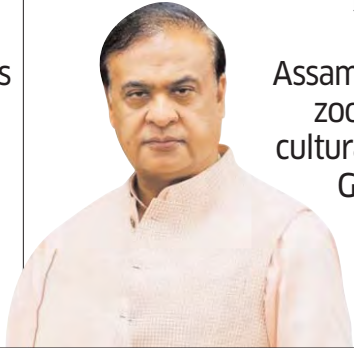
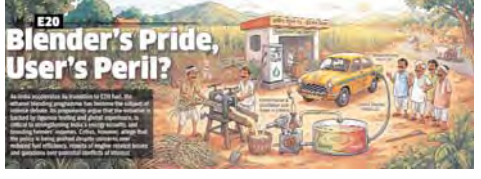
 PAGE 5 NATION Resolve, soldiers will win future wars, not just AI: Rajnath Singh	 PAGE 7 USP Assam CM inspects zoo, housing, cultural projects in Guwahati	 PAGE 9 GLOBAL Jaishankar to launch India's UNSC campaign	 PAGE 10 SPORTS Defeat makes Djokovic realise he's blessed and cursed	AGENDA 
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15 Indians killed in Vietnam boat mishap

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

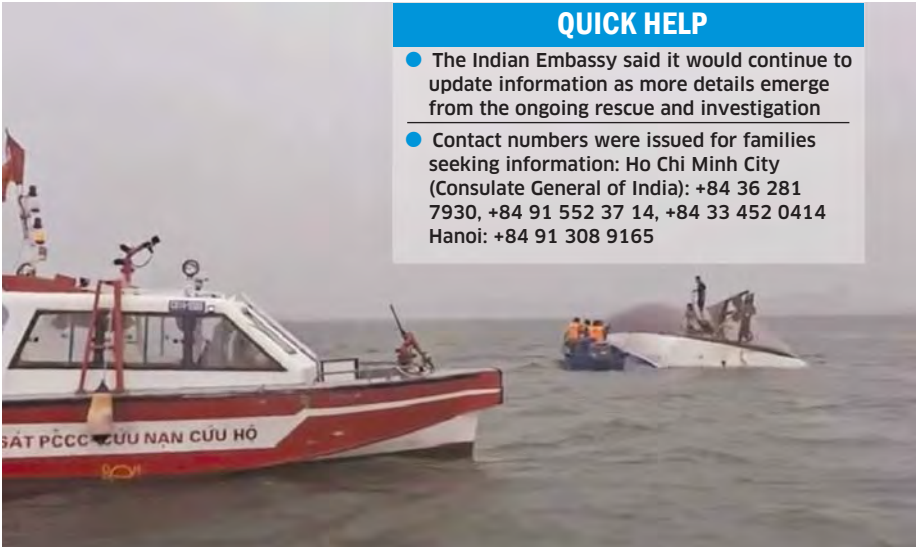
At least 15 Indian tourists died after a speedboat carrying 32 Indian passengers and four Vietnamese crew members capsized in rough seas off Phu Quoc Island in southern Vietnam on Saturday afternoon.

The vessel, operated by Ocean Pear Island Company, was ferrying tourists from Hon May Rut islet to An Thoi Port when it overturned around 1 pm local time, approximately 400 metres off Hon May Rut Ngoai. There were 36 people — 32 Indian tourists and four local crew members — on board. Of them, 21 were rescued.

The Vietnam Government ordered an immediate investigation to ascertain the cause of the accident.

Nearby tourist boats rushed to the scene within minutes of the incident. Rescue workers and boat operators reported that many passengers were trapped inside the overturned vessel, complicating efforts. "Only a few people were brought out conscious," one rescuer told the local media.

The Indian Embassy in Vietnam confirmed the casu-



alty figure and said search and rescue operations were still underway. It immediately set up control rooms in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi to assist affected families.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed deep grief over the tragedy. In a post on X, he said he was "extremely saddened" by the accident and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured. The Prime Minister added that the Indian Embassy and Consulate in

Vietnam were extending all possible assistance and maintaining close coordination with Vietnamese authorities.

President Droupadi Murmu said in a social media post, "Saddened by the news of a boat accident in Vietnam in which many Indian nationals lost their lives. My deep condolences to the grieving families. I pray for speedy recovery of the injured."

Meanwhile, Vietnamese Prime Minister Le Minh Hung

has ordered an investigation into the cause of the accident and directed authorities to hold those responsible accountable, VN Express International said in another report. He also asked officials to review waterway and maritime safety measures in the area of the accident and other similar locations, the news portal reported.

The exact cause of the incident is yet to be ascertained. Of the 15 victims, 10 were

Extremely saddened by the accident and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured

— PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI



from Tamil Nadu, three from Andhra Pradesh and two were from Kerala. Two of the deceased were women, according to a list shared by the Indian Embassy in Hanoi on X.

The bodies of all the deceased tourists have been recovered, according to local media reports.

"A big wave hit us, 20 people came out of it, and the balance members got stuck," Nirmal Kumar, a survivor, told PTI Videos.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

India a strategic launchpad: PM Modi tells NZ CEOs

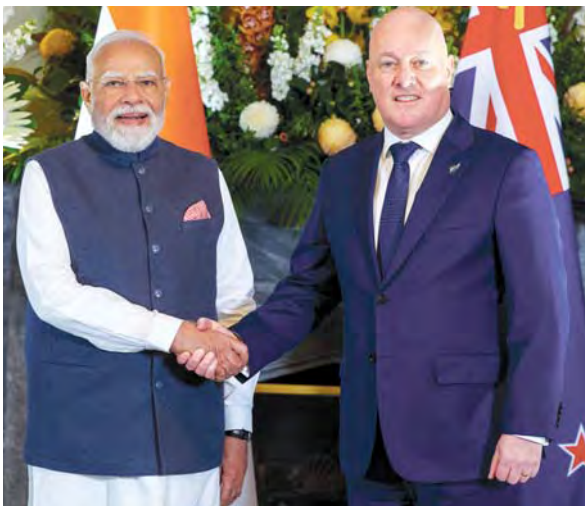
ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday invited New Zealand's top business leaders to invest across multiple sectors in India, asserting that the country is not merely a market but a strategic launchpad for global growth.

Addressing a select group of CEOs and corporate leaders, Modi highlighted the recently signed India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) as a landmark that would unlock opportunities in market access, investment, services, technology, and talent mobility.

The remarks came shortly after Modi held wide-ranging bilateral talks with New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon. The two leaders announced 18 key outcomes, including 10 agreements, and upgraded bilateral ties to a Strategic Partnership. New Zealand committed to investing \$20 billion in India over the next 15 years.

"In India, we have made



Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon pose for photographs during a meeting in New Zealand

reform, perform, and transform the basis of governance. Today, India has policy stability, political stability, and continuity of growth," Modi said. "Our message to the world is: India is not only a market; India is a launchpad for global growth."

He described the FTA, negotiated in a record nine months, as "a new resolve

for our shared future." Modi expressed confidence that the partnership would help double bilateral trade to NZD 7 billion (about ₹35,000 crore) by 2030. Speaking on New Zealand's investment pledge, Modi said it reflected a commitment to participate in India's development journey.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

GREAT OFFERS!



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PIONEER IN SHORT

BENGAL EASES INVESTMENT RULES

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvenud Adhikari on Saturday announced that his Government would introduce a single-window clearance mechanism for investment proposals of ₹100 crore and above, asserting that land availability would not be a constraint for industries in the State. Speaking at the foundation stone-laying ceremony of a new manufacturing facility of Lux Industries at Dankuni in Hooghly district, Adhikari said the Government was committed to creating a business-friendly environment and attracting fresh investments. "There will be a single-window clearance system for investment proposals worth ₹100 crore and above," he said.

FULL REPORT ON P6

FSSAI CRACKS DOWN ON SWIGGY INSTAMART

Food regulator FSSAI on Saturday said it has issued 9 notices to quick-commerce platform Swiggy Instamart following several consumer complaints, including of alleged supply of rotten and expired food products, against the platform. In a social media post on X, Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) said it has "issued 9 notices to Swiggy Instamart following multiple consumer complaints alleging violations under the FSS Act 2006." The FSSAI informed that the consumer complaints "alleged the supply of expired, spoiled, rotten, contaminated and otherwise unsafe food products through Swiggy Instamart". The regulator has directed the platform to submit a detailed explanation and compliance report failing which appropriate legal action will be initiated. Meanwhile, an Instamart spokesperson said: "We are reviewing the flagged listings by FSSAI and are in touch with the authorities to resolve the same."

FULL REPORT ON P6



CJI flags delay in creation of Arbitration Council

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Flagging the delay in the formation of the Arbitration Council of India, Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Saturday expressed the hope that a bill in this regard will now come up before the Parliament.

Speaking at the Indian Institute of Arbitration and Mediation silver jubilee event, CJI Kant stressed that India is moving towards treating Alternative Dispute Redressal (ADR) not as a lesser substitute for justice but as one of its ordinary pathways.

He said the Arbitration Council of India was created on the statute book by the 2019 amendment to grade

institutions and accredit arbitrators.

"Six years later, it has still not been constituted. A further Draft Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, circulated for public consultation in October 2024 on the recommendations of the Viswanathan Committee, remains exactly that, and its new avatar is hopefully now being introduced in Parliament.

"If our ambition is to become a preferred seat, this gap between announcement and implementation is precisely the credibility deficit we cannot legislate our way out of," he said, noting that credibility is not built by judgments alone.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Film *Satluj* faces continued OTT ban over sovereignty concerns

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Amidst the political outrage over the Diljit Dosanjh-starrer film *Satluj*, a committee set up by the Centre to examine the content of the film on Saturday asserted that the ban on its public access through online platforms should remain as the film allegedly goes against India's sovereignty and integrity.

The issue turned political in

Punjab, with the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) demanding that the ban be lifted and Shiromani Akali Dal announcing plans to screen the film across the State. Punjab currently led by Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is headed for Assembly polls early next year and political parties have been trying to create a controversy over the film.

The Honey Trehan-directed film depicts the life of



human rights activist Jaswant Singh Khalsa, who investigated the cremation of thousands of unidentified bodies in Punjab between 1984 and 1994, and was abducted and murdered by the State police in 1995.

Sources in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting said the committee pointed out that the ban on the film under Section 69A of the IT Act was justified.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

US-Iran war truce faces setbacks

JON GAMBRELL/WILL WEISSERT ■ Dubai

US and Iranian leaders traded further threats on Saturday as the interim deal to end the war buckles under repeated crossfire in the Middle East.

President Donald Trump upped threats of further missile attacks against Iran in a string of comments on his Truth Social that came after senior US officials demanded that Iran make a public statement saying the Strait of Hormuz is open and that ships crossing the vital corridor won't be attacked.



Trump also made the comments after the funeral of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei saw open calls for the US leader's killing.

Later on Saturday, Iranian Supreme Leader

Mojtaba Khamenei vowed that Iranians would continue to avenge the killing of his father, Ali Khamenei, who was mourned in funeral events throughout Iran this week.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

MHA revises norms for National Anthem, Song

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH ■ New Delhi

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has issued new directions to all State Governments, Union Territory (UT) administrations, and central ministries, reiterating rules regarding the singing of the National Anthem and the National Song, and calling for strict compliance.

The new instructions refer to earlier orders that explain which rules must be followed and which are optional. They also stress the importance of using the correct script, words, and pronunciation. Official versions and pronunciation guides can be found on the MHA website. All Government institutions will receive these instructions



RULES

- If both songs are performed at an event, 'Vande Mataram' should come before 'Jana Gana Mana'
- In States or Union Territories with their own official songs, the order should be the State song first, then the National Song, and finally the National Anthem
- The complete version of Vande Mataram, which has six stanzas and takes about three minutes and ten seconds to sing, must be used at important official events
- The MHA's action is part of a larger effort to ensure national symbols are respected and used consistently across the country

to ensure everyone follows the rules.

If both songs are performed at an event, 'Vande Mataram' should come before 'Jana Gana Mana'. In States or Union Territories with their own official songs, the order should be the State song first, then the National Song, and finally the National Anthem. This order respects both national and regional identities.

The complete version of Vande Mataram, which has six stanzas and takes about three minutes and ten seconds to sing, must be used at important official events. These include civil investitures, when the President arrives or leaves formal events, before and after the President's address on All India Radio and TV, when governors arrive or leave formal functions, and

when the National Flag is brought on parade. The Government may also request its use at other times.

Everyone is required to stand at attention during the National Song and the National Anthem. People are expected to stay silent, remain still, and show respect. The MHA also refers to its earlier order from January 28, 2026, which designates the six-stanza version of Vande Mataram as the standard for official events.

The usual rules for the National Anthem (Jana Gana Mana) remain in place. The full version is played at civil and military ceremonies, national salutes, parades, and when the President arrives or leaves. A shorter version is used for special occasions, like toasts at messes.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

JPC clears ONOE, cites legal backing

Bill may be brought in Monsoon Session

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Panaji/New Delhi

In an apparent indication that a bill pertaining to simultaneous elections could be introduced in the forthcoming Monsoon Session, the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on Saturday said that the legal experts including six former Chief Justices of India has conveyed that the proposed 'One Nation, One Election' (ONOE) framework conforms to the Constitution and does not violate federal structure or democratic principles.

Addressing a press conference at the end of the JPC's two-day visit to Goa, senior BJP leader and JPC chairman PP Chaudhary said the committee examined concerns over whether simultaneous Lok Sabha and

Assembly elections would undermine federalism or violate the Constitution's basic structure.

The JPC travelled to several States including Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Karnataka, Gujarat and Goa to gather views from chief ministers, Assembly Speakers, legislators, civil servants, industry representatives, civil society organisations and the media.

"The first question before us was whether simultaneous elections are against the Constitution, against federalism or against democracy. We sought the opinion of legal experts, including six former Chief Justices of India. All of them independently told the committee that simultaneous elections do not violate the federal structure, democracy or the basic structure of the Constitution," he said.

CONTINUED ON >> P4



Security heightened at Red Fort after hoax bomb threat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi Police significantly beefed up security at the iconic Red Fort on Saturday after receiving information about a bomb threat. However, after a thorough search of the historic monument and its surrounding areas, officials declared the threat a hoax, as no suspicious objects or explosives were found.

The threatening call was made to the Mumbai Police control room. The unidentified caller claimed that the 17th-century Mughal-era landmark in the national capital would be blown up. Mumbai Police relayed the information to the Delhi Police control room, which alerted the North District Police for urgent action.

In response, security was quickly increased around the Red Fort. Bomb squads were sent in, and teams searched the main buildings, lawns, and nearby



areas. After several hours, officials confirmed there was no real threat.

The all-clear was given, and normal security arrangements were restored at the Red Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and popular tourist spot. Police are now working to find the caller and understand why the false threat was made. Legal action will follow once the individual is apprehended, sources said. This incident comes amid recent hoax bomb threats reported

across the National Capital Region. Earlier this month, several schools in Delhi received bomb threat emails, prompting evacuations and searches.

In June, the Delhi Mayor's office also received a hoax warning about attacks at several places in Delhi and Haryana. This comes nearly eight months after a deadly car bomb exploded near the Red Fort Metro Station, killing 15 people and injuring many others.

