

CM listens to children, checks meals and inspects hospital

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Tikamgarh

Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav inspected the Takha Anganwadi Centre and Dr Rajendra Prasad District Hospital during his visit to Tikamgarh district on Friday. He reviewed facilities at both institutions and interacted with beneficiaries, children, patients and their family members.

At the Takha Anganwadi Centre, Ladli Laxmi daughters, Ladli Behna beneficiaries and women beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana welcomed the Chief Minister by tying sacred Rakhis on his wrist. As a gesture of gratitude, Dr Yadav presented saris, cosmetic kits and umbrellas to Ladli Behna beneficiaries.

The Chief Minister interacted with children at the Anganwadi centre, gave them roses and asked about their names and the food served to them. When asked whether they ate the breakfast and meals provided at the centre, the children responded enthusiastically that they did. Dr Yadav directed officials to ensure that children receive nutritious and quality breakfast and meals.

He also performed the Annaprashan ceremony of baby Vaishnavi by feeding her kheer with his own hands and blessed her for a bright future. He directed officials to ensure a continuous supply of safe drinking water for children as well as pregnant and lactating mothers. The Chief Minister also inspected the kitchen of the Anganwadi

CM SHOWERS AFFECTION ON CHILDREN



centre.

Dr Yadav greeted people who had gathered at the centre and listened to their concerns. Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Backwards Classes and Minority Welfare and De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Welfare and Tikamgarh district in-charge Minister Krishna Gaur, Chief Secretary Ashok Barnwal, public representatives and senior administrative officers were present.

Later, the Chief Minister inspected Dr Rajendra Prasad District Hospital and reviewed the OPD registration counter, doctors' chambers, blood sample collection centre in the laboratory, emergency ward of the trauma centre and other facilities.

Dr Yadav met two snakebite patients and an accident victim and enquired about their well-being from their family members. He also inspected the Nutrition Rehabilitation Centre (NRC), where he distributed health kits to 19 malnourished children undergoing treatment.

District Panchayat Chairperson Umita Singh, former Tikamgarh MLA Rakesh Giri, former MLA Ajay Yadav, MP representative Anurag Verma, former Prithvipur MLA Dr Shishupal Yadav, District Panchayat member Brijendra Singh Yadav, Dr Abhay Pratap Singh, Vivek Chaturvedi and other public representatives

were present during the visit.

At the Takha Anganwadi Centre, Dr Yadav also interacted closely with women beneficiaries and local residents and sought feedback on the services being provided through various welfare schemes.

He emphasised that government welfare programmes should translate into tangible benefits for families at the grassroots level and that eligible beneficiaries should receive assistance without difficulty. During his interaction with the children, he took particular interest in their daily routine, food and overall well-being, reinforcing the importance of proper nutrition during the early years of development.

Hotel kitchen sealed after food check

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Indore

A food safety inspection at the prominent Sayaji Hotel in Indore found serious hygiene and storage violations, including rats in the food storage area and cockroaches in the kitchen and food preparation zone.

Officials found around 66 kg of non-vegetarian food stored without proper packaging and labelling. The hotel also did not have a Central FSSAI five-star licence. The inspection continued for nearly five hours on Thursday, following which the hotel's kitchen and bakery were sealed on Friday. The inspection team found cracks in storage walls and floors, poor waste segregation and vegetarian and non-vegetarian items stored together.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav with children at Anganwadi Centre in Tikamgarh on Friday.

Pioneer photo

MP eyes new investments as global leaders meet in Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The ET World Leaders Forum 2026, being held in New Delhi on August 21 and 22, will provide Madhya Pradesh a major platform to showcase its development prospects, investment opportunities and emerging industrial potential before leading industrialists, policymakers and global experts from India and abroad.

A special fireside chat titled "MP: Unlocking the Heart of India" will be held on the second day of the forum on August 22. Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav will participate in the session and share his views on Madhya Pradesh's economic and industrial growth journey, investment potential and the state government's



efforts to position the state as one of India's leading growth centres.

The session is expected to provide an important opportunity to present Madhya Pradesh's industrial strengths, investment opportunities and growth prospects to national and international investors and industry leaders. The state has been focusing on attracting investment across multiple sectors and strengthening its industrial ecosystem

to generate employment and accelerate economic growth.

The textile sector will also receive special attention at the forum through a dedicated session titled "Weaving the Future: Building an Integrated Textile Value Chain in MP" on August 22. Industry Secretary John Kingsley, Orient Craft founder Sudhir Dhingra and Raneen Banerjee of PwC India will participate in the session.

The discussion will focus on building an integrated textile value chain in Madhya Pradesh, expanding the state's textile industry and identifying new investment opportunities across the sector. The session is expected to bring industry perspectives on strengthening the entire value chain, from manufacturing and processing to market expansion.

The ET World Leaders Forum will also host discussions on major global economic and business trends, including artificial intelligence, global capital, the new economy, energy transition, trade and supply chains, India-US relations and global investment.

The participation of Madhya Pradesh at the forum is expected to strengthen the state's engagement with the national and global business community and highlight its potential across diverse sectors. The platform will also facilitate discussions on emerging opportunities and help position Madhya Pradesh as an attractive destination for investment, industrial expansion and long-term economic growth.



Artists perform Purulia Chhau dance during a series of cultural event organised by SPIC MACAY at Maulana Azad National Institute and Technology in Bhopal on Friday.

NGT orders 15-year watch on Bhopal's green cover

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Bhopal

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has issued a comprehensive set of directions to curb tree felling, protect green spaces and strengthen urban forestry in Bhopal. The tribunal has, among other measures, ordered a 15-year monitoring plan for compensatory plantations and identification of native and endangered tree species.

The directions were issued while hearing a petition filed by Dr Subhash C Pandey against Bhopal Municipal Corporation and others. The bench comprising Justice Shyoo Kumar Singh and judicial member Sudhir Kumar Chaturvedi considered issues related to the protection of green areas, removal of encroachments from road verges and green belts, conservation of native trees and strengthening of urban forestry.

The tribunal took note of the importance of the Capital Project Forest, established in 1986, and the extensive plantation undertaken in Bhopal over the years. It also considered action-taken reports submitted by authorities and the findings of an expert com-

mittee constituted to verify the status of encroachments and plantation.

The NGT directed strict compliance with the Madhya Pradesh Preservation of Trees in Urban Areas Act, 2001, in all cases involving tree felling. It also ordered compliance with rules governing compensatory plantation, afforestation, tree transplantation and maintenance, along with monitoring of the survival of planted trees.

A committee comprising representatives of the Forest Department, Municipal Corporation, Horticulture Department and State Pollution Control Board will monitor compensatory plantations in urban areas for 15 years.

The tribunal ordered high-resolution GIS mapping and a comprehensive tree census of the Bhopal Municipal Corporation area to identify trees and their species, green belts, open spaces and encroachments. Native and endangered species are to be identified and incorporated into a long-term afforestation strategy.

Encroachments from central and

side road verges and green areas are to be removed systematically, followed by fencing, afforestation and geo-tagging. Green-belt areas should not be concretised and are to be maintained as urban environmental protection zones.

The NGT recommended prioritising native species such as banyan, peepal, jamun, native mango, neem, kadamb and arjun for plantation. The Forest Department has also been directed to plant native forest species in vacant areas within urban forests.

A joint GIS/GPS and satellite-based survey and demarcation of recorded forest land in Bhopal district has also been ordered. Where encroachments are found illegal and there is no legal impediment, they must be removed and reclaimed land secured through permanent boundary pillars and fencing, with appropriate revenue record entries.

The tribunal directed ecological restoration of reclaimed areas through plantation and asked the Forest Department to bring such areas under green cover within 12 months.

DNLU panel highlights press freedom, ethics in digital age

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jabalpur

Dharmashastra National Law University (DNLU), Jabalpur organised a panel discussion on "Understanding Journalism Today" on its campus on Friday, bringing together senior journalists, faculty members and students to discuss the evolving media landscape and journalism's role in a democratic society.

The programme was organised under the leadership of Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Manoj Kumar Sinha and Registrar Dr Praveen Tripathi. Assistant Dean of Student Welfare Dr Animesh Jha welcomed the panellists and participants.

Senior journalists Dr Rakesh Pathak, Sudhanshu Ranjan and Anshu Naithani shared their perspectives on ethical journalism, commercial pressures, digital media, misinformation, press freedom and the responsibilities of journalists.

Pathak, a senior journalist and Gandhian activist from Madhya Pradesh, highlighted the erosion of ethical standards in regional journalism and the growing commer-

cialisation of newsrooms. He stressed the relevance of truth and restraint in reporting and recalled the important role played by Indian journalism during the freedom movement. He also cautioned against misinformation and fake news in the digital era.

Ranjan, senior journalist and former Additional Director General of Doordarshan, spoke about the credibility of mainstream and public broadcasting in the digital age. He emphasised the need to balance speed with accuracy and accountability. Referring to Article 19(1) and Article 19(2) of the Constitution, he discussed freedom of speech and its reasonable restrictions and stressed the importance of independent criticism of those in power.

Naithani, a senior journalist, anchor and producer, spoke about challenges faced by reporters, particularly women journalists, and highlighted the importance of fact-checking and verification amid rapidly changing social media-driven news cycles. Dr Praveen Tripathi felicitated the guest speakers with mementos.

ANTHE assesses student potential

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

For students preparing for competitive examinations, understanding their strengths and areas for improvement is as important as knowing what to study.

The Aakash National Talent Hunt Exam (ANTHE) has addressed this need for the last 16 years by providing students with a structured platform to assess their preparedness.

With more than 1 crore students registering since its inception, ANTHE has emerged as one of India's largest and longest-running student assessment platforms.

What began as a talent identification initiative has evolved into an academic benchmark for students to evaluate their competitive potential and strengthen their preparation.

ANTHE is designed as a comprehensive, scientifically structured diagnostic assessment. Its questions are mapped to specific concepts and competencies, enabling evaluation of subject knowledge, aptitude, analytical ability and examination behaviour.

Primary school locked at 2.35 pm during inspection

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

A primary school in Bhopal's Arwalia panchayat was found locked during an inspection on Friday, with neither students nor teachers present, raising questions over attendance and discipline at the government-run institution.

Bhopal Zila Panchayat Vice-President Mohan Singh Jat, who is also chairman of the education committee, inspected the Parwalia Sani Primary School following complaints from villagers about teachers remaining absent and poor arrangements at the school.

Jat said he reached the school at around 2.35 pm and found the main gate locked. No students or teachers were present on the premises. According to him, the school had been closed before the scheduled time, as the institution was reportedly shut at around 2.25 pm.

Jat said a teacher arrived at the school after some time and alleged that the teacher appeared to be under the influence of

alcohol. He reprimanded the teacher and said he would seek a medical examination to establish the facts. Jat also said he had informed the concerned officials about the incident and sought action over the alleged irregularities.

During the inspection, Jat issued a strict warning to the teacher and challenged that he would resign from his post if a medical examination established that his allegation was incorrect. The teacher's version could not be obtained during the inspection.

Jat said the inspection was conducted after receiving repeated complaints from villagers regarding the absence of teachers and administrative shortcomings at the school. He said the inspection revealed serious lapses and negligence.

Local residents also apprised the Zila Panchayat vice-president of the school's poor condition and other problems affecting its functioning. The matter has been brought to the attention of the concerned authorities for further action.

CM orders action against Katni CSP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav has directed the Chief Secretary to immediately suspend the concerned City Superintendent of Police (CSP) in connection with the Katni incident, taking serious note of the matter.

In a post on social media platform X, Dr Yadav said any negligence, undue pressure or misuse of position in matters related to law and order would not be tolerated at any level.

The Chief Minister said an impartial inquiry would be conducted into the entire incident and assured that strict action would be taken against all those found guilty.

Dr Yadav said maintaining the rule of law and ensuring accountability in the police and administrative system were priorities of the state government. He stressed that officials would be expected to discharge their responsibilities fairly and without allowing any external pressure or misuse of authority to influence their actions.

MP raises gaushala grant to Rs 40 per cow per day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government has stepped up measures for cattle protection, conservation and welfare under the Chief Minister Jan Vishwas Abhiyan, with regular grants being provided for the upkeep of more than 5.20 lakh cattle housed in 3,212 registered gaushalas across the state.

Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav said the daily grant for the upkeep of cows in gaushalas has been increased to Rs 40 per animal. A budget provision of Rs 620.50 crore has been made for distribution of grants to gaushalas during the financial year 2026-27.

Dr Yadav said the government is focusing on providing adequate resources to ensure effective functioning of gaushalas and proper care of cattle. To make the grant distribution system more transparent and efficient, a single-click Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mechanism has been introduced. Under the system, grants are transferred directly into the bank

accounts of gaushalas, facilitating timely payments and strengthening financial transparency.

The Chief Minister said more than 1,000 new gaushalas have become operational across Madhya Pradesh since the formation of the government. These facilities are providing organised care and management to more than 2 lakh additional cattle.

He said continuous efforts are being made to improve animal care, promote breed improvement and strengthen the management of gaushalas. The government is also working to expand infrastructure and resources required for effective cattle welfare.

Dr Yadav said cow slaughter is completely banned in Madhya Pradesh and legal provisions have been strengthened to check the illegal transportation of cattle. Vehicles used for illegal transportation are also liable to confiscation under the applicable provisions. The Chief Minister stressed that community participation is equally important for effective cattle

Ken-Betwa project to benefit 8.11 lakh hectares

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav has described the Ken-Betwa River Linking Project as a landmark initiative that will bring transformative changes to Bundelkhand and several other districts of Madhya Pradesh. He said the project, India's first river-linking project, is being implemented jointly by the Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh governments in coordination with the Union government.

The foundation stone for the ambitious project was laid in December 2024, and the project has been targeted for completion by 2030. Yadav said the project would have a far-reaching impact on irrigation, drinking water supply and energy generation, besides changing the

overall development landscape of the region.

Speaking to television channel representatives after reviewing the project in Khajuraho, the chief minister said the benefits would extend beyond the entire Bundelkhand region to several districts of central Madhya Pradesh. Areas of Raisen and Vidisha districts will also receive irrigation benefits under the project.

According to Yadav, the project will provide annual irrigation facilities to a total area of 8.11 lakh hectares. It will also generate 103 MW of hydropower and 27 MW of solar power. In addition, around 44 lakh people will receive 60 MCM of drinking water through the project.

In Madhya Pradesh, irrigation facilities covering 4.51 lakh hectares will be provided in Panna, Chhatarpur,

Damoh, Tikamgarh and Niwari districts. As many as 1,382 villages are expected to benefit from the project.

The chief minister said the project's benefits would also reach districts outside Bundelkhand, including Shivpuri, Datia, Raisen and Vidisha. In Sagar district, the Bina Complex under the project will provide annual irrigation facilities to around 90,000 hectares.

Yadav said the project would prove particularly significant for Bundelkhand, where improved irrigation and water availability can create new opportunities for agriculture and economic development. The availability of drinking water and additional energy generation is also expected to strengthen the region's overall infrastructure.

He said he had discussed

the progress of the project with legislators and other public representatives from the region during the review meeting. Issues concerning people affected by the project were also discussed, with the rehabilitation of displaced families and payment of compensation being accorded the highest priority.

The chief minister said the progress of work on the project was encouraging and that the Madhya Pradesh government, in coordination with the Union government, was committed to ensuring that people in the project area receive the required facilities.

Yadav said the project would not merely expand irrigation coverage but would act as a catalyst for broader regional development. Once completed, it is

expected to significantly alter the socio-economic landscape of Bundelkhand and adjoining areas by improving water availability, agricultural productivity and energy infrastructure.

The project is also expected to strengthen the long-term water security of the region by creating a more reliable system for distributing available water resources across participating districts. Improved water availability could support greater agricultural stability, encourage diversification of crops and provide a stronger foundation for rural economic activity. With irrigation, drinking water and power generation being addressed through an integrated framework, the project is positioned as a major infrastructure intervention for the region.



Stamp vendors and other shopkeepers remove goods from their shops as a road is widened under the Bhopal Metro Rail project near the old state assembly in Bhopal on Friday.

CM highlights Swami Chinmayanand's legacy at yatra launch

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav on Friday described Swami Chinmayanandji Maharaj as a great saint, thinker and spiritual luminary whose contribution to the moral development of Indian society and youth, and the propagation of Indian cultural heritage, would always be remembered.

Addressing a gathering at his residence on the occasion of the departure of the Chinmaya Amrit Yatra from Bhopal, Dr Yadav said it had been 75 years since the Chinmaya Amrit Yatra was launched under the guidance of Swami Chinmayanandji to take Indian culture, particularly the teachings of the Shrimad



Bhagavad Gita, to people across the country.

The Chief Minister said the Swami Chinmayanand Mission had been making significant contributions across the country through the establishment of schools, colleges and universities, besides working to strengthen social and cultural traditions. He also acknowledged the mission's role in various

initiatives and appreciated its efforts on behalf of the Madhya Pradesh Government.

Dr Yadav said society should strive to follow the righteous path shown by Swami Chinmayanandji

and carry forward his message of spiritual and moral values. The Chief Minister flagged off the Chinmaya Amrit Yatra, organised by Chinmaya Amrit Vahini, an affiliated organisation of the Swami Chinmayanand Mission, by waving a saffron flag. The yatra departed from Bhopal for its next destination, Jhansi. The yatra began in

Chhattisgarh and entered Madhya Pradesh, passing through Rewa, Satna, Betul and Narmadapuram before reaching Bhopal. It will now proceed towards Jhansi and continue its journey thereafter. An earlier edition of the Chinmaya Amrit Yatra had passed through Khandwa and Indore.

Swami Mitranand Saraswati Maharaj, Head and Patron of the Swami Chinmayanand Mission, along with other followers of the mission, was present on the occasion.

After flagging off the yatra, Dr Yadav extended his best wishes on behalf of the Madhya Pradesh Government for the social and cultural initiatives being undertaken by the Swami Chinmayanand Mission.

Kailaras sugar mill set for revival

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government has initiated steps to revive the closed Kailaras Sugar Mill in Morena district, in line with Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav's vision. MSME Department Commissioner Dilip Kumar said expressions of interest have been invited online for leasing the mill site on an "as is, where is" basis.

The deadline for submissions is September 15, with proposals scheduled to be opened on September 16. Interested bidders can visit the mill site on August 31 and September 1. A pre-bid meeting will be held on September 3 in Bhopal.

Bansal One bars fined after surprise food checks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Bhopal Municipal Corporation's Municipal Court on Friday carried out a surprise inspection of restaurants and bars at Bansal One, uncovering several food safety violations, including expired cold drinks and improper storage of vegetarian and non-vegetarian food.

The action was conducted by Mobile Court Magistrate (First Class) Tarunendra Pratap Singh, who personally inspected the kitchens and checked the food being prepared and served to customers. During the inspection, expired cold drinks were found at several locations, while vegetarian and non-vegetarian food items were found stored together in refrigerators. The civic team

imposed spot fines in the cases.

The Mobile Court began its action at around 1.30 pm and continued for nearly two hours. The team inspected several establishments, including Fake Cafe, Romeo Lane, Flying Saucer, Rasta, My Bar, Ayburi, Qawwali and Sankalp Restaurant and Bar.

The inspections focused on food quality and compliance with provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, as well as the Madhya Pradesh Municipal Corporation Act. Magistrate Singh personally visited the restaurants and bars to examine food items and assess hygiene and safety arrangements.

The sudden inspection triggered concern among restaurant and bar operators in the area. The municipal team arrived with a convoy of more

than 30 vehicles, accompanied by zonal and ward officials and officers from various departments.

Food and cold drink samples were collected from the establishments for further examination. During the inspection, the team also found unhygienic conditions in kitchens and reprimanded the staff for failing to maintain proper cleanliness and food safety standards.

The civic body said such inspections are aimed at ensuring compliance with food safety regulations and protecting consumers from unsafe or substandard food and beverages.

The inspection team also stressed that food establishments must maintain proper segregation, storage and hygiene practices to prevent contamination and protect public health.

Patalpani-Kalakund Heritage Train to resume from today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Indore

Western Railway will resume the popular Patalpani-Kalakund Heritage Train from August 22, 2026, in view of passenger demand. The heritage service will operate every Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

According to a press release issued by Mukesh Kumar, Public Relations Officer, Ratlam Division of Western Railway, Train No. 52965, Patalpani-Kalakund Heritage Train, will depart from Patalpani at 11.05 am and reach Kalakund at 1.05 pm. On the return journey, Train No. 52966, Kalakund-Patalpani Heritage Train, will depart from Kalakund at 3.34 pm and arrive at Patalpani at 4.30 pm.

The train will have six coaches, comprising two AC Chair Car coaches, C1 and C2, and four non-AC Chair Car coaches, including D1, D2 and D3.

Passengers travelling to Kalakund and returning to Patalpani will be required to purchase separate tickets for each journey. The one-way fare will be Rs 270 per passenger for the AC Chair Car and Rs 20 per passenger for the non-AC Chair Car.

The resumption of the heritage service is expected to benefit passengers and tourists travelling between Patalpani and Kalakund, particularly on weekends. The service is also a popular option for visitors seeking to experience the scenic route connecting the two destinations.

Four theft cases found in Khajuri Road checks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Madhya Kshetra Vidyut Vitran Company conducted an intensive inspection of electricity consumers' premises under the Khajuri Road distribution centre on Thursday, detecting multiple cases of power theft and other irregularities.

A total of 18 premises were inspected during the checking drive. Officials detected four cases of electricity theft, 11 cases involving use of electricity load beyond the sanctioned limit, two tariff-related irregularities and one case of meter bypass. Panchanamas were prepared in all cases as per prescribed procedures, followed by billing and necessary legal action.

Among the cases involving significant billing amounts, a bill of around Rs 3.39 lakh

was raised in the case of Anand Chandani. Bills of Rs 89,777 and Rs 50,020 were raised in the cases of Ramlal Mewada and Arif Malik respectively. A bill of Rs 50,020 was also raised against Vijay Kumar Mishra Construction Pvt Ltd.

Further, bills of Rs 34,567 and Rs 33,870 were raised in the cases of Prem Singh Ram Singh Solanki and Radheshyam Mewada respectively.

In the electricity theft cases, action was initiated as per rules against Ramlal Mewada, Kalu Ram Patharia, Vikram Singh Mewada and Hema Lilwani.

The company said electricity theft cases attract both criminal penalties and civil liability under provisions of the Electricity Act. It added that regular inspection and enforcement drives are being

conducted to curb power theft and ensure compliance with electricity regulations.

The company appealed to consumers to use electricity only through valid connections and within their sanctioned load limits. It warned that use of electricity beyond the sanctioned load, tampering with meters, bypassing meters or stealing electricity would invite action under the applicable provisions of the Electricity Act.

The company said consumers should ensure that their electricity usage remains compliant with prescribed norms to avoid legal and financial consequences.

The company said the inspections are also aimed at promoting responsible electricity use and ensuring greater transparency in consumption and billing practices.

Four snakebite deaths in a day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Chhatarpur

Four people died of suspected snakebite in Chhatarpur district on Thursday, with post-mortems conducted at the district hospital. Two victims were brought to the hospital dead, while two died during treatment.

District Hospital Civil Surgeon Dr Sharad Chaurasia confirmed the deaths. The deceased were identified as Ganesh Patel, 27-year-old Rakesh Yadav, 60-year-old Bhaguniya Kushwaha and 18-year-old Rachna Sahu.

Rakesh Yadav and Ganesh Patel were brought to the hospital on August 20 in a dead condition. Bhaguniya Kushwaha was brought at around 3 am and died during treatment. Rachna Sahu was brought from Shahgarh at around 5.30 am and also died while undergoing treatment.

Dr Chaurasia said 14 snakebite patients had reached the district hospital during the preceding two days. One patient was referred to another facility, while another died during treatment.

The hospital uses around 1,500 to 2,000 Anti-Snake Venom injections annually, with consumption remaining in this range over the past two to three years.

Central Bank launches retail credit drive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jabalpur

Central Bank of India organised a Retail Credit Outreach Campaign at Hotel Narmada Junction in Jabalpur on Friday as part of its nationwide initiative to expand retail lending and connect customers with various credit products.

The campaign was held under the guidance of Zonal Head Dheeraj Goyal and Regional Head Avinash Kumar. During the programme, the bank sanctioned loans worth Rs 50 crore and generated fresh loan leads of around Rs 60 crore.



Addressing customers, Goyal highlighted the importance of using the nomination facility in bank accounts, activation of DEAF accounts and the significance of SSS. He also briefed customers about various retail loan schemes offered by the bank.

Kumar said the bank's

home loan product, Cent Grih Lakshmi, is currently available at an interest rate of 7.00%, along with a waiver on processing fees for home loans. He also highlighted the bank's education, vehicle and mortgage loan schemes and urged customers and the public to make the most of these facilities. Officials and employees from all Central Bank of India branches in Jabalpur, along with a large number of customers, attended the programme.

CM explores new avenues for brass artisans

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav on Friday visited the home and workshop of renowned Tikamgarh brass artisan Laxminarayan Soni during his visit under the Chief Minister Jan Vishwas Abhiyan and reviewed the traditional brass craft, praising the skills of local artisans.

Earlier, Dr Yadav interacted with entrepreneurs, investors and startup representatives at the Udyam Samvad programme, discussing industrial development, investment promotion and measures to strengthen local industries.

At Soni's residence in Roraia locality, the Chief Minister viewed brass idols of deities and other artistic products. He said Tikamgarh's brass craftsmanship was an important symbol of Madhya Pradesh's rich cultural heritage and

assured that efforts would be made to give the traditional craft greater recognition at the national level.

Dr Yadav directed officials to expedite development of a proposed new industrial area at Dharampura village in Tikamgarh tehsil under the Government of India's MSE-CDP scheme. The project, proposed by the MSME Department, is estimated to cost around Rs 10.99 crore.

He said the industrial area would provide artisans with modern facilities, better marketing opportunities and new avenues for employment. The Chief Minister stressed the need to combine preservation of traditional craftsmanship with modern infrastructure and market access to strengthen the local brass craft industry and create sustainable livelihood opportunities for artisans.

Two engineers face action over Simhashtha work lapses

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ujjain

With preparations for Simhashtha-2028 gathering pace, Ujjain Divisional Commissioner and Simhashtha Mela Officer Ashish Singh has stepped up monitoring of development and construction projects, directing departments to maintain quality standards and complete works within prescribed timelines.

