Copenhagen (Denmark)

A skilled drone pilot flew two to three large unidentified drones over Copenhagen Airport on Monday night, shutting down the airspace for hours as the unknown perpetrator appeared to be showing off their capabilities over Scandinavia's largest airport, police said on Tuesday.

Officials chose not to shoot down the drones because the risk was too great because of the airport being full of passengers, the planes on the runways and nearby fuel depots, Jes Jespersen, senior

police inspector of the Copenhagen Police, said during a news conference.

Jespersen called the pilot "a capable actor" and said the culprit seemed intent on showing off their skills and possibly practicing their techniques. The drones disappeared after several hours.

There were no signs that the drone pilot intended to cause harm to anyone, he added. The drones' lights turned on and off and appeared to engage in different flight patterns.

"It all indicates that you are not out to attack anyone, but you are out to show off and

maybe to practice," he said of the pilot.

Still, authorities couldn't rule out the possibility of the drones being part of a Russian hybrid attack, he said. The two to three drones appeared to have flown many kilometers to reach the airport. Investigators are looking at how the drones reached the airport — whether it was by land or possibly on boats coming through the strategic straits into the Baltic Sea.

Flights at the airport resumed early Tuesday, though delays and cancellations continued through the morning. "Copenhagen

Airport has reopened after being closed due to drone activity. However, there will be delays and some cancelled departures. Passengers are advised to check with their airline for further information," its official website said.

A drone incident the same evening at the airport in Oslo, Norway, forced all traffic to move to one runway, according to Norwegian broadcaster NRK. Traffic later returned to normal and it's unclear who was responsible.

Jespersen said nothing immediately linked the Oslo and Copenhagen incidents,

but officials would look into any potential ties.

Security concerns in northern Europe are heightened following an increase in Russian sabotage activities and multiple drones and fighter jet incursions into NATO airspace in recent weeks. In 2023, London's Gatwick Airport closed its runway for almost an hour after a drone was reported nearby. In December 2018, more than 140,000 travellers were stranded or delayed during the Christmas season after dozens of drone sightings shut down Gatwick for parts of three consecutive days.

US politician faces backlash over remarks on Hanuman

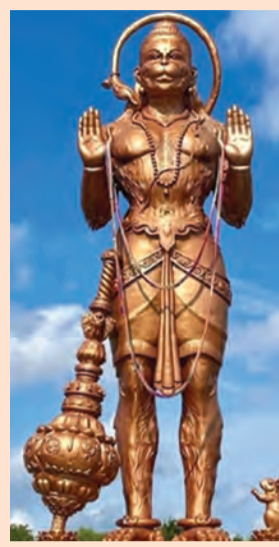
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Washington

A Republican politician in Texas has ignited a firestorm of criticism after describing Hindu God Hanuman as "false" and declaring the United States a "Christian nation" in a social media post that many have condemned as bigoted and anti-Hindu.

Alexander Duncan, a Texas Republican Senate candidate, drew widespread outrage after sharing a video of the 90-foot-tall bronze Statue of Hanuman, located at the Sri Ashtalakshmi Temple in Sugar Land, Texas. "Why are we allowing a false statue of a false Hindu God to be here in Texas? We are a CHRISTIAN nation!" Duncan wrote on X (formerly Twitter) last week.

The comments triggered swift condemnation from the Hindu American Foundation (HAF), which accused Duncan of violating the Republican Party's own anti-discrimination guidelines and urged the Texas GOP to take disciplinary action.

"Hello @TexasGOP, will you be disciplining your senate candidate from your party who openly contravenes your own guidelines against discrimination — displaying some pretty sordid anti-Hindu hate — not to



Social media users from across religious and political spectrums joined in the criticism, with many pointing to the constitutional principle of separation of church and state.

"Just because you're not Hindu, doesn't make it false. The Vedas were written almost 2000 years before Jesus walked the earth and are extraordinary texts," one user wrote. "It would be wise to honour and research the religion that predates and influences yours."

Another pointed out that the presence of a religious statue does not amount to imposition of beliefs. "We may be a Christian MAJORITY nation but, if you try to claim that other beliefs are not allowed here, then you are advocating a theocracy, which is antithetical to American values."

As of Tuesday, the Texas Republican Party has not publicly responded to the controversy or clarified whether any action will be taken against Duncan.

The episode has once again brought attention to the broader issue of religious intolerance and the growing demand from minority communities for political accountability in the face of hate speech.

mention disrespect for the 1st Amendment's Establishment Clause?" the foundation posted on X, tagging the official Republican Party of Texas handle.

The Statue of Union, as the Hanuman statue is also known, is the tallest Hanuman statue in North America and a prominent religious and cultural symbol for Hindu Americans in the region. Duncan's remarks have not only offended religious sentiments but also raised alarm over the implications for religious freedom and pluralism in the United States.

Russia, Ukraine fire drones, missiles and bombs

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Kyiv

Russia said that it shot down three dozen Ukrainian drones heading toward Moscow while Ukraine said that Russian missiles, drones and bombs killed at least two civilians, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy persevered with efforts to bolster international support for his country at a UN gathering of world leaders on Tuesday.

With his troops under strain on the front line after more than three years of fighting Russia's bigger invading army, Zelenskyy was due to begin meetings with leaders gathered in New York this week for the UN General Assembly.

Peace efforts set in motion by US President Donald Trump since he returned to office in January appear to have stalled. Trump's Alaska summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin and a White House meeting with Zelenskyy and key European leaders took place more than a month ago, but the war has continued unabated.

Zelenskyy said that he met late Monday in New York with Keith Kellogg, Trump's special envoy. Kellogg and Zelenskyy discussed cooperation agreements on the manufacturing of drones and Ukraine's purchase of American weaponry, the Ukrainian president said on Telegram.

European leaders have supported Zelenskyy's diplomatic efforts, even as the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza is expected to take centre stage at the United Nations. Some European countries are alarmed by the possibility that the war could spread beyond Ukraine amid what they have called Russian provocations.

NATO allies will hold formal consultations at Estonia's request on Tuesday, after the Baltic country said



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service, fire is seen following a Russian missile attack in Tatarbunary, Odesa region of Ukraine. AP/PTI

that three Russian fighter jets entered its airspace last week without authorisation.

Meanwhile, the full-scale war, which began on February 24, 2022, continues to take a heavy toll on Ukrainian civilians.

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights said earlier this month that Ukrainian civilian casualties increased by 40 per cent in the first eight months of this year compared to 2024, as Russia escalated its long-range missile and localized drone strikes.

Also, a UN Human Rights Office report released Tuesday described the dire situation of thousands of civilians detained by Russia in areas of Ukraine it has captured.

"Russian authorities have subjected Ukrainian civilian detainees in occupied territory to torture and ill-treatment, including sexual violence, in a widespread and systematic manner," the report said.