These incidents have

made security tighter at important heritage sites and public places in the city. Even though the latest call was a hoax, it shows how much false alarms can stretch police resources. Authorities have reiterated their commitment to protecting national monuments and keeping citizens and tourists safe.

Investigations into the caller's identity and motive continue, with a focus on preventing recurrence of such disruptive incidents. The episode serves as a reminder that police are still trying to determine who made the call and why, to prevent similar incidents in the future.

This case is a reminder that hoax threats waste time and resources that could be used for real emergencies. Its location in the heart of Old Delhi and its status as a major cultural landmark make it a high-profile target, necessitating constant vigilance by security agencies.

₹67.48 lakh compensation awarded to kin of man killed in bus accident

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A Delhi Motor Accident Claims Tribunal has awarded ₹67.48 lakh as compensation to the family of a 33-year-old mobile phone technician, who died after being hit by a bus in northeast Delhi in December 2021.

Presiding Officer Manish Sharma heard the claim petition filed by the family of Shakeel Ahmed and directed Reliance General Insurance Company Ltd, the insurer of the offending bus, to pay ₹67,48,200 along with interest at 9 per cent per annum to the victim's family.

The order dated July 6 said, "This tribunal is constrained to hold Respondent No 1 guilty of driving the offending vehicle rashly at the relevant time, leading to the death of the deceased."

According to the tribunal, Shakeel Ahmed lost his life after a bus hit his scooter near the Seelampur red light on December 16, 2021. The deceased was survived by



his wife, three children and elderly parents, who filed the compensation claim.

The driver and owner of the bus denied negligence, claiming that the deceased was attempting to overtake the bus from the wrong side and had collided with it. However, the tribunal rejected the defence, saying that the respondents failed to produce any evidence to support their version.

It held that the accident occurred due to the rash and negligent driving of the bus and held the insurance company liable to satisfy the award.

While computing the compensation, the tribunal accepted evidence that the deceased worked as an

expert mobile phone repair technician earning Rs 30,000 per month. It also took note of records showing that he travelled to China for business purposes with his employer.

"Last drawn salary shall be taken into account for calculating income of the petitioner for the grant of compensation, and to be taken into consideration for calculating the income of the deceased. Therefore, the income of the deceased is assessed as ₹30,000 per month on the date of the incident," the tribunal said.

It arrived at the total compensation of Rs 67.48 lakh by applying the applicable multiplier, adding future prospects and awarding compensation under conventional heads such as loss of consortium, funeral expenses and loss of estate.

The insurer has been directed to deposit the award amount within 30 days, failing which it will be liable to pay interest at 12 per cent per annum for the period of delay.

Man held in ₹1.6 crore loan fraud racket



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi Police has arrested a 24-year-old man from Punjab for allegedly being part of a cyber fraud syndicate that fraudulently obtained loans worth around ₹1.6 crore by misusing Aadhaar and PAN details of nearly 50 people, an officer said on Saturday.

The accused, identified as Ajay Kumar, was arrested on Friday. A mobile phone allegedly used in the crime has been recovered from his possession, police said.

The case came to light after a Delhi resident lodged a complaint on June 25, stating that he had started receiving calls from a loan recovery agent demanding EMIs for a personal loan of ₹4.5 lakh that he had never taken.

Police said the complainant later found that a loan had been fraudulently availed in his name from a company using his PAN details.

He also discovered that the mobile number linked to his Aadhaar had been changed without his knowledge, enabling the fraud.

During investigation, police traced the loan amount to a bank account operated by Ajay Kumar. "Technical surveillance and human intelligence led to his arrest. Analysis of his mobile phone allegedly revealed exchanges of the complainant's personal details with his associates before the fraud," a senior police officer said.

During interrogation, the accused allegedly disclosed that he was part of a network that routed fraudulently obtained loan amounts into bank accounts of people willing to allow their accounts to be used in return for a commission. The syndicate also allegedly changed victims' Aadhaar-linked mobile numbers before using their Aadhaar and PAN details to obtain loans from private finance companies.

Police said investigation has so far revealed that documents of around 50 victims were misused to obtain loans worth about Rs 1.6 crore from private non-banking financial companies.

Efforts are underway to trace other members of the racket, identify additional mule accounts and ascertain the full extent of the fraud, police added.

Third Jagannath Rath Yatra to roll through Gurugram on July 16

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The third Shri Jagannath Rath Yatra at Sai Ka Aangan in Gurugram will be held on Thursday, July 16, 2026, beginning at 3 pm, under the guidance of Dr Chandra Bhanu Satpathy, a spiritual thinker, humanitarian, and distinguished exponent of Jagannath culture.

The celebrations are expected to draw thousands of devotees from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The event is organised by the CB Satpathy Cultural Foundation and the management of Sai Ka Aangan. The celebrations will begin with the sacred Pahandi Bijje procession of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra, and Shri Sudarshan at 3 pm.

This will be followed by the traditional Chhera Pahara ceremony, which symbolises humility, equality, and selfless service, to be performed by Dr Satpathy before the ceremonial pulling of the divine chariot.

The festival will feature devotional music, traditional cultural performances showcasing the heritage of Odisha, and the distribution of prasad prepared by traditional Odia cooks from Puri.



The Rath Yatra at Sai Ka Aangan was introduced in 2024 and is in its third edition this year. Within two years, it has emerged as one of the most anticipated annual spiritual celebrations in the Gurugram region, bringing together devotees who cut across cultural, linguistic, and social boundaries.

Dr Satpathy's association with the Jagannath Rath Yatra tradition extends over more than three decades of spiritual and cultural work. He initiated the Shri Jagannath Rath Yatra at the Power Grid Temple in Gurugram in 2009, making him one of the early organisers to establish this tradition in the Delhi-NCR region.

He subsequently took the tradition to the United States, introducing Rath Yatras in Dallas and Nashville in 2011 and in Houston in 2012,

expanding the cultural and spiritual reach of the Jagannath tradition to the Indian diaspora in North America.

Alongside this work, Dr Satpathy has for more than three decades been associated with the Sai movement and has contributed to spiritual outreach, humanitarian activities, and the promotion of Jagannath culture both in India and internationally. He is also an author with a body of work focused on spiritual thinking and philosophy.

In the weeks leading up to the July 16 celebration, a series of awareness and outreach programmes has been conducted to educate devotees and the public about the spiritual significance of Lord Jagannath, the sacred traditions of the Rath Yatra, and the broader cultural heritage of Odisha.

AIWC half-yearly conference opens in Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The All India Women's Conference (AIWC) is holding its half-yearly business conference in New Delhi from July 11 to 13, 2026, hosted by the Ujjawal Women's Association, an East Delhi branch of the 99-year-old national women's organisation, with the formal inauguration on July 12 at Gandhi Peace Foundation featuring Laxmi Singh, Commissioner of Police, Gautam Buddha Nagar, who made history in 2022 by becoming the first woman police commissioner in Uttar Pradesh.

Around 150 members from branches across the country are attending the

three-day conference to discuss the work carried out by approximately 500 AIWC branches and to deliberate on challenges faced during voluntary work across different states.

Laxmi Singh, the chief guest, has said that when power and social awareness come together, the impact is greater. She will inaugurate the conference at 10 am on July 12. The guest of honour is Prof Bejon Mishra, an international expert on consumer focus and currently Chairman of the core group of experts constituted by the Ministry of Ayush, Government of India.

AIWC was established in 1927 and is one of India's oldest and most prominent

national-level non-governmental organisations focused on women's welfare and empowerment. The organisation holds business conferences twice a year, rotating the hosting responsibility among its various branches spread across the country. At these conferences, branches present and discuss the work they have undertaken, and the organisation's national leadership frames programmes based on the needs that emerge from different regions.

This year's half-yearly conference is being hosted by Ujjawal Women's Association, a branch established in 1989 in East Delhi and affiliated with AIWC. The association is enrolled

with NGO Darpan, the civil society portal of NITI Aayog. It runs tailoring courses, beautician courses, candle-making courses, and other handicraft training programmes and has trained over 10,000 girls and women in different skills since its founding. It is currently also running computer courses with support from AIWC.

The conference format reflects one of the practical strengths of a national organisation with geographically distributed branches: it allows representatives from different parts of the country to compare the problems they encounter in the field and collectively work out how they can be addressed.

Self-staged ₹37.5 lakh robbery by firm's employees busted

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A robbery of ₹37.5 lakh near Burari flyover in north Delhi turned out to be a self-staged conspiracy allegedly orchestrated by two employees of a private company along with their associates, officials said on Saturday.

Police solved the case and recovered almost the entire amount stolen. Three accused, including the two employees of the victim



company's advertising and newspaper publishing business, were arrested on Friday, while efforts are underway to nab the remaining suspects, police said.

The police received a PCR call regarding a cash robbery at Wazirabad police station

on July 9. Complainant Mohan Dass told police that he and his colleagues, Abhishek and Yogesh, had collected ₹45.5 lakh in cash from Chandni Chowk for delivery to their employer's residence in Saraswati Vihar.

"Mohan Dass and Abhishek were travelling on one motorcycle carrying ₹37.5 lakh in a bag, while Yogesh was following on another motorcycle with ₹8 lakh," the officer said. The officer said that near

Burari Flyover on the Outer Ring Road around 6 pm, three men riding a black motorcycle allegedly intercepted them by hitting their motorcycle, snatched the bag containing ₹37.5 lakh and fled towards Nirankari Bhawan.

The complainant and Abhishek allegedly caught one of the suspects with the help of passersby, but, instead of informing the police, Abhishek and Yogesh took him on their motorcycle towards their office in Badli.

सार्वजनिक सूचना

मै, विक्रम सिंह नेगी पुत्र स्व. उदय सिंह नेगी निवासी नं०-238बी, सद्य चौक, लाजपतनगर, साहिबाबाद, गाजियाबाद, उ.प्र. ने अपने भाई लक्षमण सिंह नेगी पुत्र स्व. उदय सिंह नेगी से अपने समस्त पारिवारिक सम्बंध विच्छेद कर दिये हैं जो भी व्यक्ति लक्षमण सिंह नेगी पुत्र स्व. उदय का कोई सम्बंध रखता है या कोई लेन-देन करता है तो उसका वह स्वयं जिम्मेदार होगा हमारी कोई जिम्मेदारी नहीं होगी।

विक्रम सिंह नेगी

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public at large are hereby informed that below mentioned documents have been misplaced (lost) - Original Succession Certificate dated 12-12-2023 granted by the Court of Sri Arun Kumar Rai, The Judicial Commissioner, Ranchi in favour of most Renu Singh w/o late Vijay Shankar Singh in respect of the estate of late Vijay Shankar Singh in regard to Residential Flat/Dwelling Unit Bearing No. - B, having a total Super area measuring 1684 Sq. Ft. (168.44 Sq. Mtr) in the "GC-16/16th Avenue" situated in the Township "Gaur City-2" at Plot No. GH-03, Sector-16C, Greater Noida, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar (U.P.) Accordingly, Police complaint has already been lodged in Haryana Police. Citizen Services, Application number 132271052600648 and the same is under investigation. Renu Singh Through Attorney Urvasi claims to be the owner of the property and has agreed to sell the same to Mr. Barun Kumar Mishra. And now Mr. Barun Kumar Mishra has approached the KOTAK MAHINDRA BANK for loan against mortgage of above said property. If any person has found information (possession/knowledge of above said missing pages of above Original Succession Certificate dated 12-12-2023 or has any claim/right/interest of any kind over the above said property, then submit intimate within 10 days in writing to Vikas Shokeen, Advocate, H-20, BASEMENT, BALI NAGAR, NEW DELHI-110015. Thereafter any kind of claim will not be acceptable.

PVR LAW ASSOCIATES

ORANE INTERNATIONAL PRIVATE LIMITED
REGISTERED OFFICE: S.C.O. 232-234, LEVEL-3, SECTOR-34A, CHANDIGARH-160022.
PUBLIC NOTICE
This Public Notice is hereby issued to inform the general public and all concerned parties of the Management of M/s Orane International Private Limited, having its registered office at S.C.O. 232-234, Level-3, Sector-34A, Chandigarh (U.T.) 160022.
Please take notice that the Franchise Agreement entered into with our franchisee, M/s Geet Trading, having its office at SCOD-5, 2nd Floor, HUDA Market (Above HUDA Bank), Sector 16, Faridabad, Haryana 121002, has been officially terminated with effect from 2nd July 2026.
The aforementioned franchisee was operating a business under the name and style of "Orane Academy" and has now been strictly directed to cease all operations under our brand name, and to immediately remove all signage, trademarks, logos, and materials acquired by it during its franchise tenure.
The general public is hereby cautioned that any person or entity dealing with the said erstwhile franchisee or at the above-mentioned location, under the impression of it being associated with Orane International Private Limited, shall do so entirely at their own risk, cost, and responsibility.
The Company shall not be held liable or responsible in any manner whatsoever for any such dealings, transactions, or consequences arising therefrom.
Legal Manager
Orane International Private Limited

JAMIA HAMDARD
(A Govt. Aided Deemed to be University) Accredited by NAAC in 'A+' Grade
Hamdard Nagar, New Delhi - 110062
RECRUITMENT NOTIFICATION
Applications on prescribed formats are invited for filling up the following Non-Teaching positions on Regular / Contractual / Deputation Basis in Jamia Hamdard. Eligible candidates may apply on or before 31st July, 2026
Non-Teaching Positions
(Advt. No. NT-06/2026, Dated: 02-07-2026)
1. Executive Engineer - (One Post)
2. Technical Associate - (One Post)
3. Web Developer - (One Post)
4. Technical Assistant - (One Post)
The other detailed information(s) and application form can be obtained from Jamia Hamdard website: www.jamiahamdard.ac.in
Any addendum/corrigendum shall be posted only on the Jamia Hamdard website.
Registrar
Ph. No. 011-26059688 (12 Lines), Extn.-5387/5306
cbc21265/11/0002/2627

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that Unit No. R-1-107, Project M3M Capital walk in M3M Capital Phase-2, situated at Village Choma, Sector-113, Gurugram, Manesar, Urban Complex, Gurugram, Haryana - 122017, was jointly booked by Mr. Arvind Kapoor and Mrs. Manisha Kapoor, residents of A-216, First Floor, Hari Nagar, New Delhi - 110064. Mr. Arvind Kapoor expired on 24 February 2026. He is survived by the following legal heirs: Mrs. Manisha Kapoor (Wife), Mrs. Sharda Kapoor (Mother), Ms. Sumedha Kapoor (Daughter), and Ms. Vinoda Kapoor (Daughter). All the above legal heirs have given their no objection for transfer/substitution of the said unit solely in the name of Mrs. Manisha Kapoor. Any person having any claim, objection, or interest in the said unit/property is hereby required to submit the same, along with supporting documents, to: M3M India Private Limited, Sector 113, Baghara, Dwarka Expressway, Gurugram, Haryana - 122017, and also to Mrs. Manisha Kapoor, A-216, First Floor, Hari Nagar, New Delhi-110064. Within 21 (twenty one) days from the date of publication of this Notice, failing which the unit shall be transferred in the name of Mrs. Manisha Kapoor, and no claims thereafter shall be entertained.
Contact +91-9891760188, Email: jpradeep3@yahoo.com

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform to the public at large that Mr. Aamir and Mr. Ayaz Khan had acquired Plot area measuring 403.20 sq. yds., out of Khata No.339 Khasra No.143, Situated at wake Village Abid Pur Manki Pargana Jalalabad Tehsil Modinagar District Ghazabad, U.P vide Gift Deed dated 13.06.2023 executed by Mr. Shadab, Mr. Aamir and Mr. Ayaz Khan are the undisputed owners of above said property and willing to Mortgage the above said property with CFCFL.
OR
Any person / firm / institution / company having any claim or right in respect of the said Property by way of inheritance, share, sale, agreement, lease, license, gift, possession, legal heirs, partners or encumbrance however or otherwise is hereby required to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice of his/her/their share or claim, if any, with all supporting documents at below mentioned address: After expiration of notice period, the claim, if any, of such person shall be treated null and void and also treated as waived and not binding on our client.
Ajay Kumar Giri (Advocate) H No. 26/161, Basement, Vikram Vihar, Lajpat Nagar 4, New Delhi -110024

The Pioneer Classified

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Yatender Kumar S/o Satya Prakash Sharma R/o H.No. V-1261, Gali No-8 Vijay Park moupur, Bhajan Pura, North East Delhi-110053 declare that name of my minor daughter has been wrongly written as Janvi in my minor daughter Janvi Sharma aged 14 years in her school records. The actual name of my minor daughter is Janvi Sharma which may be amended accordingly

PD(132/C) S, Siddarth S Saansii s/o Surinder Kumar alias Surinder Sansi r/o 3/9, Roop Nagar, Delhi-110007 declare that Siddarth Surinder Saansii and Siddarth S Saansii are names of one and same person.