During a review meeting held at the Simhashtha Mela Office auditorium, Singh suspended Water Resources Department Sub-Engineer Amit Kumar Kurmi with immediate effect after serious technical lapses were detected in the Sever Khedi-Silar Khedi project. He also ordered a

departmental inquiry against PWD Simhashtha Wing Sub-Engineer Malay Shrivastava for alleged failure to ensure quality control.

The action followed an inspection of column casting work at a pump house, where technical irregularities, including bending reinforcement bars to adjust alignment, were detected. Taking serious note of the lapses, Singh directed officials to ensure strict compliance with prescribed technical and quality standards in all Simhashtha-related projects.

The Commissioner also directed that a notice be issued to the consultant concerned over delays in the Ujjain-Maksi four-lane road project. He instructed departments to expedite the resolution of land acquisition cases linked to

ongoing projects so that construction is not held up and works are completed within the stipulated deadlines.

Singh further directed officials to provide all required information to the agency appointed for third-party inspection of ongoing construction projects during site visits. He ordered regular testing of construction material samples and continuous monitoring of quality control at project sites.

Progress reports on projects being implemented by various departments were presented during the meeting. Officials from the Water Resources Department, Namami Shipra, Madhya Pradesh West Zone Electricity Distribution Company, Police Housing Corporation, Tourism

Department, Rural Engineering Services, Building Development Corporation, Public Works Department, Simhashtha Division, Setu Division, National Highways and Road Development Corporation participated in the review.

Collector Roshan Kumar Singh, District Panchayat CEO Shreyans Koomat, Additional Municipal Commissioner Santosh Tagore, Deputy Mela Officer Sandeep Singh and senior officials of the concerned departments were also present. He stressed that timely corrective action and rigorous supervision would be critical to ensuring that Simhashtha-related infrastructure meets the required standards and is ready well before the festival.

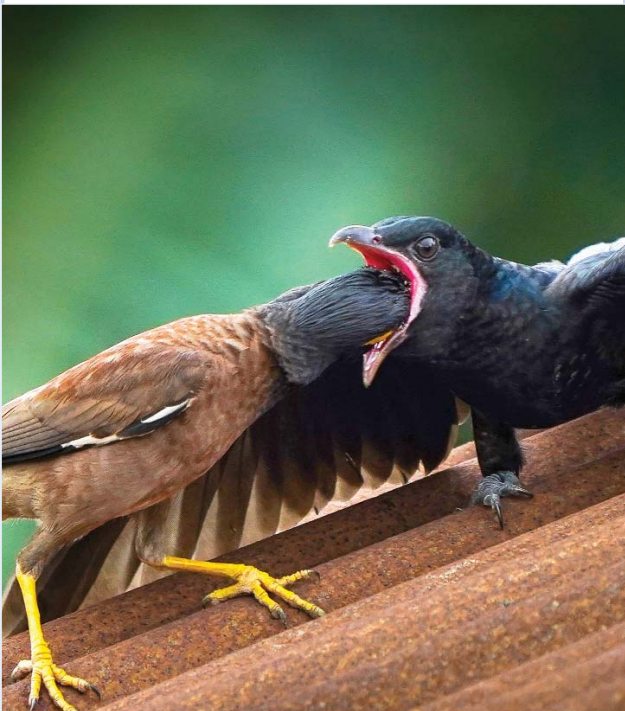
Eight trucks seized in Indore

Indore: The Mineral Department seized eight trucks allegedly transporting illegally mined and transported stone aggregate and murrum during enforcement drives in rural Indore on Wednesday and Thursday.

Four trucks were seized by the department team and kept at Shipra and Gandhi Nagar police stations. Another four trucks loaded with stone aggregate and murrum were intercepted and placed at Simrol and Badgonda police stations.

The action was carried out under the direction of the district administration as part of the ongoing drive against illegal mineral extraction, transportation and storage.

IN FOCUS



A common myna feeds a fledgling Asian koel perched on a rooftop in Morigaon district of Assam on Friday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ayodhya

Dr Anil Mishra, a former member of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, spoke to the media for the first time on Friday since the recent controversy over alleged embezzlement and misuse of offerings at the Ram temple. On the first anniversary of the daily Ramkot Parikrama, Mishra said that the ritual is closely connected to the faith of Ram devotees and Ayodhya's old religious traditions. "Ramkot Parikrama is linked to the faith of Ram devotees and religious tradition," Mishra said. He explained that doing the Ramkot parikrama covers the sacred routes of Lord Ram, Hanuman Garhi, and other major temples in Ayodhya. "This is not just an organised event," he said. "It is based on

the deep devotion of Ram bhaktas and Ayodhya's long religious history." Thousands of devotees and hundreds of saints joined the morning procession, which started at the Jagadguru Ramanandacharya entrance gate and followed a 3.5-kilometre route through the main Ramkot area. As they passed important sites like Kanak Bhawan, Dashrath Mahal, and other temples, participants chanted "Jai Shri Ram" and sang devotional hymns. The



route goes through the historic area linked to Lord Ram's kingdom. The daily Nitya Ramkot Parikrama began a year ago, thanks to the trust and local saints. It turned an occasional tradition into a regular morning ritual that now attracts over a thousand people most days. Mishra, who resigned from the trust during the donation controversy, led the anniversary procession. He appeared in public soon after the Special

Investigation Team (SIT) gave its final report on the alleged diversion of cash and valuables from temple hundi to the trust.

The controversy began in June when claims of regular theft during the counting of offerings came up. Eight people involved in handling the cash were arrested, and nearly 780 lakh was recovered. Mishra and then-general secretary Champat Rai resigned, saying they were taking moral responsibility, while the investigation continued. After finishing the parikrama, Mishra spoke briefly to reporters but did not comment on the investigation or the trust's internal matters.

Instead, Mishra talked about the spiritual and cultural value of the parikrama. Devotees and local saints welcomed his presence at the event. Ramesh Das, the

senior priest of Hanuman Garhi, wished him well and hoped the temple administration would keep improving systems for pilgrims. The Ramkot area, seen as the heart of old Ayodhya, includes the Ram Janmabhoomi temple complex and over a hundred other shrines.

According to tradition, completing the full circuit gives the same merit as visiting many sacred sites at once. Since the Ram temple was consecrated in January 2024, many more devotees have come, and organisers see the regular parikrama as a way to deepen visitors' spiritual experience from all over India. Locals and regular participants said the anniversary was especially meaningful. Many believe that the daily practice over the past year has built a sense of community among saints,

residents, and pilgrims.

The route starts early in the morning and ends near the main temple entrance. It has become a regular part of life, with flower showers and sankirtan on special days. On Friday, Mishra's careful comments showed that religious life in Ayodhya continues, even as questions about temple management are still being looked at. While the SIT's findings and the trust's next steps may affect future management, Mishra chose to focus on the lasting connection between the parikrama and the faith that supports it.

As the procession ended and people left, the mood stayed calm and devotional. For many, the day showed that traditions like the Ramkot Parikrama transcend controversy and are rooted in centuries of respect for Lord Ram.

Ban on construction activities in Delhi from December 10 to January 20 to curb air pollution

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Construction activities will be completely banned in Delhi from December 10 to January 20 as part of the Government's measures to curb air pollution during the winter season, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said on Friday.

In a post on X, Gupta urged citizens to report violations, saying construction sites measuring above 500 square metres would be monitored through the Delhi Government's Dust Portal and AI-enabled cameras. "Construction will be com-



pletely banned from 10 December to 20 January. If you spot any violation, inform MCD, your MLA, or me directly," she said. Gupta said that during the previous winter, construction activities

had continued at some sites despite the implementation of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), with work being carried out behind covers. "Last time, even under GRAP, some construction con-

tinued behind covers," she said. This year, such sites will be monitored in real time through the Dust Portal and AI-enabled cameras, with alerts being sent to the Government's Control and Command Centre, she said. "Notices, warnings and fines will follow," Gupta wrote, urging people to "inform, tag, complain and stop them". The Delhi Government had in July launched the AI-powered Dust Portal 2.0 to strengthen monitoring of construction and demolition sites and improve enforcement of dust pollution control measures.

Haryana Chief Minister Saini issues directions for registration of farmers on AgriStack platform

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Chandigarh

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Friday directed all districts to complete the targeted registration of farmers on the AgriStack platform within the next three days, setting August 24 evening as the deadline.

He directed deputy commissioners to assign specific targets to officials and employees of the revenue and agriculture departments and ensure that the registration drive is completed on a war footing. The AgriStack platform has been developed by the Central Government to enable farmers to access benefits under various central and state government schemes swiftly and effectively.

Farmers registered on the platform will be provided a unique Farmer ID,



while their agricultural land parcels will be linked with digital records, according to an official statement.

The CM issued these directions while reviewing the progress of AgriStack, digital crop survey and auto-mutation

at a meeting held. Saini said the Central Government has introduced AgriStack to ensure that benefits under various schemes reach farmers effectively.

Under the platform, every farmer is being provided a unique Farmer ID, while parcels of agricultural land belonging to the farmer are linked with digital land records. The platform will maintain a digital record of which crop has been sown by a farmer in a particular field. It will also facilitate digital and geographical mapping of villages and agricultural land, he stated. Saini said AgriStack will help deliver services under PM-KISAN, crop insurance, agricultural credit, MSP-based procurement, distribution of fertilisers and seeds, and other Government schemes more effectively to eligible farmers.

CJP team on school inspection forcibly sent back from Rajasthan village; Dipke claims BJP goons behind attack

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jaipur

A Cockroach Janta Party team that had gone to inspect a Government school in a Rajasthan village on Friday was attacked and forcibly pushed back allegedly by locals, resulting in a scuffle with the youth group warning of a bigger protest in the state if the attackers are not arrested within 48 hours and an order restricting outsiders entry into schools is not revoked.

The incident took place in Rampura Kanwarpura village in Jaipur district when the CJP team, as part of its ongoing 'School Thik Karo' campaign to inspect the condition of Government schools and

interact with students and teachers, faced opposition.

The CJP claimed its workers were attacked and pelted with stones by "BJP goons", with CJP convenor Abhijeet Dipke slamming the police for being "mute spectators while goons attacked CJP volunteers". DCP (South) Rajarshi Verma did not respond to calls while Bagru DSP Dharmendra Sharma earlier in the day said he was not aware of any such development. School Education Minister Madan Dilawar alleged that the CJP wants to create disturbance in Rajasthan similar to what it did at Jantar Mantar.

CJP co-convenor Ashutosh Ranka alleged that despite members of his team being

assaulted, vehicles damaged and women supporters roughed up, the police did not intervene.

The state education department had issued a directive on Monday, restricting unauthorised entry, photography and videography in Government schools after CJP announced it would visit schools across Rajasthan. The CJP team had planned to visit two Government schools on Friday. Giving an ultimatum to the Government, Ranka said, "We are giving you 48 hours. All these people should be arrested, and the order restricting outsider entry into schools should be withdrawn. Otherwise, this movement will go beyond education and target



Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) co-convenor Ashutosh Ranka addresses the media during the party's 'School Thik Karo' campaign in Jaipur

Madan Dilawar."

Dipke, in a post on X, asked, "Goons of BJP are after the blood of Ashutosh and other CJP volunteers. How can @PoliceRajasthan allow this kind of attack?" Videos of the

incident showed a large number of people engaging in a heated exchange with the CJP team, pushing and shoving its members as they tried to enter the village. Some clips also showed

smashed windows of cars, believed to belong to the visiting CJP team.

"All levels of disgust were crossed today. For the past several years, the school at Rampura Kanwarpura has been running from a buffalo shed. "But when we reached there for an inspection, we were openly assaulted, pelted with stones. Car windows were smashed, stones were rained down on the team. Clothes were torn. My clothes were also torn," Ranka told reporters. "Our volunteers' hands were broken, vehicles were smashed. Women were also targeted and misbehaved with by men. Their phones were broken," he alleged. "Not even a single police-

man was present there. Instead, BJP workers were present," he claimed.

The school building was closed for students after being declared 'unsafe', with classes being held in a cattle enclosure close to it. The villagers, however, claimed that the Government had already sanctioned funds for the repair work, which could be carried out with local efforts. Ranka said he had visited this school about a year ago and it was in the same condition then. In another post on X, Dipke wrote, "Rajasthan Police seems to be a mute spectator while goons attack CJP volunteers for visiting govt schools. They don't seem to have a problem with schools running in buffalo

stables, but somehow have a problem with CJP volunteers entering those schools. What exactly are they trying to protect?"

Ranka alleged that the CJP team was attacked on the orders of minister Dilawar.

"Madan Dilawar finds it acceptable for children to study in a buffalo shed. But fixing the school? That's not acceptable," he said. "Mr Dilawar? you sent goons today and shamed the entire state of Rajasthan in the eyes of the country. But we are not the kind of people who get intimidated by such thuggery," he added. "Today, the entire country has seen BJP's hooliganism live. This is a black day for democracy in Rajasthan," he said.

FROM PAGE - 1

Rahul's dharna spurs FIR in pellet gun case

Targeting the Home Minister, Rahul asked why Shah is so afraid of justice.

"There are pellets in his body, and he cannot even see, as he has suffered injuries in his eye. This is injustice to this youngster. For almost a month, he has been calling for the registration of an FIR and moving from one police station to another. Turning to the victim's mother, who also sat on the protest, Rahul asked her, "Are you happy now?" The Congress leader, who had earlier alleged that police are "under pressure from the top" for not registering a complaint, claimed that the FIR was lodged only after clearance from top authorities in the Home Ministry.

Visuals showed Rahul walking into the police station with Lochab and others, taking the officials by surprise. As the cops refused to register an FIR, Rahul staged a sit-in outside the police station in protest. Rahul said he would stay put at the police station until the complaint was formally registered.

As the sit-in dragged on for several hours, a waiting Rahul Gandhi, along with the victim, stepped in front of a swarm of cameras and microphones and held up a small plastic box. Opening the box, he spilt the contents onto his palm and showed them to the reporters. "Ye hai pellets, dekh lijiye inko, achhi tarah se dekh lijiye, ye hain pellets (These are pellets; take a look at them - look at them closely - these are pellets)," he said. This was the first time the pellets were displayed publicly.

Where did they (pellets) come from? The Congress leader asked and then answered it himself. Ye inke shareer se aaye (These came from his body)," Gandhi said, urging the student to show the injuries. The Student, who was wearing dark glasses, then rolled up his T-shirt sleeve and showed the injuries. "Ye inke yahan lage hain charre. 200 charre inke shareer ke andar hain aur teen charre inki aankh main hai (These pellets are lodged in his body. There are 200 pellets inside him and three are lodged in his eye)," Rahul said.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Police said that an FIR has been registered under sections 118 (volun-

tarily causing hurt or grievous hurt by dangerous weapons or means) and 25 (act endangering life or personal safety of others) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. The Delhi Police had earlier informed the protesting Congress leader that the Supreme Court has constituted a High-Powered Expert Committee (HPEC) to examine allegations of excessive and disproportionate use of force by the police and paramilitary forces during the student protests, as it refused to file the FIR.

The high drama by Rahul Gandhi led to a political slugfest between the BJP and the Congress here. Addressing a press conference here, senior BJP leader and MP Ravi Shankar Prasad claimed that Gandhi was staging the protest to divert attention as the Congress had realised that its stand on the Vande Mataram issue was wrong. "I have my doubts and allegations that the Congress is trapped over its stand on Vande Mataram and is trying to divert attention," he told reporters here. Prasad added that the matter was also before a high-powered committee constituted by the Supreme Court in connection with the case. "Congress has become a party driven by Rahul Gandhi's appeasement politics," Prasad said. Accusing the ruling party of communalising the situation in the country, evading accountability and raising non-issues, the Congress asserted that the dharna would continue till an FIR is registered by Delhi Police over pellet injuries suffered by a youth, 19-year-old Sahil Lochab, during the CJP-led July 20 protest. "Our demand is simple --- register an FIR and give us the FIR number. LoR Rahul Gandhi is giving voice to this demand," Congress general secretary in-charge of communications Jaiaram Ramesh told reporters at the Parliament Street police station.

Mamata hindered border security measures...

"Today, we inaugurated projects worth Rs 179 crore focused on the SSB's infrastructure and administrative needs. Whether it is the SSB, Assam Rifles or the BSF, forces that guard our borders are always the top priority of the Union Home Ministry," Shah said, reminding how the Government had taken all measures to make

the Siliguri Corridor impregnable with additional deployment of forces and conducting exercises like Teesta Prahar.

Praising the Adhikari Government for its sustained "effort to turn Bengal into a Sonar Bangla" once again, the Home Minister said, "Suvendu ji is doing a great job towards stopping infiltration and establishing rule of law in Bengal." He said, "Today Bengal has come a long way from cadre raj of the Left to goonda raj of the Trinamool Congress to rule of law of BJP."

The Home Minister also praised the Bengal Government for facilitating the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act. "Mamata ji blocked its passage in Bengal, but now the people of Bengal are realising the benefits of the Act... which is, however, not meant for the illegal infiltrators --- not mentioned in the CAA --- whom the Government is determined to find and deport," Shah said.

He also praised the Adhikari Government for quick implementation of the three criminal laws in the State. "We brought BNS, BNSS and BSA replacing the colonial laws like IPC, CrPC and BSA... but despite these laws being in force in the rest of the country, the Mamata Banerjee Government stonewalled its implementation in Bengal... but today these laws have been officially implemented in the State," he said.

Earlier, the Chief Minister too vouched for his intention to implement all the pro-people policies of the Centre. "When I became the Chief Minister, I cleared three files immediately: the one on clearance of land for border security, two files on conducting the census, which is in process and three on the implementation of the new laws BNS, BNSS and BSA," he said.

2 ships hijacked off Yemen, Somalia...

According to the official, eight pirates armed with AK-47-type weapons approached the vessel in two skiffs and boarded it.

The crew initially moved to the vessel's designated citadel, a secure area used during pirate attacks. However, the pirates managed to

enter the citadel and later took the crew to the bridge. The vessel remains under the control of the pirates. No injuries among the crew have been reported so far.

The two incidents underline the continuing risks faced by commercial shipping and seafarers operating in waters around the Gulf of Aden and the Horn of Africa, where pirate attacks have periodically threatened international maritime traffic.

Back-channel talks underway on PM...

The uncertainty surrounding the visit was also reflected in an official communication from Rashtrapati Bhavan earlier on Friday. The communication, which had referred to the cancellation of Saturday's Change of Guard ceremony to facilitate a full rehearsal for Rahman's ceremonial welcome, was subsequently withdrawn.

According to people familiar with the matter, discussions between the two governments remain underway as officials work towards resolving the outstanding issues and determining a fresh schedule for the visit.

Amid the continuing uncertainty, Trivedi met Bangladesh Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury. Their discussions covered bilateral development projects and other matters of mutual interest.

The proposed visit comes against the backdrop of renewed strains in India-Bangladesh relations. New Delhi said earlier this week that it wants to develop "positive and constructive" relations with Dhaka, guided by mutual interests and reciprocity. Tensions increased after former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressed a virtual media interaction from New Delhi on August 5. Dhaka subsequently renewed its demand for her extradition and sought to connect the issue with Rahman's prospective visit to India.

India has maintained that it had no role in organising Hasina's media interaction and did not endorse the remarks made during the event. The Bangladesh Government, however, reacted strongly, saying it was angered that the interaction had been allowed to take place

despite Dhaka having communicated its concerns to New Delhi about the possible impact on bilateral relations.

Hasina, 78, has been living in India since August 2024, when she left Bangladesh amid large-scale student-led protests that brought an end to her long tenure in power. During Friday's briefing, Jaiswal was also asked about the 1996 Ganga Water Treaty between India and Bangladesh.

He noted that the agreement was signed for a 30-year period and said river-related matters between the two countries are addressed through the Joint Rivers Commission.

Jaiswal added that meetings of the Joint Committee established under the Ganga Water Treaty continue to take place at the technical level. The ongoing diplomatic engagement indicates that both New Delhi and Dhaka are continuing discussions despite recent disagreements, with the timing of Rahman's India visit still to be settled.

Political stability makes India a bright spot...

"Earlier, the approach to regulations was 'prohibited unless permitted' - meaning you could not do something unless the government permitted you. We are changing this approach to 'permitted unless prohibited'. That means, for anything that is not explicitly prohibited by law, there should be no need to seek permission at every step."

He said the shift was intended to recast the relationship between the state, citizens and businesses around trust rather than suspicion.

"The relationship between the Government and citizens should be based not on suspicion, but on trust," PM Modi added.

The Prime Minister also highlighted legislative work undertaken during the Monsoon Session of Parliament. In the Monsoon Session of Parliament, we have passed the Bankers' Books Evidence Bill, even as the Opposition has continued to create disruptions in Parliament. We did not allow the work of serving the country to stop," he said. "We are not just changing regulations; we are changing the entire policy of regulations," PM Modi said.

Jharkhand exam protest turns violent in Ranchi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ranchi

A scuffle broke out on Friday between police and students protesting against alleged Jharkhand recruitment exam irregularities in Ranchi, with the agitators attempting to burn effigies of Chief Minister Hemant Soren and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, officials said. Student leaders under the banner of the 'JPSC-JSSC Reforms Manch' have accused the Jharkhand Government of "deceiving" and "betraying" job aspirants, after the high court stayed some notifications cancelling appointments through the 11th and 13th JPSC exams besides the JSSC-CGL.

"They gathered in large number at the prominent Albert Chowk to burn effigies of CM Soren and Rahul Gandhi. When the police tried to control them, a scuffle broke out... JMM workers were also present at the spot," an official said. Officer-in-charge of Lalpur Police Station, Rupesh Kumar Singh, said the scuffle broke out after protesting students changed the designated route and brought traffic to a halt. "The students changed the route defined for the march and effigy burning... They went to the JPSC office and brought traffic to a halt there. The agitators did not listen to our repeated pleas to adhere to the designated route,"



Security personnel try to control the situation after a clash between members of the JPSC-JSSC Reforms Manch and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) workers during an effigy-burning protest against Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren at Albert Ekka Chowk in Ranchi, Jharkhand on Friday

Singh said. The student leaders alleged that the police and workers of the ruling Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) tried to prevent them from holding a peaceful march.

"They cannot stop us from holding peaceful and democratic protests," JPSC-JSSC Reforms Manch leader Ravindra Paswan said. Piyush Kumar Singh,

another student leader, claimed that one of the core committee members of the Manch, Kunal, was detained by the police, but he fainted and was subsequently taken to Sadar Hospital. The agitators also alleged that even female protesters were thrashed during the scuffle by JMM workers. Similar incidents were reported from Hazaribag and Giridih, where JMM workers clashed with students trying to burn effigies of Soren. Meanwhile, JLMK leader Devendra Nath Mahto said it would launch a 'Recruitment System Reforms Yatra' from August 24, alleging that the Jharkhand Government was not strongly defending cases related to the cancellation of

several recruitment examinations in the high court. He warned that if the Government failed to effectively present its case before the Jharkhand High Court on September 15, when matters are scheduled for hearing, they would plan to gherao the chief minister's residence. The high court on Friday stayed notifications cancelling the appointments of Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs) and those recruited through the JSSC-CGL examination. On Thursday, the court had stayed notifications cancelling the 11th and 13th Jharkhand Public Service Commission (JPSC) examinations, and also stayed the order cancelling the appointments of food safety officers.

Rahul Gandhi doing his job as LoP by making Govt accountable: Omar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Srinagar

Defending Rahul Gandhi's aggressive posture against the ruling dispensation, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday asserted that the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha is simply fulfilling his constitutional duty by holding the Government accountable.

Talking to reporters after inaugurating a 'waste to wonder' themed garden near Polo View, Abdullah said, "If the Leader of the Opposition does not oppose, what good is he?"

When asked questions about Gandhi's repeated protests, he took a dig at the media for applying double standards when evaluating opposition leaders and pointed out that while journalists appear to enjoy the "needless" questioning raised by the Leader of Opposition in Jammu and Kashmir Sunil Sharma, they routinely question Gandhi's motives for mounting similar challenges against the Central Government.

"I haven't heard you ask the Leader of the Opposition in J-K why he keeps asking the same questions repeatedly.



When Mr Sharma does it, you enjoy it; but when Rahul Gandhi does it, you ask, 'Why is Rahul Gandhi doing this?' "You cannot weigh opposition leaders by different standards like this. Rahul Gandhi is simply doing what the country expects of him," Abdullah said. He stressed that the primary function of an opposition leader is to demand answers from those in power and expressed hope that Gandhi would continue to press the administration on key national issues. "The job of the Leader of the Opposition is to hold the Government accountable. Rahul Gandhi is doing just that, and I hope he continues to do so, because that is precisely the role of the opposition," he added. Referring to alleged

remarks by Sharma concerning the spread of Islam in the region, the chief minister remarked that his Government's administration must be performing exceptionally well if the state opposition leader could find no governance issues to criticise and had instead resorted to giving discourses on religious history. "I will only say this: our Government's performance must be remarkably good, given that the Leader of the Opposition found nothing to criticise about this administration. Now, he is shedding light on how Islam originated in Jammu and Kashmir. I consider this our success," Abdullah said. However, he asserted that Sharma should refrain from commenting on religious affairs.

BRICS tourism ministers adopt Jaipur Declaration to deepen cooperation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jaipur

The BRICS Tourism Ministers' meeting, under India's chairship, concluded in Jaipur on Friday with the adoption of the BRICS Tourism Ministers' Communique 2026, also known as the Jaipur Declaration, aimed at strengthening tourism cooperation among member countries.

The meeting, chaired by Union Culture and Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, marked the culmination of the BRICS Tourism Track under India's 2026 chairship, which was conducted under the theme "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability." Tourism ministers and heads of delegation from nine BRICS member states participated in the meeting. Ministerial participation included Brazil's Tourism Minister Gustavo Costa Feliciando, Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi Amir, South Africa's Tourism Minister Patricia De Lille and UAE's Minister of Economy and Tourism Abdulla Bin Touq Al Marri. Heads of delegation from



China, Ethiopia, Indonesia and Russia also attended the meeting. The Indian delegation included Tourism Secretary Bhuvnesh Kumar and Joint Secretary Harikishore S, among other officials. The Jaipur Declaration builds on the work undertaken by the BRICS Tourism Working Group during India's chairship and focuses on four key priorities: artificial intelligence and tourism, sustainability and responsible tourism, tourism skilling and capacity building, and tourism exchanges and seamless travel facilitation. The communique, adopted by consensus, recognises the potential of responsible, safe and human-centred artificial intelligence and digital technologies to transform

tourism. It calls for cooperation among BRICS countries in areas such as tourism planning, destination management, visitor services, multilingual communication and travel facilitation. The declaration also emphasises sustainable and community-centred tourism, protection of natural and cultural heritage, tourism investment and infrastructure development, and promotion of diverse tourism products. It further calls for continuous skilling and upskilling of tourism professionals, stronger industry-academia partnerships, exchange of tourism data and statistics, sharing of best practices and enhanced people-to-people connectivity among BRICS countries.