Russian aircraft dropped five glide bombs on the southern Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia during the night, killing a man, regional head Ivan Fedorov said Tuesday.

In the Odesa region of southern Ukraine, Russian ballistic missiles struck the town centre of Tatarbunary, killing a woman, regional head Oleh Kiper said Tuesday morning.

Overall, Russian forces launched three Iskander ballistic missiles and 115 strike and decoy drones at Ukraine

overnight, the Ukrainian air force said. It said that 103 drones were intercepted or jammed, but 12 drones and three missiles reached their targets at six locations.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said that more than 40 Ukrainian drones flying toward the Russian capital were shot down between Monday evening and midday Tuesday. Flights were temporarily halted overnight in and out of Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport, causing delays and cancellations, because of the attack.

The Russian Defense Ministry reported Tuesday that it intercepted 69 Ukrainian drones over a number of Russian regions and the annexed Crimean Peninsula.

China cancels schools, flights as it braces for typhoon Ragasa

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Hong Kong

Southern Chinese cities scaled back many aspects of daily life on Tuesday with school and business closures and flight cancellations as the region braced for one of the strongest typhoons in years that has already killed three people and led to the displacement of thousands of others in the Philippines.

Hong Kong's observatory said Super Typhoon Ragasa, which was packing maximum sustained winds near the centre of about 230 kph, is expected to move west-northwest at about 22 kph across the northern part of the South China Sea and edge closer to the coast of Guangdong province, the southern Chinese economic powerhouse.

China's National Meteorological Centre forecast the typhoon would make landfall in the coastal area between Shenzhen city and Xuwen county in Guangdong province on Wednesday.

Already hoisting a strong wind signal, the observatory



Passengers look at an information display board showing cancelled flights due to the super typhoon Ragasa, at the Hong Kong International Airport. AP/PTI

in Hong Kong will issue storm warning signal No. 8, the third-highest in the city's weather alert system, on Tuesday afternoon and will assess the necessity of upgrading the signal on Tuesday night or Wednesday morning. The city categorises tropical cyclones with maximum sustained winds near the centre of 185 kph or above as super typhoons to make residents extra vigilant about the approach of more intense storms.

The water level is forecast to rise about 2 metres over

coastal areas in the Asian financial hub on Wednesday morning, and the maximum water level in some areas could hit 4 to 5 metres above the typical lowest sea level.

The government said the water levels could be similar to those recorded during Typhoon Hato in 2017 and Typhoon Mangkhut in 2018 — estimated to have caused the city direct economic losses worth over 1 billion Hong Kong dollars (about USD 154 million) and 4.6 billion Hong Kong dollars (about USD 590 million), respectively.

Spain's top diplomat dismisses Israeli leader's vow of no Palestinian State

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ United Nation

Spain's top diplomat dismissed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's statement that there will never be a Palestinian State, saying Israelis will one day want to live side by side in peace with Palestinians.

Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares said in an interview with The Associated Press on Monday that "a real wave" of countries have recognised the state of Palestine since Spain, Ireland and Norway did in May 2024 and an overwhelming number support a two-state solution to the nearly 80-year Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"The day that everyone will have recognised the state of Palestine, we will have to move forward," he said at the United Nations. "I'm sure that we will find someday the right people for peace on the Israel side, in the same way that we have found it in the Palestinian side" in the Palestinian Authority. Spain has been in the forefront in pressuring



Secretary General Antonio Guterres speaks during a high-profile meeting at the United Nations aimed at galvanising support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian at the UN headquarters. AP/PTI

Israel to end the war in Gaza sparked by Hamas' surprise invasion of southern Israel on October 7, 2023, criticising "the atrocities" and "endless killing" it is committing in the territory. Albares spoke before a UN General Assembly meeting at its annual gathering of world leaders. At the meeting, the Palestinians expected 10 recent and new countries to formally recognise the state of Palestine, adding to the list of more than 145 nations that already have. France,

Luxembourg, Belgium and others did so at the meeting, even after Netanyahu reiterated his vow that there will never be a Palestinian state. Weekend recognitions came from the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia.

The Spanish minister called Hamas "a terrorist organisation" that doesn't want a two-state solution. "So let's put aside the extremists, and let's look for the people that want a peaceful and secure coexistence."

More experts calling Israel's actions in Gaza genocide

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ The Hague (Netherlands)

A growing number of experts, including those commissioned by a UN body, have said Israel's offensive in the Gaza Strip amounts to genocide, deepening Israel's isolation and risking untold damage to the country's standing even among allies.

The accusation is vehemently denied by Israel, which was established in part as a refuge for Jews after the Holocaust. Others have rejected it or said only a court can make that determination.

Even so, global outrage over Israel's wartime conduct has mounted in recent months, as images of starving children emerged, adding to the humanitarian catastrophe of a 23-month war that has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and laid waste to much of Gaza. A current offensive in the territory's largest city further raised concern, with

some of Israel's European allies condemning it.

But the genocide accusation goes further, raising the question of whether a state forged in the aftermath of the crime is now committing it.

Israeli leaders brand the argument as veiled antisemitism, saying the country abides by international law and urges Gaza's civilians to evacuate ahead of major military operations. They say Hamas' October 7, 2023, attack that sparked the war was itself a genocidal act.

In that attack, Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted 251. Forty-eight hostages remain in Gaza, around 20 of whom Israel believes are alive.

Israel's ensuing operation has reduced much of Gaza to rubble and led to famine in parts. Israeli leaders have also expressed support for the mass relocation of Palestinians from Gaza.

Turkiye authorities detain 13 in corruption probe

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Ankara

Turkish authorities on Tuesday detained 13 people as part of a corruption investigation into concerts organised by the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality — the latest legal action targeting municipalities run by Turkey's main opposition party.

A statement from the Ankara Chief Prosecutor's Office said the suspects, including former municipal employees and owners of private event companies, were taken into custody on charges of abuse of public

office and rigging of public tenders. The investigation centres on 32 concerts held between 2021 and 2024, which allegedly resulted in 154.4 million Turkish lira (USD 3.7 million) of financial losses, according to reports by the Interior Ministry, Turkey's Financial Crimes Investigation Board, and the Court of Accounts, the statement said.

Municipalities led by the opposition Republican People's Party, or CHP, have faced a series of corruption probes this year, including the most high-profile one of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem

Imamoglu. Regarded as president Recep Tayyip Erdogan's main rival, Imamoglu was arrested and detained in March, triggering widespread protests.

The CHP has rejected the allegations, describing the legal actions as politically motivated efforts by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government to undermine the opposition through judicial means.

The government insists that Turkey's judiciary operates independently, and that the investigations are solely focused on uncovering corruption.