PD(133/C)

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Km Bavi Heen Koushar Ansari W/o Md. Ishtiyak, resident of T-3718, Gali No. 21A, Baljeet Nagar, New Delhi - 110008 do hereby declare that I have changed my name from Km Bavi Heen Koushar Ansari to Heena Ansari and henceforth I shall be known as Heena Ansari in all purpose, vide Certificate No. IN-DL50801991062186Y sworn before the Notary Public at Delhi on 10.07.2026 Heena Ansari and Km Bavi Heen Koushar Ansari both are same and one identical person.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public is hereby informed that my client, Smt. Kanta Mittal, W/o Late Sh. Rattan Prakash Mittal, R/o H. H. No. 57, Sukh Vihar, Delhi-110051, has severed all relations with and debarred her daughter Smt. Sudha Gupta her husband Pawan K. Gupta, and their children and respective spouses, namely Savan Gupta & Ketki Gupta, Pooja Jain & Jiniendra Jain, and Nisha Aggarwal & Nehru Aggarwal, including their legal heir and immovable properties due to their misconduct and misbehaviour. Anyone dealing with them shall do so at their own risk, and my client shall not be responsible for the same.
Sd/- Priyam Pandey (Advocate)

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given on behalf of SANJEEV KUMAR to inform to the public at large that SANJEEV KUMAR is Purchasing the THIRD FLOOR (LHS SIDEWESTERN PORTION) WITH ROOF RIGHTS, OF BUILTUP ENTIRE FREEHOLD PROPERTY BEARING NO. XXIV2608 LAND MEASURING 122 SQ. YDS. WITH TERRACE ROOF RIGHTS, SITUATED IN THE ABADI OF GALI MANDIR WALI, SHADPUR, NEW DELHI-110068, from Mr. Rajinder Kumar Goel, Mrs. Bela Goel, Mrs. Deepakshi Mittal, Mrs. Swati Jain who become the owner through Sale deed dated 27.12.2024 (Doc. No.2024/221167/08). Previously, this property was registered in the names of Mr. Gurmukh Singh Tehara Following their demise, their legal heirs, (1) Mr. Surinder Singh Tehara (2) Mrs. Jaswinder Kamba (3) Mrs. Amajit Kaur (4) Mr. Joginder Singh Tehara they executed Relinquishment favouring Mr. Joginder Singh Tehara S/o Late Shri Gurmukh Singh through Shri Gurpreet Singh Kalsi S/o Shri Gurcharan Singh Kalsi who sold to this property to Mr. Rajinder Kumar Goel, Mrs. Bela Goel, Mrs. Deepakshi Mittal, Mrs. Swati Jain now SANJEEV KUMAR intend to Purchase and mortgage the subject property for the financial assistance from Aditya Birla Housing Finance Limited to comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any Person having any type of claim/rights/interests/creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 15 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien etc.
Lucem Legal LLP N-161, Ground Floor, Satra Tower, Gautam Nagar Near Yusuf Sarai Community Centre New Delhi-110049 Contact # 011-40046316 & 41667327

Ugandan woman held with amphetamine worth ₹70 lakh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi Police has arrested a 26-year-old Ugandan woman in the Mohan Garden area with 117 gm of amphetamine, a potent stimulant estimated to be worth ₹70 lakh in the international market, officials said on Saturday.

Jackline Namulondo was allegedly supplying the synthetic drug to college students and youngsters in the national capital, they said.

Acting on a tip-off, police raided Jackline's rented accommodation in Mohan Garden on Thursday, and recovered a commercial quantity of fine-grade amphetamine from her possession, the officials said.

An investigation is underway to identify the source of the seized substance, a police officer said.



Jackline, a resident of Kampala, came to India on a three-month business visa in July 2025 but continued to stay in the country even after her visa expired, the officer said.

According to police, she has no previous criminal record. Investigators are examining her possible links with other drug suppliers operating in Delhi, the officer said.

NORTHERN RAILWAY RE-ENGAGEMENT NOTICE

No. 844-E/Genl.Matter/Re-engagement/Retd. Officers/ EIA/32 Dt. 10.07.2026
Applications are invited from willing Retired Group 'B' Officers from all over Indian Railways for re-engagement to filling up 1 (one) post of Consultant (Public Relations) in the Public Relations Department, Northern Railway. Detailed advertisement with vacancy status, terms & conditions, format of application form is available on Northern Railway website https://nr.indianrailways.gov.in/recruitment_info.jsp?lang=0&id=0.4. The last date for application is 25.07.2026.

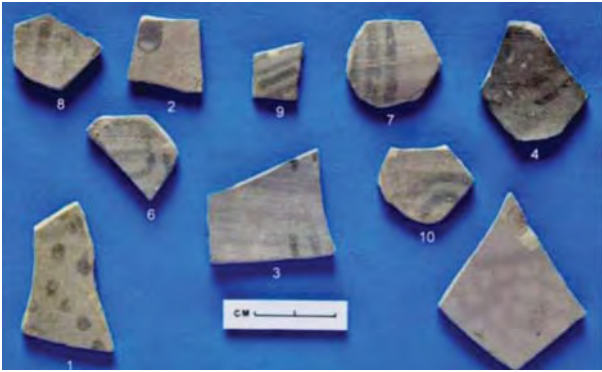
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 2390/26

Govt approves fellowships for archives, archaeology research

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi Cabinet has approved two research fellowship schemes, one for archives and one for archaeology, to promote the scientific study, documentation, and digitisation of Delhi's historical heritage. Chief Minister Rekha Gupta announced on Saturday that 15 fellows will be selected annually under the archives fellowship and 12 under the archaeology fellowship, each receiving a monthly stipend of ₹25,000 to ₹50,000 for a one-year term.

The Research Fellowship in Archives is designed to promote high-quality archival research, strengthen archival management, encourage digitisation of historical records, and make historically significant documents more accessible to researchers and the public. The scheme will provide an institutional platform for researchers, archivists, conservation specialists, historians, linguists, and heritage experts. Work under the fellowship will cover records management, preservation



and conservation of archival material, digitisation, dissemination of information, microfilming and reprography, research and publications, and subjects related to Oriental languages, particularly Urdu and Persian. The Research Fellowship in Archaeology is aimed at promoting the study, conservation, and documentation of Delhi's archaeological sites and monuments. The scheme specifically encourages research on lesser-known historical monuments in Delhi, covering their history, archaeology, architecture, and conservation needs. Officials said this is expected to give fresh momentum to both heritage

conservation and tourism at sites that currently receive limited scholarly attention. Together, the two schemes will select 27 fellows per year. Detailed guidelines on eligibility, applications, selection procedures, and terms and conditions will be notified separately by the concerned departments. Both schemes are expected to launch soon after the operational guidelines are issued. The Chief Minister said Delhi is not only the national capital but a living heritage of thousands of years of history, culture, and civilisation, and that preserving this legacy through scientific study and systematic doc-

umentation is a Government priority. She said the fellowships will help build a trained pool of professionals in archives, archaeology, and heritage conservation while making a significant contribution to the preservation of Delhi's documentary and archaeological record. Delhi's history, as a continuously inhabited urban settlement dating back several millennia, spans multiple empires and civilisations, including the early settlements at the site of the present city, the Tomara and Chahamana dynasties, the Delhi Sultanate across its several dynasties, the Mughal period, the British colonial era, and the modern post-independence capital. The city's archives contain records in multiple languages, including Persian, Urdu, and English, covering administrative, legal, and cultural history across these periods. Its archaeological landscape includes over 1,300 notified monuments and numerous unprotected sites ranging from prehistoric remains to medieval fortifications and garden complexes.

Govt plans to add 50 ladies special buses

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi Government plans to expand its ladies special bus service by adding around 50 buses, officials said on Saturday.

According to officials, the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) will run 25 ladies special buses, which will be student-centric U-special buses, and the remaining 25 will serve Outer Delhi areas. "We plan to start 50 ladies' special buses soon under the PM e-Drive scheme. Initially, 25 of these buses will be deployed in outer areas and 25 as university specials," a senior government official said. Officials said the transport department has identified some areas, and work is ongoing for other areas as well. "The ladies' special buses would only be for women travellers. We had some ladies' special buses running earlier, but now we plan to expand in a more structured way. There will be more safety features in the buses," another official said. The Government is also studying the usage of Saheli Pink Smart Cards, and Pink



tickets are being analysed to determine corridors where demand for women-only services is high and to guide the planned expansion, he added. Earlier this month, the Delhi Government launched 300 electric buses, bringing the Delhi Transport Corporation's total fleet to nearly 6,600 buses, including 4,845 electric buses and 1,755 CNG buses. The Delhi Government aims to build a modern fleet of around 14,000 buses by 2028-29. Chief Minister Rekha Gupta has said the newly inducted buses are low-floor, air-conditioned vehicles designed to provide passengers with safe, comfortable and accessible travel, including for persons with disabilities.

Labourer dies, two critical after wall collapses during demolition in Jasola

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A 24-year-old labourer died, and two others were admitted to the AIIMS Trauma Centre after a dilapidated side wall of an old building suddenly gave way during demolition work in Delhi's Jasola area on Friday afternoon, trapping four workers under the debris, with police apprehending the demolition contractor Shamshudin and working to arrest the building owner Khurshid. Police received information about the incident at 1:27 pm on Friday. Teams rushed to the spot and found demolition work had been underway at an old and dilapidated structure when one of its side walls collapsed without warning, burying four labourers under the rubble. All four were pulled out from the debris and rushed to the hospital. The deceased has been identified as Vijay, 24. He succumbed to his injuries at the



hospital. Two other labourers are currently admitted to the AIIMS Trauma Centre. The fourth sustained minor injuries. A security guard posted near the site, Suraj Narayan Yadav, described what he saw. "Four labourers were demolishing a wall when the accident occurred. Suddenly, the wall collapsed on them. One labourer died on the spot, while the remaining three were injured. They were pulled out from the debris and shifted to a nearby hospital," he said. The Crime Team visited the scene and collected evidence. Vijay's body has been

sent for a post-mortem. The demolition contractor, Shamshudin, a resident of Jamia Nagar in southeast Delhi, has been apprehended. Police are working to trace and arrest the building owner, Khurshid. The Badarpur Sub-Divisional Magistrate sealed the premises. An FIR has been registered at Sarita Vihar police station. Police said an investigation is underway to establish the exact circumstances of the collapse, including whether prescribed safety measures and statutory requirements were followed during the demolition work.

DUPA urges Delhi University to reconsider fourth-year UG rollout

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi University Principals' Association (DUPA) has asked the university to reconsider the rollout of fourth-year undergraduate programmes, pointing to low student enrolment. DUPA said that implementing the additional year is financially and academically challenging for all colleges. In a letter to the Dean of Colleges, DUPA stated that enrolment trends show limited student interest in the fourth year of the four-year undergraduate programme (FYUP). This, according to DUPA, makes it difficult for all colleges to offer every fourth-year course. DUPA cited enrolment data for 2025-26, noting that only about 30 per cent of students chose the fourth year. The association said this reflects limited demand. "However, for the Academic Year 2026-27, only a limited number of students have, thus far, expressed interest in



continuing to the fourth year," the letter said. DUPA, after discussions with principals, said it may not be financially, academically or administratively feasible for every college to offer all fourth-year programmes, especially where enrolment is low. The association suggested the university should identify and designate certain colleges, including cluster colleges, to offer specific fourth-year programmes. This should be based on infrastructure, faculty strength, academic resources and student demand. The model, it said, would ensure optimum utilisation of

resources while maintaining the quality and sustainability of the programmes, linking limited rollout to better use of available capacity. The letter, signed by DUPA Secretary Savita Roy, has also been marked to the Dean (Academic) and the Registrar of the University of Delhi. Meanwhile, the Academics for Action and Development Teachers Association (AADTA) has raised concerns about admissions to the new one-year postgraduate programmes. The association called for steps to prevent disruption for students. Vice-Chancellor Yogesh Singh, the faculty members urged the university to allocate one-year PG seats to colleges, arguing that the current allocation to university departments is "meagre and insufficient" and limits access to the new programme. AADTA noted that colleges already have seats for the existing two-year PG programmes and should also receive seats under the one-year PG framework.

Two trains to stop at Adarsh Nagar station

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has approved the stoppage of two trains at Adarsh Nagar railway station in North Delhi following a request from Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta. Train No 14331 Delhi-Kalka Express and Train No 14053 Delhi-Daulatpur Chowk Himachal Express will both halt at the station, bringing relief to passengers from North and West Delhi travelling to Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, and major religious destinations in Punjab. Vaishnaw wrote to the Chief Minister informing her that the stoppage of both trains at Adarsh Nagar has been approved in response to her earlier request letter. The Chief Minister said the decision will save time for residents of North and West Delhi, make their journeys more convenient, and remove the need to travel to New Delhi Railway Station or Old Delhi Railway Station to board these trains. The Delhi-Kalka Express stoppage at Adarsh Nagar will directly benefit passengers heading to Kurukshetra, Chandigarh, and Kalka and will also be useful for tourists travelling onwards to various destinations in Himachal Pradesh from Kalka, which is the gateway to the hill state by rail. The Delhi-Daulatpur



Chowk Himachal Express stoppage will benefit passengers and devotees travelling to Kurukshetra, Fatehgarh Sahib, Anandpur Sahib, and different parts of Himachal Pradesh. The Chief Minister specifically noted that travel to the major Sikh religious destinations of Shri Fatehgarh Sahib and Shri Anandpur Sahib will become considerably easier for residents of North and West Delhi as a result of the new halt. Adarsh Nagar is a railway station on the Delhi-Ambala line situated in North Delhi, serving a densely populated stretch of the city that includes Adarsh Nagar, Model Town, Shakti Nagar, and surrounding areas. Residents of this area and the broader North and West Delhi zone currently have limited direct access to inter-city trains heading toward Punjab and Himachal Pradesh without first making their way to the larger, more congested terminals at New Delhi or Old Delhi. The new stoppages change that equation for passengers with destinations served by these two specific trains.