Jitendra Singh calls for future-ready framework to address global challenges



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chennai

Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Friday called for a future-ready framework to address global challenges and support the developmental aspirations of the Global South. Inaugurating the 14th BRICS Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) Ministerial Meeting here, the Minister of State for Science and Technology, said India as the Chair for 2026 BRICS Presidency under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has adopted the overarching theme: "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability." He stressed that science and technology must serve as vehicles for driving inclusive economic growth, enhancing climate resilience, and establishing equitable international partnerships. Highlighting the rapid global shift toward emerging domains - including Artificial Intelligence (AI), quantum computing, biotechnology, and advanced materials — Singh stressed that international collaboration is essential to ensure scientific breakthroughs remain accessible, affordable, trusted, and sustainable. He invited member nations to pursue actionable pathways in frontier research,

infrastructure sharing, startup partnerships, and talent mobility to build a robust, responsive innovation ecosystem for the future. The Minister said cooperation among BRICS partners can help create a future-ready BRICS STI architecture that is responsive to global challenges and supportive of the aspirations of the Global South. Later, speaking to reporters he said, "we have had a very fruitful, very constructive and very productive BRICS Science, Technology and Innovation meeting, represented by the Science Ministers of the various member countries of BRICS." "In the true spirit of cooperation, collaboration and collective effort, we aim to create innovation for the welfare of the rest of the world as well, and more so for the betterment of the citizens of the BRICS countries. We have followed the theme of building an innovation system that is resilient, sustainable and guided by the spirit of what Prime Minister Modi keeps reiterating, 'Vishwa Bandhu Bharat'," he said. Jitendra Singh expressed confidence that the deliberations in Chennai would further strengthen the spirit of BRICS partnership and contribute meaningfully to a more innovative, resilient and sustainable world.

1,499 auto, taxi drivers get notices over lack of working knowledge of Marathi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

On the second day of the state-wide drive, the Regional Transport Offices (RTOs) issued notices to 1,499 non-Marathi-speaking auto-rickshaw and taxi drivers across Maharashtra on Friday for not having enough working knowledge of Marathi language. A senior official said 5,299 auto-rickshaw and taxi drivers were subjected to the language test across Maharashtra, excluding the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), of whom 777 were found to be

lacking the working knowledge of Marathi. "Notices were issued to all such drivers," he said. In the MMR, 3,482 drivers were assessed, of whom 722 failed to clear the test, and notices were issued to 622 of them, the official said. The exercise, which began on Thursday, is being carried out as part of the Transport Department's drive to ensure that auto-rickshaw and taxi drivers possess working knowledge of Marathi. On the first day of the month-long drive, 8,217 drivers were put to test and 1,268 commercial passenger



vehicle drivers, including auto-rickshaw and taxi drivers, were issued notices for failing the language proficiency test. Of these, 604

notices were issued in the MMR. According to the RTO officials, checks are being carried out by flying squads

as well as during the renewal of vehicle fitness certificates at RTO offices. During the exercise, the drivers are being put through a 16-question test based on everyday situations, including communicating with passengers about destinations, directions, fares, meters, routes and stands. The drive will continue till September 30. The move follows the state Government's decision to make working knowledge of Marathi mandatory for taxi and auto-rickshaw drivers. The state has also amended the

Maharashtra Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, to give effect to the requirement. The Government had earlier launched Marathi-language training for non-Marathi-speaking drivers, with 1.65 lakh drivers completing the course and receiving certificates during a 105-day campaign. However, some drivers' union leaders and retired RTO officials have questioned the lack of a clear definition and standardised benchmark for "working knowledge" of Marathi, saying this could lead to arbitrary assessments.

India rejects remarks by USCIRF officials

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

India on Friday trashed remarks by senior officials of US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) calling for sanctions against the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and asked Washington not to extend diplomatic courtesies to its leaders. External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, rejecting the remarks described the USCIRF as a "biased" organisation. "We are all aware that the organisation that you are referring to has been making disparaging and inflammatory remarks about India," he said at his bi-weekly media briefing. "It is a biased organisation. I would say that we should keep away from such organisations as they have their own agenda and lack any credibility," he said. Jaiswal was responding to a question on the remarks by the USCIRF officials. USCIRF Commissioner Gene Mills said RSS leaders,



even when affiliated with the Indian Government, should not be honoured with high-level meetings or diplomatic courtesies. "Instead, the USG (US Government) should focus on imposing sanctions on RSS members found responsible for FoRB (freedom of religious belief) violations," Mills said. USCIRF chair Asif Mahmood described RSS as an umbrella organisation whose sub-groups have perpetrated attacks on religious minorities. USCIRF posted the remarks by Mahmood and Mills on its X account.

In March, the USCIRF annual report criticised India for alleged violations of religious freedom and backed "targeted sanctions" on individuals and entities such as the RSS and Research and Analysis Wing, holding them responsible for the matter. In its recommendation, the USCIRF also called for designating India as a "country of particular concern" or CPC, for engaging in and "tolerating systematic, ongoing, and egregious religious freedom violations, as defined by the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA)".

National symbols should not be politicised, says Himachal CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Shimla

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Friday alleged that the BJP MLAs insulted the National Anthem by raising objections regarding the tradition of singing the National Anthem before the National Song. He emphasised that the National Anthem commands its own respect, and the National Song is also sung in the House with full dignity. The chief minister remarked that both the National Song and the National Anthem have always been accorded respect, from schools to public events. The chief minister said that the manner in which the controversy over the National Song has been "manufactured" has caused resentment among the public. He urged the BJP not to "stoop to such a low level of politics" that the issue of respecting national symbols becomes a subject of political confrontation.

■ Nation Focus ■



Odisha floods ease as rivers recede; heavy rain alert issued

The flood situation in Odisha showed signs of improvement on Friday as water levels in major rivers receded below their danger marks amid no significant rainfall, allowing the state Government to speed up restoration work. However, the respite may be short-lived. The India Meteorological Department has forecast a wet spell from Friday to August 27, including heavy rain in coastal and northern Odisha, already hit by a second round of floods this year. The state Government, in a statement, said it faced a challenging task during its rescue and relief operations in flood-hit districts of Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar, where more than 13.44 lakh people were affected. (PTI)



Govt announces National Teachers' Awards 2026

The Government on Friday announced the National Teachers' Awards 2026 for 48 teachers in recognition of their contribution to school education and literacy. The awardees, listed by the Department of School Education and Literacy, include teachers from states and Union Territories as well as institutions such as the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti, Sainik Schools, Adarsha Tribal School, and PM SHRI schools, among others. Among those selected are J Prakash Rao from Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Rajesh Kouluri from Andhra Pradesh, Yaku Tame from Arunachal Pradesh, Rajesh Bordoloi from Assam, Suman Goel from Delhi and Zafar Alam from Eklavya Model Residential Schools under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. (PTI)

■ States Focus ■



ARSON, PETROL BOMB ATTACKS REPORTED ACROSS MEGHALAYA

Incidents of arson and petrol bomb attacks on Government properties were reported across Meghalaya on Friday, as tensions prevailed following violence during the Khasi Students' Union black-flag bike rally two days ago. An office that housed the National People's Party previously at Lachumiere was targeted with a petrol bomb around 5 am, but it did not explode, police said.

A police and forensic team reached the spot, collected evidence and registered a case, they said.

In West Khasi Hills, two Government vehicles were gutted after miscreants set them ablaze at Nongstoin on Thursday night.

(PTI)



MAHARASHTRA, GERMANY'S HESSE SIGN MOU TO BOOST INVESTMENT

The Maharashtra Government and Germany's Hesse state on Friday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen cooperation in investment, innovation, employment and skill development.

The MoU was signed by Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Hessen President Boris Rhein at Sahyadri Guest House here.

Fadnavis described the partnership as cooperation between two economically strong regions and said Hesse could serve as Maharashtra's gateway to Germany and Europe, while Maharashtra could become Hesse's gateway to India and the Indo-Pacific region.

"The Maharashtra-Hesse partnership will boost investment, innovation, employment and skill development and create new opportunities for citizens," Fadnavis said.

(PTI)

Himanta discusses Assam issues with Union Ministers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday called on Union Ministers Nirmala Sitharaman and Prahlad Joshi in the national capital and discussed issues concerning key sectors of the State. He updated Sitharaman on the State Government's response to the flood situation and the roadmap to rehabilitate the affected people.



Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma meeting Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Delhi on Friday

"It is always a pleasure to meet Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Ji, who has consistently been a strong champion of Assam's interests and aspirations," said Sarma said in social media. "As always, she heard our concerns with great attention and sensitivity. I am deeply grateful for her posi-

tive response and assurance that the Government of India will stand firmly with Assam as we work to help every flood-affected family rebuild their lives," Sarma added.

During the meeting at

Kartavya Bhawan, the Chief Minister apprised the Union Finance Minister of the Assam flood response, with particular focus on the ongoing assessment of damage caused by the floods and the

slew of measures on the anvil for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of affected areas. He also outlined the state Government's roadmap for restoring livelihoods and extending assistance to

flood-affected families as part of the next phase of the response. Sitharaman assured the Chief Minister that the Government of India would continue to stand firmly with Assam as the state works towards helping flood-affected families rebuild their lives.

The Chief Minister's meeting with the Union Finance Minister comes as Assam continues to assess the impact of the floods and work on rehabilitation, reconstruction and restoration of livelihoods in the worst-hit Sivasagar, Charaideo and Jorhat districts.

Sarma also had a "very productive meeting" with Joshi, the Union Minister for Education, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, and New and Renewable Energy. "Our discussions

covered key priorities for Assam across education, food and civil supplies, and renewable energy. Grateful to Joshi Ji for his positive approach and continued support for Assam," Sarma said in another social media post.

The Union Minister further said that the two leaders discussed ensuring seamless fund flow under the SNA-SPARSH mechanism, in line with the scheme's framework, to facilitate timely salary disbursement and strengthen the delivery of quality and equitable school education across Assam.

The meeting also covered key issues relating to food and civil supplies and renewable energy, reflecting the continued focus on strengthening Centre-State cooperation for Assam's development.

MEA denies political clearance for Telangana CM Reddy's US visit

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Friday said it had denied political clearance for Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's proposed visit to the United States, stating that the programme did not conform to established norms.

The clarification came hours after the Telangana Chief Minister's Office announced that Reddy had been forced to cancel his planned US visit after the Centre declined permission for the trip.

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said visits by chief ministers and other dignitaries are assessed by the ministry before political clearance is granted. He said the proposed programme must be appropriate to the office held and the purpose of the visit.

"In this particular case, that was not so in respect of the US," Jaiswal said at the MEA's media briefing. "Therefore, clearance has not been given. Incidentally, his visit to the UK has been cleared."

Reddy is currently in London and had planned to travel to the US after



completing his UK engagements. Following the denial of clearance for the American leg of his tour, he is scheduled to return to Hyderabad on August 30, according to his office.

The Telangana Government said it had sought the Centre's permission for both the UK and US visits in accor-

dance with Government policy and protocol. While the UK visit was approved, clearance for the US trip was not granted.

According to the Chief Minister's Office, Reddy had intended to use the US visit to explore opportunities for bringing leading American educa-

tional institutions to Telangana.

Reddy said the proposed initiative was aimed at expanding educational, skills and training opportunities for young people in the state, including through partnerships with Ivy League and other globally recognised institutions.

The chief minister stressed that efforts to strengthen education and youth opportunities should be viewed beyond electoral politics.

The denial of political clearance is not without precedent. The MEA has previously declined permission for foreign visits by chief ministers, including Arvind Kejriwal during his tenure as Delhi chief minister and Mamata Banerjee while serving as West Bengal chief minister.

The latest episode comes against the backdrop of the Centre's established practice of assessing foreign travel by state chief ministers and other public dignitaries on the basis of the nature and purpose of the proposed engagements.

For Reddy, the decision means that his planned US engagements will not go ahead as scheduled, while his UK visit remains unaffected.

JU files police complaints over campus violence, forms probe panel



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kolkata

Jadavpur University (JU) authorities on Friday lodged police complaints over the violence that broke out on its campus here, officials said.

One of the complaints was lodged over a crowd's entry to the campus at midnight, the attempt to damage the main gate, setting on fire festoons and locking some students inside one of the buildings, they said.

"The complaint sought an investigation, and asked the police to prevent recurrence of such incidents on the campus," an official of the state-run varsity said.

The university also formed a high-level committee comprising three members to look into the circumstances and factors that led to the August 19 midnight incident, when a group entered the campus, and subsequent developments, including damage to two heritage emblems, Vice-Chancellor Chiranjib Bhattacharya told reporters.

The committee will pass on its recommendations to the police.

"Another complaint was lodged in connection with scaling the varsity's gate number 4, damaging the historic emblem of the varsity crafted by legendary painter Nandalal Bose, and the pelting of stones and water bottles," he said.

A clash broke out between members of ABVP and Left-leaning student groups at the Jadavpur University early Thursday, with both sides accusing each other of bringing outsiders into the campus.

Govt tightens SIM card limits; telcos to deny new connections beyond 9 from August 24

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
■ New Delhi

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has told telecom companies to stop giving new mobile connections to anyone who has already reached the allowed limit. This rule will start on August 24, 2026.

The DoT issued a circular on August 17 instructing operators to implement technical and organisational measures to detect customers who seek to open more connections than the prescribed number. These applicants should be informed that they have reached the maximum permitted number and therefore cannot be issued a new mobile connection.

Since August 9, 2012, the rules have been that a person may have a maximum of nine mobile connections in their name throughout all telecom operators and licensed service areas in the country.

In Jammu and Kashmir, Assam and the North-Eastern states, a ceiling of six applies. This limit is cumulative and not based on individual operators. Having nine connec-



tions with various companies amounts to the full allowance. To identify them, the operators will use the DoT's Digital Intelligence Platform (DIP). This central system collects the subscriber data uploaded by the telecom companies.

From 23rd August onwards, the platform will provide representative photographic images of subscribers who have already reached the relevant limit.

Operators will have to download these images daily and use them alongside other records when screening new applications. At first, the checks may be carried out on a post-facto basis. Any connection activated beyond the

limit, even for just one day, must be suspended immediately until the problem is resolved.

Telecom providers are to incorporate real-time verification into their enrolment and activation procedures by 30 November 2026. When applying for a new SIM card, customers must still declare on the Customer Application Form all mobile connections currently in their name, including those with other operators or in other service areas. Responsibility for dealing with any implementation-related problems remains with the Licensed Service Areas.

The Government has made it clear that the aim is to

make sure that each subscriber uses their mobile connection only within the specified limit. Greater enforcement is anticipated to prevent the misuse of multiple numbers for cyber fraud, financial scams, and other illegal activities. People who currently have nine (or six in areas where restrictions apply) SIMs will no longer be able to get another one from 24 August onwards. Individuals who are unsure about the number of SIMs registered in their name can check this through the *Sanchar Saathi* portal or app.

The directive reinforces an existing regulation rather than establishing a new numerical limit; the DoT intends to eliminate gaps that had previously allowed some users to exceed the limit when using different operators by combining data consolidation, photographic verification, and the mandatory denial of excess connections.

Telecom companies must now implement the required systems without delay to meet the August 24 deadline and achieve full real-time compliance by the end of November 2026.

Congress opposing Vande Mataram unconstitutional, reprehensible: Rajnath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday criticised the Congress for its opposition to singing Vande Mataram in its entirety, terming it "unconstitutional" and "reprehensible".

The Congress on Wednesday decided to abide by the 1937 resolution of the Congress Working Committee (CWC), the party's highest decision-making body, on Vande Mataram, saying that only two stanzas of the national song would be sung at all party events henceforth.

In a post on social media, Rajnath Singh said the Congress' "formal refusal to honour" Vande Mataram is a "very serious matter" from a constitutional perspective. "The Congress' formal refusal not only to honour Vande Mataram but to outright oppose it is extremely regrettable and, from a constitutional perspective, a very serious matter. According to the Constitution of India, Parliament is the supreme institution of the country, and any law passed by



Parliament is binding on every individual," he said.

He termed the party's decision a "serious warning sign" for the future of the country and said it could create a "serious crisis" politically. "I believe that this decision of the Congress is entirely unconstitutional and reprehensible, and from a political perspective, it is one that will create a serious crisis in the future. By opposing Vande Mataram, the Congress has revealed its foolish and dangerous intentions to the country," he added.

He said the "refusal to abide by the law" raises questions over a person's loyalty to the Constitution. "If someone refuses to honour the national song, a question mark is placed on their patriotism as well,"

he said. Rajnath Singh also hit out at the Congress for referring to its 1937 resolution on Vande Mataram, alleging that the resolution was passed by the party "by bowing down to the radical demands of the Muslim League".

"The resolution of 1937 that the Congress refers to was one that the Congress passed by bowing down to the radical demands of the Muslim League, and its consequence was witnessed by the country in the future in the form of partition," he added.

"Compromising with radical elements has always proven fatal for the country," Rajnath Singh said, alleging that the Congress is once again "surrendering to radical elements".

Govt will fully back young space entrepreneurs: PM at meet with 20 startups

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday assured full support of the Government to young space entrepreneurs and urged them to explore how space technology can be used in agriculture, livestock management, dairy, environment and other areas that affect people's everyday lives.

Interacting with CEOs and founders of 20 space startups here, Modi also hailed them for showing remarkable courage by entering a new and demanding domain of space startups as they have taken risks, trusted the reform process and remained consistent in their efforts.

He assured them of the Government's full support and called for greater collab-

oration between space companies and organisations in other sectors to expand the use of their technologies.

"I assured the space startups that Government of India will continue to stand with them as they build India's capabilities for the future. India can offer the world a strong, innovative and commercially viable model in the space sector," he said.

Modi also urged the startups to explore how space technology could contribute to "agriculture, livestock management, dairy, environment and many other areas that touch everyday lives".

The prime minister suggested, "Companies working on space debris could work with environmental organisations to scale up their tech-

nologies. Space technology companies working with the agriculture sector could collaborate with agricultural universities and departments to help farmers make better informed decisions and maximise their output."

The prime minister said the startups made insightful presentations on their work and appreciated the Government's space reforms and the opportunities they had created for the industry to grow. "It was wonderful to meet the Yuva Urja of India's space sector... young entrepreneurs and innovators who have shown remarkable courage by entering a new and demanding domain. They have taken risks, trusted the reform process and remained consistent in their efforts. Due to this, India has



Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with young entrepreneurs and innovators from India's space sector

PTI

achieved a lot in the space sector in the last few years," he said.

He said India's private space ecosystem could become a major force for the country and the world and called for an ecosystem

in which the world looks to India when thinking about the space sector.

India's space sector can act as a magnet to attract global talent, companies and investment to the country, Modi said, urging industry

players to rapidly strengthen India's position globally.

The prime minister also encouraged space startups to engage with Atal Tinkering Labs, saying they could spark curiosity among schoolchildren and inspire the next generation to participate in the space sector.

He recalled that opening the space sector to private participation had generated significant enthusiasm and created new opportunities for industry.

The prime minister said many countries either could not invest in the space sector or did not wish to do so, presenting India with a major opportunity to rapidly strengthen its position in the global space industry.

He also encouraged space companies to explore new

applications of their technologies and focus on how these could make people's lives easier, while calling for greater collaboration between space-sector firms and companies working in other areas.

The CEOs of leading companies in the space sector working in diverse fields ranging from building rockets and reusable semi-cryogenic launch vehicles, avionics, satellites, advanced propulsion system, space and defence intelligence, removing space debris, AI-powered hyperlocal weather and climate intelligence, among others, participated in the interaction.

The prime minister said the confidence shown by the private space sector had strengthened the vision

behind opening the industry to private participation.

The CEOs highlighted the rapid progress being made by India's private space industry and shared their vision for its future.

They said their companies had invested significant time and effort in building capabilities and developing the required technologies indigenously in the country, while expressing gratitude for the support received from the Prime Minister.

They also highlighted the strong support from the Government and collaboration within the industry, saying their teams were highly motivated and working with determination to achieve ambitious goals in the space sector.



PM chairs 3rd high-level meet with secretaries, calls for long-term vision

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday late evening chaired the third high-level meeting with Secretaries to the Government of India during which he discussed the future action agenda of Ministries and Departments dealing with Infrastructure and Connectivity, Security and External Affairs, and Governance.

Noting that deliberations had already been held with two groups of Secretaries, sources said Prime Minister conveyed that Secretaries, in addition to thinking about immediate issues and statistics, should also think with a long-term perspective on how the country's future should be shaped.

Prime Minister called for greater engagement between Government departments, universities and young people to bring fresh perspectives in policymaking. He said wider engagement with universities and young people can bring new and unconventional ideas.



The Secretaries shared their experiences on sectoral priorities, emerging challenges and implementation issues. The meeting was attended by the Cabinet Secretary, Secretaries of key Ministries and Departments, and senior officials from the Prime Minister's Office at the residence of PM Modi.

Discussing the challenge of overcoming silos, Modi stressed that silos are not merely an organisational problem but also a problem

of mindset. He said silos can be both horizontal and vertical. He stressed that officials must take ownership of their responsibilities and work with a spirit of belongingness.

Emphasising the importance of collective effort, Prime Minister cited the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic and the West Asia crisis, when officials across departments worked together effectively. He said that such coordination mechanisms should become a

natural part of the Government's work culture.

Prime Minister called for effective use of Artificial Intelligence while ensuring human intervention and judgement. He called for exploring innovative ways of combining the capabilities of AI with human expertise.

Modi emphasised that data is a national asset and a resource for the future. He noted that the Government invests resources in collecting, storing and managing data, but its full potential is not always realised because of departmental silos and fragmented systems.

He pointed to differences in the manner in which data is collected and managed for various purposes, and called for finding solutions that enable greater interoperability and effective use of data.

Sources said PM emphasised the need for better connectivity between manufacturing units and export-oriented units, so that India's manufacturing and export capabilities can fully benefit from its maritime infrastructure.

VP inaugurates MALHAR 2026 classical music festival in Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Vice President CP Radhakrishnan on Friday inaugurated 'MALHAR 2026', a youth-centric, monsoon-themed celebration of Indian classical music by Antar Hriday Connect, in the national Capital.

Addressing the gathering, the Vice President appreciated Antar Hriday Connect for creating opportunities for young people to experience and engage with India's rich classical music heritage, particularly through free classical music concerts.

Radhakrishnan said that across Bharat, every region has its own musical traditions, sounds and styles, yet music remains one of the strongest threads connecting the country. He described India's cultural diversity as "many musical traditions, one shared spirit; many voices, one Bharat."

He noted that the Malhar family of ragas is traditionally associated with the monsoon and described 'MALHAR' as a symbol of renewal, with music having the power to refresh the



human spirit, awaken imagination and inspire hope.

The Vice President emphasised that India's classical music tradition has remained a living tradition because it has continuously evolved. He urged the youth to become custodians and ambassadors of India's civilisational heritage and encouraged them to take the country's classical music and cultural traditions to communities across the world.

He also highlighted music as one of India's greatest forms of soft power, capable of transcending language and borders and fostering friendship, understanding and goodwill.

The Vice President congratulated all those associated with MALHAR and expressed hope that the celebration would become a recurring musical journey, returning every monsoon with greater energy, wider participation and an ever-growing love for Indian classical music.

Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha and Chief Patron, Antar Hriday Harsh Vardhan Shringla; President, Corporate Affairs, ITC Anil Rajput; Chairman, Galaxy and Sawasdee Group Pradeep Kumar; and Antar Hriday Youth Cultural Ambassador for India Saurav Sharma and other dignitaries were present during the occasion.

Pregnant woman carried 8 km on stretcher due to no road in MP; baby dies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

A pregnant woman in Chhindwara district's Junnardeo block had to be carried nearly 8 km on a makeshift stretcher after an ambulance reportedly could not reach her hamlet due to the absence of a motorable road.

The unborn baby later died, while the woman remains in serious condition. The incident has raised fresh questions over basic road connectivity and emergency healthcare access in remote areas.

The incident was reported from Chitipatha Jamundong hamlet, where Sonu Malgam's wife Kustariya developed labour pains on Thursday morning.

According to local residents, the lack of a pucca road prevented a 108 ambulance from reaching the hamlet. The sarpanch, family members and villagers subsequently made a makeshift stretcher using wooden poles and cloth.

They carried Kustariya on foot through difficult terrain for around 8 km and took her to Gop village. From there, she was transported by a 108 ambulance to the Damua health centre.

Doctors at the health centre, after assessing her serious condition, referred her to the district hospital. According to the family, Kustariya had to be carried over a considerable distance through difficult terrain before she could reach medical assistance.

Doctors at the hospital later confirmed the death of the unborn baby. The woman has been admitted to the ICU and is undergoing treatment.

The incident has also brought attention to the long-standing demand for better connectivity in the hamlet.

Residents said around 125 families live in Chitipatha Jamundong and claimed that the demand for a pucca road has been raised before the administration and public representatives since 2016.

UPI scam cluster in Vijayawada: How one tap emptied four accounts in minutes

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
■ New Delhi/Vijayawada

Four people went to the Patamata police station in Vijayawada on the same day to report cybercrimes. A different scam, such as fake KYC alerts, suspicious links, or unusual account activity, tricked each person. In every case, their bank accounts were emptied within minutes of them using their phones. Police have registered all four cases on the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal and are working with the Vijayawada City Cyber Crime Wing to track down the stolen money.

One thing that stands out is who the victims are. Rajendra, a retired bank manager from Nagarjuna Nagar, worked in banking for years but was still targeted by scammers. It shows that even people familiar with banking systems can fall victim, not just those less comfortable with technology.

Paklapati Ravivarman from Nidamanuru also installed an APK that appeared to be a legitimate update, allowing attackers to control his phone remotely.