Former Philippine president faces crime-against-humanity charges

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ The Hague (Netherlands)

The crimes against humanity charges against former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte allege his involvement in the killings of at least 76 people while he was president and earlier a southern mayor, the International Criminal Court has revealed. The first charge cites 19 victims killed while Duterte was mayor of Davao City between 2013 and around 2016. The second involves 14 who died in targeted killings between 2016 and 2017 when Duterte was president. The third cited the killings of 43 people during so-called "clearance operations" between 2016 and 2018. The redacted charges were made public after prosecutors submitted a 15-page charge sheet to the court on July 4.



Ship comes under Houthi attack off coast of Yemen

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Dubai

A ship travelling off the coast of Yemen in the Gulf of Aden came under attack early on Tuesday, officials said, though no one was hurt. It was not clear who launched the attack. The captain of the vessel heard a splash and explosion in the vicinity of the vessel, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre said in a statement. "Vessel and crew reported safe and proceeding to next port of call," the centre said in a statement. The attack happened about 225 km off the coast of Aden, which is held by forces loyal to Yemen's exiled government. Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi rebels have launched a series of attacks targeting shipping through the Red Sea corridor, but did not immediately claim the attack.

PROSPECT



Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve marked World Rhino Day with a cycle rally and planting 52 fruit saplings at Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation (CWRC), Borjuri, as a tribute to renowned artist and Kaziranga's supporter Zubeen Garg

TERI CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE ON BIOCHEMICALS INAUGURATED



Tata Chemicals Limited (TCL) on Tuesday said it partnered with The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) to launch TERI Centre of Excellence on Biochemicals that aims to develop cost-effective, innovative technologies for platform and specialty biochemicals from renewable first- and second-generation feedstocks.

"India's chemical industry is undergoing a transformative shift, from fossil-based production to sustainable biomanufacturing. The inauguration of the Centre of Excellence on Biochemicals is a step towards harnessing the power of biotechnology being explored for solutions of the future. The CoE will serve as a crucible for cutting-edge research, scalable technologies and skilled talent - paving the way for India to lead the global transition to green chemistry," Tata Chemicals Managing Director and CEO R Mukundan said in a Statement.

The Centre's initial research focus is on the low-cost, demonstration-scale production of 2,3-Butanediol, a versatile platform chemical with wide applications in plastics, polymers, pharmaceuticals, paints, food additives, rubber, and as a precursor for bio-jet fuel. "This Centre is more than a research facility, it is a biomanufacturing hub designed to bridge the gap between lab-scale innovation and commercial-scale production. By building expertise, infrastructure, and partnerships, we are laying the foundation for India's leadership in sustainable biochemical production, aligned with the Government of India's Bio-E³ policy," TERI Director General Dr Vibha Dhawan said.

CBI closes DA case against IDBI ex-deputy MD

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The CBI has closed a case of disproportionate assets against former IDBI deputy managing director BK Batra, who is also under investigation in a ₹950 crore loan fraud case against now-defunct Kingfisher Airlines of fugitive liquor baron Vijay Mallya, officials said on Tuesday.

The CBI had booked Batra in 2018, a year after his arrest in connection with the loan extended to the airlines, for allegedly amassing ₹1.69 crore of assets disproportionate to his known source of income from January 1, 2008 to July 30, 2016, during his tenure at the bank as chief general manager, executive director and deputy managing director.

Shradhanjali to music icon Zubeen Garg in New Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Assam Information Centre held a Shradhanjali as a mark of respect to music icon Zubeen Garg at its office on Tuesday. Deputy Director Sabir Nishat paid floral tribute at the portrait of the multifaceted personality along with employees of Assam Information Centre. Media persons also turned up in large numbers to pay floral tribute. Officials and employees of Tourist Information Centre and Assam Emporium also paid their homage to the departed soul whose mortal remains were consigned to flames at Kamarkuchi, Sonapur on the outskirts of Guwahati City on Tuesday afternoon.

Fulfilling Zubeen's cherished wish, everyone present joined their voices in unison, singing the iconic

Delhi Police warns: Beware of cyber fraud

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi Police on Tuesday cautioned people to stay alert against growing online scams, saying cybercriminals are using greed, deception and fear to trick innocent individuals. Speaking at a fraud awareness campaign held in Rohini, senior officers stressed that most cybercrimes can be stopped if people remain vigilant and practice "information distancing" while using online platforms.

The nationwide programme was organised jointly by Delhi Police and Bajaj Finance Ltd (BFL) at the Technia Institute of Advanced Studies. The aim was to educate people on how fraudsters operate and how citizens can protect themselves while banking, shopping, or socialising online. Addressing the gathering,

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime and Railways) KPS Malhotra explained how these scams usually work. "Cybercriminals today primarily exploit three human weaknesses — greed, deception and fear," he said. "When people believe in offers that look too good to be true, they become victims of greed. When they trust someone posing as a bank official, an insurance agent, or even a police officer, they fall prey to deception. And when criminals act as authorities to create panic, fear pushes innocent people to reveal sensitive information."

Malhotra also pointed out how seemingly harmless actions online can be risky. "Even downloading forwarded Good Morning or Good Night images on WhatsApp can be used to steal banking details. People should avoid such downloads and remain cautious," he warned.



In his keynote address, Assistant Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) H.S. Randhawa compared safe internet use to COVID-era precautions. "Just like we

practiced social distancing during the pandemic, we must now practice information distancing in the digital world," he said. He advised people to use

different email IDs for personal, professional and social media purposes.

He also suggested following simple measures like strong passwords, changing

them regularly, enabling multi-factor authentication and verifying links before clicking.

Randhawa further guided people on reporting online fraud. Victims of cybercrime can use the official Government portal www.cybercrime.gov.in or call the financial fraud helpline number 1930. He also stressed that women can lodge complaints anonymously on the portal without any hesitation.

Bajaj Finance Ltd, which partnered with Delhi Police for the initiative, said such programmes are part of its nationwide campaign on financial literacy and cyber fraud awareness.

Officials said the message is simple: stay alert, avoid shortcuts, and practice safe online behaviour. With awareness and small precautions, individuals can protect both their data and their money.

Sikkim Chief Minister flag off participants for Ziro festival

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Gangtok

Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang flagged off the participants for the Ziro Festival 2025 from Ridge Park, yesterday morning (Sep22).

The annual outdoor music and culture festival is commencing from September 25 and culminating on September 28, 2025 at Ziro Valley, Arunachal Pradesh.

The participants include officials from the Departments of Tourism and Civil Aviation, Culture, Information and Public Relations, and Commerce and Industries, along with entrepreneurs, Self Help Groups, and members of various biking clubs. The ceremony was attended by the Minister for Tourism and



Civil Aviation and Commerce and Industries Departments Tshering Thendup Bhutia, Additional Chief Secretary Tourism and Civil Aviation Department CS Rao, Secretary Tourism and Civil Aviation

Department Honda Gyaltsen and Chairman Tourism and Civil Aviation Department Sonam Norgay Lachungpa, along with officers from line departments.