DMRC MD conducts five-hour night inspection of Blue Line

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) Managing Director Dr Vikas Kumar conducted a comprehensive night inspection of the Blue Line between midnight and 5 am on Saturday. He travelled from Dwarka Sector 21 to Noida City Centre to review the progress of ongoing infrastructure and passenger amenity enhancement works at stations along the corridor, inspecting station remodelling, installation of new escalators, realignment of automatic fare collection gates, and other passenger-centric upgrades. The inspection covered several stations along the Blue Line, including Dwarka Sector 14, Dwarka Mor,



Rajouri Garden, Karol Bagh, RK Ashram, Indraprastha, and Noida City Centre, among others. Kumar instructed officials to ensure that public convenience and safety remain the highest priority while executing all development and upgradation works. He emphasised the need for quality in execution, adherence to timelines, and minimal inconvenience to commuters during the ongoing upgrade works. Night inspections of this kind are conducted regularly by DMRC's leadership after operational hours to closely monitor the progress of passenger-related infrastructure without disrupting Metro services.

DDA to hold Yamuna Dialogues in September for river rejuvenation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The DDA plans to organise 'Yamuna Dialogues', a multi-stakeholder initiative for the rejuvenation of the river, in September this year, officials said on Saturday. In the run-up to the main event, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) organised a consultation workshop on Friday with government institutions, policymakers, environmental experts, urban planners and other stakeholders. "The consultation marks the beginning of an extensive participatory process to develop a shared vision for sustainable restoration, conservation and development of the Yamuna floodplains and ghats in Delhi,



and to provide actionable inputs for the Zero Draft of the Delhi Yamuna Compact," the DDA said in a statement. The discussions focused on two key themes — floodplain responsive planning and ghat development — with deliberations on infrastructure that works in harmony with the river's natural flood cycles and on ghat typologies integrating ecological, cultural, recreational and religious functions, they added. "The initiative follows the LG Taranjit Singh Sandhu's preliminary visits to the Yamuna floodplains and subsequent review meetings with senior officials, during which he called for a multi-dimensional approach to tackle pollution in the river," the DDA said.

rooted in knowledge and wisdom. And that knowledge comes only through libraries." The Union Home Minister encouraged the library administration to work with nearby schools and help young people develop the habit of reading. "My request to the librarians here is to reach out to all schools in the 10 nearby assembly constituencies. Bring young people here once. The books will do the rest. Once a young person

develops the habit of reading, he himself learns to distinguish between right and wrong," he said. Shah said the library has about 32,000 books and one crore e-books. He also expressed hope that the Delhi government would connect libraries across the city with schools. He praised the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) for naming the library after Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah speaks during the inauguration of North Delhi Municipal Corporation's (NDMC) Jayaprakash Narayan public library at Jayaprakash Narayan library, Udayan Marg, New Delhi,

IN FOCUS



Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma met professor Jiten Hazarika, Vice Chancellor of Dibrugarh University, Paramananda Sonowal, registrar of Dibrugarh University at Lok Sewa Bhawan in Dispur

PIONEER PHOTO

Heavy to very heavy rain lash parts of India; doctor killed in Uttarakhand

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi

Heavy to very heavy rain lashed parts of India on Saturday, with Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh among the worst-hit as landslides blocked roads and disrupted public life.

According to the India Meteorological Department, very heavy rainfall was recorded over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, East Uttar Pradesh and Meghalaya, while heavy rainfall was recorded over West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, Punjab, Haryana, West Uttar Pradesh, Mizoram, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

In Uttarakhand, heavy rainfall triggered landslides, blocking 120 roads, including three national highways, while around 100 pilgrims were escorted to safety across a washed-out stretch of the Yamunotri National Highway after the route remained cut off for two



A man walks on a stretch amid misty morning following rainfall in Rishikesh, Uttarakhand on Saturday

PTI

days. According to the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), a massive accumulation of debris completely blocked the highway at Syanachatti in Uttarkashi district on Thursday after incessant rain triggered a landslide that washed away nearly 100 metres of the road.

15 Indians killed in Vietnam boat mishap

Andhra Pradesh Minister Nara Lokesh also took note of the incident after reports indicated that several tourists from the State might have been on board. He directed senior officials to coordinate with the Centre and the Indian Embassy to provide every possible support to the victims and their families.

According to the list, the deceased from Tamil Nadu were identified as Senthil Kumar Jayavel, Muruga Prabhu Arumugam, Sridhar Sundararajan, Shaik Abdullah Abdul Majeed, Balaji Natesan, Vinaya Kumar Chithirapuram Bhaskara, Ravisankar Sugumaran, Santosh Kumar Shantilal Jain, Babu Kuppuswamy and Alagurajan Sivasamy.

The deceased from Andhra Pradesh were identified as Nallapeta Adiseshaiah Raviteja, Sreedhar Mudiam and Jaya Lakshmi Gelli while those from Kerala were identified as Avicot Cheriyan Thomas and Loveni Thomas. The Governments in the three southern States have issued helpline numbers to assist relatives of the affected persons.

Authorities noted that sea conditions off An Thoi were rough at the time of the incident, though there was no rainfall. The boat was on an island-hopping tour to May Rut Islet, a popular destination known for its clear waters, beaches and coral reefs, about 10-12 km south of An Thoi. The captain, a man in his 50s, reportedly had several years of experience.

The incident comes almost exactly one year after a major boating disaster in Vietnam. In July 2025, a tourist boat carrying 48 people, including at least 20 children, capsized in Ha Long Bay during a sudden storm, killing at least 35 passengers. That tragedy had raised serious questions about maritime safety standards at Vietnam's popular tourist spots.

Political leaders, cutting across party lines, from all over India took to social media to express their condolences over the incident.

India a strategic launchpad: PM Modi...

"India remains the world's fastest-growing major economy. Our growing middle class, large-scale digital adoption, and infrastructure push make India a unique growth story," he added.

The Prime Minister spotlighted the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, offering around \$20 billion in support across 14 sectors ranging from food processing to textiles. He invited New Zealand businesses to join India's manufacturing momentum in airports, regional connectivity, air cargo, and tourism.

Modi also called for collaboration in dairy, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, clean energy, urban mobility, water and waste management,

ED attaches ₹1,021 crore assets in Reliance Anil Ambani Group probe

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday said it has issued a fresh order to attach assets worth ₹1,021 crore as part of a money laundering investigation against the Reliance Anil Ambani Group.

The provisional order, issued under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), attaches equity shares of Reliance Power held by Reliance Infrastructure and certain loan amount receivable from Sasan Power and Reliance Power, the agency said in a statement.

The investigation stems from a CBI FIR against Reliance Home Finance Limited (RHFL) and Reliance Commercial Finance Limited (RCFL).

According to the ED, the probe found that public funds worth ₹15,548 crore raised by RHFL and RCFL were "systematically divert-



ed" through a web of "shell" (dummy) and group companies controlled and managed by the Reliance Anil Ambani Group.

The ED is investigating multiple cases against the Group in connection with four FIRs filed under the anti-money laundering law, and three under provisions of the Foreign Exchange Management

Act (FEMA). With the latest order, the total value of properties attached in this case has reached at ₹20,367 crore, with the ED filing four chargesheets and arresting eight persons so far.

Additionally, properties worth ₹77.86 crore have been attached under the FEMA, according to the ED.

LG Saxena inaugurates Centre of Excellence for smart energy and electrical systems

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Leh

In a major step towards positioning Ladakh as a hub for clean energy innovation and future-ready technical education, Ladakh Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Saturday inaugurated the Centre of Excellence for Smart Energy and Electrical Systems at LREDA Campus here.

"This Centre of Excellence will prepare

the youth for emerging sectors such as renewable energy, industrial automation, electric mobility and smart infrastructure.

"Our objective is not merely to create employment but to nurture innovators, entrepreneurs and technology leaders who will contribute to the sustainable development of Ladakh and the nation," Saxena said while addressing the gathering.

He said Ladakh's unique



geography presented challenges but also unparalleled opportunities in renewable energy, smart infrastructure and climate-resilient technologies.

"The future of Ladakh lies in building a skilled,

innovative and self-reliant workforce capable of leading the transition towards clean energy and advanced technologies," he said.

The officials said the Centre has been established to equip local youth with advanced skills in renewable energy, industrial automation and emerging technologies suited to the unique requirements of the Himalayan region.

Channi camp meets Baghel, pushes for replacing Punjab Congress chief Warring

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh

The turmoil in Punjab Congress over the leadership issue seems to be far from over with many leaders on Saturday pushing for replacing president Amrinder Singh Raja Warring even though party general secretary in charge of the state Bhupesh Baghel claimed no one has any objection to the party high command's decision to give



MP Amrinder Singh Raja Warring and MP Charanjit Singh Channi

the incumbent another term.

After staying away for days since Baghel arrived in the state on Monday on a apparent fire-fighting mission, Jalandhar MP Charanjit Singh Channi and leaders close to him attended met the former Chhattisgarh chief minister at party MLA Rana Gurjit's Sector 4 residence here.

On July 1, the Congress announced that Warring would continue as the Punjab unit president and appoint-

ed Channi as chairperson of the campaign committee.

Said to be "miffed" at not being appointed the state unit president, Channi had not met Baghel. Several leaders close to Channi had also stayed away.

During Saturday's meeting that lasted for nearly 80 minutes, the dissident camp, which appeared to present a show of strength with over 80 leaders including at least 12 MLAs turning up, con-

veyed the sentiment to Baghel against Warring's continuation as state unit chief, sources said.

Notably, the infighting in the state unit appeared to have intensified with several leaders pushing for Warring's removal. Without taking any name, senior leader and MP Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, told reporters after the meeting that they want a leader who is not "compromised".

FROM PAGE - 1

ments and public bodies are, by most estimates, party to roughly half of that docket. A fifth of all pending cases concern land and property disputes, that frequently outlive the original litigants," he said.

The CJJ said no adjudicatory model, however well-resourced, resolves a backlog of that scale on its own. It has to be met partly outside the courtroom, not as a matter of convenience, but as a matter of arithmetic.

CJJ Kant said the modern justice ecosystem now includes arbitration centres, mediation institutions, online dispute resolution platforms, community mediation and hybrid processes. "None of this competes with courts, but still relieves them of disputes that do not need a judicial dictum for being resolved. This complementary process saves judicial time to be spent only where a reasoned judgment is the last resort," he said. The CJJ said the road ahead for the mediation movement in India depends on three things – the professionalisation of mediator training and accreditation, corporate India's willingness to draft mediation clauses in their business agreements with the same seriousness as it drafts arbitration clauses; and India's actual ratification of the Singapore Convention on Mediation.

Film Satluj faces continued OTT ban over...

Section 69A empowers the Government to block online content on grounds including India's sovereignty and integrity, defence, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States and public order.

The committee comprises representatives from the ministries of information and broadcasting, home affairs, electronics and information technology, women and child development, external affairs, defence, and law and justice, among others. "It observed that the narrative of the film is not balanced as it whitewashes the acts of the militants while highlighting the excesses committed by the security forces in Punjab during the militancy years," Government sources said. Part III of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, empowers the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to invoke Section 69A of the IT Act under a mechanism meant to oversee OTT content that does not fall within the purview of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC).

It was pulled from the OTT platform ZEE5 for viewers in India two days after its release on July 3 after the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting cited security concerns. Subsequently, the ministry set up an inter-department committee (IDC) under the IT Rules 2021 for a detailed examination of the film and recommend the future course of action.

JPC clears ONOE, cites legal backing

Three Supreme Court judges, the chairman of the Law Commission and several constitutional experts also expressed similar views before the committee, Chaudhary added. "The consensus among constitutional experts is that simultaneous elections are fully in consonance with the Constitution and are not inconsistent with any constitutional provision," he added.

The BJP leader said the committee also consulted economists to assess the financial implications of holding simultaneous elections. Referring to the report of the high-level committee headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind, he claimed that synchronised Lok Sabha and Assembly polls could add nearly Rs 7 lakh crore to the country's economy by reducing election-related disruptions and improving governance.

Frequent elections adversely affect education, tourism and industrial production, Chaudhary said. "Teachers in Government schools are repeatedly deployed for election duties, affecting education. Tourist destinations such as Goa suffer losses because elections and the Model Code of Conduct disrupt tourism activity. Around five crore migrant workers move during election periods, affecting industrial production," he said.

According to Chaudhary, industries also face financial stress due to election-related disruptions, impacting production, loan repayments and the banking sector. Simultaneous elections would provide governments with an uninterrupted five-year governance cycle instead of keeping the country in "continuous election mode", he said.

Tracing the history of simultaneous elections, Chaudhary said Lok Sabha and Assembly polls were held together between 1952 and 1967. The election cycle was disrupted later due to premature dissolution of Assemblies, changes in political leadership, the Emergency and repeated imposition of President's Rule in several states. "Today, five to six Assembly elections are held every year, keeping the country in election mode almost throughout the year," he said.

The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution, the Election Commission in its 1983 report, the Law Commission and several expert committees had recommended simultaneous elections in the national interest, Chaudhary said.

US-Iran war truce faces setbacks

He said in remarks carried by State television that such revenge "is the will of our nation and must certainly be carried out."

So far, Tehran has not submitted to US demands over the Strait of Hormuz, instead

Health ministry launches monthly webinar to discuss good initiatives by States

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi



The Union Health Ministry on Saturday launched a monthly webinar series under the National Health Mission (NHM) so that innovative public health practices across states and Union territories can be replicated where needed. The webinar, launched on the occasion of World Population Day, has been envisaged as a year-round knowledge-sharing platform where states and UTs will present successful innovations, exchange implementation experiences and promote the adoption of scalable healthcare models across the country.

Chairing the inaugural session, Additional Secretary in the Union Health Ministry and Mission Director (NHM) Aradhana Patnaik said innovation is central to building responsive and resilient public health systems.

She described the webinar series as an institutional mechanism to identify, document and disseminate innovative practices emerging from states and UTs so that solutions developed in one region can be replicated elsewhere. Patnaik urged states and UTs to showcase innovations that go beyond existing programme frameworks and address emerging public health challenges through locally developed solutions.

She also appreciated the efforts of state and district teams whose work often remains undocumented despite their contribution to programme implementation. Patnaik said

the National Health Systems Resource Centre (NHSRC) will provide technical support for documenting and showcasing such innovations, helping expand the scope and impact of the National Summit on Good and Replicable Innovative Practices.