Manoj Kumar from Prasadampadu lost money through unauthorised UPI transactions after his phone was hacked. In Rajendra's case, he clicked a link for SBI reward points, which took him to a fake page that collected his banking details.

The money was taken out right away. These attacks are more sophisticated than regular phishing. In APK-based scams, the fake app requests many permissions, such as access to your SMS, accessibility services, and device administration.

If you grant these, the malware can read your OTPs, display fake login screens to steal your PIN, track your typing, and even approve UPI transfers without you knowing.



You do not have to share any codes; the malicious software collects them on its own. Scammers usually send urgent messages, but real banks or Aadhaar KYC processes in India give customers

several weeks' notice and do not require immediate action. The reward-link scam works differently. Victims are asked to claim points on a page that closely copies a real banking website.

In real bank or Aadhaar KYC processes in India, customers get several weeks' notice and do not need to act immediately. The reward-link scam works differently. Victims are asked to claim points on a page that closely resembles real banking websites.

These incidents in Vijayawada are part of a larger trend. Since early 2025, the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal has received over 12 lakh complaints about APK scams. Cyber fraud has gone up by several hundred per cent in recent years.

Organised groups send the same malware through WhatsApp to thousands of people, using the same tricks each time.

The stolen money is moved through several accounts, then turned into cryptocurrency or withdrawn as cash. This makes it hard to recover unless the crime is reported within a few hours. The city cyber wing is now tracking the

flow of money by checking bank accounts, UPI handles, and digital footprints linked to the stolen funds.

Acting quickly by calling the 1930 helpline or visiting cybercrime.gov.in can stop the money before it is fully withdrawn. Reporting right away is crucial. Taking preventive steps is still the best way to stay safe.

Do not install apps received through WhatsApp, SMS, or Telegram. Official banking apps are only available on authorised app stores.

It is best to turn off the "Install from Unknown Sources" option in your phone settings. Treat any request with a same-day deadline as suspicious. If you have installed a suspicious APK, turn off mobile data and Wi-Fi, uninstall the app, change your passwords and UPI PIN on another device and report the incident to the police immediately.

Congress doing communal lynching of Vande Mataram: Mukhtar Naqvi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Former Union Cabinet Minister and senior BJP leader Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on Friday slammed the Congress and the "Vande Mataram Bashing Brigade", saying that these "pseudo secular chieftains" are doing "communal lynching" of "Vande Mataram" "by choice and not by chance" only to appease the "communal Mogambo".

While talking to media Naqvi said that the Congress' stance on "Vande Mataram" is riddled with "self-goals and communal cunningness". Instead of atoning for the "sin" committed in 1937, when the Congress truncated the national song to appease the "Mogambo" of the Muslim League, the Congress is still engaged in the foolishness and absurd bravado of justifying that very act.



Naqvi said that following the restoration of the full spirit of "Vande Mataram" in the Parliament, the Congress had an opportunity to rectify the "criminal misdeed" it had committed against the national song under Muslim League pressure and to stand by Parliament's decision; yet, even today, the Opposition party is appeasing the "spirit of the Mogambo".

Naqvi said that during the Congress party's Kakinada session, the great freedom fighter and prominent Muslim woman Raihana Tybji sang "Vande Mataram" despite opposition from the then-Congress leader Muhammad Ali Jauhar. Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar, who was present, reprimanded the dissenters, stating, "This is not a religious gathering but a social and political event; no one can stop the chanting of the mantra of national consciousness and nationalism here."

However, ignoring that historic event, the Congress is now busy trying to awaken "Jinnah's Jinn."

Naqvi said that the insult to the national song is not a coincidence but a communal ploy, "Vande Mataram" does not endanger anyone's religious faith—rather, it demolishes the design to denigrate the democracy.

SC lets down Indian working class in industry definition case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A nine-member Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court, constituted, inter alia, to adjudicate on the application of the triple-test formula laid down by a seven-judge Bench to define 'industry' in Bangalore Water Supply & Sewerage Board v R Rajappa & Others, has pronounced a 5:4, viper-thin majority judgment.

The judgment has immunised the Industrial Relations Code, 2020 from the application of the expansive definition of 'industry' interpreted in 1978 by the seven-judge Bench led by Justice VR Krishna Iyer in Bangalore Water Supply & Sewerage Board v R Rajappa & Others, which had laid down the famous triple test to determine the term 'industry'.

Justice VR Krishna Iyer had held that if there is any systematic activity, an employ-



er-employee relationship, and production or distribution of goods or services for human wants, the organisation may qualify as an "industry", even if there is no profit motive. Since 1978, this has stood the test of time and has become the law of the land.

The definition has been disputed by the employer class continuously since then. In the context of State of Uttar Pradesh v Jai Bir Singh, the issue was revisited

by a nine-member Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court, which delivered its judgment on August 20, 2026.

The ruling says that all matters presently pending before courts, tribunals, labour authorities or other fora under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, may be adjudicated in accordance with the triple test laid down in the Bangalore Water Supply case. At the same time, the thin-majority judg-

ment has refrained from examining the new definition of 'industry' under the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, in the light of the triple test laid down in the Bangalore Water Supply case. It is nothing but dancing to the tune of the neo-liberal ecosystem that is mercilessly depriving workers of their hard-earned rights.

Accordingly, the Supreme Court concluded in its judgment: "It is apposite to note that the ratio in Bangalore Water Supply (supra) limited itself till a new definition was introduced. As a new law redefining 'industry' has come into force, the ratio in Bangalore Water Supply (supra) would remain restricted to the proceedings pending under the repealed law and the provisions of the new law, ie IR Code, shall be independently interpreted."

The entire process of labour law codification in

general, and the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, in particular, has already excluded millions of working people from coverage through increased threshold limits for the application of the law. This means that they have been kept out of legal entitlements and protections.

Now, the Supreme Court has gone further through its judgment in this case. It has not only lent credence to this cruel exclusion but, by refraining from upholding the application of the judgment of the Justice VR Krishna Iyer-led seven-judge Bench in Bangalore Water Supply & Sewerage Board v. R Rajappa & Others to the Industrial Relations Code, where there are huge exclusions aimed at keeping workers away from the ambit of the law, it has facilitated corporate interests by excluding its own citizens — the working population — from the protection of law.

Protests erupt in J&K's Kishtwar after 14-year-old girl allegedly impregnated by teacher dies; accused held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jammu

Massive protests broke out in the remote Kishtwar district of Jammu division on Friday after a 14-year-old school-girl, allegedly impregnated by her teacher, died when she was being shifted to a hospital in Doda to terminate her pregnancy.

A Grade-II Government school teacher identified as Khalid Hussain Sheikh has been placed under suspension by the Chief Education Officer, Kishtwar, pending an inquiry into the matter.

A large number of college students and residents in Kishtwar staged protest demonstrations seeking justice for the minor tribal girl and severe punishment for



the accused in the case.

According to official sources, the victim, a resident of Kishtwar district's Chhatroo area, was referred from the District Hospital in Kishtwar to Doda for specialised treatment for termination of the pregnancy but died en route on Thursday.

Following the incident,

police registered FIR No. 34/2026 at Police Station Chatroo under Sections 61(2), 65(1), 90, 91 and 92 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, besides Sections 4, 6, 8, 10 and 17 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012.

Police subsequently arrested Khalid Hussain Sheikh,

who is identified as a Teacher Grade-II at Middle School Bumalpora, Zone Inderwal.

The Chief Education Officer, Kishtwar, through an order issued on August 21, placed Sheikh under suspension in terms of Rule 31 of the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services (Classification, Control and Appeal) Rules, 1956, pending an inquiry into the matter.

The suspension order specifically refers to the FIR registered at Police Station Chatroo and notes that the accused teacher is under police custody.

Further investigation into the case is underway, while the circumstances surrounding the minor's pregnancy and death are being investigated by the concerned authorities.

FM directs early completion of DPR for high-level dam on Kosi River

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi/Patna

Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary, along with Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Kumar Choudhary and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Kumar Jha, met Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in New Delhi and held discussions on several key issues related to Bihar's development.

The meeting with Sitharaman focused extensively on the release of funds to Bihar and the implementation of various schemes in accordance with the announcements made in the Union Budget.

The requirement of funds for Phase I of the Kosi-Mechi Inter-State River Link Project and technical approval for Phase II was also discussed. The Union Finance Minister directed the National Water Development Agency (NWDA)



and the Ministry of Jal Shakti to take necessary action in this regard.

The Chief Minister said that progress on the project would provide significant benefits to the Seemanchal region of Bihar in terms of irrigation, agriculture and water management.

The proposed Sapt Kosi Project was also discussed. Following the Chief Minister's request, the Union Finance Minister directed relevant department to complete the Detailed Project Report

(DPR) for a high-level dam on the Kosi River at the earliest. It was also agreed that Bihar will have one representative on the Joint Technical Expert Committee to ensure that the state's interests are effectively represented in technical matters related to the project.

The meeting also discussed the implementation of SNA & SPARSH by September 30 with the objective of enabling Bihar to access greater Central assistance. The effective implementation of Reform-Based Incentives under SASCI was also discussed.

The Chief Minister said these measures would help the state mobilise additional financial resources for development projects.

The establishment of Vikramshila University was also discussed during the meeting. The Chief Minister informed that the Bihar Government has made available 219 acres of land in Bhagalpur for the university.



Editor's
TAKE

Convergence amid constraints

India and Japan are now strategic partners, hedging against a region in flux and China's growing influence

On August 20, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Japanese counterpart Shinjiro Koizumi signed a Memorandum of Arrangement on Maritime Security Cooperation in New Delhi – a document with considerable strategic weight. It builds on Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's July visit to Delhi, when the two governments unveiled over \$10 billion in agreements spanning artificial intelligence, clean energy and defence, and set a target of 10 trillion yen in Japanese investment over the coming decade.

The new arrangement gives the Indian Navy and Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force a formal framework for sharing maritime domain awareness, conducting search-and-rescue and disaster-relief operations, exchanging ship visits, and, crucially, exploring joint warship design and reciprocal repair facilities. Both countries have watched China's naval footprint expand across the Indian Ocean even as Beijing presses claims in the East and South China Seas. Tokyo's calculus has hardened since Takaichi's remarks last November that Japan could respond militarily to a Chinese move on Taiwan, comments still colouring ties with Beijing. Japan's recent easing of decades-old defence export restrictions, welcomed openly by Singh, signals a country recalibrating post-war pacifism to build real production capacity rather than lean solely on American guarantees. For India, the pact goes well with the 'Make in India' push in defence manufacturing and offers access to Japanese shipbuilding expertise that could speed naval modernisation. Both governments describe this as advancing a "free and open Indo-Pacific" – carefully avoiding the word China even as everyone understands the signal.

The challenges are real. Beijing's foreign ministry has already signalled discomfort with the broader partnership, warning that cooperation between neighbours must not target third parties. India must walk a tightrope: deepening security cooperation with a Quad partner while preserving the strategic autonomy that has long defined its foreign policy, and without irking China. The Quad has not held a leaders' summit since 2024, and doubts about how reliably Washington will stay invested in the region are precisely why bilateral hedges like this one matter more. Converting memoranda into genuinely interoperable navies also takes years – technology absorption, joint doctrine, and shared threat perception across two very different theatres – the situation in South China sea is very different from Indian Ocean. The way forward lies in patient institutionalisation rather than symbolism. Regular 2+2 ministerial dialogues, expanded logistics-sharing arrangements on the model of India's agreement with Washington, and genuine co-production projects – building on the newly launched UNICORN mast programme – would give this partnership operational substance. Anchoring bilateral gains within broader Quad initiatives. India and Japan are not building an alliance against China but coming closer to safeguard their own maritime interests, something that must be reiterated to keep tempers low in Beijing.

Education reform must factor in well-being

As classrooms evolve with new curricula, technology and changing approaches to assessment, emotional wellbeing can no longer remain a peripheral concern. A child's ability to handle anxiety, failure, relationships and uncertainty is as fundamental to preparing for life as academic achievement – and it is time education reform recognised that



NEERJA
BIRLA

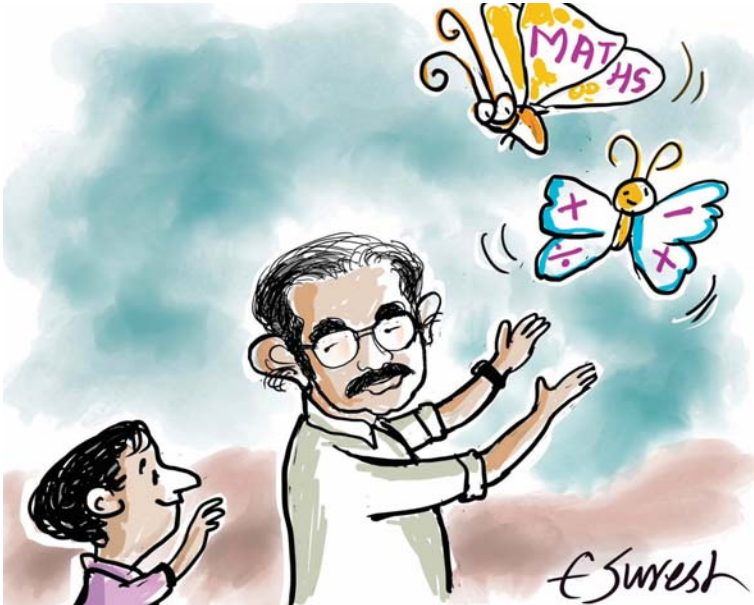
We have spent decades asking what our children need to learn. Perhaps it is time to ask another question: what do they need in order to learn well? Education in India has changed significantly. Curricula have become more progressive; technology has expanded access to knowledge and assessment is gradually moving beyond rote learning. These changes reflect a larger shift in how we think about preparing young people for an uncertain future. Yet one part of that preparation is still often treated as secondary: the emotional experience of learning.

A child does not leave their worries at the classroom door. Pressure to perform, fear of disappointing parents, friendship struggles, loneliness or uncertainty about the future can influence how they concentrate, participate and respond to challenges. If education is meant to prepare young people for life, then how they feel while learning cannot remain separate from what they learn.

This is why I believe the next chapter of education reform must place emotional wellbeing alongside academic development. Not instead of excellence, but as an essential part of enabling it. The need is increasingly visible. An NCERT survey conducted in 2022, cited by UNICEF India, found that 11% of students reported anxiety, 14% experienced extreme emotions, and 43% reported mood swings. The importance of early intervention is equally clear half of all mental health disorders begin by age 14, and 75% by the mid-20s. These figures should prompt us to look beyond whether a child is keeping up academically and consider whether they are developing the emotional resources to cope with the demands placed upon them. Emotional literacy is not a soft skill. It is a life skill. It begins with giving children the vocabulary to understand what they are experiencing. A child who can recognise frustration before it becomes anger, understand anxiety rather than simply fear it, or articulate that they need help is developing a capacity that will remain valuable far beyond school.

A psychologically safe classroom allows children to question, disagree, make mistakes and try again without feeling diminished. If children associate mistakes with embarrassment or failure with loss of worth, they may become more focused on avoiding errors than on discovering, experimenting and learning. The role of the teacher is therefore changing too; not into that of a mental-health professional, but into that of an informed and observant adult within a child's support system.

A sudden withdrawal, behavioural change or



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The author is Founder and
Chairperson, Aditya Birla
Education Trust, and Founder,
Mpower

disengagement can sometimes signal that a child is struggling. Teachers need not become mental-health professionals, but they do need the awareness to recognise such signs, respond with empathy and know when professional support may be required. This also means rethinking how we interpret behaviour. Children facing mental-health concerns may be labelled "lazy", "hyperactive" or "naughty" when they may actually need understanding and support. In one school-based intervention, 95% of teachers reported a positive change in how they perceived students with mental-health concerns. Student referrals offer another important insight: 20% were related to poor academic performance, while others involved aggressive behaviour. Such changes should not automatically be viewed as disciplinary issues; they can also signal that a child may be struggling emotionally. But recognition is only the first step. Students must also have access to the right support, without placing the entire responsibility on teachers. But recognition must lead to access. UNICEF India notes that India has only 0.75 psychiatrists per 100,000 people, with shortages extending to psychologists and psychiatric social workers. This is why strengthening mental wellbeing in education cannot mean placing another responsibility on teachers and schools without strengthening the wider support system.

Schools need clear pathways to professional care, while counselling must be normalized as a resource rather than viewed as a last resort. Equally important is bringing parents into the conversation and strengthening relationships between students, teachers and families.

Often, meaningful support begins with something simple: an adult who listens without immediately comparing, correcting or trying to solve everything.

The experience of implementing the curriculum demonstrates how strengthening emotional skills and relationships can create a school environment that is more conducive to learning, while also contributing to academic outcomes. Across all grade levels, students became better at managing their emotions and more willing to seek help when needed. Both coping skills and help-seeking behavior improved significantly from baseline to endline across every age group.

The impact was also visible beyond the classroom, with parents observing positive changes in how children handled everyday conflicts. When students are equipped to regulate emotions, seek help and build healthier relationships, classrooms can become more supportive spaces where both well-being and learning can thrive. The approach must also recognise that wellbeing does not look the same for every young person. The pressures faced by a school student may differ from those experienced in university. Adolescence, young adulthood, family circumstances, social environments and individual experiences all shape how challenges are experienced. A responsive approach to wellbeing must therefore be responsive rather than one-size-fits-all.

When a young person is unable to cope, the consequences can affect attendance, learning, educational progression and, later, employability and participation in the workforce. Supporting wellbeing early is therefore not merely an investment in individual children. It is an investment in the country's human potential. A report card can tell us what a child has learnt. It cannot tell us whether they have developed confidence, empathy, adaptability or the ability to recover from disappointment. These qualities shape how young people navigate relationships, decisions, setbacks and opportunities.

That does not mean lowering academic expectations. Quite the opposite. We should want young people who can pursue excellence without tying their entire sense of worth to achievement; who can experience failure without seeing themselves as failures. The next education reform, therefore, should not ask us to choose between achievement and wellbeing. It should recognise that the two are deeply connected. Education has always been about preparing the mind for what lies ahead. The next step is to recognise the person behind that mind, their emotions, relationships, confidence, vulnerabilities and capacity to adapt. Perhaps the question for the next education reform is no longer only what do we want our children to learn? It is also: what do we want them to be equipped to handle when the lesson ends? If the answer includes uncertainty, failure, relationships, change and the inevitable challenges of life, then emotional wellbeing cannot remain at the margins of education.

When no one owns the problem

During my wait, I noticed several other irate customers. Some appeared to be daily-wage earners, conscious that every hour spent waiting meant lost income. A few struggled to communicate their problems and were asked to return another day. I could afford the time and had the confidence to persist. I wondered how easily they could.

Amazon scheduled the pickup for the day I was travelling. Since I was leaving early, the customer-service executive suggested that I leave the phone with a neighbour. After reaching my destination, I checked with the neighbour. The phone had been collected. Later that evening, however, I received a message saying that the pickup could not be completed because I was unavailable. From overseas, I tried contacting customer service. Automated calls offered no opportunity to explain the situation. Emails promised that an executive would contact me. Nobody did.

An escalation email directed me back to the same helpline. On returning to India, I resumed my calls. The system continued to maintain that the phone had not been collected. Eventually, I traced the pickup person through our condominium records. He remembered collecting it and, after checking, told me that the phone had been lying in the warehouse for almost a month. It could not be verified because it could not be switched on. That was precisely why I had returned it!

I called Amazon again. The executive was categorical that nothing could be done. Even speaking to a

senior, I was told, would make little difference. I then mentioned that I understood such calls were recorded and that, if nobody could resolve the matter, I might have to consider legal recourse. Things suddenly began to move. Someone contacted me, the pickup details were verified, and after another round of follow-up, my money was refunded. My purpose in recounting this experience is not merely to complain about a defective phone or poor service. Each person appeared constrained by the part of the system visible to them.

And still, for almost a month, the problem belonged to nobody. More troubling is what happens to those who do not have the time, confidence or resources to persist. Technology and standardised processes allow large organisations to handle millions of transactions efficiently. They are indispensable. But systems inevitably encounter situations they were not designed to anticipate. At that moment, someone needs both the willingness and the authority to look beyond the screen and ask whether what the system is saying actually makes sense. Perhaps the true test of a good system is not how smoothly it handles the routine, but how humanely it responds when something goes wrong. Ultimately, someone must be willing to own the problem.

The writer is a founder of Kala - Krazy About Literature And Arts, is an author, speaker, coach, arbitrator, and strategy consultant

PIC TALK

Artists perform during a 'Kalash Yatra' during the holy month of Shravan, at Badi Chaupar, in Jaipur. PHOTO: PTI

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VANDE MATARAM BELONGS TO EVERY INDIAN CITIZEN

As an octogenarian from a freedom-fighter family, though apolitical, I extend my full support to the Congress Working Committee's reaffirmation that only the first two stanzas of Vande Mataram should be sung at party programmes.

As a true patriot and free-minded citizen, how can I accept the last four stanzas, which the Modi Government has politically added to the patriotic narrative? Previous BJP governments under Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani did not pursue this issue in the same manner.

Patriotic Indians are shocked, though not surprised, by the changing position of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The RSS, the BJP's ideological parent, did not participate in the freedom movement and, until 2002, did not fly the Tricolour at its

headquarters. The attempt to impose a particular interpretation of patriotism also ignores the historical context surrounding Vande Mataram. In 1937, Rabindranath Tagore advised that the first two stanzas could be treated separately because they had a broader national character, while the later verses contained imagery that could be unsuitable for inclusive national gatherings. Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel were also part of that larger national movement.

India's patriotism cannot be reduced to political ownership. Vande Mataram belongs to the entire nation, and no political party should issue certificates of patriotism.

BIDYUT K CHATTERJEE | FARIDABAD

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

Sanctions tighten pressure on Iran

The United States is preparing its toughest sanctions in history against Iran, seeking to squeeze Tehran economically and cut off the financial lifelines sustaining it. Washington has also urged other countries, particularly China, a major buyer of Iranian oil, to join the effort. The proposed sanctions come alongside a revived US naval blockade, creating a pincer-like strategy designed to restrict Iran's access to trade, energy revenues and international markets. For Iran, the consequences could extend far beyond government corridors. Years of sanctions have already strained its economy, while the latest measures threaten to deepen Tehran's isolation amid heightened regional tensions. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has dismissed the US campaign as a failed strategy, arguing that intensifying economic pressure will not force Tehran into submission.

China, meanwhile, has rejected the premise that greater economic pressure will resolve the dispute, calling instead for diplomatic efforts. Its position could prove consequential as Washington seeks to restrict one of Iran's most important economic outlets.

The confrontation risks becoming a struggle over Iran's economic survival and its government's future.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

Vande Mataram must unite India

The controversy raging across the nation over Vande Mataram is nothing short of tragic. A song that once united millions under the banner of freedom now finds itself entangled in divisive politics. During colonial rule, Indians sang it with pride; today, in an independent India, hesitation to sing it feels like a betrayal of that very spirit.

What is perplexing is the Congress party's decision to rake up the issue. Once built on Vande Mataram, the party now faces criticism for fragmenting its legacy. From Partition and the Syndicate-Indicate split to the division of Pakistan, critics point to a history of fractures. Now, they ask: "Is this the same Congress that fought for freedom?" The shame lies not in debate but in the perception that the party places itself above the nation. For the common Indian, the creed is simple: Rashtra Sarvopari – the nation above all. Mahatma Gandhi himself had warned that Congress might one day descend into a struggle for power rather than principle, even suggesting its dissolution after independence. Had that advice been heeded, perhaps the spectacle of public disrespect towards the national song would never have arisen. Every citizen must resist attempts to divide Vande Mataram. It is more than a song; it symbolises India's sacrifice, unity and pride. To diminish it is to diminish the nation's soul.

ARVIND TAPKIRE | MUMBAI

Can growth come without integrity?

Amicus curiae and senior advocate Vijay Hansaria has informed the Supreme Court that serious criminal cases are pending against the chief ministers of 14 of the 28 states. Revanth Reddy of Telangana tops the list, while West Bengal's Suvenud Adhikari follows close behind.

At the same time, Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks proudly of India crossing the \$4-trillion GDP mark and dreams aloud of a "trillion-dollar economy". But is this financial optimism worth celebrating if constitutional heads of states themselves stand tainted? Can India afford to bid adieu to morality in its quest to become a financial superpower? Economic growth is undoubtedly important, but prosperity without ethical governance risks undermining public trust. Political leaders hold immense responsibility, and allegations of serious criminality involving those at the highest levels of government inevitably raise questions about accountability, integrity and the standards expected in public life.

What we need is to moralise politics, not politicise morals. As philosopher Karl Popper warned, ignoring this distinction comes at our own peril. Development and ethical governance must go hand in hand. Without morality, even the most ambitious economic dreams risk becoming castles built on sand.

AVINASH GODBOLEY | MADHYA PRADESH

Are we fair to the young of India?

India cannot afford to treat education merely as another administrative department. It is the principal instrument through which the nation prepares its future. And none should ignore the fundamental truth that the future of India is initially being shaped primarily in its classrooms, and only afterwards in other places



There are occasions in the life of every nation when generational transition suddenly attracts far greater attention than it usually receives. People tend to take the growing up of the next generation as a routine process, overlooking the fact that this process is profoundly influenced by the rapid changes in knowledge and technology, which in turn affect the psyche of

every human being. The transition of a child from innocence to a fully developed personality depends significantly on the external socio-cultural environment, which, too, is changing dramatically and continuously.

The beginning of the academic year 2026-27 has been disturbed in several ways. One is not referring only to the agitations witnessed at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi and in Ranchi, Jharkhand. There are also reports from several places of school students protesting against the absence of basic amenities such as functional toilets and drinking water, as well as the shortage of teachers. One often wonders whether the Right to Education Act has truly delivered what it promised to the children of India. Needless to repeat, it is the quality of school education that ultimately determines the quality and level of excellence in higher education. Education systems that nurture students' ideas and imagination—the two divine gifts that every child receives at birth—are obviously destined to excel in innovation. If the power of ideas and imagination is not impeded by the uncritical pursuit of routine, outdated pedagogies and assessment systems, and is not further weakened by inadequacies in basic support structures, creativity would become evident everywhere and in every field. Such an environment would also provide fertile ground for curiosity, which is again a common human possession. It serves no professional or academic purpose if the establishment simply blames “outsiders” for agitations such as those witnessed at Jantar Mantar and Ranchi.