Food Ministry-FCI pact sets target for procurement

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Food Ministry has signed a pact with State-owned FCI for the current fiscal, setting measurable targets to improve foodgrains procurement and distribution operations for optimal management of subsidy.

According to an official Statement on Tuesday, the Department of Food and Public Distribution and the Food Corporation of India signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the 2025-26 fiscal.

This MoU reflects the Government's commitment to leveraging technology and systems-based approaches to ensure that food subsidy funds are managed optimally. "It aims to address key



areas such as minimising storage losses, achieving optimum utilisation of storage capacity, strengthening quality control measures, adopting the latest innovations in Information Technology (IT), digitising processes and monitoring, and enhancing the performance of logistics and the supply chain," it said.

The MoU includes measurable targets on these aspects, along with capacity-building goals for FCI

employees.

The Food Corporation of India (FCI) was set up in 1965 under an Act of Parliament called the Food Corporations Act, 1964 (Act No. 37 of 1964) with the primary duty to undertake the purchase, storage, movement/ transport, distribution and sale of foodgrains.

The Centre is providing 5 kg of foodgrains free of cost to more than 80 crore people under the National Food Security Act.

Pradhan calls for positioning India as global brand of excellence in science

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday underscored India's progress in building a robust innovation ecosystem and stressed the importance of positioning the country as a global brand of excellence in knowledge, science, and technology.

Releasing a report, Pathways to Progress: Analysis and Insights into India's Innovation Story, prepared by NITI Aayog, Pradhan called for harnessing India's youth, talent, and institutional strengths to drive innovation that is both scalable and inclusive.

Speaking at the event, Science & Technology Minister Jitendra Singh emphasised that innovation in India is pervasive and not confined to frontier technologies alone.

Singh highlighted the Government's initiatives to



advance research, promote technology development, and facilitate the commercialization of innovations across all sectors.

He underscored the importance of inclusive and context-driven innovation that addresses real-world challenges while strengthening India's overall capacity to compete globally and drive sustainable,

equitable growth.

NITI Aayog member VK Saraswat emphasized the strategic importance of science, technology, and innovation in shaping India's development trajectory.

Saraswat noted that the report provides critical evidence-based insights that can guide policymaking, strengthen institutional linkages, and enhance collabora-

tion between academia, industry, and Government.

Atal Innovation Mission director Deepak Bagla elaborated on the transformative role of AIM in nurturing entrepreneurial talent, fostering innovation at scale and creating a vibrant startup culture across the country.

The report provides a holistic view of India's innovation ecosystem, encompassing national and State initiatives, industry and grassroots innovations, startups, university-industry-Government collaborations, and India's positioning in global innovation rankings.

The report also identifies systemic challenges and lays out a forward-looking roadmap that includes scaling successful models, fostering deep technology innovation, strengthening knowledge creation, enhancing global integration, and building innovation capacity across States.

Strategically important hydro project in Arunachal gets environmental clearance

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Central Government has granted environmental clearance to the Oju hydroelectric project in Arunachal Pradesh's Upper Subansiri district, paving the way for the construction of one of India's largest hydropower ventures in a geologically sensitive and strategically important region bordering China.

The project, to be developed by Oju Subansiri Hydro Power Corporation Pvt Ltd, envisages generating 2,220 megawatts of electricity through a run-of-the-river scheme with daily peaking capability. It involves a 100-metre-high concrete gravity dam, a 14.12 km headrace tunnel and an underground powerhouse complex.

With an estimated cost of over ₹24,942 crore, the dam

is expected to produce 8,402 million units of electricity annually, according to the minutes of the meeting of the environment ministry's Expert Appraisal Committee held on September 12.

The Oju project is the largest in a series of dams proposed on the Subansiri River, often described as the lifeline of Assam, and has been in the pipeline for nearly two decades.

It has stirred concerns over its social and environmental consequences.

The entire 750 hectares required for the project is forest land, and though only nine families are listed for displacement, the impact on local tribal communities, who constitute nearly 98 per cent of the population in the area, is expected to be significant.

The public hearing held in September 2024 saw residents flag issues ranging from



Representative Photo

inadequate compensation to risks for fisheries, ecology, and sacred sites.

Many demanded that a fair share of the electricity generated be provided to the local population, according to the minutes of the meeting.

The public hearing also reflected mistrust over whether corporate social responsibility funds would actually reach local schools and health facilities.

Ecologists have warned that large dams in the fragile Himalayan ecosystem could destabilise slopes, alter riverine ecology and endanger biodiversity.

The Subansiri basin falls in seismic zone V, the most vulnerable category.

Studies by the South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People (SANDRP) have in the past highlighted repeated monsoon damages at hydropower projects in the

region, including the Subansiri Lower project downstream, calling them "ticking water bombs" for Assam. The EAC itself deliberated extensively on the risks of glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), noting that potential peak discharges from upstream glacial lakes could overwhelm dam structures.

It directed the developer to include GLOF scenarios in the design flood estimates, establish a real-time early warning system and conduct community preparedness drills. The committee has also mandated a post-commissioning environmental impact study after five years.

While there are no national parks or wildlife sanctuaries within 10 km of the project site, the dam will submerge 43.66 hectares of riverine forest and alter flows over an 18.6 km stretch.

Nearly 17 lakh cubic metres

of muck will be generated during construction, for which disposal sites covering 93 hectares have been identified. The project proponent claimed that mitigation measures such as compensatory afforestation on 1,500 hectares and e-flow releases higher than those recommended in cumulative impact studies will protect river ecology.

About 1,500 jobs are expected during construction, with 300 permanent posts. The project proponent says the influx of workers and development of townships will stimulate trade and allied activities in the remote district. Environmental groups and student bodies in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh have consistently campaigned against large dams on the Subansiri, warning of downstream flooding and ecological collapse.

PSG's Dembélé wins Ballon d'Or, Bonmati completes award hat trick

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Paris

Ousmane Dembélé won the Ballon d'Or for leading Paris Saint-Germain to its first Champions League title and Aitana Bonmati received the women's award for a third successive year. Dembélé succeeded Manchester City midfielder Rodri to become the sixth Frenchman to win it after Raymond Kopa, Michel Platini, Jean-Pierre Papin, Zinedine Zidane and Karim Benzema.

Bonmati won ahead of her Spain teammate Mariona Caldentey. She's only the third player in the award's history to win three in a row after Platini (1983-85) and Lionel Messi (2009-12).

The award capped a remarkable turn of fortune for Dembélé, who at one point last season was snubbed by PSG coach Luis Enrique for disciplinary reasons. But once repositioned as a No. 9, he became

a scoring machine and was inspirational in PSG's historic Champions League campaign. The French club also completed a quadruple last season.