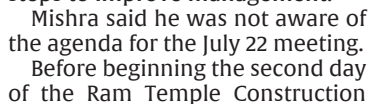
The inaugural webinar focused on "Anaemia, Child and Adolescent Health" and featured presentations by Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh on interventions that have shown measurable impact in addressing local health challenges, a ministry statement said.

Jharkhand showcased the Anaemia Mukht Bharat T4 App and its Integrated Home-Based Newborn Care (HBNC)-Home-Based Young Child Care (HBYC) home visits initiative, it said.

Chhattisgarh presented Chirayu Day under the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK), while Madhya Pradesh shared its initiative on addressing adolescent obesity. According to the statement, the interventions demonstrated how context-specific solutions can be aligned with national health programmes and scaled up to strengthen public health systems.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
 Ayodhya

He stated that the incident highlighted the need to improve temple management to prevent future thefts. Mishra said a high-level committee has been formed to recommend a candidate for the post of CEO of the temple trust. There is speculation that the trust may consider appointing a woman as CEO, but Mishra did not comment on this possibility. "You are aware that a (retired) judge is heading the committee for the appointment of a CEO. It will submit its recommendations to the trust, which will take a call on the issue," he said.



Mishra said he had reviewed the ongoing construction work. He stated that work on the old temple, being developed as a memorial, is

Mishra said the return of Lord Ram to his original abode marks the creation of a magnificent temple. He expressed confidence that the number of devotees would remain high and that followers of Sanatan Dharma would wish to visit.

TONY DAS ■ Agartala

During the deliberations, both sides exchanged views on their respective administrative experiences and best



The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary of the Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs Department, Assam, Biswaranjan Samal; Commissioner Hemanta Bhuyan; Principal Secretary of the Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department, Government of Tripura, Shantanu; and Director Sumit Lodh.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
 Visakhapatnam

Speaking at the commissioning ceremony of INS Mahendragiri in Visakhapatnam, Singh also said Andhra Pradesh has emerged as a new powerhouse of India's defence and aerospace manufacturing. Highlighting the Government's balanced approach towards defence modernisation, Singh said

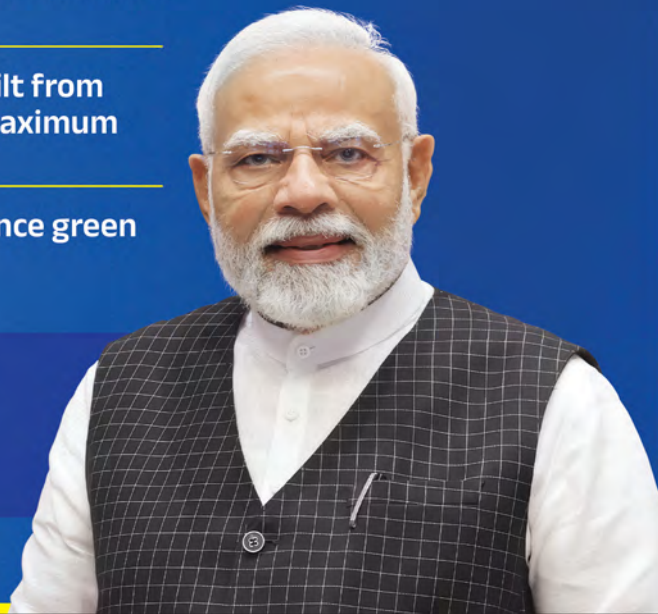
So, I would say that new technologies and conventional platforms are not opposed to each other, but supplement each other, complete each other.

GIRISH SHARMA
■ Bhopal

With several senior leaders, including Kailash Vijayvargiya, Prahlad Patel and Assembly Speaker Narendra Singh Tomar, already occupying key positions in the State, while Union leaders Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Jyotiraditya Scindia and VD Sharma continue to wield considerable influence, the BJP leadership is believed to have preferred maintaining the existing balance rather than allowing another dominant political centre to emerge.

Government of India

– Prime Minister Narendra Modi



CBC 45101/13/0011/2627

Single-window system for mega investments in Bengal: Suvendu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Dankuni (WB)

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Saturday announced that his Government would introduce a single-window clearance mechanism for investment proposals of ₹100 crore and above, asserting that land availability would not be a constraint for industries in the State.

Speaking at the foundation stone-laying ceremony of Lux Industry Ltd's new facility, touted as one of Asia's largest garments manufacturing plants, at Dankuni in Hooghly district, Adhikari said the Government was committed to creating a business-friendly environment and attracting fresh investments. "There will be a single-window clearance system for investment proposals worth ₹100 crore and above. Availability will not be an issue for industry," he said, laying the foundation stone for the ₹600-crore plant.

"Such investments will not have to obtain approvals from panchayats, municipalities, municipal corporations or zilla parishads. Instead, clearances relating to land and environment, among others, will be processed through a single-window mechanism involving the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation



(WBIDC) and the State departments concerned," he added.

Adhikari said his Government would rely on direct purchase of land, rather than acquisition, for industry needs.

"We do not want another Singur or Nandigram. If investors require land, the Government will procure it under the direct land purchase policy and hand it over," he said, noting that this framework was being used for infrastructure projects, including those for the railways, the BSF and airports.

Claiming that West Bengal was poised to regain its position as a leading investment destination, he said the state was entering a new phase of industrial growth.

"West Bengal will once again become India's top destination for investment. A business-friendly environment is created only when

law and order are maintained," he said.

Adhikari alleged that the State's debt had increased from around ₹2 lakh crore during the Left Front regime to nearly ₹8 lakh crore under the previous Trinamool Congress Government, maintaining that attracting investments was crucial to augmenting the State's own revenue.

Stating that around one crore workers from West Bengal were employed outside the State, he said the Government aimed to create large-scale employment opportunities through industrialisation.

Adhikari said his Government was working to build a "three-pillar" framework for employment generation through industry, infrastructure and skill development, expressing confidence that people would soon witness the benefits of a

"double-engine" Government through improvements in law and order, employment, education and healthcare.

Industry Minister Tapas Roy said the Government would make all efforts to bring back companies that had moved out of the State, expressing confidence that West Bengal's "industrial drought" would soon end.

"We are prepared to work tirelessly with the chief minister to bring industries back. People should not have to leave the State in search of jobs," he said.

State BJP president Samik Bhattacharya, a Rajya Sabha MP, said industrial growth should transcend linguistic identities, welcoming investment from all sections.

"Anyone who has contributed to Bengal's economy and generated employment belongs to Bengal, irrespective of the language they speak at home. We are Indians first," he said, adding that the new Government would strive to unlock the State's industrial potential.

Health Minister Sharad Mukherjee and Transport Minister Arjun Singh were also present at the function.

Meanwhile, Lux Industries Ltd announced that it will undergo a three-way demerger, under which the Lux Cozi Group will emerge as one of the independent business verticals.

FSSAI issues 9 notices to Swiggy Instamart over rotten food

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Food regulator FSSAI on Saturday said it has issued 9 notices to quick-commerce platform Swiggy Instamart following several consumer complaints, including allegations of supply of rotten and expired food products, against the platform.

In a social media post on X, the Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) said it has "issued 9 notices to Swiggy Instamart following multiple consumer complaints alleging violations under the FSS Act 2006."

The FSSAI informed that the consumer complaints "alleged the supply of expired, spoiled, rotten, contaminated and otherwise unsafe food products through Swiggy Instamart".

The regulator has directed the platform to submit a detailed explanation and compliance report, failing which appropriate legal action will be initiated.

Meanwhile, an Instamart spokesperson said: "We are reviewing the flagged listings by FSSAI and are in touch with the authorities to resolve the same."

Elaborating on the consumer complaints, the FSSAI mentioned that 'Healthify 100% Whey Protein 1 kg' and 'Noice Homestyle Madras Mixture with Peanuts' were allegedly supplied after



their expiry dates. 'Akshayakalpa Organic Egg' was reportedly found expired, rotten, emitting a foul odour, with signs of contamination. Similarly, 'Kakke da Paratha' was reportedly found spoiled, emitting a foul odour.

The FSSAI said that some of the complaints alleged the delivery of contaminated eggs and milk, along with damaged packaged food items through Instamart.

"An infant food formulation was reportedly found in a highly deteriorated and unsafe condition, showing signs of contamination and improper storage and handling," it added. Even after the return of this same product, it was allegedly re-supplied.

FSSAI also observed incorrect, invalid or non-existent FSSAI licence numbers. Food business entities were allegedly being listed under names different from those reflected against their FSSAI Registration.

"Some complaints alleged

that no satisfactory response, grievance redressal or corrective action was taken despite the complaints being forwarded or escalated, while one complaint stated that only a refund was offered without addressing the reported food safety concerns," the FSSAI said.

The regulator said these notices raised concerns regarding seller onboarding, compliance verification, traceability, food quality monitoring, consumer grievance redressal, supervision of food business activities and the adequacy of food safety compliance systems.

Of late, the regulator has been posting on social media platforms regarding its actions taken on food business operators (FBOs) as well as e-commerce companies over misleading claims and advertisements, as well as labelling violations under the law.

The notices are based on suo motu cognisance as well as consumer complaints.

In the last 2-3 months, the

FSSAI issued notices to many energy drink makers, alcoholic beverage companies, food companies and quick-commerce platforms.

The regulator gave notices to Lotte India, Ferns N Petals and Kubera Foods for misleading claims and violation of labelling norms on their various food products.

The FSSAI sent notices to six beverage brands claiming to be 'energy drinks' for misbranding and misleading claims. These are: Red Bull Energy Drink, PepsiCo's Adrenaline Rush Energy Drink, Reliance Consumer Products' 'Campa Energy Drink- Gold Boost', Sting Energy Drink, Hell Energy and Coca-Cola-backed Monster Energy.

The regulator has also sent a notice to quick-commerce player Blinkit regarding consumer complaints about the sale of poor-quality eggs on its platform after the regulator took 'suo-moto cognisance' of consumer complaints on social media platforms. In another case, it sought an explanation from Blinkit on a complaint by a person who allegedly fell sick after consuming curd ordered from the platform.

Earlier this month, the FSSAI issued a notice to Heritage Foods Ltd for misleading claims regarding its product 'Fresh Paneer' as part of its efforts to safeguard consumer interest.

West Bengal Govt sets up committee to examine draft UCC Bill

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kolkata

The West Bengal Government has constituted a high-level committee headed by former Supreme Court judge Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai to examine a draft Uniform Civil Code (UCC) for the State.

A Government notification issued on Friday said the committee was formed in view of the "wide ramifications and voluminous nature" of the proposed legislation.

The panel will undertake a comprehensive examination of the draft Bill before any further steps are taken, it said.

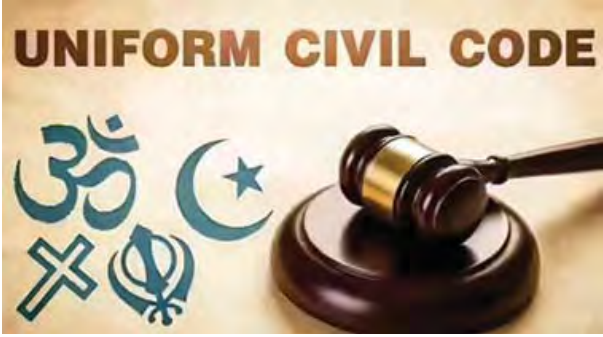
The State Government said it has prepared the draft Bill with the objective of creating a comprehensive legal framework governing personal civil matters for residents of the State, irrespective of religion, faith or community.

The proposed legislation seeks to deal with issues relating to marriage, divorce, intestate succession and testamentary succession, it said.

Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai (ret'd) will chair the committee, the notification stated.

Other members include former Meghalaya Governor Tathagata Roy, Resident Commissioner Dushyant Nariala, retired IAS officer Shatrughna Singh, Principal Secretary of the Home and Hill Affairs Department Sanghamitra Ghosh, academic Dr Ratna Bhattacharya, former vice-chancellor of Gour Banga University Gopalchandra Misra, advocate Osman Gani Mallick and former executive director Nirmalya Bhattacharyya.

The committee has been constituted following a decision taken at the State Cabinet meeting held on July 2.



"It has been set up for a comprehensive examination and review of the draft Bill in view of the wide ramifications and voluminous nature of the subject," a senior State Government official said.

Another senior official said the panel would study the draft document in detail and submit its recommendations to the Government before any decision on the proposed legislation is taken.

The initiative has been

taken keeping in view Article 44 of the Constitution, which directs the State to endeavour to secure a Uniform Civil Code for citizens, the notification stressed.

Since 2014, three States — Uttarakhand, Gujarat and Assam — have adopted UCC, and West Bengal is set to become the fourth.

The West Bengal UCC Bill aims to standardise civil laws across all communities regarding marriage, divorce,

inheritance, and adoption. The bill is similar to the models in Uttarakhand and Assam in key parameters.

The UCC was one of the BJP's key electoral promises in the 2026 Assembly polls. The party came to power, ending the Trinamool Congress's 15-year rule in the State.

Speaking to reporters in Baruipur in South 24 Parganas district, West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Saturday said that the committee would soon start working and the UCC would soon be implemented in the State.

"The committee has been formed under former Supreme Court judge Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai. It will soon start working, and it will soon be implemented in the State just as it has been in other states. There will be one nation and one law and not two laws," Adhikari said.

Ex-Bengal minister channelled scam cash into restaurant: ED

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Arrested ex-West Bengal minister and TMC leader Sujit Bose "infused" illicit cash obtained from an alleged municipality recruitment scam into his Chinese food restaurant and other hospitality ventures, including a bar, the Enforcement Directorate alleged in its latest chargesheet.

In a statement on Saturday, the federal agency said it filed a prosecution complaint on July 9 against Bose, a former minister for fire and emergency services; his son Samudra Bose; IAS officer and former director of local bodies Jyotishman Chattopadhyay, and some others behind a special PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act) court in Kolkata.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested Sujit Bose in May. He is currently lodged in a Kolkata prison.

In the statement, ED claimed that Bose, also a former vice-chairman of the South Dum Dum Municipality, "illegally" recommended 340 candidates for various posts in the municipality, and 284 of them secured appointment during 2014-22.

"The proceeds of the crime so generated and received from underserving candidates were initially infused into his (Sujit Bose)



Former West Bengal minister Sujit Bose

proprietorship concern, Chinese Cuisine Restaurant, by projecting it as legitimate cash sales despite its limited business operations. Huge cash deposits were made in bank accounts, even during the Covid lockdown period," the ED claimed.

A three-time sitting MLA from Bidhannagar, Bose lost the recent assembly elections to BJP candidate Sharadwat Mukherjee by a margin of more than 37,000 votes.

The ED had raided him in October 2025, along with former food and civil supplies minister Rathin Ghosh.

Bose has denied wrongdoing in these recruitments. The ED further alleged that funds drawn from the Chinese restaurant were "utilised" to finance and expand hospitality entities — including Shree Venkatesh Banquets and Speciality Dhaba LLP (which

ran Bengal Dhaba and The Bar & Lounge) — through capital contributions and unsecured loans.