It is a hard fact that external elements sometimes intrude with borrowed agendas of disruption and sabotage, often with political support from those who have been ousted from power and are eager to return. They attempt to push their own hidden agendas into otherwise genuine movements. The presence of politicians and known disruptors in large numbers at Jantar Mantar was evident to everyone. The general perception is that the presence of antisocial elements and political proxies contributed to the escalation of the situation and the subsequent use of force and unacceptable violence. The young students and ideologically unconstrained citizens have also noticed how some of the most vocal politicians and intellectuals have maintained silence over the student agitation in Jharkhand.

Over the years, agitations, demonstrations and protests in India have often followed a familiar pattern. There is sufficient evidence from numerous instances of external elements intruding into movements and attempting to destroy their original purpose, even when the cause is entirely genuine. An agitation may begin with sincerity of purpose and raise an issue that deserves the serious attention of those in power and of the nation at large. Yet the intrusion of politicians—particularly unscrupulous politicians seeking to score political points—sometimes assisted by criminal elements, can deprive a genuine agitation of its positive intent.

In a democratic system, there is no need to convert every protest into a political tug-of-war between the government and the Opposition. When this happens, the original goal is gradually lost. This appears to be what happened during the Delhi agitation. The education minister resigned. But so what? Was the resignation the only goal identified by the students? Certainly not. The political class may naturally have been pleased with the development, but the criticality of the issues raised by the students was lost in the political contest. Such political manipulation leaves young students in a state of confusion and dilemma. The ghosts of paper leaks and the cancellation of examinations continue to keep future aspirants on tenterhooks. The role of the coaching mafia is not unknown. It is extremely depressing to observe that teachers and paper-setters—the very people entrusted with the responsibility of protecting the integrity of examinations—have, in some cases, been charge-sheeted for betraying the confidence reposed in them by the nation. The details of how such operations were allegedly planned and executed are



IF WE ARE SERIOUS ABOUT BECOMING A KNOWLEDGE-DRIVEN NATION, THE FIRST QUESTION WE MUST ASK OURSELVES IS SIMPLE BUT PROFOUND: ARE WE REALLY BEING FAIR TO THE YOUNG OF INDIA?

The author is an educationist, a Padma Shri awardee, and works in religious amity and social cohesion

indeed chilling. If these allegations are proved true, will they not make every teacher—including me—feel ashamed?

One must repeatedly recall the observations of the late Chief Justice of India, Justice J. S. Verma, made in 2012 and subsequently cited in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, paragraph 15.2: “...a majority of stand-alone TEIs [Teacher Education Institutions]—over 10,000 in number—are not even attempting serious teacher education but are essentially selling degrees for a price.” This observation was made fourteen years ago by one of the most distinguished legal minds of contemporary India. Sadly, however, not only public perception but also the view among many concerned academics remains clear: nothing substantial has changed. The truth is that India is going to be seriously affected by the deterioration in the quality of education at practically every stage. The learners cannot be blamed. The systems of policy formulation, implementation and resource allocation must accept responsibility for permitting such a situation to develop. Those who matter in decision-making on such issues rarely send their own children to government schools. For them, there are private schools offering what they consider high-quality education. Subsequently, the children of fortunate families have access to foreign universities. If this were not so, media reports would not have appeared around the celebrations of the 80th Independence Day indicating that, in one state, five government-established universities reportedly had not a single regular faculty member. Will such a situation not make the hearts of investors in higher education flutter with the prospect of an obvious increase in their dividends? The greatest damage being inflicted on future generations is the failure to provide them with the necessary knowledge, skills and spirit to tackle the challenges of their working lives. I can put this on record on the basis of my personal interactions extending over six decades with children in schools, young people in colleges and universities, and those being trained to become school teachers: the fear of an uncertain future has gripped a majority of our learners—exceptions apart—across the country.

The anxiety and tension cast their dark clouds painfully over parents and families as well. The political class, particularly those who have been ousted from power, often focuses almost entirely on collecting political brownie points without offering alternative strategies for setting things right. Those in power, on the other hand, sometimes take solace in recalling similar mishaps of the past, when their political adversaries were in power.

One wonders: how does this help the nation or the aggrieved young people? Why cannot India think seriously and deliberate upon how to spare generations ahead from the genuine fear of an uncertain future? Young people in schools and higher education institutions are increasingly apprehensive about the manipulation of systems by mafias and corrupt elements, both within and outside the education system. Is it not time to recall the great dialogical tradition that we encountered while becoming acquainted with that great divine song, the Bhagavad Gita? Dialogue, reflection and reasoned deliberation have always been integral to India's intellectual tradition. They could once again help us move beyond confrontation towards solutions.

There are certain simple steps that need no lengthy deliberation. The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) should be revamped at the earliest and given an appropriate statutory status. Its recommendations and decisions should be followed by effective mechanisms for implementation and accountability. There is also a long-pending need for serious reconsideration of the nature and quality of leadership in academic institutions. Is it not incongruous that a civil servant could head even a textbook corporation? The appointment of heads of academic institutions, including Vice-Chancellors, requires in-depth scrutiny and a fresh approach based on academic leadership, institutional vision, integrity and professional competence.

If we are serious about becoming a knowledge-driven nation, the first question we must ask ourselves is simple but profound: Are we really being fair to the young of India?

Gen Z: A vibe is not a revolution



ACHARYA PRASHANT

Both screens are real. The country has chosen to see only the first, and has begun garlanding it. I have spent more than twenty years looking at the second, in direct question and answer with the young, one person at a time, in lakhs. I am writing this to say: withdraw the garland. It is the surest way to make certain the young man never changes.

Every generation is certain that the next one is more rebellious. Hardly anyone asks: rebellious against what, and from where? The rebel himself has been assembled, by school, media, peer pressure, religion and culture. What they have produced is a type, and notice the type's very name: “Gen Z” was coined not by this generation but by marketers, people who slice the population into cohorts to sell to. A generation that wears its price sticker as its identity has already told you something about its condition.

I do not think anything has arrived. Leave the placards aside and see where this generation actually stands in line.

The astrology app market, worth some fourteen hundred crore rupees in 2024, is projected to grow tenfold by 2030; investors call it faith tech. Who pays? By the industry's own account, eighty-five per cent of users are under thirty-five. The market for superstition is being sponsored by the generation that calls itself forward-looking. And a person who cannot even beat imaginary stories will not stand up to a living oppressor.

The Lokniti-CSDS youth surveys complete the picture: more than half the young want a government job against a quarter who want to build their own; six in ten want a film banned if it hurts religious sentiment; eighty-four per cent of married youth had arranged marriages, overwhelmingly within caste.

I know the private face behind the placard; it sits before me daily. The questions are not about transforming the system. They are: my parents want me married, what do I do? The caste is different, how do I tell my father? A generation whose most urgent private question is how to find the courage to speak to its own father is being garlanded as the force that will confront the State!

Then there is love, the oldest school of intensity. A revolutionary is first a lover; both run on the capacity to stake everything on one thing. The heart that will not burn for a beloved is not about to burn for a nation.

The crowd wanted one minister to go. He went. And the education system that exists for the sake of “placements”, and the social system that pressures youth into suicides, stand exactly where they stood.

The grievances are legitimate: the queues for institutions and government jobs are long, and somebody breaking a queue is a fraud, and fraud deserves anger. But the anger was not against the queue; it was for the queue. A rebellion whose maximum demand is better admission into the machine is not a rebellion against the machine. It is the machine's own quality-control department, staffed free of cost.

Rebellion here is a mood one puts on, an aesthetic, what they themselves would call a vibe. And a vibe does not make a revolution. A vibe lifts when the weather changes. A revolution is what remains when the weather turns against you, and the weather turned the day one minister resigned.

There is a name for the root of all this: ahankaar, the ego. The ego is the first superstition. So long as there is an I here that must be secured at any cost, everything else follows. The ego is not afraid of revolutions; it steps into them happily. It is afraid of reality. Bring down one system, and the same centre hands you a brand new institution the next morning. Iran threw out the Shah in 1979 and put its women in the veil. Change of generation changes nothing. Change of centre is everything.

So, my young friends: everything above was said about you; now something to you. I am being blunt because I am your well-wisher, not your enemy. The ones celebrating you have known you for one news cycle; I have heard your silent wails for twenty years. Your restlessness is real, and it is the truest thing about you. My complaint is only with where you have been taught to fire from it: at the minister, at the system, at everything except the place it comes from.

Do not accept those coming to garland you; flattery is the cheapest salary ever invented, and it is paid to keep you asleep. The revolution you are capable of is nearer and harder: telling your father the truth this evening, deleting the app you consult before you dare to live, asking, when the anger rises, who exactly is burning in here. Stay with the question, because you will see your falseness on Tuesday and be back inside it by Friday, unless the seeing is joined by the intent to be free of it. That intent is the only thing entirely yours to give.

You have been cheated, yes, but the exam leaks and the rest are the small cheating. The big cheating is that in all your years of education, nobody ever turned your attention toward the one doing all the wanting and fearing. That education was your birthright, and it was withheld. Go get it: it requires one honest person, and you are allowed to be the first one you meet.

So drop the tag; it was never your name. You are not Gen Z or any fancy thing. You are not special, and hear that as the liberation it is. The work is the work it has always been.

It is open. It has always been open. Come.



Acharya Prashant is a philosopher and author whose work centres on self-inquiry and its application to contemporary life

The next farm reform must protect India's harvest



As India marks Reforms Utsav, celebrating 12 years of governance reforms under the leadership of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, agriculture stands out as a major success. The

Government's farmer-first approach has focused on raising incomes, reducing cultivation costs, strengthening risk protection and bringing modern infrastructure and services from farm to market. Direct benefit transfers, crop insurance, institutional credit, irrigation, digital markets, farm infrastructure, soil health, mechanisation and technology-enabled advisories have together improved the operating environment for farmers.

The results are visible. India's total foodgrain production is estimated at 376.56 million tonnes in 2025-26, the highest ever in the country's history. Agricultural exports, which stood at USD 32.08 billion in FY 2014-15, are projected to reach a record USD 52.55 billion in FY 2025-26. Recent GST rationalisation has also supported this direction by reducing rates on tractors below 1800 cc, several bio-pesticides, micronutrients and other farm-linked inputs. On the farm advisory side, initiatives such as the National Pest Surveillance System and Bharat-VISTAAR are helping improve pest intelli-

gence and decision-making. These initiatives are laying the foundation for an integrated ecosystem where production, pest surveillance and market access are increasingly interconnected.

This is why crop protection should become a central part of the next phase of reform. A country producing and exporting at record levels needs a modern system to protect crops and preserve its competitive edge in global markets. Crop protection sits at the intersection of productivity, farmer income, food safety and export readiness. A pest outbreak can reduce yield. The wrong product or improper application can jeopardise residue compliance. A spurious input can damage the farmer's crop and weaken trust across the value chain.

These pressures are intensifying. Climate variability is changing pest behaviour and infestation windows. A study published in Science estimated that for wheat, rice and maize, yield losses from insect pests could increase by 10-25% for every degree Celsius of warming. Official estimates placed before Parliament suggest that pests, diseases and weeds account for about 10-35% of annual crop losses in India, depending on the crop and season. Separately, a CropLife India and YES Bank knowledge report estimates that nearly 72 lakh crore worth of crop yield is lost annually due to pests.

Pests are creating a market-access challenge as well. The EU RASFF system, the US FDA import refusal system and APEDA's export advisories show that residue compliance has become a recurring concern across high-value markets. APEDA's advi-



sory on rice exports to Lebanon illustrates how quickly residue-related concerns in one market can influence requirements elsewhere. Assam tea faces a similar challenge, with reports warning that tighter European residue limits could affect around 40 million kg of high-end Assam tea exports to Europe and the UK.

India's response must begin at the production stage. Compliance depends on farmers knowing which product is approved for which crop, how it should be applied, when it should be applied and how long the crop must wait before harvest. Integrated Pest Management must become more central in practice. Surveillance, correct diagnosis, economic thresholds, resistant varieties, field hygiene and responsible use of crop protection products all have a role. Better pest management is ultimately about correct use, not more use.

Access to a wider basket of crop protection technologies enables farmers to choose the most effective

solutions for their crops and pest pressures. Yet India has only around 380 registered molecules, compared with nearly 1,200 available globally, limiting access to newer tools needed to manage resistance, improve productivity and meet evolving export standards. One reason for this gap is the absence of Protection of Regulatory Data (PRD) in India. A well-designed PRD framework can encourage innovation and facilitate faster access to newer, more selective and lower-dose crop protection solutions with improved stewardship practices. When used in accordance with approved labels and Good Agricultural Practices, these technologies can help farmers manage pests pressure more effectively, optimise spray intensity and better align with the increasingly stringent residue requirements of international markets. At the same time, farmer training, adherence to approved uses and pre-harvest intervals, along with robust testing and traceability systems, remain critical for ensuring compliance with prescribed Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs). Major agricultural economies, including the EU, the US and China, provide time-bound regulatory data protection to encourage innovation. India too can design a calibrated framework for new molecules that promotes earlier access to advanced technologies while preserving competition through independent data generation and eventual generic entry. Such a model would benefit farmers today and expand opportunities for domestic manufacturing and exports over time. Reforms Utsav should be seen not as the culmination of agricultural reforms, but as a call for the next phase. India has strengthened its

production base, built export-oriented systems and embraced digital agriculture. Crop protection regulation must now keep pace with this transformation. A Protection of Regulatory Data (PRD) framework can accelerate access to newer crop protection technologies and enhance the competitiveness of Indian agriculture. The proposed Pesticides Management Bill, 2025 presents a timely opportunity to provide the regulatory foundation for this transition by replacing the framework established under the Insecticides Act, 1968. Its focus on digitisation, stronger action against spurious products, improved compliance and enhanced regulatory oversight is a welcome step. To serve farmers in the next decade, the legislation should also enable faster registration pathways for innovative molecules, lower-risk products and new uses, alongside greater emphasis on label expansion for export-oriented and minor crops. As global markets become more demanding, these reforms are essential to protect yields, raise farmer incomes and reinforce India's position as a trusted supplier in global agricultural trade.

The next milestone should be an ecosystem where crop protection decisions are guided by science, traceability, timely advice and access to modern tools, all geared towards improving outcomes for farmers. That is how India can secure farmer incomes, enhance food safety and build high-value agricultural exports that meet the standards of increasingly discerning global markets.

The writer is agriculture-policy analyst, writes on agro, issues, policies and reforms

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Order Order

Saurav Das approaches Delhi HC over privacy breach



Cockroach Janta Party spokesperson Saurav Das on Friday approached the Delhi High Court seeking action against commentator Abhijit Iyer Mitra and several other law portals and media platforms for allegedly putting his residential details in public domain.

In his suit, Das has sought protection of his right to privacy, dignity and security and damages for alleged violation of his privacy rights.

The plaintiff has sought permanent and mandatory injunction against Iyer, X, Google and several law portals and media platforms from publishing, circulating or disclosing his residential details and direction to them to remove and disable public access to the videos and posts giving such details.

The plea sought a direction to X and Google to take down the content revealing the information.

Das, in his plea, said he has been living in a rented room in Greater Kailash here since last year and the defendants have unlawfully discovered, recorded, published and repeatedly disseminated his residential address and other personal details including his background, particulars of his parents and sexuality. (PTI)

SC disposes of petitions concerning *The Kerala Story*



The Supreme Court on Friday closed the proceedings on a batch of petitions relating to the controversial 2023 film, *"The Kerala Story"*, while leaving open the question of law relating to challenges to certification of films by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC).

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant-led bench on Friday disposed of dozens of cases which were filed either during the COVID-19 period or became infructuous due to passage of time.

Dealing with two pleas seeking cancellation of CBFC certification of *"The Kerala Story"*, the bench, which also comprised Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana, said that the petitions have become infructuous.

The third plea filed by the film's producers, Sunshine Pictures Pvt Ltd and Vipul Amritlal Shah, was withdrawn. The petition had challenged the then West Bengal Government's decision to ban the film.

The top court, in May 2023, had stayed the ban imposed by the state Government. Advocate Nizam Pasha, appearing for petitioners Qurban Ali and BR Aravindakshan in the other two matters, submitted that the issues raised by his clients continued to survive despite the film having already been released.

Pasha pointed out that the Kerala High Court had disposed of a writ petition concerning the film after observing that the plea was not maintainable against the grant of a certificate to a movie by the CBFC. (PTI)

Supreme Court relaxes 3-year mandatory law practice norm for entry level judicial exam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

In a major relief to law graduates, the Supreme Court on Friday reduced to a year the earlier mandatory requirement of three-year legal practice for them to take entry level judicial service examination.

However, the selected candidates will have to undergo training at the judicial academy and a further one-year clerkship, a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices AG Masih and K Vinod Chandran said in a split decision of 2:1.

On May 20 last year, a bench headed by then Chief Justice of India BR Gavai, since retired, had barred fresh law graduates from appearing in the entry-level judicial services examination, fixing a minimum three-year law practice criterion.

On Friday, a three-judge



bench headed by CJI Kant, in a majority verdict of 2:1, modified the May 2025 verdict and relaxed the mandatory three-year legal practice criteria for law graduates aspiring to become judicial officers.

"All law graduates shall be eligible to apply, notwithstanding the three-year practice requirement. Having regard to the fact that more than a year has elapsed since the judgment under review was pro-



Jharkhand HC gives relief to CDPOs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ranchi

The Jharkhand High Court on Friday stayed the notifications cancelling the appointments of Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs) and those recruited through the JSSC-CGL examination.

The court on Thursday had stayed the notifications cancelling the 11th and 13th Jharkhand PSC exams, besides putting a clamp on the order cancelling the appointments of food safety officers.

"A bench of Justice Deepak Roshan today stayed the operation of the notification cancelling recruitments through Jharkhand Staff Selection Commission-Combined Graduate Level examination (JSSC-CGL), besides the one cancelling the appointments of CDPOs," petitioner's counsel Indrajit Sinha said.

He said a counter affidavit will be filed by the state on September 7, and by September 14, petitioners will submit a rejoinder.

"Also, the court has made it very clear that on September 15 it will hear the matter at 12.15 pm, earlier than scheduled 2.15 pm. The court also said that the matter has been taken on a priority basis," he said.

Advocate Amritansh Vats, who also represented the



petitioners, said the court was of the view that if the need arises, it will dispose of the matter by conducting day-to-day hearings from September 16.

"Today, the CDPO and JSSC-CGL matters were listed afresh. The court has granted an interim stay on both these matters on the ground of the principle of natural justice," he said. Vats said a PIL was earlier filed regarding the JSSC-CGL examination.

Hailing the stay, the Government employees protesting the cancellation of their appointments said the decision was unjustified.

"The abrupt decision to cancel our exams had taken a toll on my mental health. Today, I am relieved that my 11 years of hard work is not a complete waste. Since 2015, I had been preparing for the JSSC-CGL exam. I am confident that we will get justice

and our jobs will be safe," said Avinash Gupta, who is posted at the secretariat.

"Over the past few days, we were forced to sit in protest outside the secretariat," he added.

Meanwhile, the courtroom was packed with Government employees affected by the notifications. Celebrations broke out after the high court pronounced its order, giving relief to about 2,000 employees recruited through the JSSC-CGL exam.

In Thursday's order, the court said the JPSC exam was cancelled without following due process of law and principles of natural justice.

"This court is prima facie of the view that a regular appointment cannot be disturbed/terminated without following principles of natural justice," said the order, a copy of which was made available on Friday.

"This court feels that interest of justice and balance of convenience is paramount and in the instant case, the balance of convenience is in favour of the petitioners; inasmuch as, in effect they have been terminated without following any due process of law. Further, operation of this notification is also against public interest," it added.

The court also directed the Government's pleader to inform the department concerned to allow the petitioners as well as others, who are similarly situated and affected by this notification, to continue their work till disposal of the writ application.

"However, looking to the overall facts and circumstances of the case, all the petitioners are directed to file an affidavit/undertaking to the effect that the final order passed by the trial court in the connected criminal case shall be binding on them and the Government would be free to take appropriate action in accordance with law," the order said.

Amid a 25-day students' agitation over alleged irregularities in recruitment exams, the JMM-led Government on August 18 cancelled 22 exams and ordered a probe into 23 others, conducted since 2014.

Calcutta HC grants interim protection to TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee in 3 FIRs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kolkata

The Calcutta High Court on Friday granted interim protection to TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee from coercive police action in three FIRs lodged against him at different police stations in South 24 Parganas district.

Banerjee challenged the three criminal prosecutions — two at the Bishnupur and one at the Rabindranagar police stations in South 24 Parganas district in July.

Justice Saugata Bhattacharyya directed that no coercive steps be taken against Banerjee in connection with the three FIRs in this petition till September 11.

Justice Bhattacharyya said that since three other criminal prosecutions pending against Banerjee are questioned in a different petition, the order for which is scheduled to be delivered on August 25 by this court, the hearing of this petition stands adjourned till September 7.

The court directed that the protection order will not prevent police authorities from carrying out the investigation.

The court had already granted protection to Banerjee in the earlier three FIRs and in an FIR before the Bidhannagar police cyber crime cell.



The court was earlier informed that 16 FIRs are registered against Banerjee at different police stations.

On a plea by Additional Advocate General Rajdeep Majumdar that protection not be given to Banerjee before hearing the prosecution in

these three FIRs, the court said it has been hearing several petitions by the TMC MP challenging FIRs against him in different police stations lodged from May this year.

Majumdar claimed that Banerjee is a highly influential person and it was not possible for the complainants to lodge police cases earlier.

The BJP came to power in May, defeating the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress Government, which governed West Bengal for 15 years from 2011.

The Diamond Harbour MP is the national general secretary of TMC and nephew of the former chief minister.

Calcutta HC upholds FIR in ₹50 crore gold, cash seizure case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kolkata

The Calcutta High Court on Friday dismissed a petition by the sister of alleged illegal sand and stone trader Tulu Mondal, challenging an FIR lodged against her in connection with the seizure of gold and cash worth ₹50 crore.

Petitioner Kabira Khatun's lawyer alleged illegality in the registration of the FIR, claiming that it was lodged after search, seizure and arrest of an accused.

He asserted that the sequence should have been registration of FIR, then arrest and there after seizure. Justice Saugata Bhattacharyya dismissed the petition, holding that this



Tulu Mondal

order is governed by a judgment of August 20 in which the court dismissed Mondal's petition, seeking that the FIR against him be quashed.

Khatun's petition challenged an FIR registered at

Mohammedbazar police station in Birbhum district in connection with the seizure of gold bars and cash worth around ₹50 crore from the residence of Mondal's brother-in-law Minar.

Police arrested Minar Mondal following the seizures on July 29, while Tulu Mondal, alias Mohammed Nazibuddin, is abroad since May 23.

The FIR was drawn up on July 30 following the seizures. Justice Bhattacharyya noted that the court had already dismissed a challenge by Tulu Mondal against an identical criminal prosecution based on the FIR, holding that this petition would be governed by the judgment delivered on August 20.

SC refuses to quash criminal defamation complaint against Sukhbir Singh Badal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday dismissed a plea filed by Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) chief Sukhbir Singh Badal seeking quashing of a 2017 criminal defamation complaint against him.

Badal had moved the apex court challenging an October 2025 order of the Punjab and Haryana High Court refusing to quash the complaint and a March 2020 summoning order passed by a judicial magistrate.

According to the complaint, Badal, the then deputy chief minister of Punjab, alleged in January 2017 that religious organisation 'Akhand Kirtani Jatha' (AKJ) was a "political front" of terrorist outfit Babbar



Khalsa International.

The complainant, who filed the complaint in individual capacity, had claimed that he was the chief spokesperson of AKJ.

Badal's plea came up for hearing on Friday before a bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Sheel Nagu.

"We have read this order. What is alleged against you (Badal)? You

said that this organisation is a terrorist organisation and this complainant is the spokesperson of the other organisation which is the political front...." the bench told Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal, who was appearing for Badal.

Sibal said Badal had not said that the complainant was the spokesperson of the organisation.

SC sets aside order to summon telecom secretary in Dayanidhi Maran case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday set aside an order of the Madras High Court which directed the trial court to summon the Union Telecom Secretary as a court witness in a case against DMK MP Dayanidhi Maran relating to the alleged setting up of "illegal" telephone exchanges.

A bench comprising Justices KV Viswanathan and Arun Palli was hearing a plea filed by the CBI challenging the March 25 order of the high court.

"Now that we are inclined to restore the order of the trial court, we permit the respondent (Maran) to summon the secretary telecom as a defence witness as indicated in our August 10 order.

"We set aside the high court's order and restore the trial court's order. We



DMK MP Dayanidhi Maran

permit the respondent to have the option to summon the secretary, telecom, as a defence witness, if he so desires," the bench said.

During the hearing, senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, appearing for Maran, objected to the telecom secretary being summoned as a defence witness and said it would be appropriate if he summoned as court witness.

On August 10, the apex court had asked advocates appearing for Maran as to why the secretary, telecom

cannot be summoned as a defence witness. It had also asked Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for the CBI,

whether he would have any objection if the secretary, telecom, is summoned as a defence witness.

Raju had told the court that he would not object to such a direction.

On March 25, the high court had allowed a plea by Maran to summon the Union Telecommunication Secretary to depose as a court witness before the

trial court in Chennai in the case. The high court had said that Secretary's evidence was relevant to determining whether Maran, who was Minister of Communications and Information Technology between 2004 and 2007, was entitled to service-category telecom connections during the relevant period.

The trial court by its order dated October 10, 2025, had rejected Maran's prayer to summon the telecom secretary as the court witness.

The charges date back to the time when Maran was the Union minister for telecommunications and information technology in the UPA-I Government.

The CBI has alleged that he misused his official position and got private telephone exchanges installed at his various residences here which were used for business transactions of the Sun Network.

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BUSINESS11

Govt debunks ethanol link to sugar price surge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

With sugar prices increasing rapidly, the Government has taken a series of measures to ensure a steady supply and has debunked claims that the surge was due to sugar diverted for ethanol production. In a related development, Pakistan sugar producers have urged the Government to explore possibilities to export the item to India after it allowed duty-free imports. Sugar is being sold from ₹68 to ₹72 a kg in the retail markets.