Dembélé was praised after the Champions League final for the way he contributed to PSG's pressing and his ability to defend during the 5-0 rout of Inter Milan. He delivered 35 goals and 16 assists in 53 official matches last season, and was involved in 14 goals (8 goals, 6 assists) in the Champions League in 15 appearances.

Dembélé received the Ballon d'Or from former winner Ronaldinho and teared up during his acceptance speech in which he asked his mother to join him on the stage.

"It's incredible to win a trophy like this," he said in French. "I worked for the team to help win PSG's first Champions League. To then be rewarded with an individual trophy like the Ballon



d'Or is truly exceptional." Dembélé won ahead of teenage star Lamine Yamal. The forward, who turned 18 in July, helped Barcelona win La Liga and the Copa del Rey last season and reach the Champions League semifinals. Yamal was given the Kopa award for the best under-21 player for the second straight year.

"I need to keep on working to win other awards in the future," Yamal said through a translator.

Dembélé was injured and able to attend the ceremony in Paris while his team lost at Marseille 1-0 in the French league. He was one of nine PSG players nominated for the men's award, including goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma, forward Désiré Doué, who scored twice in the Champions League final, and winger Khvitcha Kvaratskhelia.

Although Bonmati lost to England in a penalty shootout in the Women's European

Championship final last summer, she was named the best player of the tournament, which she began just days after being hospitalised by viral meningitis.

Bonmati's spot kick in the shootout was one of two saved by England's Hannah Hampton, who was voted the best women's goalkeeper. "Third time in a row here and I still can't believe it," Bonmati said. "I owe Barcelona everything, this is the club of my life."

She won a domestic treble with Barcelona and also reached the Champions League final.

Barcelona has won the last five women's awards but it was expected an Englishwoman would win for the first time. England won the Euros and Arsenal took the Women's Champions League. But with five England players among the women's top 10 nominees, the highest placed was Alessia Russo at third.

Argentina likely to face Australia in Kerala

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Thiruvananthapuram

The Lionel Messi-led Argentina team will most likely face Australia in the eagerly-awaited friendly match in Kerala come November, official sources in the state's sports department said on Tuesday.

No date has been fixed for the game, but it will take place in Kochi on any day between November 12 and November 18, the sources said.

They added that Australia will most likely be the opponent of the South American giants.

Another source said that a member of the Argentine support staff is expected to land in Kochi on Wednesday "for venue inspection."

There were some controversies surrounding the team's visit to Kerala, with some reports in early August this year saying that the South American side will not come to the state.



Lionel Messi

However, putting speculations to rest later in the month, the reigning world champions announced that they would play a FIFA friendly against an unnamed opponent in Kerala in November. The state's sports minis-

ters V Abduurahman too confirmed the team's visit for the game. "The Argentine national team, led by Lionel Scaloni, will have two FIFA friendlies in the remainder of 2025. The first, in October, from the 6th to the 14th, will be played in the United

States (opponents and cities to be determined)," the Argentine Football Association had written on its official X handle.

"The second, FIFA friendlies in November, from the 10th to the 18th, will be played in Luanda, Angola, and Kerala, India (opponents to be determined)," the AFA statement had read. Following the Kerala visit, Messi is also expected to embark on a multi-city tour of India in December, with stopovers at Kolkata, Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Delhi where a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi is planned.

The move to bring Messi-led Argentina to Kerala first gained steam in September 2024 when Abduurahman travelled to Spain to meet officials of the Argentine Football Association to work out the details.

Argentina's previous visit to India was in 2011 when they faced Venezuela at the Salt Lake stadium in Kolkata.

Grace Harris out of World Cup; Heather Graham called up

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Bengaluru

Australia all-rounder Grace Harris was on Tuesday ruled out of the upcoming ODI World Cup due to a calf strain, dealing a blow to the defending champions' prospects of winning a record-extending eighth trophy in the global showpiece.

According to media reports, Western Australia all-rounder Heather Graham was called up to replace the big-hitting Harris for the tournament starting in Guwahati on September 30.

India and Sri Lanka are co-hosting the tournament.

Harris injured her calf while fielding in the final ODI of the three-match series against India in Delhi on Saturday. Harris played only one match in the just-concluded series, having received a call-up after Annabel Sutherland was ruled out with hip soreness.



Australia are beginning their World Cup campaign on October 1 against New Zealand.

Harris was not a sure-shot starter in Australia's XI but with the side facing a few injury issues, she may have played a part in the tournament. Phoebe Litchfield missed the last two matches of the ODI series against India with a quad issue while Darcie Brown suffered back spasms.

Sophie Molineux was unavailable for the entire series against after coming off her a knee injury.

The 28-year-old Graham has played one ODI and five T20Is for Australia, with her last outing in the international arena being the match against New Zealand in September last year.

The fast-bowling all-rounder has taken nine wickets in the six international matches she has been part of.

DINESH KARTHIK NAMED INDIA CAPTAIN FOR HONG KONG SIXES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Hong Kong

Former India player Dinesh Karthik has been appointed captain of the country's team for the upcoming Hong Kong Sixes, the tournament organisers said on Tuesday.

The exciting short format tournament will start from November 7.

Known for his vast international experience, sharp leadership skills, and explosive batting, Karthik's inclusion as captain is set to inspire fans and elevate the tournament's competitive spirit. On his appointment as skipper, Karthik said, "It is an absolute honour leading Team India at the Hong Kong Sixes, a tournament with such rich history and global recognition."



"I look forward to lead a group of players who have such incredible records to their credit, and together we will aim to bring joy to the fans and play cricket that is both fearless and entertaining."

Burji Shroff, chairperson of Cricket Hong Kong China, said: "We are thrilled to welcome Dinesh Karthik as the captain of Team India for the Hong Kong Sixes 2025."

"His leadership and wealth of experience will add immense value to the competition, and we are confident that his presence will attract fans from across the globe to witness this spectacular cricketing festival."

Ex-Juventus Boss Agnelli granted plea bargain

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ ROME

A plea bargain deal for former Juventus president Andrea Agnelli with a 20-month suspended sentence in a false accounting trial was granted by a judge — possibly setting up Agnelli's return to soccer after his sports ban expires next month.

The trial, which began after prosecutors started investigating Juventus in 2021, contributed to Agnelli's downfall at the record 36-time Serie A champion.

Former Juventus vice president Pavel Nedved was granted a deal of 14 months and former Juventus sporting director Fabio Paratici got 18 months — with their sentences also suspended.

Former Juventus CEO Maurizio Arrivabene was cleared of wrongdoing by the court in Rome — where the trial was moved to after starting in Turin.

"The decision to request that this suspended sentence be applied, without recognizing responsibility — and therefore coherent with my position of innocence — was quite difficult," Agnelli said in a statement to Italian media.