It said additional funds for the acquisition of properties were arranged through borrowings from various shell companies and individuals, which were later repaid by routing the proceeds of crime through "inflated" and "bogus" cash sales of the hospitality entities.

The agency said Bose was the beneficiary of "direct" proceeds of crime in the form of multiple flats in lieu of ensuring jobs to certain individuals.

Bose, the ED charged, not only vitiated the recruitment process of South Dum Dum Municipality but also "expropriated" the authority of fair and transparent recruitment from the municipality and administered illegal appointments in lieu of pecuniary gains.

Omar accuses BJP of trying to buy NC legislators

MOHIT KANDHARI
■ Jammu

In his strongest and first public outburst against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) since assuming office, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Saturday accused the saffron party of attempting to destabilise his Government by engineering a split in the National Conference through money power and false promises.

Addressing party workers during the 26th death anniversary of Begum Akbar Jehan Abdullah at Hazratbal, Omar charged that one of the party's legislators from Jammu was offered Rs 20-30 crore, a ministerial berth and a promise of statehood to switch sides. He said such efforts were aimed at weakening the National Conference but asserted that the party would not succumb to political pressure.

The sharp criticism came days ahead of the National Conference's (NC) planned July 20 protest at Jantar Mantar in support of statehood restoration.

Invitations have been sent to more than 50 prominent personalities, including like-minded politicians, civil society activists, representatives of trade bodies, religious leaders, and other eminent citizens.

Feeling left out despite waiting patiently for the restoration of 'statehood', Omar also cautioned the centre that Jammu and Kashmir's patience should not be mistaken for weakness. Unsparing, Omar also questioned why the promise to restore statehood remained unfulfilled despite the completion of the delimitation process and the Assembly elections.

In his fiery speech, Omar posed a direct question: why was New Delhi prepared to consider constitutional safeguards such as Article 371 for Ladakh while denying basic political rights to the people of J&K?

Omar said the Centre was adopting different yardsticks for two different Union Territories. They are holding a dialogue with the representatives of Ladakh



while J&K continues to wait for the restoration of statehood despite repeated assurances. He said he had repeatedly raised the issue of statehood in meetings with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, only to be told each time that restoration would happen "at the right time".

"I ask them, for God's sake, how will we know that the appropriate time has come," asked the chief minister. "What do my colleagues and I have to do to reach that appropriate time?"

He also asked if the "appropriate time" implies the BJP coming to power in Jammu and Kashmir. "Have the courage to say it publicly," said Omar Abdullah. "At least, we will not remain in this deception that you will fulfil the promise."

Referring to the party's approach towards the Centre, Omar said the National Conference had spent nearly two years seeking the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood through dialogue rather than confrontation.

"I repeatedly said we wanted to

secure our rights through dialogue, not conflict. I consciously gave the Centre time to fulfil its promises. But today we are compelled to speak of protest because something has clearly changed," he said.

Announcing that the National Conference would hold a protest at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on July 20, Omar said the party would peacefully intensify its demand for the restoration of statehood.

Questioning the functioning of the elected Government, Omar said if key decisions continued to be taken from Raj Bhavan, there was little purpose in holding elections.

"If everything has to be run from Raj Bhavan, if employees are to be dismissed and all major decisions taken there, then why were elections held? Why were we brought into government with our hands tied behind our backs?" he said.

He added, "Our demand is simple: restore the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir. Our patience remains, but it should never be mistaken for surrender.



India and the Ministry of External Affairs to work closely with the Vietnamese authorities to ensure that every possible effort is made in the ongoing rescue operations and that all necessary assistance is extended to the affected families," the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha added.

Congress president

Mallikarjun Kharge said the tragic boat-capsize incident near Vietnam's Phu Quoc Island is deeply distressing.

"I extend my heartfelt condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones and pray for strength and courage for those anxiously awaiting news of their missing family members.

BJP demands apology from Omar over bribe charge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jammu

J&K BJP launched a scathing attack on Chief Minister Omar Abdullah over his public allegation that a BJP office-bearer allegedly offered money to lure a National Conference MLA, terming the statement "baseless, irresponsible and politically motivated".

This was stated by senior BJP leader and MLA Udhampur East, Adv RS Pathania, accompanied by BJP Media Incharge Dr Pardeep Mahotra, and Spokesperson Dr Hari Dutt Shishu, while addressing a press conference at party headquarters in Jammu.

RS Pathania said that the BJP will be constrained to initiate appropriate criminal and other legal proceedings if Omar Abdullah fails to tender an unconditional public apology and substantiate his allegation with verifiable evidence.

Pathania questioned why, if such a serious attempt to bribe a legislator had indeed taken place, neither the alleged recipient nor the Chief Minister reported the matter to the Jammu & Kashmir Police, the Anti-Corruption Bureau, or any other competent investigating agency. They demanded answers to fundamental questions: Who allegedly made the offer? Which BJP office-bearer was involved? Which NC legislator was approached?



10th Northeast International Fashion Week to be held in Guwahati on July 18 to 19

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

The 10th edition of the Northeast International Fashion Week (NEIFW) will be held on July 18 and 19 at Regal Gardenia on Lokhra Road in Guwahati, bringing together fashion designers, models and industry professionals from across India and neighbouring countries.

Organised by Kreative People, the two-day event will be centred on the theme "Save the Earth, Style the Future," with a focus on creating awareness about global warming and environmental conservation. The event is supported by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC).

Over the years, NEIFW has evolved into one of the Northeast's premier fashion platforms, combining fashion with social causes. Previous editions have promoted issues



such as support for old-age homes, eye and organ donation, and environmental protection in collaboration with organisations including PETA.

The organisers said the event aims to provide a platform for aspiring designers, models and creative professionals, including children, teenagers and

women, to showcase their talent and gain national and international exposure. It also seeks to promote the region's handloom and handicrafts while connecting local talent with domestic and international buyers.

This year's edition will feature designers from the

Northeast, other parts of India and neighbouring countries, including Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan. Celebrity designer Felix Bendish, known for presenting collections at London, New York and Paris Fashion Weeks, will participate alongside resort wear designer Sakshi Bindra. International designer Roney Alay Magar from Nepal will also showcase his creations.

As part of the celebrations marking its 10th season, NEIFW will honour 10 personalities for their contribution to the growth of the fashion industry in Northeast India.

The event is being led by fashion designer and choreographer Prasantt Ghosh, who has been associated with the fashion industry since 1994 and has choreographed more than 2,500 fashion and beauty events in India and abroad.

Over 1.7 crore ITRs filed for AY 2026-27: I-T dept

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Over 1.7 crore I-T returns have been filed for 2025-26 financial year so far, the Income Tax Department said on Saturday.

The last date to file ITRs 1 and 2 for income earned in 2025-26 fiscal year is July 31.

"Over 1.7 crore taxpayers have already taken the smart step and filed their ITRs for AY 2026-27," the department said on X.

Of this, more than 10 lakh returns were filed on

Friday. ITR Form 1 (Sahaj) is a simpler form that caters to a large number of small and medium taxpayers.

Sahaj can be filed by a resident individual having annual income up to ₹50 lakh and who has salary income, one house property, and agricultural income up to ₹5,000 a year.

ITR-2 is filed by individuals and Hindu Undivided Families (HUFs) not having income from profits and gains in business or profession, but having income from capital gains.



'India must boost certification, buyer networks to gain from UK FTA'



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The India-UK free trade agreement opens market access but does not automatically translate into higher exports, and the country must strengthen standards, certification, logistics and buyer linkages to realise its full benefits, economic think tank GTRI said on Saturday.

The India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) will come into force from July 15.

"Without parallel work on standards, certification, logistics, regulatory approvals and buyer networks, much of the opportunity will remain on paper. The agreement opens the door; India must now convert access into exports," the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said.

Citing example, GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said while food exporters need better testing, traceability and compliance with UK sanitary and phytosanitary rules; machinery and electronics firms need certification, technology and stronger buyer links.

Similarly automobile exporters must meet rules-of-origin and technical requirements; and the garment, leather and footwear producers should move quickly to turn tariff savings into orders before competitors adjust.

Chakraborty's sudden exit raised governance questions: HDFC MD

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi



HDFC Bank MD and CEO Sashidhar Jagdishan on Saturday said abrupt resignation of part-time chairman Atanu Chakraborty was a challenging event and it led to questions about governance standards at the bank.

Chakraborty resigned as a part-time chairman of the country's biggest private sector lender on March 18, more than a year before his term came to an end, citing ethical concerns. This is the first time a part-time chairman of HDFC Bank has left midway, raising concerns about its functioning.

"Towards the end of the

Financial Year 2025- 26, the bank faced a challenging event with the resignation of Atanu Chakraborty, part-time chairman and independent director of the bank, on March 18, 2026," Jagdishan said in the annual report of the bank released on Saturday.

The statement mentioned in Chakraborty's resignation letter led to questions about

governance standards at the bank, he said. To reinforce the robust governance standards of the bank, he said, the board of directors of the bank took the proactive step of appointing external law firms to conduct a review regarding the statement made by Chakraborty in his resignation letter.

Since the ADRs of the Bank are listed on NYSE, the board

considered it prudent to engage both, domestic and international law firms for the purpose of this review, he said.

The bank, on June 26, 2026, shared the findings of the external law firms, which, in essence, were that Chakraborty's statement in his resignation letter and its implications were not substantiated by the record reviewed and witness interviews, he said.

Welcoming the new part-time chairman Rajiv Kumar, he said, Kumar has played a transformational role in revitalising the banking and financial services sector of the country as a Financial Services Secretary and later

as Finance Secretary.

Kumar also drove growth-oriented and inclusion-focused initiatives within the financial system, he said.

As Secretary, Department of Financial Services (2017-2020), he assumed charge at a time when public sector banks were grappling with high levels of unrecognised NPAs, capital inadequacy, lenders frozen out of fresh credit, gold plating being rampant, equity and debt being diverted and recirculated to leverage fresh credit, governance challenges including large consortiums, NBFCs struggling to fill micro credit gaps post demonetization, Ponzi schemes defrauding citizens, etc.

Coal Ministry notifies SECL's CSR initiative for NEET aspirants

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi



Coal India Ltd (CIL) arm SECL on Saturday said its CSR initiative providing free residential NEET coaching to meritorious students from the company's operational areas, has been notified by the coal ministry.

The initiative 'SECL Ke Sushrut' was launched in 2023. The ministry has issued a Gazette Notification enabling Aadhaar authentication for beneficiaries of the flagship initiative, a company statement said.

The notification facilitates transparent, efficient and targeted delivery of benefits to the beneficiaries through voluntary Aadhaar authentication, while also providing alternative government-approved identity documents for those who

choose not to use Aadhaar.

The gazette notification formally recognises the scheme and marks a first for the coal PSU sector, underscoring the expanding role of coal producer in social development across mining districts.

SECL said the move will strengthen the institutional framework for its CSR activities and help scale up projects in areas such as

health, education and livelihoods. "Gazette Notification of SECL Ke Sushrut is a landmark recognition of a CSR initiative that is transforming aspirations into opportunities for youth from coal-field communities.

It reinforces our commitment to delivering impactful, transparent and inclusive development in line with the vision of Government of India," SECL Chairman-cum-Managing Director (CMD) Harish Duhan said.

The initiative had earlier become the first and only CSR scheme of any Coal PSU to be listed on the Centre's Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) portal, reaffirming its robust governance framework and alignment with the government's vision of technology-enabled and transparent service delivery.

A mirror across the Himalayas

AJ PHILIP ■ New Delhi

There are books that merely inform, and there are books that compel readers to question long-held assumptions. Chindia: Journey to an Asian Century by Shastri Ramachandaran belongs firmly to the latter category.

It is not just a study of India-China relations but an invitation to rethink the future of Asia itself, free from the prejudices, slogans and inherited fears that have clouded public discourse for decades.

My own fascination with China began long before I set foot in the country. One of the greatest scoops of my journalistic career was for the India Press Agency (IPA), when I reported that India was on the verge of restoring diplomatic relations with China after the rupture caused by the 1962 war.

The story created quite a stir. The next day, with MPs and journalists demanding confirmation, External Affairs Minister YB Chavan announced in Parliament that KR Narayanan had been appointed India's Ambassador to China.

Yet, like millions of Indians of my generation, my understanding of China remained filtered through the lens of the 1962 conflict. We grew up on the official narrative while the Henderson Brooks-Bhagat Report remained under lock and key. Defence Minister George Fernandes famously described China as "enemy number one", reinforcing a perception that had already become deeply embedded in the Indian psyche.

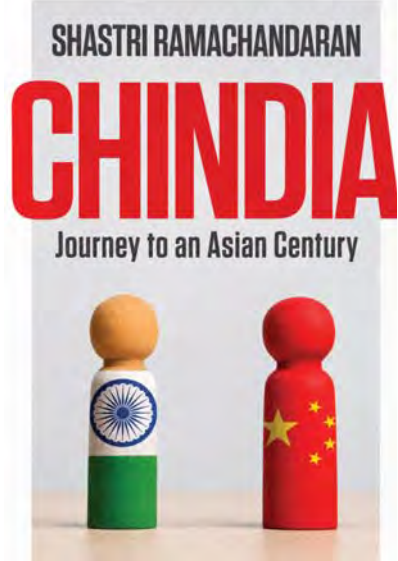
When I eventually travelled to Beijing nearly two decades later, en route to Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia, I found a country that was still poor but unmistakably disciplined.

The airport was hardly superior to New Delhi's. As the aircraft taxied, I noticed an elderly man in the familiar Mao suit carefully removing weeds from the grassy verge. The sight seemed symbolic of a nation painstakingly rebuilding itself.

Driving to the diplomatic enclave where my host, a PTI correspondent, lived, another image remained etched in my memory: endless streams of cyclists moving with clockwork precision through the streets. Even my host commuted by bicycle. Consumer goods were inexpensive. I bought batteries for my camera flash at almost half the Indian price, only to discover that they took forever to recharge. Japanese batteries proved far more reliable, a reminder that China had not yet become the manufacturing powerhouse it is today.

I also remember standing in a long queue near Qianmen Gate, close to Tiananmen Square, to buy a burger from China's first McDonald's outlet, which had opened only days earlier.

That scene, ordinary as it seemed then, represented a society cautiously opening itself to the world. Years later, after the Beijing Olympics,



my wife sent me photographs of the Bird's Nest Stadium and other landmarks. Comparing those images with my memories of the city was astonishing. China had transformed itself beyond recognition. The bicycles had given way to expressways, gleaming skyscrapers and world-class infrastructure. The nation that once struggled to produce dependable batteries had become a technological giant competing with the world's best.

It is precisely this remarkable journey that Shastri Ramachandaran explains with clarity, balance and authority.

He occupies a unique place among Indian writers on China. Having spent more than a decade as a senior journalist with Chinese publications in Beijing, he combines the curiosity of a seasoned reporter with the discipline of a serious scholar. That combination gives Chindia its distinctive flavour. It reads effortlessly without sacrificing intellectual depth.