The Government attributed the increase to lower-than-expected sugar production, stronger demand ahead of the festive season, weather-related crop damage, tightening global supplies and speculation and hoarding by some

sections of the industry. "It is incorrect to attribute the recent increase in sugar prices to diversion of sugar for ethanol production," the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution said in a statement. The Government also stated that the global market is also facing tighter supplies.

According to the government's website, retail sugar prices rose to ₹55.70 a kg on August 20 from ₹48.18 a kg on July 20. The share of sugar diverted for making ethanol for doping in petrol, has, in fact, declined to around 9 per cent in the 2025-26 season from about 12 per cent in 2022-23, while nearly three-fourths of India's ethanol production now comes from grains, particularly maize, it said. To curb the price rise and ensure adequate avail-

ability, the Government has imposed a stock limit of 400 tonnes on sugar dealers nationwide until November 30. From September 1, bulk consumers will also be barred from holding stocks exceeding 15 days of consumption. The government has also approved duty-free imports of 1 million tonnes of raw sugar and ordered physical verification of stocks at

mills by joint central and state government teams to check hoarding and artificial scarcity. The ministry said domestic sugar production in the current season is expected to be around 30.6 million tonnes, compared with an initial estimate of about 34.3 million tonnes by sugarcane-growing states.

It attributed the shortfall to Red Rot and Top Borer dis-

eases affecting sugarcane, as well as waterlogging caused by excess rainfall. It said existing stocks remain adequate to meet domestic demand until the new crushing season begins in October.

The government estimates a sugar deficit of about 3.3 million tonnes in 2026-27, while international sugar prices have risen more than 16 per cent to \$ 552 a tonne on August 20 from \$ 474 a tonne on June 30.

The government said the ethanol programme has helped address structural surpluses in the sugar industry, strengthening mill finances and improving payments to farmers. India typically produces 32-34 million tonnes of sugar annually against domestic consumption of about 28-29 million tonnes. In surplus years, excess invento-

ries can lock up working capital at mills and contribute to delays in payments to sugarcane farmers.

As of August 20, 97 per cent of sugarcane dues for the 2025-26 season had been paid, the government said. It added that the industry's improved finances had reduced its dependence on government support, with around ₹14,600 crore in subsidies provided between 2014 and 2021 but no similar subsidy announced since 2021-22. The Government has also advised states and mills to begin crushing from October 15. This is expected to lift October sugar production to more than 1 million tonnes, compared with the usual 300,000-400,000 tonnes, helping strengthen supplies during the festive season.

UP, Japan to deepen cooperation in advanced tech, skill growth: CM Yogi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh and Japan will deepen cooperation in semiconductors, advanced technology, skill development, employment and tourism, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said after meeting Japanese Ambassador to India Ono Keiichi here on Friday.

The Japanese side said a team of industry representatives will visit Uttar Pradesh to explore opportunities in the semiconductor sector. A Japanese industry team is also scheduled to visit Semicon India and HCL Technologies in September.

The two sides also discussed Japanese investment in Uttar Pradesh, with Adityanath highlighting opportunities ranging from MSMEs to large industries. Japanese companies, including Yamaha, Denso, NTT DATA, Toyo Ink, and Panasonic already have a presence in the state. Skill development was another key focus, with discussions on setting up centres to train Uttar Pradesh youth according to the requirements of Japanese industries. Opportunities in manufacturing, agriculture and nursing care were also dis-

cussed. Japan has also sought Uttar Pradesh's participation in Tourism Expo Japan 2026 in September, which the chief minister approved. The state plans to showcase its Buddhist, cultural and heritage tourism destinations. The meeting comes as a delegation of more than 200 Japanese industry representatives is visiting Uttar Pradesh.

Several MoUs have been signed, with proposed investments expected to generate around 10,000 jobs.

UP inks MoU with Japan's Yamanashi; paves way for dialogue, cooperation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh and Japan's Yamanashi Prefecture have taken a step towards strengthening institutional ties with the signing of an MoU between their legislative bodies, officials said on Friday. Yamanashi Prefecture is a landlocked region bordering Tokyo, known for housing the northern half of Mount Fuji in Japan.

According to a press statement, the MoU was signed by Uttar Pradesh Assembly Speaker Satish Mahana and Hidenori Miyamoto, chairman of the Yamanashi Prefectural Assembly, during a visit by a Japanese delegation to the state legislature on Friday. The agreement provides for regular dialogue, exchange of information and experiences,

and reciprocal visits by delegations of the two legislatures, officials said.

The Japanese delegation toured the assembly complex and was briefed on the functioning of the House, its role and its historical and democratic legacy. The MoU envisages cooperation in areas including economy, tourism, agriculture, education and human resource development, besides exchange of technology, knowledge and skills.

Mahana briefed the delegation on Uttar Pradesh's development journey and highlighted the state's cultural and spiritual heritage, including Kashi and the Buddhist Circuit.

The agreement is expected to strengthen people-to-people ties and create opportunities for wider cooperation between Uttar Pradesh and Yamanashi in investment, education, skill development, tourism and other sectors, officials added.

Stock markets end flat as elevated oil prices cap gains

Index	Open/High	Close	Previous Close	Low
NSE NIFTY	24,284.05	24,252.00	24,231.85	24,206.80
BSE SENSEX	77,725.67	77,701.07	77,537.72	77,445.86

Market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended flat on Friday, a day after registering a rebound, as elevated crude oil prices induced by geopolitical uncertainties and a sharp fall in the US markets made investors cautious. In a largely range-bound trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended almost unchanged from the previous close at 77,540.83, up 3.11 points. During the day, it hit a high of 77,725.67 and a low of 77,445.86, gyrating 279.81 points. The 50-share NSE Nifty also ended flat, up 20.15 points, or 0.08 per cent, at 24,252.

A rebound in US Treasury yields and persistently elevated crude oil prices discouraged investors from taking aggressive directional positions, an expert said. (PTI)

Foreign trade policy changes to add flexibility for exporters

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The amendment in certain provisions of the Foreign Trade Policy to make it easier for exporters to invoice overseas sales and receive payments in Indian rupees will promote rupee internationalisation in trade settlement while providing exporters greater flexibility and certainty, CII said on Friday.

Sanjay Budhia, Chairman of the CII National Committee on EXIM and MD — Patton International, said Indian

industry remains committed to working closely with the Government to build on this momentum and further deepen India's global trade competitiveness.

The notification by the directorate general of foreign trade (DGFT) has made it easier for exporters to invoice

overseas transactions and receive payments in Indian rupees. He said that Indian industry welcomes the Government's continued efforts to simplify and modernise India's foreign trade framework, further easing the ecosystem for exporters.

Rupee export proceeds, other than for Nepal and Bhutan, routed through approved banking channels will now qualify for FTP benefits and count toward fulfilment of Export Obligations, at par with foreign-currency realisations, he said.

Auto LPG industry seeks 5-year extension for commercial vehicles

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Indian Auto LPG Coalition (IAC) on Friday urged the Government to include Auto LPG-powered commercial vehicles in a proposed five-year extension of the age limit for certain vehicles operating under the national permit system.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has proposed extending the prescribed vehicle age limit by five years for battery-operated, hydrogen fuel-based and natural gas-driven commercial vehicles covered by the national

permit regime. Welcoming the proposal, the IAC said Auto LPG vehicles that meet prescribed safety, fitness and emission standards should also qualify for the extension, arguing that cleaner-mobility policy should remain technology-neutral.

"The proposed five-year extension for EVs, hydrogen and natural gas vehicles is a welcome step, but cleaner mobility policy cannot be technology-selective. Auto LPG must also be included. It is a proven, readily available and cost-effective transport fuel that can reduce vehicular emissions today, including through the conversion

of suitable existing petrol vehicles. If the objective is to encourage cleaner transportation, every viable technology should have an opportunity to qualify based on its emissions performance, safety, affordability,

infrastructure readiness and contribution to energy security," said Suyash Gupta, Director General, Indian Auto LPG Coalition. The coalition said any age extension for Auto LPG vehicles should remain conditional on com-

pliance with mandatory fitness, safety, emission and other regulatory requirements. The IAC's proposal comes as India seeks to accelerate the shift toward cleaner road transport while a large existing vehicle fleet remains on the country's roads.

The coalition said EVs and hydrogen-powered vehicles could play a growing role in the longer-term transition, but replacing the existing fleet entirely would take years. Converting suitable petrol vehicles to Auto LPG, it said, could offer an alternative way to reduce emissions from vehicles already in operation.

Govt says 29 FDI proposals worth ₹4,895.65 cr reported after easing 10% Chinese stake rule

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

As many as 29 FDI proposals totalling about ₹4,895.65 crore (over \$ 500 million) have been reported so far following the government's decision in May to permit overseas companies with up to 10 per cent Chinese shareholding to invest in India under the automatic route, an official statement said on Friday.

Before May, these companies, even with a minor stake held by an individual or firm from a country sharing land

border with India, were required to seek government approval to invest in any sector in India. Following the demand from the stakehold-

ers, the government amended the norms.

As per the amendments, foreign companies having a Chinese/Hong Kong share-

holding of up to 10 per cent are eligible to invest in India in sectors where FDI is permitted under the automatic route, subject to sectoral conditions. However, these relaxed FDI rules do not apply to entities registered in China or Hong Kong or other countries sharing land borders with India. Countries that share land border with India are China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Afghanistan. The finance ministry notified the changes to this effect under FEMA on May 1, 2026.

US markets struggle to find positive ending

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Hong Kong

US markets pointed higher early on Friday, but for the first time in a month, major indexes are all at risk of closing the week in negative territory.

The futures for the S&P 500 rose 0.3 per cent, the Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 0.4 per cent and Nasdaq futures climbed 0.6 per cent. For the week, the Dow and the S&P are down 1.81 per cent and 1.85 per cent, respectively, before the opening bell, and the Nasdaq is down 2.48 per cent. It would be the second consec-

utive week of losses for the Dow. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent this week attempted to put a lid on longer-term borrowing costs, which have weighed on

markets, but the results have been muted.

The Treasury announced Wednesday that it will at least double the size of its planned purchases of longer-

term government debt, and Bessent signalled Thursday that the repurchase program could be larger.

The announcement temporarily brought down government bond yields, which have been elevated by concerns about high inflation partly caused by the war in Iran and rising US government debt. But economists believe the effect on bond yields is temporary.

The yield on the US 10-year Treasury was around 4.70 per cent, up from nearly 4.64 per cent on Thursday and back near its level before the Treasury Department's announcement.

FROM THE WORLD

PAKISTAN

Gunmen kill cop in KPK

A Pakistani policeman was killed when unidentified gunmen attacked him while returning from duty in northwest Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province, police said on Friday.

The gunmen ambushed Assistant Sub-Inspector Dost Muhammad, additional in-charge of Khatan Police Post, in the Main Malakand Road area in District Mardan late Thursday night, a police official said.

According to police, the ASI was returning to the police post on his motorcycle after performing duty at the Tablighi Markaz Jhanday when he came under attack. A Rescue 1122 medical team and ambulance reached the scene after being informed of the incident and shifted his body to Hospital Takht Bhai for post-mortem. (PTI)

USA

Drought hits Virgin Islands

The US Government has declared a drought disaster in the US Virgin Islands as dry conditions persist. St Thomas, St John and St Croix are all experiencing an extreme drought, according to the US Drought Monitor.

The declaration announced will allow farmers and agricultural producers to seek federal emergency loans. "Our farmers are essential to our food security, our economy and our way of life," Gov Albert said in a statement. He had requested the federal declaration earlier this month. "This declaration does not make the drought disappear, but it gives our farmers another tool to withstand its effects," he said.

The deepening drought also has affected neighbouring Puerto , where officials recently implemented water rationing measures for certain neighbourhoods in seven cities, including San Juan, the island's Capital. (AP)

Myanmar military strike kills 14 at Buddhist monastery

ASSOCIATED PRESS

■ Bangkok

An airstrike on Friday by Myanmar's military on a Buddhist monastery in Myanmar's central Sagaing region killed 14 people who were taking part in a week-long meditation retreat, an Opposition group and a resident said.

The attack is the latest in a series of frequent and deadly aerial strikes targeting armed pro-democracy forces and ethnic armed groups in the country. The strikes often cause civilian casualties.

The attack occurred on



Friday at 9 am in Swel Le Oh village in Myaing township, about 75 kilometers (45 miles) west of Mandalay, the country's second-largest city, according to Nway Oo, a

spokesperson for the Civil Defence and Security Organisation of Myaing Township, or CDSOM. Nway Oo said 14 people, including three women, were killed

and 20 others were wounded when a jet fighter dropped a bomb in the compound of the village's monastery.

A villager who spoke on condition of anonymity also confirmed the death toll to *The Associated Press*. The villager said the jet fighter dropped two bombs 15 minutes apart, with the second bomb damaging a house near the monastery where more than 100 people were on a week-long retreat during Buddhist Lent. The villager, who lost a relative in the airstrike, said that people fled to a nearby community after burying bodies of the victims.



Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf gathering with members of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces during a visit to the grave of Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the Iraqi paramilitary commander killed alongside Qassem Soleimani in a 2020 US drone strike at Wadi al-Salam cemetery in Najaf, Iraq

US Army plane crashes near Alaska

BECKY BOHRER

■ Juneau

A small plane chartered by the US Army Corps of Engineers travelling to the site of a remote aircraft-tracking radar in western Alaska crashed near its destination, killing all eight people aboard, the US military said.

The crash happened Thursday near Cape Newenham Long Range Radar Site Airport, approximately 725 kilometres west of Anchorage, Alaska.

The twin-engine Cessna 441 was scheduled to land there after taking off from the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport, the Federal Aviation Administration said Friday.

Clint Johnson, the National Transportation Safety Board's Alaska region chief, said two pilots and six passengers were on board. No names were immediately released, but two US Army Corps of Engineers employees were among the passengers, the Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, a military facility in Anchorage, said in a statement.

"This is a devastating loss for our military family and the communities we serve," US Air Force Lt. Gen. Robert Davis, commander of Alaskan Command, the Alaskan North American Aerospace Defence Command Region and Eleventh Air Force, said in a statement.

The NTSB and the FAA are investigating the crash. It happened in foggy weather, according to information compiled by a service that's part of the Flight Safety Foundation, a nonprofit.

The airport is a private mil-



itary site. The radar site is managed by the Pacific Air Forces Regional Support Centre. It's part of a network of remote radar sites that tracks aircraft operating in Alaska's airspace and along its borders, the statement from Alaskan Command said.

The statement did not provide details on the specific work the individuals were doing. It referred to the plane involved as a "civilian-contracted aircraft."

Davis described those on board as "dedicated professionals carrying out a vital mission in a demanding environment. Our absolute priority right now is providing unwavering support to their families, friends and teammates during this devastating time. We are profoundly grateful for the swift and tireless response of our search and recovery professionals." US Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska posted online that the flight was operated by Security Aviation, an airplane charter company

based in Anchorage.

An email was sent to the company Friday morning seeking comment.

"I join Alaskans in offering condolences as we learn of the plane crash in Cape Newenham," Murkowski posted Thursday night.

"I've travelled extensively with Security Aviation throughout Alaska, and have met many of their experienced pilots. I appreciate the US Coast Guard, NTSB, Alaska State Troopers, and the Rescue Coordination Centre for responding to the site. Alaska is praying for those on board, their loved ones, and the team at Security Aviation."

In 1950, a continental defence radar station was built at Cape Newenham as part of the Distant Early Warning Line to warn of a Soviet attack during the Cold War, according to Coastview, a science education nonprofit that promotes understanding of the Alaska coast. Little remains of the former station today. (AP)

US to accept new Form I-485 for green card applications from September 18

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

■ Washington

A new application form for green card will come into effect next month and any submissions made using the older versions will be rejected after September 18, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has said.

The new Form I-485 to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status replaces the January 20, 2025 edition and aligns with the new public charge rules that come into effect from



September 18, said the USCIS, operating under the Department of Homeland Security. The USCIS will reject the January 20, 2025 edition of Form I-485 if it is postmarked or electronically sub-

mitted on or after September 18. The agency is providing a preview version of the new edition of Form I-485 and its instructions because there is no grace period for accepting the revised edition. It has

made it clear to applicants not to file the revised edition of Form I-485 before September 18.

The old version of Form I-485 will be accepted only if it is postmarked or electronically submitted before September 18. Earlier, the Trump administration expanded the definition of "public charge" to deny immigration applications of those availing benefits such as Medicaid, food stamps or any subsistence aid from the Government. The new "public charge" rules come into effect on September 18.

Fakhrul Islam Alamgir takes oath as Bangladesh's President

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

■ Dhaka

Veteran politician Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir was on Friday sworn in as Bangladesh's 23rd President.

Alamgir, a longtime secretary general of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party, was administered the oath by Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) Acting Speaker Kayser Kamal at the Darbar Hall of Bangabhaban, the official office-cum-residence of the head of state.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, Opposition Leader Shafiqur Rahman, former Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus, Cabinet ministers, top army brass and several other officials were present at the oath ceremony.

Ahead of his oath ceremony, Alamgir visited the graves of BNP founder Ziaur Rahman and former prime minister Khaleda Zia and offered prayers. Alamgir, a close ally of Khaleda Zia, defeated his



lone rival Colonel (retd) Oli Ahmed, the nominee of the Jamaat-e-Islami-led 11-party opposition alliance, in the first contested poll for the post in 35 years .

The 78-year-old BNP stalwart secured 255 votes while Oli Ahmad bagged 88 votes.

It was the first contested presidential election in Bangladesh since 1991, as the office had largely been filled through consensus and uncontested polls in recent decades.

UK marks first National Day for victims and survivors of terrorism

ADITI KHANNA

■ London

The UK marked its first National Day for Victims and Survivors of Terrorism on Friday, to be commemorated annually with a ceremony to recognise and support those impacted by terrorist attacks.

A ceremony in London brought together hundreds of victims, survivors, bereaved families, emergency responders and Government representatives. A two-minute silence honoured those lost to and affected by terrorism and those whose lives have been changed forever as a result of a terror strike.

"I am proud that we now have a national day to honour victims and survivors of terrorism," said UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham.

"There is something remarkable about how we come together as a country in those darkest moments. As time passes, most people go back to their lives, but for those who lived through the trauma, there is no return to normality.

"Today matters because it says you are not alone. You have not been forgotten. This is a moment to remember the loved ones lost and anyone who has survived the very worst of humanity," he said. The new National Day, which will be observed every year on August 21, follows campaigning by victims and survivors of ter-



rorist attacks for better recognition and to raise awareness of the impacts of terrorism. The chosen date coincides with the United Nations International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism, which began in 2017.

"I know how much this day will mean to people across the country. I encourage everyone to join us by taking some time to reflect on the experiences of victims, survivors and all those whose lives have been changed forever by terrorism" said UK Security Minister Dan Jarvis.

The commemorations follow two terrorist attacks in the past 12 months in the UK – at Heaton Park Synagogue and Golders Green in London – and ahead of the 10th anniversaries of five terrorist attacks in the UK in 2017.

The Home Office said that the National Day builds on the Government's commitment to support those affected by terrorism, following the launch of a new 24/7 Support Hub for victims and survivors of terrorism in June. (PTI)

Data warns Ebola outbreak could triple in size: Health agency

CHINEDU ASADU

■ Abuja

The Ebola outbreak that is spreading at unprecedented speed in Congo has not peaked yet and could be three times the current known size, according to data from authorities and Africa's top public health agency.

It is history's fastest Ebola outbreak, and the World Health Organisation says it is on track to surpass the deadliest on record, which was between 2014 and 2016, with over 11,000 deaths across West Africa. This latest outbreak has recorded 2,516 deaths out of the 5,290 confirmed cases as it rages in Congo's vast eastern region, exacerbated by an intensely mobile population, including those displaced by armed conflicts, and distrust of medical authorities. Less than 10 per cent of cases are currently coming from known contacts, far



below the 90-95 per cent rate when the outbreak can be said to be under control, according to Yap Boum, head of emergency preparedness and response at the Africa CDC.

Boum told reporters on Thursday that under current estimates, only 30-40 per cent of cases have been detected. Compared to the 2014-

2016 West Africa Ebola outbreak that ended with over 28,000 cases, including more than 11,000 deaths, this outbreak has recorded ten times more cases and seven times more deaths by the 13th week from when it was declared, data from the Africa CDC shows.

Congo's deadliest Ebola outbreak before now had been that of 2018-2020 with 3,400 cases and more than 2,200 deaths.

This is moving 18 times faster in terms of confirmed cases and 13 times faster regarding deaths. One key source of concern is that experts believe the outbreak began spreading from the mining town of Mongbwalu as early as February, months before authorities declared the outbreak on May 15.

Africa CDC data from the past three weeks shows the contact tracing rate of those exposed to patients is 82 per cent out of 19,630

contacts in total. But that doesn't give the full picture. The agency said with an average of 60 contacts per confirmed case, it was expecting 99,780 contacts to be recorded for the 1,663 cases it said it confirmed in that three-week period.

However, many of those contacts are not known, and therefore cannot be contacted for follow-up. Therefore, the "actual contact tracing rate is only 16 per cent of the expected," the Africa CDC said in its update. It is caused by Bundibugyo virus, which has no approved vaccines or treatments, unlike the most common Ebola virus type. Its symptoms are also milder, which could mean that many patients feel less immediate need to alert responders or seek treatment.

The health zones affected in the outbreak have grown from three at the onset to 56 across six provinces. (AP)

Imran Khan's party slams Pak Govt for defying SC order, threatens nationwide protests

SAJJAD HUSSAIN

■ Islamabad/Peshawar

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf on Friday slammed the Government for defying the apex court's order by preventing Imran Khan from being admitted to a hospital and threatened to launch nationwide protests if the former premier is not released from jail.

The Supreme Court on August 18 ordered that 73-year-old PTI founder be shifted from Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi to private-owned Shifa International Hospital for medical care and that he remain admitted till September 16. Instead, Khan



Ex-Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan's sister Uzma Khan speaking during a press conference in Islamabad, Pakistan

was taken to state-run Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) in Islamabad on Thursday night, where doctors from Al-Shifa were also present. After undergo-

ing medical examination at the PIMS, Khan was moved back to Adiala Jail.

The party has threatened to launch a long march towards Islamabad on September 26 if

Khan remains incarcerated, demanding legal access, court-ordered medical treatment, and ultimately his release. Addressing the media in Islamabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi said the party would intensify its movement.

Terming the alleged violation of the apex court's order "unfortunate", Afridi said the party's legal team would initiate legal proceedings, warning that the situation could undermine public confidence in the judiciary and the rule of law. He said Khan had instructed him to intensify the party's movement, adding that the campaign would now proceed

"at a faster pace". Afridi claimed that the Government and establishment were giving the impression that they were above the Constitution and law and had no fear of judicial orders. "I will visit Hangu tomorrow and Buner the day after, and thereafter I will travel across Pakistan," he said.

He alleged that the judiciary and the public were being misled over the former prime minister's health. Meanwhile, Khan's sister Uzma Khan also addressed a separate press conference in Islamabad alongside his personal physician Dr Faisal Sultan, sharing details of her visit to the jail on Thursday night and what tran-

spired at PIMS. After arriving at Adiala Jail, Uzma said she was taken to PIMS and asked to sit in an office. Later, she said she was taken to another room to meet his brother, who asked why he was taken to PIMS instead of Shifa.

"He (Khan) asked me what was happening (at PIMS), and I told him he would be taken to Shifa International Hospital for complete examination and, if required, any treatment. He was happy with that," Uzma said.

She said that Khan asked her to stay with him at PIMS, adding that he kept telling her just one thing: that he had been subjected to "cruelty". (PTI)

US, South Korea cut short military drill

HYUNG-JIN KIM ■ Seoul

The US and South Korean militaries wrapped up their annual drill six days earlier than initially scheduled on Friday in a conciliatory gesture toward North Korea, though the North said the step isn't enough to persuade it to return to talks.

US President Donald Trump had earlier abruptly ordered the Pentagon to "substantially reduce" the Ulchi Freedom Shield exercise just before it began on Monday. Trump cited what he described as a good relationship with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korea's refusal to support him over the war in Iran.

South Korea's military said the Ulchi Freedom Shield, a command post exercise with the US, ended on Friday.

This month's exercise was initially reportedly sched-



uled to be held in two phases for 11 days in simulation of North Korean attacks — the first part until Friday on defensive operations and the second part until August 27 on counteroffensive operations. North Korea is

extremely sensitive to the second phase.

South Korea and the US had also planned to hold 14 joint field training exercises during the Ulchi Freedom Shield period. But they've agreed to halve them as

well, according to South Korea's military. Kim Yo Jong, the influential sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, brushed aside Trump's overture on Wednesday, saying that reducing the duration and size of the drills won't change their "provocative, aggressive nature."

The next day, North Korea fired about 10 short-range ballistic missiles toward the sea, apparently following through with its previous threat to respond to the US-South Korean drills that it views as an invasion rehearsal.

The US Pacific Command said the events didn't pose an immediate threat to US territory or its allies. The command said the US remains committed to the defence of the US homeland and its allies in the region.

Kim Yo Jong's statement dampened hopes for an early

resumption of talks between Trump and Kim Jong Un, whose earlier nuclear diplomacy collapsed in 2019.

Kim Jong Un has used the diplomatic stalemate to increase his leverage by modernising his nuclear and missile arsenals and aligning with Russia over its war against Ukraine. Kim Jong Un suggested last year that he won't return to talks unless the US drops its demand for North Korean denuclearisation as a precondition for diplomacy. Jong still used relatively measured language, avoided typical harsh North Korean rhetoric and touched upon what she called an "excellent" relationship between her brother and Trump.

This suggests North Korea doesn't want to completely shut the door for future talks and may seek to win bigger US concessions, such as inter-

national recognition as a nuclear state and broad sanctions relief.

More nuclear weapons, Russia ties give North Korea greater leverage With its supply of ammunition and troops to Russia, North Korea is likely receiving economic and military assistance in return, and its expanding ties with Russia provide it with leverage to ask for greater support from China, its biggest trading partner.

"After this strategic play has run its course, Kim may seek further economic and reputational benefits from Washington," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul.