Agnelli added that since

the trial is still in the initial phase and preliminary hearings, "the alternative would have been remaining in limbo for a very long time. "My love for Juventus remains total and unaltered," Agnelli said. He's been living in Amsterdam for more than two years and he plans to "carry out his future plans" in the Dutch city. Juventus, which is listed on the Milan stock exchange, was fined 156,000 euros (\$183,000) and also reached a settlement with about 75 investors who the club will pay slightly more than 1 million euros (about \$1.2 million).

All of the parties involved denied any wrongdoing.

Juventus said in a statement reacting to the ruling that "while reiterating the correctness of its conduct and the soundness of its defensive arguments," the club "has deemed it appropriate to resort to this instrument in the best interest of the company itself, its shareholders and all stakeholders."

The case prompted Agnelli and Juventus' entire board of directors to resign in 2022. Agnelli was then given two separate bans by sports authorities, the last of which expires in October.



Australia's team well-balanced with strong depth: Healy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Bengaluru

Captain Alyssa Healy believes the perfect mix of youth and experience in her side will help defending champions Australia lay their hands on a record-extending eighth Women's ODI World Cup title.

The upcoming edition of the tournament, co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka, begins on September 30, with Australia once again entering as overwhelming favourites.

"Our group is incredibly well-balanced, with plenty of youth to complement the more experienced players. While for some it will be their first ODI World Cup, they've all had exposure to major tournaments and high-pressure series," Healy wrote



in her ICC column. Australia rounded off their preparations with a thrilling 2-1 series win over India last week, boosting their morale further ahead of the marquee event.

"I think we're in a great spot as a team. We've had some valuable time together as a group across multiple

camp over the winter and I think everyone has enjoyed the chance to tailor their preparation through the Australia A series and domestic cricket in England.

"We know we've put in the time both on and off the field, so we come in confident with that body of work

behind us and are ready to play some ODI Cricket.

"We're lucky enough to have great depth in our squad. Our bowling depth will be key with the warm conditions we will no doubt face," the two-time World Cup winner said.

The Australians open their campaign against trans-Tasman rivals New Zealand in Indore on October 1 before travelling to Colombo for matches against Sri Lanka (October 4) and Pakistan (October 8).

"As a team we've not played in Sri Lanka since 2016, but plenty of our group have had experience there over the years with various development tours.

It'll be nice to get back there and hopefully have

some success in our matches against Sri Lanka and Pakistan."

Personally, the 34-year-old skipper is relishing her return after an injury layoff earlier this year. Since returning to the side, she has featured in three T20s and three ODIs against India A, before leading Australia to the series win over India.

"For me personally, having the opportunity to play that 'A' series at home was huge, getting through six games of cricket in a short space of time was a big tick for me after coming back from injury," Healy reflected.

The defending champions are also strengthened by the return of all-rounder Sophie Molineux, who underwent a knee surgery earlier.

The Ryder Cup is off to an emotional start for Team USA

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Farmingdale (US)

The Ryder Cup had moments of inspiration in vastly different forms during a quiet start to golf's most chaotic week. There were tears for the Americans as they gathered on the first tee at sunrise and a strong reminder for Europe as it goes after a rare road win.

US Captain Keegan Bradley had his entire team on the first tee before the gates open, no one in the massive grandstands that come Friday will be packed with flag-waving fans.

He had Chris Mascali, a New York firefighter whose father died during the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, speak to the team. Mascali brought his uniform, along with the helmet of his father, Joe Mascali. Those now are in the team room for the Americans.

Bryan Robinson from FDNY Ladder 16 sang the national anthem as the large video board showed great moments in Ryder Cup history.

"I had this vision of doing that for about a year," Bradley said. "And to be out there and see it, and see how emotional the guys got, was a really special time for our team." The Americans walked solemnly across the bridge from the first tee complex, headed to the practice area, then played 18 holes of the Black Course.

Team Europe spent two days at Bethpage Black a week ago and then dispersed — some to American homes, others playing some of Long Island's best golf courses — until returning to Bethpage for what it expects to be a big challenge.

The Americans have lost at home only four times since the Ryder Cup began in 1927.

European captain Luke Donald had his team wear salmon-colored pullovers or sweater vests, a subtle reminder of what can be done. That was the Sunday color for the European team in 1987 when it stunned the Americans at Muirfield Village to win its first Ryder Cup away from home.

Europe has won three more times on U.S. Soil since then, the most recent 13 years ago in what became known as the "Miracle at Medinah" because of the Sunday rally. "That's motivating to the guys that it can be done, it has been done, and again, we're here to try and do it again," Donald said.

Europe is coming off a resounding win at Marco Simone and returns 11 of the 12 players from the Italy matches in 2023 — the exception is Rasmus Hojgaard, the identical twin of Nicolai Hojgaard, who played in the

last Ryder Cup. But the Europeans lost by nine points in 2021 at Whistling Straits, by six points at Hazeltine in 2016 and by five points at Valhalla in 2008.

"I think it's always important to rally around something," Donald said.

"We always have things that we come up with that are important to us. History and our unity and celebrating what we've done in the past and the legends that have kind of come before us is really important.

"This is going to be a difficult challenge."

There were not many surprises in the way Bradley grouped his three groups of four players for the only full practice round they play this week.

Justin Thomas and Cameron Young were together, as they were in the Procore Championship two weeks ago in Napa,

California. Ben Griffin, one of four Ryder Cup rookies, was with Bryson DeChambeau, who was not in Napa because he's with LIV Golf and thus ineligible for PGA Tour play.

Scottie Scheffler was with Russell Henley — they formed a tough partnership in the Presidents Cup last year at Royal Montreal — along with US Open champion JJ Spaun and Harris English.

The final group had Patrick Cantlay and Xander Schauffele, partners for most team matches over the last six years, along with Sam Burns and Collin Morikawa, who won a fourballs match in Marco Simone at the last Ryder Cup.

at home with a newborn son.

The captains are good friends, both living close to each other in South Florida, and shared one sentiment about the Ryder Cup. As tense as it has become, the goal is to enjoy the week not knowing if the opportunity will come up again.

Bradley played in two Ryder Cups, the last one in 2014. He has not been back in any capacity until the 39-year-old who played college golf at St John's was named captain last year.

He felt that sentiment as his team gathered on the first tee to listen to Mascali.

"It was a powerful moment," Bradley said. "You are looking around and seeing all the guys staring at what we were doing and so into it in such an emotional way. A lot of people have worked really hard to get to this point in their lives."

BRIEFLY

LAVANYA JADON LEADS 13TH LEG OF HERO WPG TOUR BY ONE SHOT



Lavanya Jadon overcame a late double bogey to take a one-shot lead in the 13th Leg of the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour on Tuesday.