His earlier work, Beyond Binaries: The World and China, established him as one of India's perceptive observers of contemporary China. That book appealed largely to diplomats, academics and policy specialists. Chindia, however, speaks to a much wider audience. It translates complex geopolitical developments into lucid prose that ordinary readers can readily grasp.

Writing objectively about China is no easy task for an Indian. Public opinion has long been shaped by suspicion, selective information and political rhetoric. Unlike Indians who proudly claim distant relatives in Britain or America, very few can say they have Chinese friends.

Familiarity breeds understanding, distance breeds caricature.

Ramachandaran approaches China without ideological baggage. His central argument is straightforward yet profound: the twenty-first century belongs to Asia, and India and China will largely determine its course.

The two countries have every reason to cooperate rather than confront each

Assam CM inspects zoo, housing, cultural projects in Guwahati

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday visited the Bhupen Hazarika Samannay Tirtha at Jalukbari, where he paid tribute to the legendary music maestro and announced plans to develop the memorial into a vibrant year-round cultural destination. He also reviewed major infrastructure projects at the Assam Police Reserve campus and the Assam State Zoo and Botanical Garden.

During his visit to the Samannay Tirtha, the Chief Minister held discussions with officials of the Cultural Affairs Department and the Public Works Department on upgrading the complex. He said the memorial would be redesigned to better reflect the life and legacy of Bhupen Hazarika.

The proposed revamp will include the use of Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) technologies to provide immersive experiences, allowing visitors to interact with the artiste's life and music through digital platforms. An open-air stage will also be constructed, while a government committee will be formed to manage the complex and organise cultural programmes throughout the year, in addition to events on Hazarika's birth and death anniversaries.

Later, Sarma inspected the

ongoing redevelopment of the Assam Police Reserve campus at Paltan Bazar. The project, estimated to cost around ₹600 crore, will provide residential accommodation for more than 600 police personnel, including inspectors, sub-inspectors and constables. The campus will also house a school, temple, namghar, playground, press conference hall and administrative office. A separate residential building for 42 police officers is also being constructed at Panbazar.

The Chief Minister also reviewed the modernisation works at the Assam State Zoo and Botanical Garden, a ₹360-crore project aimed at improving visitor amenities while creating more natural habitats for wildlife. He inspected the under-construction veterinary hospital, wildlife rescue and rehabilitation centre, and museum before chairing a review meeting with officials of the Environment, Forest and Climate Change Department and the Public Works Department in the presence of Forest Minister Jayanta Mallabarua.

Sarma directed that the veterinary hospital be developed in consultation with leading veterinary experts and asked officials to examine the feasibility of introducing an internal train service to improve visitor convenience.



Volkswagen India launches Tayron Life SUV at ₹41.99 lakh with level 2 ADAS, 4MOTION AWD

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mumbai

Volkswagen India has expanded its premium SUV portfolio with the launch of the Tayron Life, a five-seater SUV priced at ₹41.99 lakh (ex-showroom). The model is the company's second locally assembled vehicle introduced in India this year and is aimed at customers seeking a spacious, technology-rich premium SUV.

The Tayron Life is powered by a 2.0-litre TSI EVO petrol engine paired with a 7-speed DSG automatic transmission and 4MOTION all-wheel-drive system. The powertrain develops 204 PS of power and 320 Nm of peak torque.

Positioned as a premium lifestyle SUV, the Tayron Life measures 4,792 mm in length and has a 2,789 mm wheelbase. It offers an 885-litre boot, which can be expanded to 2,090 litres with the rear seats folded, making it one of the more spacious offerings in its segment.

Speaking on the launch, Nitin Kohli, Brand Director, Volkswagen Passenger Cars India, said the Tayron Life



reflects the company's strategy of introducing global products tailored for Indian customers. He said the locally assembled SUV strengthens Volkswagen's premium SUV lineup with its combination of spaciousness, advanced technology, German engineering and driving competence.

The SUV comes equipped with a host of premium features, including LED Plus headlights, a panoramic sunroof, heated and ventilated ergoActive front seats with massage function, a 26.03-cm digital cockpit, a 32.77-cm touchscreen infotainment system, an 8-speaker audio system, wireless smartphone connectivity and charging, and the IDA Digital Voice Assistant.

On the safety front, the Tayron Life features Level 2 Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) with 14 driver assistance functions, including adaptive cruise control, autonomous emergency braking, lane keeping assist, blind spot detection, rear traffic alert and park assist. It also comes with nine airbags, electronic stability control, hill start and hill descent assist, tyre pressure monitoring system and ISOFIX child seat anchors.

The SUV offers six drive modes-Eco, Comfort, Sport, Individual, Offroad and Snow-along with an independent suspension setup featuring McPherson struts at the front and a multi-link rear suspension.

The Tayron Life is available

in seven exterior colour options: Dolphin Grey Metallic, Cipressino Green Metallic, Oyster Silver Metallic, Nightshade Blue Metallic, Ultraviolet Metallic, Oryx White Mother-of-Pearl Effect and Grenadilla Black Metallic.

With the launch of the Tayron Life, Volkswagen India further expands its premium SUV range, which now includes the Taigun, Tiguan R-Line, Tayron R-Line and the newly introduced Tayron Life.

The company said the SUV has been designed for customers looking for a combination of comfort, practicality, advanced technology and German engineering in a premium five-seater package.

FROM THE

WORLD

USA

Martha Lillard

dies at 78

Martha Lillard had just turned 5 when she was diagnosed with polio and depended on an iron lung to live. She died last month in Oklahoma, the last US polio patient who used the machine, her sister said. She was 78.

"They told her she wasn't supposed to live past 20 years old," Lillard's younger sister, Cindy McVey, told The Associated Press on Friday. "She had the enthusiasm and the drive to continue living and make the best of her life." While McVey doesn't know the official cause of death, she attributes it to the effects of long-haul COVID-19. Lillard died on June 26.

Lillard slept in the iron lung cylinder that encased her body as the air pressure in the chamber forced air in and out of her lungs. As a child, she went to grade school for two hours a day and was tutored the rest of the time. (AP)

PAKISTAN

Cleric bans

Crypto trading

A leading Pakistani cleric has issued a "fatwa" against trading in cryptocurrencies, declaring it "haram" under Islamic law, in a ruling that comes as the government pushes to regulate and promote the virtual assets sector.

The fatwa, issued by Islamic scholar Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, was made public by the Darul Uloom Karachi, one of Pakistan's most respected Sunni Islamic seminaries. Though a fatwa is a religious opinion and not legally binding, it may influence how many Muslims in Pakistan view cryptocurrency trading and investment. The fatwa has been endorsed by several other Islamic scholars. The ruling covers cryptocurrencies, crypto tokens and stablecoins, and States that such digital assets do not meet the Islamic definition of wealth or property, making their buying and selling impermissible under Shariah. (PTI)

Bahamas plane crash kills 10,

Flamingo flights grounded

ASSOCIATED PRESS

■ San Juan

A small plane crashed in the Bahamas , killing 10 people and prompting the government to temporarily ground Flamingo Air flights.

The deadly incident happened in North Andros, located in waters just west of Nassau, the archipelago's Capital. Bahamian Prime Minister Philip Brave Davis had initially said that one person survived, but he later confirmed in a press conference that the person died from their injuries. The victims have not been publicly identified. "We gather beneath a cloud of great



sorrow," he said, noting that people were celebrating the Bahamas' 53rd independence anniversary. "It has become a day of mourning. ... To every family that has received the devastating news, that someone they love will not be coming

home, we offer our deepest condolences." The Bahamian Aircraft Accident Investigation Authority said in a statement that the plane had departed Lynden Pindling International Airport in Nassau and was headed to San Andros when

it crashed. It identified the plane as a Cessna 402 aircraft registered in the Bahamas.

The Ministry of Energy, Utilities and Aviation said in a statement that the suspension of Flamingo Air's air operator certificate is only a precautionary safety measure as officials investigate the cause of the crash. The ministry said the suspension is a result of two safety incidents that happened. During the press conference, Energy, Utilities and Aviation Minister JoBeth Coleby-Davis said the first incident occurred earlier Friday involving a Flamingo Air plane. (AP)



Artistes performing as Prime Minister Narendra Modi attend, an Indian community event in Auckland

PTI

Two Indians

among three

arrested for

dealing in drugs

in Nepal

SHIRISH B PRADHAN

■ Kathmandu

Nepal police have arrested three drug dealers, including two Indian nationals, in Rupandehi district, police said on Saturday.

Iqbal Khan, 50, a resident of Amethi Musafirkhana, UP and Ram Dayal Sharma, 34, a resident of Siddharthanagar Thana, Chatarra and Sarajuddin Musalman, 24, a resident of Lumbini Municipality, Rupandehi district in Nepal were arrested on Friday during an operation, according to a statement by Nepal Police.

The Anti-Narcotic Bureau of Nepal Police in Kathmandu carried out an operation based on a tip off, it said.

Police said that one of the Indian nationals opened fire during the operation. Iqbal Khan sustained a bullet injury below the knee of his left leg during the cross-firing.

The injured Indian national was taken to the Lumbini Provincial Hospital for medical treatment. (PTI)



Indian mission in Shanghai discusses

agribusiness cooperation with Olam Agri

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

■ Beijing

India's Consul General in Shanghai, Pratik Mathur, met the regional leadership team of Olam Agri, a Saudi-owned global food, feed and fibre agribusiness, and discussed potential avenues for collaboration with Indian agribusiness stakeholders.

The meeting explored potential avenues for collaboration and partnership between Indian, Chinese and ASEAN agribusiness stakeholders, the Indian Consulate in Shanghai said

in a social media post. The discussions included opportunities to strengthen agricultural trade, enhance supply-chain resilience, promote knowledge exchange, and support broader food security objectives in the region, it said.

During the meeting held in Shanghai, Mathur held talks with Himanshu Chaturvedi, Regional Head for China and ASEAN, and Ben Tong, Regional Head of Legal and Compliance, on developments in global agricultural markets, food security concerns relevant to the Global



India's Consul General in Shanghai, Pratik Mathur

South and emerging risks to global supply chains. Both sides also exchanged views on the importance of resilient,

diversified and sustainable agricultural supply chains in supporting long-term food security, the mission said.

Blackout strikes Cuba for second time this week

ASSOCIATED PRESS

■ Havana

An islandwide blackout struck Cuba on Friday for the second time this week as the nation of nearly 10 million people grapples with a crumbling power grid and fuel shortages stemming from a US energy blockade.

While total blackouts have become increasingly common in the Caribbean country, it's unusual for back-to-back ones to hit just days apart. Cuba's Electric Union confirmed the outage on X.

Officials had also confirmed the first total power outage, which happened on Monday, although it wasn't clear what caused it.



Authorities at the time said an investigation was underway. Fuel has been running

out across Cuba since January, when US President Donald Trump threatened

tariffs on any country that sells or provides oil to the island, deepening the island's ongoing economic and financial crisis. Public transportation has largely been halted, and officials have cancelled tens of thousands of surgeries.

Cuba produces only 40 per cent of the fuel it needs, while the 730,000 barrels of oil delivered by a Russian tanker in late March ran out by the end of April. The government also has been rationing power with intentional outages that can stretch to more than 24 consecutive hours.

A blackout in mid-May affected the island's eastern provinces, while a blackout in mid-March struck the entire island.

Japan's space agency conducts first test

flight for experimental reusable rocket

MARI YAMAGUCHI

■ Tokyo

Japan's experimental reusable rocket took off and safely landed in a first test flight on Saturday as the country seeks to achieve the technology key to cut launch costs and compete in the global space market dominated by SpaceX.

The RV-X rocket lifted off, hovered and moved horizontally before landing during its less than one-minute flight at the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency's Noshiro Testing Centre in northeastern Japan, which was livestreamed by the NVS, a group of space fans.

JAXA is expected to explain the results in an online briefing later Saturday. Japan seeks to catch up



with the technology Elon Musk's SpaceX has been using for several years to cut launch costs of delivering payloads into space.

Saturday's flight is a step forward for Japan in achieving the technology needed to develop a lower-cost successor to the country's current mainstay, single-use H3 series. The flight comes one day after state media in China reported the country achieved its first successful recovery of the first stage of a rocket after liftoff.

Japan's H3 rocket is designed to be more cost-effective than its predecessor H-2A series, which had a near-perfect success record, but still needs further cost cuts to compete in the global space market. The Japanese government says a stable, commercially competitive transport capability is key to the country's space program and national security. (AP)

US braces for oppressive heat wave, millions affected

PATRICK WHITTLE/TAMMY WEBBER

■ Washington

A widespread and dangerous heat wave is building across the US, with triple-digit highs expected in the Southwest and Great Plains this weekend before spreading eastward under a dome of high pressure that meteorologists say could trap oppressive temperatures for a week or more.

Forecasters are advising people to stay hydrated and find places to cool off, warning of temperatures 15 to 25 degrees warmer than normal in many areas, including at night—especially bad for people's health because their bodies won't have a chance to recover. The heat dome is expected to affect as much as two-thirds of the continental United States. "The heat doesn't necessarily stop when it's



dark out," said Josh Adam, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Bismarck, North Dakota, where temperatures will surpass 100 F (37 C) until Tuesday. That is a dramatic spike for a state where summer temperatures are typically in the

80s, he said. The National Weather Service predicts that more than 90 US local temperature records will be tied or broken through Wednesday - with two-thirds of those being overnight heat records. Temperatures won't drop below

80 F (27 C) at night in Fort Lauderdale, Florida; Miami; Tampa, Florida; Galveston, Texas; and Charleston, South Carolina, according to the forecast. The current heat dome - formed when high pressure traps hot air while blocking cooling winds and rain - is one of the strongest to affect the Dakotas in 25 years, said Chad Merrill, a senior meteorologist with AccuWeather.

Forecasters expect record triple-digit highs this weekend in Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota.

Nevada, a state accustomed to hot weather, is even hotter than normal, said Andrew Gorelow, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Las Vegas. The temperature in Las Vegas is expected to hit 111 F (48 C) on Saturday, Gorelow said. (AP)

Hundreds of firefighters battle deadly Spain wildfire after 12 killed in Almeria

SERGIO RODRIGO/

SERGE CARTWRIGHT

■ Bejar

Hundreds of firefighters backed by helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft struggled on Saturday to contain one of Spain's deadliest wildfires that killed a least 12 people.

A combination of light winds and high humidity are helping crews but the sheer size of the fire still poses challenges, Antonio Sanz, head of Andalusia's emergency services, said.

The fire has scorched some 66 sq km (25 sq miles) of forest and farmland, about the size of Manhattan. Sanz said fire crews carried out controlled burns overnight around the perimeter of the fire, which broke out late Thursday in a semi-arid area near



the Sierra de Los Filabres mountains in in Almeria province, just as Spain was sizzling.

Most of the victims, who are believed to be foreign nationals,

died after ignoring shelter-in-place instructions, authorities said. Seven people died while on foot after abandoning their cars. Four of the dead were believed to

be British because the steering wheel of their burned-out car was on the right side, as with British vehicles, regional authorities said.

Sanz said on Saturday that authorities had completed autopsies and DNA samples were collected to identify them.