"But that will probably be after the US midterm elections when Trump is expected to be in a weaker domestic political position and in search of headline-grabbing foreign policies." (AP)

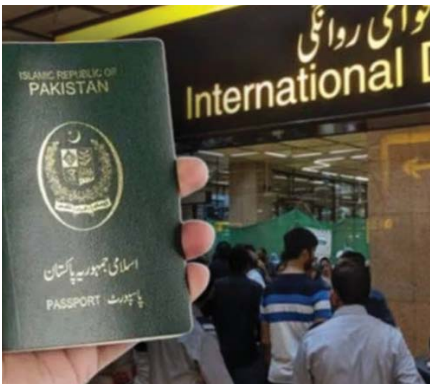
20,000 Pakistanis deported from South Asia countries due to security concerns

M ZULQERNAIN ■ Lahore

Over 20,000 Pakistani Nationals were deported from Gulf countries, mostly from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, in recent months due to security concerns and multiple reasons, amid the ongoing conflict between Iran and the US, according to official data.

According to the Narcotics Control Ministry data, presented before the National Assembly, several Pakistanis were also reportedly detained or deported for filming or uploading videos and material relating to Iranian attacks in their cities.

The Pakistani Nationals were deported between March 1 and July 13 from the Gulf Cooperation Council, comprising six countries — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, the ministry said. The deportations were ex-



cuted due to security concerns, overstaying, illegal entry, begging, drug-related offences, refusal of asylum claims and forged or improper documentation. (AP)

Prince Harry, 6 others to learn initial cost of failed Daily Mail case

PAN PYLAS ■ London

Prince Harry and six others, including Elton John, are set to find out on Friday how many millions of pounds they will have to pay initially to the publisher of Britain's Daily Mail newspaper following their failed invasion of privacy case.

Following their defeat in a High Court case in London last month alleging malpractice, such as the illegal hacking of phones, the high-profile figures will learn the scale of their exposure to the roughly 34 million pounds in legal costs accumulated by *Associated Newspapers Limited*.

The losing claimants are believed to be insured for around half that total.

In addition to an initial payment, which could be up to 10 million pounds, they will find out how they will pay the outstanding amount.

The publisher had strongly denied the claims made during the 11-week trial in London, which ended on July 7 when Justice Matthew Nicklin said there had been a shortage of evidence to support the claims and found a possibility that the reporting came from legitimate sources. Nicklin is due to give his decision on the financial implications of that



decision in a written statement at 2 pm. Associated Newspapers has asked for more than 9.9 million pounds as an interim payment, while lawyers for the claimants say the interim payment should be just over 7.9 million pounds.

The other high-profile figures behind the case were Doreen Lawrence, the anti-racism activist whose son Stephen was stabbed to death in 1993 as he waited for a bus; Elton John's film producer husband David Furnish; actors Sadie Frost and Liz Hurley; and politician Simon Hughes.

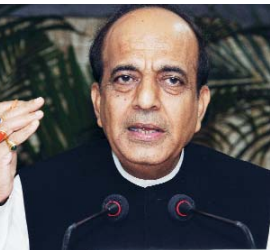
The judgment comes two days after it was made public that Harry and his wife, Meghan Markle, are moving back to the UK. The Duke and Duchess of Sussex, who are no longer working royals, decamped to California more than six years ago but will relocate back later this month to live in a nonroyal residence outside London. (AP)

Indian envoy meets Bangladesh Finance Minister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dhaka

Indian envoy Dinesh Trivedi met Bangladesh Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury and discussed bilateral development projects and issues of mutual interest.

The visit comes amid uncertainty surrounding Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's visit to India next month for the BRICS Summit following fresh strains in bilateral ties over Dhaka's demand for the extradition of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina. "High Commissioner Dinesh



Dinesh Trivedi

Trivedi paid a courtesy call on the Minister of Finance and Planning of Bangladesh, Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, and held discussions on mutual interest on economic cooperation and bilateral development projects between India and

Bangladesh," the High Commission of India in Bangladesh posted on X.

Trivedi also gifted Chowdhury a copy of 'Arthashastra' by Kautilya. "Arthashastra says, 'Education is the best friend. An educated person is respected everywhere,'" the Indian mission quoted from the book.

Earlier, Trivedi also met the Minister of Health and Family Welfare Sardar Md. Sakhawat Hossain.

"Both sides discussed issues of mutual benefit and mutual interest to further people-to-people cooperation in the field of

healthcare," the Indian mission said.

Bangladesh Foreign Affairs Adviser Humaiun Kobir said the possibility of Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's visit to India next month for the BRICS Summit "remains slim" unless an appropriate environment based on "mutual trust" is created.

Kobir also expressed resentment over deposed prime minister Hasina, who fled to India following the political upheaval, being allowed to use Indian territory for political activities and media appearances.

First group of deportees arrives in troubled Haiti after US ends TPS programme

GERARD MAXINEAU/ DANICA COTO ■ Cap-Haitien

The US deported more than 160 people to Haiti for the first time since the Trump administration won a legal battle to end Temporary Protected Status for some 350,000 Haitians.

The plane landed in the northern Haitian city of Cap-Haitien because the main international airport in Port-au-Prince is considered too dangerous. The US Government currently has a ban on US commercial flights to Haiti's capital through early September because of



ongoing gang violence.

The deportees were clad in white, and many covered their faces out of safety as

journalists filmed their arrival. Nearly all declined to talk, with some fearing being targeted by gangs that

control an estimated 70 per cent of Port-au-Prince and swaths of land beyond.

The deportees included TPS holders and Haitians who had served prison sentences, said Jean Negot Bonheur Delva, director general of Haiti's National Office of Migration.

"It is not the Haitian state that asks for them to be sent back," he said. "Our mission is to welcome migrants of forced return. We welcome them with the aim of accompanying them to their home." Delva noted that some of the deportees were not born in Haiti, although

they are of Haitian descent. He said that several deportees planned to travel to Haiti's southern region, a dangerous journey because gangs control the main routes leading to that area and are known to randomly open fire on vehicles passing through.

Others are going to Haiti's western region, he said. "There is one migrant who knows nothing about Haiti because he said he was coming from the Dominican Republic; that's where he was born," Delva said.

He said the Government would attempt to reunify

him with any potential relatives in Haiti or the Dominican Republic, where his mother and father live.

Immigration officials in Haiti on Thursday offered deportees a maximum of \$65 and something to drink and eat. "Those who cannot reach their homes today, we will host them in secure spaces, and the next day the process will continue until all migrants return home as they should," Delva said. Delva did not say how many of the 161 deportees were TPS holders who had been living and working legally in the US since 2010. (AP)

US sanctions block effort to attract private capital, says Cuba

EDITH M LEDERER ■ United Nations

The United States has demanded that Cuba open up to private investment, and Cuba has passed sweeping reforms to encourage just that. So Cuba's UN ambassador says he wants to know why Washington keeps piling on sanctions that stymie the very economic opening it has sought for decades.

Ambassador Ernesto Soberon Guzman, in an interview this week with *The Associated Press*, directed his question to US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the main architect of the Trump administration's Cuba policy: "What are you afraid of? If you are so convinced that the Cuban Government is an incompetent Government, why do



you need to implement almost every two weeks new sanctions?" The US State Department responded to a request for comment with a quote from Rubio saying new sanctions will continue to be announced every couple of weeks to close off "escape valves that they're trying to create in every mechanism."

Then on Thursday, the US imposed more economic penalties on Cuban industries, targeting state-owned mining, metal and construction companies.

Cuba has been pushed to the brink by an oil blockade imposed by the United States in January on top of a decades-old embargo, coupled with the escalating sanctions. The moves by President Donald Trump's administration, meant to put pressure on the Government

by depriving it of funding, have worsened already debilitating blackouts, cut workers off from public transport, crippled infrastructure and deepened shortages in medicine and food in the Caribbean island nation.

Guzman said the sanctions are the main obstacle to Cuba opening up its economy. He said the impact of the US measures — specifically the shortage of electricity and lack of fuel to run a business or travel — has turned off investors and tourists, a major source of Cuba's income.

Some companies have pulled out of Cuba, including the Spanish hotel chain Melia, which relied on tourist revenue and cited "significant operational, legal, economic and financial difficulties" in explaining its decision to leave. (AP)

2 organisers of Hong Kong's Tiananmen vigils convicted in national security case

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Hong Kong

Two former organisers of Hong Kong's annual vigils in remembrance of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown were convicted by Government-approved judges Friday of inciting others to overthrow China's communist leadership.

Lee Cheuk-yan and Chow Hang-tung, former leaders of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, were charged with inciting subversion in 2021 under a China-imposed national security law that has effectively crushed the city's previously thriving pro-democracy movement. The alliance was also found guilty. They both had pleaded not guilty and face a maximum prison term of 10 years.

The three judges ruled that the alliance's call for "end one-party dictatorship" did not aim to demand that the ruling Communist Party return to the system of multiparty cooperation under the constitution, but to end its leadership status under the constitution. They said the "end" in the phrase



carried the meaning of "overthrowing" and "undermining."

In the verdict, they wrote that the defendants persisted in the call after the law's introduction, neglecting that it was in breach of the constitution, which states the party's leadership is an essential characteristic of socialism with Chinese characteristics. That falls within "other unlawful means" under the security law, the judges said.

New Opposition group plans protest in Tunisia



GHAYA BEN MBAREK ■ Tunis

A summer of extreme heat has left many Tunisians short of water and electricity — and full of anger at the country's leadership. Protesters rallied in the Capital Tunis, many calling on President Kais Saied to leave power.

Mobilised by a new opposition collective, the demonstrators pleaded for improvements to basic utility services and an end to medicine shortages, rising living costs and restrictions on freedoms. Some denounced what they described as the president's failure to meet the people's demands since he was elected seven years ago.

The protest was called by the Nafas movement, which seeks to bring together political parties and independent figures beyond the North African country's

traditional opposition to Saied. The umbrella initiative, launched in May, has been calling for an end to what it describes as Government failure and injustice in the country that was the birthplace of the Arab Spring pro-democracy uprisings.

The protest came during a summer of extreme heat, with temperatures reaching up to 50 degrees C (122 F) in some parts of Tunisia. The heat wave pushed electricity demand to record levels and led state-owned utility STEG to introduce rationing measures in several regions.

The power cuts also affected water pumping stations, exacerbating long-running concerns over access to drinking water. Shelves of bottled water emptied quickly as lengthened blackouts disrupted factory operations. (AP)

Afghan-American Aisha Wahab elected to US Congress



SAGAR KULKARNI ■ Washington

Aisha Wahab, a progressive Democrat, won the special election to California's 14th congressional district, making her the first Afghan-American elected to the US Congress.

Wahab, 39, defeated moderate Democrat Melissa Hernandez in the election for the seat vacated by Eric Swalwell amid accusations of sexual misconduct.

"From foster care to Congress, this journey shows the possibility of the American Dream. Today this district made history by electing the first Afghan American to

Congress," Wahab said in a statement after the poll results were announced. Wahab polled 53.09 per cent of the total votes cast against Hernandez's 46.91 per cent in the results announced on Thursday, two days after election day. While Wahab will serve the remainder of Swalwell's term until January 20 next year, she is now poised for a contentious rematch with Hernandez in November when they compete for a full term. Wahab's parents fled Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion and settled in New York City, where she was born in 1987. (PTI)



Technology helping ICICI Prudential Life bring down its savings cost-to-premium ratio

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance's sustained investment in technology and automation along with other cost optimisation initiatives has played a central role in bringing down its cost-to-premium ratio for the savings line of business to 13.6 per cent in Q1-FY2027. It has reduced by 50 basis point over the previous year, even as the Company continues to scale its business.

Commenting on this, Ganessan Soundiram, Chief Technology Officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, said, "At ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, our investments in bolstering the Company's digital infrastructure have not only empowered our customers but also enabled us to deliver an enhanced customer experience across their policy life cycle. We are leveraging AI, analytics and platforms such as ICICI Pru Partner Stack, IPRU Edge, etc. to strengthen customer acquisition, distributor effectiveness, servicing and operational efficiency."

TOLIC Delhi-2 presented awards to NBCC and its employees in various categories

On August 19, Anshuli Arya, IAS, Secretary, Department of Official Language, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, and Vikas Kumar, Chairman, TOLIC Delhi (Undertaking-2) and Managing Director, DMRC, presented Trophy/Shield to TD Mairal, GM (HRM/IR/Rajbhasha), along with other officials in token of appreciation for the publication of the 20th edition of NBCC's Hindi In-house magazine & exemplary promotion of official language.

Additionally, during the same meeting in the Individual Employee category, Jai Ram, AGM (Finance), Vandana Ojha, Manager (Official Language), Ramesh Kumar Vaish, Manager (HRM) and Arvind Kumar Srivastava, Executive (NBCC), have also received awards for their outstanding performances in various Rajbhasha competitions.

Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham PhD admissions 2026 to close on August 31

Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham has announced that Ph.D. admissions for the 2026 intake in Engineering, Artificial Intelligence, and Computing will close on August 31, 2026. All selected scholars were awarded grants of up to 25 lakhs, which includes funding for research, publications, and international travel. Additional tuition fee waivers are available for eligible women scholars.

Candidates holding a postgraduate degree with at least 60 per cent marks are eligible to apply. GATE/UGC-NET qualified candidates are exempt from the entrance test. Interested applicants must apply before the deadline via www.amrita.edu/phd or contact phd@amrita.edu for details.

Collaboration key to securing India's digital financial ecosystem: IBA CEO

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

Growing cyber threats, digital fraud, data protection and technology risks call for a collaboration among all stakeholders to secure the country's digital financial ecosystem, Atul Kumar Goel, CEO of bankers' body IBA, said on Friday.

No single institution can tackle the challenges of India's growing digital financial ecosystem. Therefore, there is a need for collaboration between the regulator, the bank, fintech companies, technology firms, auditors, forensic experts, academicians, and the law enforcement, the chief executive officer of the Indian Banks' Association (IBA), said, addressing the ICAI-Bharat DIGIT 2026.

"This collaboration is essential in the area of fraud prevention, forensic investi-



Atul Kumar Goel



gation, cybersecurity, data governance, AI and technology-enabled assurance," Goel said.

The two-day ICAI-Bharat DIGIT 2026, organised by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), seeks to strengthen digital governance and trust, promote cyber resilience, encourage technology-

breached, then there is a challenge in the industry as well. We look forward to strengthening collaboration in fraud prevention, forensic investigation, cyber security, data governance, AI and technology-enabled assurance.

"The future of digital finance will not be defined only by how fast we can innovate; it will be defined by how confidently people can trust that innovation," Goel added.

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) Chairperson Ravi Mital, who was also present on the occasion, said as accounting and financial processes become increasingly digital, systems must be designed to be robust, secure and resilient from the beginning.

"Professionals must move beyond routine compliance to early risk identification and actionable insights," he added.

CIJW School adopts Vairengte College



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Aizawl

In a significant initiative under the Army-Academia Modernisation Development Partnership Programme (MDPP), Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School (CIJWS), Vairengte extended institutional support to Vairengte College on Friday.

Vairengte College is a relatively new private institution with limited resources and serves an important educational need in an area where opportunities for higher studies remain limited. Recognising its potential and relevance to the local population, CIJW School has adopted the College with a view to assisting its gradual growth and improving the facilities available to students.

As part of the initiative, Maj

Gen Kulvir Singh, SM, PhD, Commandant, CIJW School handed over furniture for use by the College. The contribution will help improve classroom and institutional facilities and provide students with a more conducive environment for learning.

The programme was attended by representatives of the civil administration, faculty and students of Vairengte College and representatives of CIJW School.

Addressing the gathering, the Commandant highlighted the importance of making quality education more accessible to students in Vairengte. He also emphasised the value of sustained cooperation between institutions in creating opportunities for young people and enabling them to pursue their aspirations closer to home.

Minister Rajesh Nagar to inaugurate mega health camp in Tigaon today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Faridabad

Haryana Government Minister Rajesh Nagar will inaugurate a mega health check-up camp at Ajay Nagar Vatika in Tigaon on Saturday. The camp is being jointly organised by the Rotary Club of Faridabad Excellence and Amrita Hospital with the objective of providing accessible and free healthcare services to people in the region.



The mega health camp will offer free consultation with specialist doctors for a range of health-related problems. Along with general health check-ups, facilities will be available for the diagnosis and consultation of orthopaedic and gynaecological conditions.

Basic health screening tests, including blood pressure, blood sugar, BMI and cholesterol, will also be conducted free of cost. To promote early detection and prevention of breast cancer among women, free mammography tests will be offered at the camp.

In addition, dental and eye examinations will be conducted, and necessary implants and spectacles will also be provided free of cost to eligible beneficiaries.

According to the organisers, a team of specialist doctors will assess the health concerns of visitors and provide necessary medical advice and medicines without charge.

The camp is expected to particularly benefit people who face difficulties in accessing regular health check-ups or consulting specialist doctors.

The initiative also aims to create greater awareness among people about preventive healthcare and encourage them to take timely precautions based on their health condition.

Jitendra Prasad, VSM, ADG (East) visits project Udayak

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

Jitendra Prasad, VSM, ADG (East), Border Roads Organisation, visited the Area of Responsibility (AoR) of Project Udayak from 16 to 19 August 2026, reviewing the progress of works and interacting with personnel deployed across the challenging terrain of the Northeast.

During the visit, the ADG was briefed at Project Headquarters on the overall planning, priorities and schedule of works for the current year, as well as the proposed plan and schedule for the ensuing year. He provided valuable guidance and direction towards achieving the project's operational and developmental objectives.

The ADG also visited the forward areas of Project Udayak and took stock of the progress of works on the ground. Drawing upon his extensive experience in the Border Roads Organisation



and his years of service in demanding operational environments, he interacted with ground executives, listened to their challenges and provided practical guidance for enhancing the execution, quality and pace of works.

His interaction with the officers and personnel working in the field infused a renewed sense of purpose, energy and enthusiasm among the men and women of Project Udayak.

He urged the entire team to raise the bar, utilise their capabilities to the maximum and achieve targets much beyond what is expected of them.

Gujarat Governor attends EXCEED Awards, calls for rooted sustainability

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Gujarat Governor Acharya Devvrat attended the 21st EXCEED Environment, HR and CSR Awards and Conference 2026 as chief guest. The event was organised by *Ek Kaam Desh Ke Naam* at Ramada by Wyndham, Motera, Ahmedabad.

Addressing the gathering, the Governor said true sustainability could only be achieved by staying deeply rooted in Indian culture, traditional wisdom and timeless values. He encouraged individuals, institutions and industries to adopt responsible practices aimed at protecting nature, strengthening communities and securing a sustainable future for coming generations.



Rajiv Babbar, President of *Ek Kaam Desh Ke Naam*, presented an overview of the organisation's vision, journey and nation-building initiatives at the event. He urged every citizen to contribute at least one meaningful action toward the nation, saying that if each of India's 140 crore citizens took up such an effort, their combined contribution could play a transformative role in realising the vision of a developed India.

The conference honoured several leading organisations for their achievements in Environment, Human Resources and Corporate Social Responsibility. Companies recognised for their contributions included GAIL (India) Limited, Lupin Limited, NTPC Limited and Tata Power, among others, for their responsible initiatives and exemplary work in these areas.

Central Bank of India organises mega retail outreach programme in New Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A Mega Retail Outreach Programme was successfully organised by the Central Bank of India, Delhi South, at the India International Center Annexe, New Delhi, on Friday.



The programme was graced by the presence of Kushal Pal, Chief General Manager; Tarsem Singh Zira, Zonal Head Delhi; Munish Rana, Regional Head — Delhi South; and Mandeep Kumar, Deputy Regional Head — Regional Office Delhi South, whose guidance and encouragement added great value to the event.

The outreach programme

witnessed enthusiastic participation from esteemed customers. During the event, multiple sanction letters were handed over to customers, in addition to reinforcing the bank's commitment towards expanding retail business and strengthening customer relationships.

During the event, a pre-

sentation on various retail products was given by the bank staff. A total of approx Rs. 200 crore was sanctioned in the Outreach Camp.

Vigilance Campaign: The ongoing vigilance and compliance initiatives undertaken by the bank to uphold high governance standards, transparency, and consumer trust.

IndianOil's Energy Soldiers to strengthen nation's energy security: Director (Refineries) Arvind Kumar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Arvind Kumar, Director (Refineries), IndianOil, led the 80th Independence Day celebrations at IndianOil Township, Noida, joined by Team IndianOil and their families.



The event opened with a rendition of the *Rashtra Geet*, marking 150 years of Vande Mataram, followed by the National Anthem and flag hoisting by Kumar.

In his address, he reflected on India's journey since Independence and called on employees to help build a nation that is economically resilient, technologically advanced, environmentally responsible and energy self-reliant.

"We inherited a free India. Let us leave behind a stronger one - stronger in energy security, innovation, self-reliance and character," he said.

Kumar highlighted IndianOil's role in sustaining the nation's energy lifelines through conflict, pandemic

and geopolitical disruption, reaffirming the philosophy of "*Pehle Indian, Phir Oil*." He described IOCIans as "Energy Soldiers" who have optimised operations and reconfigured logistics to keep essential fuel supplies uninterrupted.

Looking ahead, he outlined

and geopolitical disruption, reaffirming the philosophy of "*Pehle Indian, Phir Oil*." He described IOCIans as "Energy Soldiers" who have optimised operations and reconfigured logistics to keep essential fuel supplies uninterrupted.

Looking ahead, he outlined

DAILY SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★☆

HOW TO SOLVE IT

Sudoku is a logic puzzle where you fill a 9x9 grid so that numbers 1 to 9 appear once in every row, column, and 3x3 box, using elimination and logical deduction—no maths involved.



SOLUTION (21.8.26)

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

DOUBLE CROSSWORD

SATURDAY | AUGUST 22, 2026

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
			9				
10							
				12			
13	14					15	16
17					18		
				19			
20	21					22	23
24					25		
			26				
27						28	
			29				
30							31

ACROSS

1 Mark's dog? (5)

6 Financial houses supporting many anglers (5)

9 When wildly to dash way out to the laundrette? (7)

10 Show no haste to be a toady? (5)

11 Revolutionary linen weaver (5)

12 Birds may or may not pay theirs (5)

13 Decorate by carving of stone (7)

15 Cough or breathe on them (3)

17 Pale due to having a fling? (4)

18 Gloomy and apt to become more so (6)

19 Tough master embraced by a lady at a party? (2-3)

20 Explosive effect created by a boxer? (6)

22 Mention in some excitement (4)

24 Shell-like part of a pearl (3)

25 Vessel useful to a smoker? (7)

26 Wine and a piece of seaside rock! (5)

27 A militant start is as much as you can manage (5)

28 What it is to be wise, proverbially (5)

29 Disadvantages a minister exploits? (7)

30 Caper by a six-footer, I see (5)

31 Tired of attrition? (5)

face? (5)

14 She has far less to cut (5)

15 Escape with a sprained ankle, perhaps? (3,2)

16 It measures many a gnarled tree (5)

18 Spell of wizardry (5)

19 One who believes in being disagreeable? (7)

21 To rain stormily but in small amount (6)

22 Masticates noisily, if you like (6)

23 One you can't bank on to keep a secret? (6)

25 The blooming lot, useless! (5)

26 She provides a duplicate copy for me (6)

28 But they meant a lot as fliers (3)

2. Cash prizes arranged by the press around the centre court (6)

3 No longer a teenager, at least (6)

4 In jazz, apparently, there's violent action (3)

5 Sort of reaction to keep watch on? (5)

6 It's an advantage if everybody's in when it goes up (7)

7 They're of one accord (4)

8 The long ones can be deeply penetrating (6)

12 Fighter with whom the old enemy is about to get cross! (5)

13 In which to get a custard pie right in the

DOWN

1. Spell out

2. Packet

3. Fourso-me

4. Strike

5. Por-tab-le

6. Second-hand

7. Stood in

8. Umb-O-llie

11. Asinine

16. Es-Cu-do

19. Era-se(cond)

20. Ten (rev)

22. Press

23. P-ounce

25. Getting out

27. Her-bage

30. Retreats

31. Sta-gee-rs

32. P-at ro-ast

33. S-prints

35. Uns-aid

36. Lights

37. O-liver

24. Car-dig-an

26. Made over

28. Eyes (ls)

29. (be)st-ared

31. S-end-s-up

34. Blueprint

36. Leaves out

38. Gushing

39. Engage

40. Fi-do

41. Mist-rust

42. Threa-tens

13. Art-i-st

14. Odo-r-o-us

15. On the nose

17. Ba-dminton

18. Treas-ure

20. The-back(dn)

21. Open

Treesa-Gayatri assure WC medal, say job not finished

AMIT KUMAR DAS
■ New Delhi

India's Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand on Friday said being "calm and patient" was the key to their medal run at the World Championships, but were quick to add that the job is "not finished yet" as they eye a deeper run.

The Indian duo assured themselves of a medal with a come-from-behind 16-21, 21-15, 21-13 win over China's Jia Yi Fan and Zhang Shu Xian in the women's doubles quarterfinal. India last won a BWF World Championships medal in women's doubles in



2011, when Jwala Gutta and Ashwini Ponnappa claimed bronze in London.

"I think just being calm and patient and just being in the present moment is actually what we need to do to score points against them. That kind of mindset was there. I think that really worked," Gayatri told reporters.

Treesa admitted the significance of the victory only truly sank in when they reached the final stages of the deciding game. "I think when we got the last 21 points. Because with those kinds of players, it's like when you actually win, that time only will we actually process that,"

said they were refusing to get carried away by the occasion or the identity of their opponents. "We don't want to think too much. We don't want to think about the outcome too much. We just want to get on court first. And then I think we are playing well. And I think we just want to keep doing that. And see what happens," she said.

Treesa also drew confidence from the praise they received from Olympic champion Jia Yifan, who won the Paris Games gold alongside Chen Qingchen. "When I started playing, when she won the Olympic gold medal, it's like she is a good player and

beating her it's like kind of a confidence boost for both of us," Treesa said.

Rising stars like India's Atiqa Mir redefining future of motorsport: FIA



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Paris

World motorsport body FIA has given a strong endorsement for Indian racer Atiqa Mir's special talent, saying rising stars like the 11-year-old are redefining the future of the sport.