Lavanya was one shot ahead of the experienced Amandeep Drall (73) and amateur Zara Anand (73) at the DLF Golf and Country Club.

Amateur Lavanya Gupta, Vani Kapoor, Astha Madan and Ananya Garg carded 2-over 74 each to be tied fourth.

One shot behind them were six players, Heena Kang, Kriti Chowhan, Jahaanvi Walia and three amateurs, Mannat Brar, Anvvi Dahhiya and Ananyaa Sood, all of whom shot 4-over 76 each.

Lavanya opened with a bogey, but got the shot back on the Par-3 second. Another bogey on sixth and a birdie on the ninth saw her turn in even par.

On the back nine she birdied the 12th, but bogeyed the 13th and double bogeyed the 14th. A birdie on the 17th ensured she was even par and leading.

Amandeep had two birdies against four bogeys while Zara also had two birdies against four bogeys.

Vani, the leader on Order of Merit, had four birdies but she also had three bogeys and two double bogeys.

PINKATHON SET TO RETURN TO MUMBAI ON DECEMBER 21



Pinkathon, India's biggest women's run, is set to return to Mumbai on December 21 to champion breast cancer awareness and the importance of preventive health.

The Mumbai leg will kick off a six-city tour spanning Bengaluru, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Chennai, and Delhi, which will take place over nine months.

Pinkathon has on boarded Zydus Lifesciences Ltd as title sponsor this year. The 10th edition will offer something for everyone, from 3 km, lifelong 5 km, and 10 km community runs to ultradistances of 50 km, 75 km, 100 km, and 100 km relay. "At Pinkathon, our mission has always been to inspire every woman to take charge of her health and fitness while building a community of strength and inclusivity," Pinkathon founder Milind Soman said.

"With Zydus joining as Title Partner, we are amplifying this mission and urging women from all walks of life to make health a priority, integrating at least one physical activity into their daily lives, starting with running."

Dr Sharvil Patel, Managing Director, Zydus Lifesciences, said, "With the Easiest Exam campaign, we seek to empower women with the knowledge that a simple 3-minute self-examination each month can make a life-saving difference." "Joining hands with Pinkathon, we aim to reach many more women, raise awareness, and inspire collective action in the fight against breast cancer. We believe that raising awareness on women's health and breast cancer remains equally vital, as early detection has the power to save countless lives."

Every team can beat India: Phil Simmons

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Dubai

Bangladesh head coach Phil Simmons doesn't believe that India is an unbeatable team and come Wednesday when his 'Tigers' take on the reigning world champions in an Asia Cup Super 4 encounter, it won't matter what Suryakumar Yadav and his men have achieved in the past four games.

Bangladesh will come into the match after having beaten Sri Lanka in an earlier Super 4s game, something that has boosted their confidence enormously considering T20s aren't their 'Go-To' format.

Asked if this Indian team can be defeated, Simmons, who, in his playing days, represented a strong West Indies side in the late 1980s to late '90s, replied: "Every team has the ability to beat India."

"The game is played on the day. It's not what India has done before. It's what happens on Wednesday. It's what happens during that three and a half hour period. We will try to play as best as we can and hope to find chinks in India's armoury. That's the way we win games."

The 62-year-old Simmons understands the surround sound around any game involving India and wants his wards to soak in that electric atmosphere, stay in the moment, and enjoy the challenge to the fullest.

"Every game, especially games involving India, have a hype because they're the number one T20 team in the world. There must be a hype. We're just going to ride on the hype."

"We're going to enjoy the moment and enjoy the game."

Simmons believes that the Dubai International Cricket Stadium (DICS) track is really good for batting and toss won't be a huge factor going into the match.

"I didn't see much of a difference in the wicket over the 40 overs. I think it's some of the best wickets I've seen here for a while. I think last night (India vs Pakistan) it was the same."

"The wicket was really good to bat. Bowlers had to bowl properly. I don't think the toss has that much of an effect."

The September heat in Dubai and Abu Dhabi is sapping and playing back-to-back T20 games in this weather can be a challenge



Bangladesh head coach Phil Simmons

physically, admitted Simmons.

"It is extremely difficult to play back-to-back T20 matches, back-to-back ODIs. So it's not a nice thing but again we are prepared, we have trained really hard."

"I think the guys are fit enough to handle the back-to-back game. But it is not a fair thing for any team to

have to play back-to-back T20s. It's a lot more difficult than people seem to think," said the coach, who played 26 Tests and 143 ODIs for the West Indies during his playing days.

Talking about senior players in the squad, the coach couldn't stop praising Mustafizur Rahman, a seasoned left-arm seamer, for

taking more initiative in team meetings and guiding the juniors in the team.

"He's been the main bowler. And he's carrying that mantle of being the senior bowler on the team. And even in meetings and everything, he's really stepping up. So it's great to see him performing out there."

"Look, I am one who tries

to control my emotions as much as possible. We are not here to win a game against Sri Lanka. We are here to win the tournament...Then I can release my emotions. But I have to keep everybody grounded in the dressing room."

T20 cricket is increasingly becoming data driven and the analysts in every squad do a risk vs reward analysis while picking out the right combination. Simmons had a different take to this theory of having more risk-takers in the team.

"I don't know about risk in T20 format. Since I've been here, we've tried to make sure that this is the way we want to play. And we've picked the correct players to play that way. And so far, it's benefited us. It's going well," he asserted.

Bangladesh is an emotional country when it comes to cricket and Simmons was asked a pertinent question about how one handles the incessant criticism.

"...As long as I'm confident and my staff and myself, including the captain, are confident in what we're doing and how we're guiding the team, then criticism is like water off a duck's back," he said.

MEGHANA REDDY QUALIFIES FOR MAIN DRAW OF KOREA OPEN



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Suwon (Korea)

Indian shuttler Meghana Reddy entered the main draw of the Korea Open Super 500 badminton tournament after registering straight-game wins in the qualifiers on Tuesday.

The 21-year-old defeated Chinese Taipei's Pei Chu Chen 21-6, 21-18 in the first round, before beating Japan's Ririna Hiramoto 21-19, 22-20 in the second to secure her spot in the main draw of the USD 475,000 event.

She will take on Tonrug Saeheng of Thailand in the first round.

All other Indians competing in the qualifiers failed to advance to the main event.

In men's singles, Shivansh lost 12-21, 21-17, 12-21 to Lu Wei Hsuan of Chinese Taipei.

The pair of Nitin Kumar and Harsh Rana was defeated 11-21, 17-21 by Bao Xin Da Gu La and Yu Hsang Chou of Chinese Taipei, while Shivansh and Pranave Chandel lost 15-21, 6-21 to Hung Bing Fu and Fu Syuan Liu in the men's doubles qualifiers.

Atiqa Mir shines in Slovakia, misses podium

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Orechova (Slovakia)

India's racing sensation Atiqa Mir finished an impressive fourth after being in the running for a famous victory for the majority of the action-packed race in the Champions of the Future Academy (COFTA) karting series here.

Atiqa showed exemplary race craft to put herself in a winning position before narrowly missing out on a podium finish in round 4.1 of COFTA, a series which is keenly tracked by the top brass of the FI Academy.

The 10-year-old, who won in the DAMC series in Dubai earlier this month, is the first Indian to be supported by Formula 1 and is part of the FI Academy DYD program. Atiqa finished just 0.32

seconds behind the race winner in the mini category, reflecting the highly competitive nature of a male dominated grid at Slovakia Karting Centre. It was the first time that an Indian driver managed a top-four in the championship history and was the highest finish by a female in the ongoing season.

In the second race of the weekend, Atiqa was running in a comfortable third place until she got hit from the back by another competitor on lap seven, forcing her off the track and as a result she lost multiple places to finish 11th.

The podium eluded her last weekend but with a performance like that, Atiqa again showed her exceptional talent against a very strong international grid.



Deepti rises to fifth, Mandhana retains top ODI rankings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Dubai

India all-rounder Deepti Sharma moved up two places to fifth in the ICC Women's ODI rankings for bowlers even as Smriti Mandhana continued to hold the top spot in the batters' list with a career-high rating after her sparkling show in the recently-concluded series against Australia.

Mandhana scored two scintillating hundreds in the three-match series at home against Australia, which the visitors won 2-1 in the run-up to the upcoming World Cup beginning September 30 in Guwahati. She has moved to a career-high rating of 818.

Deepti's pair of two-wicket hauls against Australia moved the India off-spinner up two spots to fifth with 651 points, while South African pacer Ayabonga Khaka moved three spots to 15th (548) after claiming 2/36 against Pakistan in Lahore in spite of non-favourable conditions.

India's Kranti Gaud (up 23 spots to 39th) continues her fine start to the international game, while England's Sophie Ecclestone (795 rating points) boasts an 85-point lead as the top-ranked ODI bowler ahead of the World Cup.

While Mandhana maintained her numero uno



status, Tazmin Brits made the most noteworthy move in the batting rankings, up 15 spots to sixth (669 rating points) with back to back unbeaten hundreds in the Proteas series win in Lahore. Brits averages 91.85, hitting 643 runs at a strike rate of 94.14 in ODIs in the 2025 calendar. It continues a dramatic rise from the prolific Protea, having been the 73rd ranked batter at the start of September 2023.

Pakistan's Sidra Amin meanwhile made a 10-spot move of her own having enjoyed a strong series herself, making 121 not out, 122 and 50 not out across the three matches.

Amin's rating of 636 points is a career high for the right-hander, who now sits in 13th, just 19 points from a top 10 spot.

Beth Mooney meanwhile

made ground on the top two, up two spots (727 points), though it's still Mandhana by a distance leading the way at the top.

Other big movers of note further down include Australia's Georgia Voll (up 28 spots to 61st), and Pakistan's Natalia Pervaiz, who while outside the top 100 moved 54 spots thanks to a half-century in the second ODI.

South Africa's Marizanne Kapp moved closer to Ash Gardner atop the ICC Women's ODI all-rounder rankings, moving past Hayley Matthews to go to second (420) with a century and a two-wicket haul in back-to-back matches, while teammate Chloe Tryon showed her wares in spin-friendly conditions, taking a two-wicket haul of her own in the series.

Rahul Chahar joins Surrey for final clash against Hampshire

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
London

Indian leg-spinner Rahul Chahar has been drafted into the Surrey squad for their season-ending fixture against Hampshire in the English County season.

The game is scheduled to take place at the Utilita Bowl from September 24 to 27. The 26-year-old Chahar, who has represented India seven times in white-ball cricket, was registered for the final part of the County Championship season in early September, but was not required to play in the two home games at the Oval against Warwickshire and Nottinghamshire.

"Leg-spinner Rahul Chahar comes into the squad for the final Rothesay County Championship match of the season. Chahar plays for Rajasthan in the Ranji Trophy



and has represented India seven times in white-ball cricket," Surrey Cricket posted on X. In the match for which he has been picked, Chahar will come up against fellow Indian all-rounder Washington Sundar.

According to a statement by director of cricket Alec Stewart on the club's website, they had initially planned to bring back Chahar's compatriot R Sai

Kishore, who picked up 11 wickets in two matches in his stint at the club, but a finger injury and subsequent surgery rendered the player unavailable.

"I'm excited to join Surrey for this week's match. I'm coming here to have an impact and help the team in their final match of the season," Chahar told the Surrey website.

ED records Yuvraj Singh's statement in betting app case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Former Indian cricketer Yuvraj Singh on Tuesday appeared before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for questioning in a money laundering case linked to an online betting app named 1xBet, officials said. Singh (43), wearing a white T-shirt and pant, reached the agency's office in central Delhi around 12 noon accompanied by his legal team.

The investigating officer of the case questioned the all-rounder and left-hand batter and recorded his statement under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the officials said.

An influencer named Anveshi Jain also appeared before the ED for questioning in the same case.

The federal probe agency has questioned former cricketers Suresh Raina, Shikhar Dhawan and Robin Uthappa

apart from former TMC MP and actor Mimi Chakraborty and Bengali actor Ankush Hazra over the last few weeks as part of this investigation.

Actor Sonu Sood has been summoned for Wednesday by the ED in the same case. The investigation into the operations of the 1xBet betting app is part of the ED's wider probe against such platforms on allegations of duping numerous people of crores of rupees and reportedly evading a huge amount of direct and indirect taxes.

According to Curacao-registered 1xBet, it is a globally recognised bookmaker with 18 years in the betting industry.

The brand's customers can place bets on thousands of sporting events, with the company's website and app available in 70 languages, as per the company information available on its website.

Some more sportspersons, movie actors, online



influencers and celebrities are expected to be questioned by the agency in the coming days as part of this probe.

The ED may also soon initiate the process to attach assets of individuals in this case who are found using the alleged proceeds of

crime generated from the promotional activities of the app.

A chargesheet will be filed subsequently before a court, as per the sources.

The agency's line of investigation, according to sources, is to know from the celebrities as to how

they were contacted by the said betting company seeking their endorsement, the nodal person(s) for contact in India, the mode of payment (cash through hawala or banking channel) and place of the payment (in India or abroad), etc.

The agency, while recording the statements of the cricketers and actors, is understood to be asking them if they knew that online betting and gaming was illegal in India. It has also asked them to furnish a copy of their contracts and all relevant email and paper documentation made by them with 1xBet.

The agency is also looking at the end use of the money taken by the celebrities to check if any of them can be categorised as the "proceeds of crime" under the PMLA, according to the sources.

The Union government recently banned real money online gaming in India by bringing a legislation.