Atiqa, the first Indian to be backed by the F1 Academy, is currently giving the more experienced drivers a run for their money in the age 12-14 category across karting series in Europe. Her ultimate goal is to reach F1, where no female has raced since 1992. "Rising stars such as Atiqa Mir are redefining the future of motor sport and her recent success shows how bright the future is for our sport," FIA, the world body for four-wheel motorsports, said in a post on social media on Thursday. "With incredible support from her FIA Member Club, the Western India Automobile Association, Atiqa has already represented her country at the MENA Karting Championship Nations Cup and has now started competing in international FIA Karting competitions on her journey to professional racing. Well done Atiqa and we look forward to following your continued success," the FIA added.

In May, Atiqa had completed a historic sweep of Round 2 of the Champions of the Future Academy in Greece. Earlier this month, she became the youngest Indian to record two top-10 finishes in a FIA European Championship round in Sweden. Last month, Atiqa had attracted plenty of attention by outqualifying Mercedes junior Niccolo Perico for pole position in Round 3 of the Champions of the Future Academy series in Italy. The FIA too took notice of that standout performance. "At the recent Champions of the Future Academy Program event in Italy, 11-year-old Atiqa Mir from India delivered a stand-out performance, securing pole position and setting an event record against a highly competitive international field. "Her achievement reflects the opportunities that accessible competition can create for young drivers as they develop their skills and gain experience on the international stage.

NAME CHANGE

I SHABANA W/O SYED RASHID ALI R/O H.No. B-99, Mulla colony, Housing Board, Near Rana Pratap School, Karond Bhopal (M.P.). I declare that My Old Name was SHABANA BANO (old name) now has to changed SHABANA (New Name) hence forth I shall be known as SHABANA W/O SYED RASHID ALI in all future purpose including all the official documentations.

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY

MATERIAL MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT
(e'-TENDER NOTICE FOR THE SUPPLY OF STORES, NO. EPS/27/2026)
PCMM/WCR on behalf of the President of India invites the following advertised tenders through E-procurement System. Manual/postal offers shall not be entertained. Tenders can be accessed under the link <https://ireps.gov.in> for details and for submission of Tender.

Sr.No.	Tender No.	Short Description	Tendered Qty
1	81265512	Manufacture and supply of Metal Liner	769606 Nos.
2	38262192A	Elastomeric Pads Design-B	59142 Nos.
3	38262414	Constant contact side bearer assembly (consisting of 6 items)	6676 Nos.
4	38262195	Knuckle Pivot Pin with washer	45337 Nos.
5	38260026	Non-asbestos L' type composition brake blocks	141445 Nos.
6	38262168A	Bolster Liner size 153 mm X120 mm X 8 mm thick	101400 Nos.

Due Date for Sr. no.1: 24.08.2026, Sr. no.2: 15.09.2026, Sr. no.3: 17.09.2026, Sr. no. 4: 01.10.2026, Sr. no.5: 22.10.2026, Sr. no. 6: 10.11.2026. For tenders with estimated value below ₹ 50 Lakh, interested firms are advised to visit www.ireps.gov.in

(SD.)
For Principal Chief Material Manager,
WCR, Jabalpur

स्वच्छ भारत अभियान एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर

MADHYA PRADESH STATE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD.

Paryatan Bhawan, Bhadbhada Road, Bhopal-462003
Ph. : +91-755-4027100, 2774340/42, www.mpsdtc.com

क्रमांक 395/यांत्रिकी/पब्लिनि/26 **दिनांक : 21.08.2026**

NIT No. 308/2026_STDC 531451_1

MPSTDC invites RFP for Selection of Agency for Plantation, Site Development, Protection and Long-Term Maintenance (11 year maintenance) Works at Identified Locations in Bhopal 2nd call. **Project Cost 2272.40 lakhs.**

Terms and Conditions can be downloaded from website <https://mptenders.gov.in>. For any other information contact Mrs. Manisha Gautam (EE) Contact No. **9754585667** **Mr. Dr. Krapal Singh Verma (Asst. Director Horticulture), Mob. No. 9826479462 and or e-mail at krapalverma@gmail.com.** **Last date and Time for Online Tender Purchase and submission is 07.09.2026 Time 05:00 PM.**

M.P. Madhyam/127696/2026 **EXECUTIVE ENGINEER**

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

CAPITAL DIVISION NO. 1, CAPITAL PROJECT ADMN., P.W.D., BHOPAL

TENDER NOTICE

Tenders are invited for following work. The details of the work will be available in the website <https://www.mptenders.gov.in> :-

S. No	CPA/	N.I.T.	Name of the Work	Probable amount of contract (In lakhs)	Earnest Money	Cost of tender form	Last date of online purchase, download & submission of tenders
1	2026_CPA 528044_1	57/SAC dt. 07.8.26	Repairing of pot holes, patch repair work and other repair works of various roads under construction sub Division No.8, C.P.A. PWD, Bhopal	Rs. 40.00	Rs. 50,000.00	Rs. 5,000/-	27.08.2026
2	2026_CPA 528046_1	58/SAC dt. 07.8.26	Repairing of pot holes, patch repair work and other repair works of various roads under construction sub	Rs. 29.00	Rs. 50,000.00	Rs. 5,000/-	27.08.2026

The tender forms (documents) can be download after online payment of the cost of the from the above website. The last date of purchase, download and online submission the tender form shall be 27.08.2026 upto 17.30 PM. The detailed NIT and other information can be seen in the above website.

Executive Engineer Capital Division. No. 1 C.P.ADMN., P.W.D., E-5, Axera Colony, Bhopal 0755-2464382

G-17411/26 " स्वच्छता ही सेवा "

कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम जबलपुर

अमृत योजना

मानस भवन बिल्डिंग, राईट हाउस, जबलपुर - 482002

NIT No.:- AMRUT 2.0/Sewer/2026-27/PRO-498 **Date: 21.08.2026**

Notice Inviting e-Tenders (FIRST CALL)

Online Percentage Rate bid for the following AMRUT 2.0 works are invited from registered contractors and firms of reputed fulfilling eligibility criteria:

Name of work:- Construction of Sewerage system of LEFT-OVER area and property house connection of zone-01 of Jabalpur Municipal Area. Under AMRUT 2.0

S. No.	Package Description	Online Tender ID & Date	Probable amount of contract (Rs. In Crore)	Cost of Bid Document & Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (In Rs)	Time of Completion (including rainy season) Months	Online Bidding Last Date
1	(A) Laying Length Total 153.36 K.M. House Service Connection Total -35397 Nos.	2026_UAD 530881_1	130.4464	50,000/- & 65,22,320/-	24	
2	(B) Laying Length Total 272.48 K.M. House Service Connection Total -67358 Nos.	2026_UAD 530881_2	239.8317	50,000/- & 1,19,91,585/-	24	24.09.2026
3	(C) Laying Length Total 208.33 K.M. House Service Connection Total 53027 Nos.	2026_UAD 530881_3	182.0413	50,000/- & 91,02,065/-	24	

Interested Bidder can View the NIT Details & Detail Package Work Description on website <http://www.mptenders.gov.in> and www.mpurban.gov.in & Amendment to NIT, if any, would be published on web site only, and not in News paper.

SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
MUNICIPAL CORPORATION JABALPUR

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

ICICI Home Finance Registered Office: ICICI Bank Towers, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra (East), Mumbai - 400051

Corporate Office: ICICI HFC Tower, JB Nagar, Andheri Kurla Road, Andheri East, Mumbai- 400059
Branch Office: Ambika Arcade, 2nd Floor, Z-19, Zone 1, M.P. Nagar, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh- 462001

Whereas
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Home Finance Company Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Home Finance Company Limited. The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of property/ Date of Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Parushram Choudhary (Borrower), Bhagshri, (Co-Borrower), 37 Karod Kala Part 3 Karod Kala Ward 70 Bhopal M P Bhopal Bhopal- 462010 Madhya Pradesh, LHBHP00001459076	Commercial Plot For Shop No. 03, Housing Park, Housing Board Colony, Ward No. 78, Berasia Road, Tehsil Huzur, District Bhopal Madhya Pradesh Bounded By- North By: Plot of Shop No. 02, South By: Plot of Shop No. 04, East By: Open, West By: Road/ Date of Possession 17-Aug-26	16-05-2026 Rs. 3,53,350/-	Bhopal
2.	Parushram Choudhary (Borrower), Bhagshri, (Co-Borrower), 37 Karod Kala Part 3 Karod Kala Ward 70 Bhopal M P Bhopal Bhopal- 462010 Madhya Pradesh, LHBHP00001459077	Commercial Plot For Shop No. 03, Housing Park, Housing Board Colony, Ward No. 78, Berasia Road, Tehsil Huzur, District Bhopal Madhya Pradesh Bounded By- North By: Plot of Shop No. 02, South By: Plot of Shop No. 04, East By: Open, West By: Road/ Date of Possession 17-Aug-26	16-05-2026 Rs. 1,22,926.8/-	Bhopal

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantors(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Date: August 22, 2026 **Place: Bhopal**

Authorized Office,
ICICI Home Finance Company Limited

केनरा बैंक Canara Bank

Canara Bank, Specialised ARM Branch,
Plot no. 4, PSP Area, Near AIIMS, Saket Nagar Bhopal Tel.: 8989014648

E-AUCTION (SALE NOTICE)

Appendix-IV-A [See provisio to rule 8(6) & 9]

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF MOVABLE & IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES

E-auction Sale Notice For Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provision to Rules 8(6) & 9 of The Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) & Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable properties mortgaged / charged to the secured creditor, the Possession of which has been taken by the authorised officer the **Canara Bank (secured creditor)** will be sold on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS, AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" & WHAT EVER THERE IS" on **30/09/2026** for recovery of bank dues to the **Canara Bank (secured creditor)**

Name and address of the Borrower & Guarantors	Description of Property	Demand Notice Dt Possession Dt. Outstanding Amt.	Reserve Price EMD Amt. Bid Increment Amt.
Borrower: M/s Aditya Urja Through its Proprietor Shri Pankaj Dubey Proprietor- Mr. Pankaj Dubey MIG 55 J Sector Ayodhya Bypass District Bhopal M.P. 462042 Guarantor/Mortgagor : Mr. Pramod Kumar Dubey S/o Mr. P. N. Dubey	All that part and Parcel of House No.- MIG/55, J Sector, Ayodhya Nagar, Ward No. 68, Bhopal, Tehsil - Huzur District Bhopal Total area: 774.72 Sq. Ft. or 72.00 Sq. Mt. Boundaries: East: J/Jr. MIG/56, West: J/Jr. MIG /54, North: 6 m. wide Road, South: HIG House, Name of Title Holder- Mr. Pramod Kumar Dubey S/o Shri P. N. Dubey BAANKNET PROPERTY ID: CNRBADITYAURJA COORDINATES: 23.278831, 77.46381	12.05.2026 01.08.2026 as on 21/08/2026 ₹ 33,55,860.79/- + Interest & charges	₹ 49,40,000/- ₹ 4,94,000/- ₹ 10,000/-

Last date for submission of online bids is on or before 29/09/2026 upto 5.00 p.m.
Date and Time of e-auction : 30/09/2026, 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM (With unlimited extension of 5 minutes duration each)

1) The intending bidders shall deposit above mentioned Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) being 10% of the Reserve Price in E- Wallet of M/s PSB Alliance Private Limited (baanknet.com) portal directly or by generating the Challan therein to deposit the EMD through RTGS/NEFT in the account details as mentioned in the said challan, on above mentioned date of bid submission.

2) The successful bidder shall deposit 25% of the sale price (inclusive of EMD already paid), immediately on the sale being knocked down in his/her favour and the balance within 15 days from the date of confirmation of sale. If the successful bidder fails to pay the sale price as stated above, the deposit made by him shall be forfeited.

3) All charges for conveyance, stamp duty/GST registration charges etc, as applicable and any taxes, revenue/dues to any local authority etc shall be borne by the successful bidder only

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale please refer web portal : <http://BAANKNET.com> or may contact - Chief Manager, SPLSD ARM Bhopal, Canara Bank, Plot no. 4, PSP Area, Near AIIMS, Saket Nagar Bhopal, Contact no. 8989014648, 8057766078, 9691096410, 9123403299 (BHOPAL), 7905027805 (JABALPUR AND BILASPUR), 7683068902 (RAIPUR), 9140476074 (GWALIOR), 9830130770 (INDORE), 8073562754 (BHOPAL) during office hours on any working day.

Date: 21/08/2026, Place: Bhopal **AUTHORISED OFFICER, CANARA BANK**

कार्यालय नगर परिषद जेरोन खालसा जिला निवाडी (म.प्र.)

Office of Nagar Parishad Jeron Khalsa Dist-Niwari (M.P.)

पता-चाई 12 पृथ्वीपुर रोड, जेरोन, जिला निवाडी, पिन- 472337
ई-मेल- cmojeronkhalsa@mpurban.gov.in

क्र./न.परि./टेंडर/लो.नि.शा./2026/527 **जेरोन दिनांक 20/08/026**

Notice Inviting e-Tenders

Online Lumpsum bids for the following works under "SBM (U) 2.0" (Estimated on UADD ISSR (w.e.f 02.08.2021) are invited from registered contractors and firms of reputed fulfilling eligibility criteria

Tender No. & Date	Scope of the work	Probable amount of contract (Rs. In Lacs)	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (In Rs)	Cost of Bid Document (In Lacs)
2026_UAD_531243 Date 21.08.2026	1. Design and build sewage treatment plant of installed capacity 1.0 MLD and all appurtenant structures and allied works; 2. Construction of RCC sump well along with providing and installing pumps and pumping main Comprising of DI-K-7 class pipe of 200mm & 150mm diameter having length of 300 m respectively from Sump well to STP for 2 no's intermediate pumping stations. 3. Construction 2 Nos. of Interception Diversion Structure near outfall point. 4. Reuse of treated used water hydrant sump well (capacity 13 KL). HDPE pipe & pumps 100 meter of Lenth towards talab & Plantation of 50 no's avenue trees 5. Providing and laying of 33 KV/11KV Electrical line (HT feeder) and Electrical Substation	290.57	145285	15000

1. All details relating to the Bid Document(s) can be viewed and downloaded free of cost from the website. Interested Bidder can view the NIT on website www.mptenders.gov.in and www.mpurban.gov.in.

2. The Bid can be purchased only online from 10:30 Hrs of 21/08/2026 to 17:30 Hrs. of 24/09/2026

3. Bid document can be purchased after making online payment of portal fees through Credit / Debit / Cash Card / internet banking to participate.

4. At the time of submission of the Bid the eligible bidder shall be required to:

i) Pay the cost of Bid Document;
ii) Deposit the Earnest Money;
iii) Submit a check list.
iv) Submit an affidavit.
v) Valid registration of EPF.
vi) Joint Venture Agreement, if any
Details can be seen in the Bid Data Sheet

5. ELIGIBILITY FOR BIDDERS:

(a) At the time of submission of the Bid, the bidder should have valid registration with the Government of Mcha Pradesh, PWD. However, such bidders who are not registered with the Government of Madhya Pradesh and are eligible for registration can also submit their bids after having applied for registration with appropriate authority However such bidders who are not registered with the Government of Madhya Pradesh and are registered with Central Government, other State Governments, PSUs are also eligible for submission of Bids.

(b) The bidder shall be required to have valid registration with MPPWD in appropriate class at the time of signing of the Contract.

(c) Failure to sign the contract by the selected bidder, for whatsoever reason, shall result in forfeiture of the earnest money deposit (EMD).

6. Pre-qualification - Pre-qualification conditions, wherever applicable, are given in the Bid Data Sheet.

7. Special Eligibility - Special Eligibility Conditions, if any, are given in the Bid Data Sheet.

8. The Bid Document can be Purchased Only Online from 10:30 Hrs of 21/08/2020 to 17:30 Hrs. of 24/09/2026 Other key dates may be seen in Bid data sheet.

Amendment to NIT, if any, would be published on website only, and not in Newspaper. 9.

10. GST shall be payable extra as per Govt. rules.

11. The Bidder shall operate and maintain the work executed in his scope for the proposed works for 10 years after successful completion of the works as per Tender. The initial period of Five year after completion shall be treated as Defect Liability Period (DLP). The payment against the O&M shall be made every year on satisfactory upkeep and running of the system at percentage rate of the sanctioned Bid cost with an increment of 6% every succeeding year.

मुख्य मगर पालिका अधिकारा, नगर परिषद जेरोन खालसा, जिला निवाडी (म.प्र.)

Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd.

Corporate Office: Office Nos. 501 & 503, 5th Floor, Lightbridge, Saki Vihar Road, Andheri East, Mumbai Suburban (Dist.), M.H. 400072
Bhopal Branch: Office No. 1, Plot No. 200, 1st Floor, Jyoti Cineplex, M.P. Nagar, Zone-1 Bhopal-462001 (MP).
Guna Branch: P.H. No. 75, Building 1st Floor, In Front of Hero Showroom, Near ICICI Bank, Mahaveerpura, AB Road, Guna-473001 (MP).

DEMAND NOTICE

UNDER SECTION 13(2) OF THE SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 READ WITH RULE 3 (1) OF THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002.

The undersigned is the Authorised Officer of **Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd. (AHFL)** under Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (the said Act). In exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Authorised Officer has issued Demand Notices under section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the following Borrower(s) (the "said Borrower(s)"), to repay the amounts mentioned in the respective Demand Notice(s) issued to them that are also given below. In connection with above, Notice is hereby given, once again, to the said Borrower(s) to pay to AHFL, within 60 days from the publication of this Notice, the amounts indicated herein below, together with further interest as detailed in the said Demand Notice(s), from the date(s) mentioned below till the date of payment and/or realization, payable under the loan agreement read with other documents/writings, if any, executed by the said Borrower(s). As security for due repayment of the loan, the following assets have been mortgaged to AHFL by the said Borrower(s) respectively.

S. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower & Guarantor	Demand Notice Date & Amount	Description of secured assets (Immovable property)
1	(Loan Code No. 00610001235 / Bhopal Branch) Vishal Sittani (Borrower) Raj Kumar Sittani (Co-Borrower)	10-08-2026 & ₹ 11,01,081/-	All that piece and parcel of the property bearing, Flat No. Mig -T1, 3Rd Floor, Shikhar Parisar, Khasra No. 259, Village Laukhedi, Bairagarh, Ward No. 02, Tehsil Huzur, Dist Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. Boundaries: East: Staircase, West: Road, North: Other S Land, South: Flat No. T-2
2	(Loan Code No. 05810000978 / Guna Branch) Rinku (Borrower) Deviprasad Jain & Avnesh (Co-Borrower)	10-08-2026 & ₹ 9,96,851/-	All that piece and parcel of the property bearing, House No. 03095/1, Old Patwari Halka No. 65, New Patwari Halka No. 08, Ward No. 03, Salim Ki Badi, Durga Colony, Tehsil Guna, Dist Guna, Madhya Pradesh. Boundaries: East: Land of Bhajan Rathore, West: Way 18ft, North: House of Mithlesh Namdev, South: House of Rahul Jain

If the said Borrowers shall fail to make payment to AHFL as aforesaid, AHFL shall proceed against the above secured assets under Section 13(4) of the Act and the applicable Rules, entirely at the risks of the said Borrowers as to the costs and consequences. The said Borrowers are prohibited under the Act from transferring the aforesaid assets, whether by way of sale, lease or otherwise without the prior written consent of AHFL. Any person who contravenes or abets contravention of the provisions of the said Act or Rules made there under, shall be liable for imprisonment and/or penalty as provided under the Act.

Place : Madhya Pradesh **Sd/- Authorised Officer**
Date : 22.08.2026 **For : Aadhar Housing Finance Limited**

बैंक ऑफ इंडिया

Bank of India

BOI

Zonal office : MIG 15, Rajeshwar Building, Shivanagar, Damoh Road, Jabalpur-482002, Email : jabalpur.ard@bankofindia.co.in

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF MOVABLE PROPERTIES

E-AUCTION DATE : 25-9-2026, TIME : 11.00 AM to 5.00 PM

E-auction Sale Notice for Sale of movable Assets under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provisio to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described movable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the constructive possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of Bank of India, Kareli / Secured Creditor will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is on 25th September 2026, for recovery of Rs. 25,78,551.93/- + UCI and Other Charges due to Bank of India, Kareli Branch / Secured Creditor from **Mr. Lal Sahab Lodhi**.

The reserve price will be Rs. 21,10,000/-
Earnest money deposit will be Rs. 2,11,000/-

DESCRIPTION OF THE MOVABLE PROPERTY

Harvester Manku Agro /Vishal 435 Harvester / 2025
Registration No : MP22ZG0547, Date of Registration : 02.04.2026
Chassis No: MS15697032K25, Engine No: SPHM104451
Color : P Green and White, RLW-9730 KG, ULW -7945 KG

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in Bank of India's / Secured Creditor's website, i.e., www.bankofindia.co.in and on www.ebkay.in. or contact Authorised Officer Mr. Ravikant Shukla on Mo. No. 7985276357.

Date : 22.08.2026
Place : Jabalpur

Chief Manager & Authorised Officer

बैंक ऑफ इंडिया
Bank of India

**Zonal Office: MIG 15, Rajeshwar Building,
Shivnagar, Damoh Road, Jabalpur- 482002**
Email: jabalpur.ard@bankofindia.co.in

**SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF
IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES**

E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE

for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrowers(s) and Guarantors(s) that immovable properties as described in column 3 in table hereunder mortgaged/charged to Bank of India (Secured Creditor), the constructive/physical possession of which has been taken by the **Authorized Officer of Bank of India**, (Secured Creditor), will be sold on **"As is where is" "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" on 25.09.2026** for recovery of the amount(s), as stated in column 4 of the table hereunder, due to Bank of India (the secured creditor) from the Borrowers and Guarantors as mentioned in column 2 of the following table. The reserve price and earnest money deposit will also be applicable as stated in the following table in column 6 & 7 respectively:

Date of E-auction - 25/09/2026, Time : 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM						
Name of Branch (1)	Name of Borrower/ Guarantors (2)	Description of Property & Owner Name (3)	Dates of Demand Notice U/s 13(2) & Amount (4)	Date of Possession/Type of Possession (5)	Reserve Price (6)	Earnest Money Deposit (7)
SUHAGI	Mr. Shree Ram Kushwaha (Proprietorship Firm) Address: H no 349 Chandra Mohan Nagar, Berial number -1, Mohaniya Khamarua, Jabalpur(M.P) District- Jabalpur (M.P.)-482005. And also at: Factory Address M/S Nirmal Sai Construction Ranjhi District- Jabalpur (M.P.)-482005.	EQM of all the part & parcel of property (Land and Building) situated on Plot no- 43, Shop No. A & B, Part of Patwari & Div. Kh.No. 17/1 & 36/1, N.B. no. 302, PH. No. 15/49, Nirmal Sai Nagar, Mauza- Jhurjhura, RNM- Maharajpur, Tehsil- Panagar District Jabalpur (MP) admeasuring 46.46 sq.mt (500 Sq. Ft.) in the name of Mr. Shree Ram Kushwaha. (leasehold) and Bounded By: North: Shop no C, South: 20.0" side Road East: Side Road, West: Plot no 42	10.04.2026 ₹ 15,54,812.78 Interest + Other Charges	18.06.2026 Symbolic	₹ 11,05,000/-	₹ 1,10,500/-
SEONI	M/s Annapurna Rice Mill Prop. Mrs. Reeta Esarka Akbar Ward, Daida Factory Road (MP)-480661 (Borrower) Mrs. Reeta Esarka W/o Mr. Ashok Esarka (Deceased) (Borrower- Mortgageor) Through known legal heirs 1. Mr Ashok Esarka (Relation- Spouse) 2. Mr. Vishwanath Esharka (Relation- Son) both R/o Near Neelam Laj, Chandrashekhar Azad Ward, Managlipeth, Lugharwada Seoni (MP)-480661	1. Equitable Mortgage over immovable property situated at Village Babariya, Industrial Area, Plot No. 02. PC. No 55/105, S. No 384, R.I.C. Seoni-2, Tehsil & Dist. Seoni M.P. Admeasuring 12000 Sq.Ft., leased to M/s Annapurna R.C. Mill (Prop. Mrs. Reeta Esarka). Boundaries - North: M/s Banganga Milk & Milk Product, South: M/s Madvelli Minerals Pvt. Ltd. East: House of Afser Hussain, West: Road	01.05.2026 ₹ 2575631.53 Interest + Other Charges	10.07.2026 Symbolic	₹ 35,43,000/-	₹ 3,54,300/-

DETAILS OF ENCUMBRANCE KNOWN TO THE SECURED CREDITOR: NOT KNOWN

TERMS OF CONDITIONS- 1. Auction Sale / Bidding would be only through "Online Electronic Bidding Process" through the website <http://baaneknet.com>

2. If required, there shall be unlimited extension of 10 minutes each. Auction would commence on reserve price and bidders shall improve their offers in multiples of Rs. 10,000/- for all above property(ies). The sale shall not take place at or below reserve price.

3. The sale shall be subject to the Terms & Conditions prescribed in the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 and to the following further conditions.

4. The intending bidders should get themselves registered on the above mentioned website. The should make their own inquiries regarding any statutory liabilities, arrears of property tax, electricity dues etc. relating to the above property(ies) before participating in the auction sale process. The properties are being sold along with all existing and future encumbrances, whether known or unknown to the Bank. The Authorized Officer shall not be responsible in any way for any third party claims / rights.

5. The particulars of Secured Assets specified in the Schedule here in above have been stated to the best of the information of the Authorized Officer, but the Authorized Officer shall not be answerable for any error, misstatement or omission in this proclamation.

6. The Authorized Officer is not bound to accept the highest bid or any bids or any or all bids and reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the bids without assigning any reason therefor, and very, modify and waive any condition of sale in his absolute discretion. The Authorized Officer reserves the right to withdraw the above e-Auction without assigning any reason.

7. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer <http://baaneknet.com>, www.bankofindia.co.in or Contact: Shri Ravikant Shukla (Mob. No. 7985276357), Bank of India, Zonal Office, Jabalpur.

8. This publication is also a 15/30 days notice to the above mentioned borrower(s) / Guarantor(s)/ Mortgageor(s).

9. It shall be the 3 responsibility of the successful bidder to remit the TDS @ 1% as applicable u/s 194-Ia of Income Tax Act if the aggregate of the sums credited or paid for such consideration is Rs. 50 Lakhs or more. TDS should be filed online b filing form 26QB & TDS Certificate to be issued in form 16 B. The purchaser has to produce the proof of having deposited the income tax into the government account.

Date: 22.08.2026

Authorized Officer, BANK OF INDIA