Authorities proactively evacuated 1,448 people from some 11 areas. Jeffrey and Christine Kember were watching a favourite TV show in their Los Pinos farmhouse when the blare of a siren alerted them to the fire.

Jeffrey Kember said at the sight of the advancing flames, both he and his wife jumped into their respective cars while also trying to help a neighbour with two toddlers. He described how the

couple got separated and how he was unable to speak to his wife because she didn't have a phone on her.

"I'm driving through the flames. It was actually flames. I though, I can't stop, I just gotta go," Jeffrey Kember told The Associated Press, with his wife next to him outside an evacuation centre.

"It was eerie because all of a sudden I came out of the flames and it was all bright sunshine. It was like surreal. Ridiculous!"

Meanwhile, Spanish authorities arrested two people for ignoring evacuation orders and returning to a high-risk area, according to Spain's official EFE news agency. Authorities are still combing through the Bedar area in search for any victims. Spain has battled

frequent and severe heat waves in recent years, with temperatures often exceeding 40 degrees Celsius. Wind, high temperatures and little rainfall help small wildfires grow into unchecked blazes.

Justice Minister Felix Bolanos on Saturday attributed the ferocity of the Almeria wildfire to a "climate emergency". He said the fire, at its most intense, advanced as fast as 100 metres per minute.

In June, Spain experienced several days of record-setting heat, with over 1,000 excess deaths. Europe is the world's fastest-warming continent, with temperatures increasing twice as fast as the global average since the 1980s, according to the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service. Parts of

Western Europe are facing their third heat wave in six weeks. Globally, 2025 was the third-hottest year on record, bringing several intense heat waves across Europe.

Several wildfires remained active across France on Saturday as temperatures soared. Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said that 32 people have been arrested across the country since the beginning of the summer in connection with wildfires.

"Those unacceptable acts, which have disastrous consequences and mobilise our firefighters at the risk of their lives, now fall into the hands of the justice system," he said. "We will continue our determined action and will not let anything slide." (AP)



88 terrorists killed in ongoing anti-terror operation in Pak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Karachi/ Peshawar

At least 88 terrorists were killed in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province since the launch of a major anti-terror operation on July 5, the Government said on Saturday. Nine terrorists were killed in the past 24 hours, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said in a statement.

"The total number of terrorists killed since July 5 in Operation Shaban has reached 88," he said.

The military, paramilitary Rangers and the Frontier Corps are participating in the ongoing operation, which has involved both ground and air offensives against the militants. The operation was launched after insurgents carried out several coordinated attacks across Balochistan on July 5.

The deadliest attack targeted a police checkpoint at Mangi Dam in Ziarat district, where militants killed nine policemen before abducting 18 others.

Their bodies were later recovered from the Zarghoon Gar mountainous area near Ziarat, officials said.

Meanwhile, families of the slain policemen continued their sit-in protest at Koila Phatak Chowk on the outskirts of Quetta, demanding justice and improved security for law enforcement personnel. The protesters on Friday brought eight of the 18 bodies from the Civil Hospital in Quetta to the protest site, saying they would not bury them until the Government



assured them of justice and better protection for police personnel. Also on July 5, militants attacked members of the Hanna Urak Valley tribe near Quetta, killing five tribesmen, injuring eight others and abducting 11 people.

The abducted tribesmen were recovered on Friday night, following which the protest staged by their relatives near Quetta's Airport Road was called off.

Balochistan has been facing unrest for about two decades due to allegations by the local ethnic Baloch groups and parties that the federal Government was exploiting the mineral wealth of the province.

5 people shot dead in NW Pak over old feud

At least five people, including a woman, were shot dead on Saturday in an alleged inci-

dent of longstanding enmity in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, police said.

According to police, the shooting took place in the Lakki Marwat district of the province.

Initial investigations suggest the attack was motivated by an old personal feud, although authorities said the exact circumstances behind the incident are still being investigated.

Rescue 1122 officials shifted the bodies to Lakki City Hospital for medico-legal formalities. Police rushed to the crime scene, collected evidence and launched an investigation. Officials said efforts were underway to identify and arrest those involved, adding that legal action would be taken against the perpetrators in accordance with the law.

Six killed in overnight Russian missile, drone strikes on Kyiv

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Kyiv

Russian attacks on Ukraine killed six people, including a child, and wounded 29, officials said on Saturday, adding that Ukrainian forces damaged more than two dozen Russian tankers and other vessels in the Sea of Azov.

Ukraine's General Staff said 21 tankers used to transport oil and petroleum products were damaged overnight, in addition to four tugboats, two cargo ships and a dredging vessel. Russian officials said one person was killed in the Ukrainian drone strikes and that only four ships came



under attack. In Ukraine's northeast Sumy region, four people were killed, including a child, and 17 people were wounded when two aerial glide bombs hit a crowded area where civil-

ians were present, said Sumy regional head Oleh Hryhorov.

Eleven people, including one child, were wounded in missile and drone attacks overnight on Kyiv, the State Emergency Service reported.

In the southern region of Odesa, two people were killed after a Russian missile struck a building, said regional head Oleh Kiper. Another man was wounded by shrapnel. Explosions and fires were reported across Kyiv's Solomianskyi, Darnytskyi and Dniprovskyi districts, the emergency service said. (AP)



A helicopter drops water on the Summit Fire in Llano

AP

Students abducted by militants in Nigeria rescued: Government



DYEPKAZAH SHIBAYAN
■ Abuja

Students abducted in May by Islamic militants in Nigeria's southwestern Oyo State have been rescued, the Government said. Government spokesman Bayo Onanuga did not specify the total number of students rescued, but authorities said at the time of the abductions on May 15 that more than 40 people had been abducted. One of the teachers abducted alongside the students was killed shortly afterwards.

Eight militants were arrested as part of the operation, while an unspecified number of the militants were killed, Onanuga said. The abductions

in a southern state had represented an escalation of the country's security crisis because most such abductions previously had taken place in the north.

"This successful military operation has ended the siege and standoff of over 50 days and has brought relief to the entire nation and the affected families in particular," Nigerian President Bola Tinubu said in a statement. In the same week as the Oyo abduction, dozens of children were kidnapped in Borno, the epicentre of Nigeria's security crisis. Abductions at schools are common in Nigeria, where militant groups target them to put pressure on the Government and extract ransoms. (AP)

King Charles meets Harry, family amid rift repair efforts



ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ London

King Charles III hosted Prince Harry and met with his family for the first time in years on Friday as they try to repair a rift that has persisted since his youngest son and wife quit royal life and moved to America six years ago. Harry, Meghan, and their two children, Prince Archie and Princess Lilibet, met with the king and Queen Camilla at Highgrove House, a country estate west of London.

The Duke of Sussex arrived Monday in his homeland for a number of charity events that were overshadowed by speculation of whether he would meet with his father.

British tabloids and news broadcasts were filled with speculation about whether Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, would accompany him and, more importantly, whether they would bring their two children so they can finally get to know Grandpa Charles.

It had appeared those plans fizzled after a Government committee denied Harry security protection for his family and Buckingham Palace withdrew and offer for the prince to stay there when it appeared he would come alone. Harry's visit coincided with him losing his final lawsuit in his quest to tame the British tabloids.

US NGO HemAth gets UN accreditation for empowering Kashmiri women

YOSHITA SINGH ■ United Nations

The UN has granted accreditation to a US-based non-profit organisation dedicated to empowering displaced and underserved Kashmiri women, a status that will enable it to engage actively with the world organisation and provide a global platform to advocate for "women whose voices are often unheard."

HemAth Inc has been granted Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which is one of the six principal organs of the UN and is focussed on advancing economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Founder and President of HemAth INC Dr Shakun Malik said that the "distinguished recognition" by UN



ECOSOC marks a significant milestone in HemAth's journey from a grassroots initiative serving displaced Kashmiri women to an internationally recognised civil society organisation contributing to global dialogue on women's empowerment, sustainable development and social inclusion. "Receiving Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC is

a tremendous honour that recognises the strength of community-led solutions and gives us a global platform to advocate for women whose voices are often unheard," US-based Malik, who is also an eminent oncologist and humanitarian, said.

Last month, ECOSOC adopted the recommendation of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to grant HemAth special consultative status.

According to the UN, consultative status for an organisation enables it to engage in several ways with ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies, the Human Rights Council and, under specific conditions, some meetings of the General Assembly and other inter Governmental bodies, as well as with the United Nations Secretariat. Through the status, HemAth will be able to

engage more directly with the UN by participating in relevant meetings and conferences, submitting written statements, making oral presentations where appropriate, organising side events, and collaborating with Member States, UN entities, and other civil society organisations on issues aligned with its mission.

HemAth, named after the Kashmiri word for 'strength', was established to support displaced Kashmiri women by preserving their rich cultural heritage while creating pathways for their economic independence.

Through mentorship, skills training, entrepreneurship, education, and wellness initiatives, HemAth seeks to restore dignity, opportunity, and hope to women whose lives have been disrupted by displacement and adversity. A member

of the Kashmiri Pandit community, Malik said founding HemAth has been a "deeply personal journey" inspired by the resilience of women who have endured displacement and hardship and yet continue to preserve their heritage while striving for a better future.

The Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC provides HemAth with new opportunities to contribute its expertise to international discussions on issues affecting women and marginalised communities.

Malik said the organisation intends to engage actively with the United Nations by sharing evidence-based community experiences, participating in policy discussions, collaborating with international partners, and promoting innovative approaches that empower women and strengthen communities. (PTI)

Jaishankar to launch India's UNSC campaign

YOSHITA SINGH ■ New York

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will launch India's campaign for a non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council for the 2028-29 term and also meet UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres at the world body's headquarters next week.

Jaishankar undertook an official visit to Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman from July 5-10 and is expected to arrive in the US on Saturday.

He will launch India's official campaign for the UN Security Council tenure 2028-29 at a special event in the UN headquarters on Monday.

He will then attend the 3rd India-EU Trade and Technology Council meeting



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar

and interact with his EU and Belgian counterparts in Brussels on July 14-15.

According to a schedule of meetings released by the UN, Guterres will meet Jaishankar at the UN headquarters on Monday afternoon. India had last sat at

the UN horseshoe table for the 2021-22 term.

Elections for the 2028-29 term will be conducted in June next year, when India and Tajikistan will compete for the sole seat in the Asia-Pacific Group category.

The UNSC elections will

come amid significant geopolitical shifts as the world continues to grapple with challenges such as the Ukraine war, Gaza conflict and the US-Israel war against Iran. In its message for its UNSC candidature, India has highlighted "#India4UNSC 2028-29 Peace, Planet, Progress." Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his address to the Parliament of Indonesia this week, had said that the global order is changing rapidly, and in this context, "developing countries like ours are seeking equal participation and a greater role in global affairs.

In this evolving global landscape, India firmly believes that reforms in the United Nations Security Council can no longer be delayed." (PTI)

Mali, Algeria end diplomatic rift and reopen airspace

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Bamako

Mali and Algeria reopened their airspace and reinstated their ambassadors, ending a diplomatic rift that started over a year ago after Algeria shot down a Malian armed drone near the shared border.

Mali's military junta said in a statement late Friday it would restore the Algerian ambassador to Bamako and open its airspace to "all civilian and military aircraft operating flights to or from the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria."

Algerian media also confirmed the restoration of diplomatic relations.

The two nations recalled their ambassadors and closed their airspace in April 2025 after the drone shooting, with Algeria accusing Mali of repeatedly violating its airspace. Mali denied the claim. Relations between the Malian military junta and



Algeria began to deteriorate two years ago, when Mali ended a crucial 2015 peace deal with local Azawad separatists, mainly mediated by Algeria. The rebels have long sought to create an independent state in northern Mali, which has thrown the West African nation into a violent conflict for over a decade.

China issues red alert for rainstorms as Typhoon Bavi makes landfall

AGENCIES
■ Taipei/Beijing

Nearly 2 million people were evacuated in eastern China on Saturday as Typhoon Bavi made landfall, bringing strong winds and heavy rain to the region, officials said.

Several Chinese cities, including the Capital Beijing, have stepped up emergency response measures as the local authorities issued a red alert for rainstorms as Typhoon Bavi barrelled down on its east coast.

Bavi, the ninth typhoon of the year, landed on the coast of east China's Zhejiang Province at around 11.20 pm on Saturday, Zhejiang provincial meteorological observatory said.

The typhoon, with the maximum wind force at its centre reaching 40 meters per second,



Huge waves crash on the coastline ahead of Typhoon Bavi in Wenling in eastern China's Zhejiang province

(AP)

churned ashore at Yuhuan City, a county-level city, State-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Earlier on Saturday, China's National Meteorological Centre issued a red alert for rainstorms, the highest level in its four-tier system, and an orange alert for the typhoon, Xinhua reported.

More than 2 million people have been evacuated in eastern China, the report added. Within 24 hours until 2 pm on Sunday, torrential rains are expected to drench large parts of the country, including Zhejiang, northern Fujian, north-eastern Jiangxi and southern Anhui, and some parts of Beijing and Hebei, according to the national observatory's forecast.

Scores of flights and ferry services have been cancelled across eastern China, while Zhejiang province has stepped up emergency prepara-

tions. Cangnan County, a possible landing point for the typhoon in Zhejiang's Wenzhou city, has relocated people to safety and set up temporary shelters in local schools. Nine districts in Beijing activated a Level-I emergency response for flood control on Saturday afternoon after a red alert for torrential rain was issued for these regions. Downpours are forecast to batter the districts of Fangshan, Pinggu, Miyun, Huairou, Mentougou, Fengtai, Daxing, Tongzhou and Shunyi, mostly in the suburbs, the Beijing Meteorological Observatory announced on Saturday.

China Southern Airlines and Spring Airlines have cancelled about 60 flights to and from Shanghai. The neighbouring province of Zhejiang raised its typhoon emergency preparations to the highest level,

which allows it to relocate large numbers of people, close schools and workplaces, and mobilise all resources needed.

Over 50 major tourist attractions in Shanghai have been temporarily closed or adjusted their operating hours on Saturday as Typhoon Bavi barrels toward the country's eastern coast, according to the Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture and Tourism and scenic sites operators. After landfall, Bavi is forecast to move northwestward and then shift toward a more northerly direction. In southeastern China, cities near the coast are preparing for the impacts of Typhoon Bavi.

In the city of Ningde in Fujian province, more than 3,700 people were relocated from high-risk onshore areas as of Friday evening, Xinhua said.

Hindi authors laud Singapore Govt's effort to support Indian languages

GURDIP SINGH ■ Singapore

Singapore's policies to support community celebrations has been instrumental in the growing interest in learning Hindi not only by students of Indian heritage but also of Chinese-descent and others, language lovers and experts said on Saturday.

Dr Sandhya Singh, Head of Indian Languages at the National University of Singapore (NUS) was speaking at an event to launch a Hindi book here when she also highlighted how the Singapore Government actively promotes the learning of Indian languages.

Noting the growing interest in learning Hindi "not only by Indian students but also Chinese-descent and other international students," Singh said, "We are proud that the NUS has produced graduates with a strong understanding of Hindi and Indian culture."

The university continues to strengthen Hindi language education through academic excellence, cultural engagement and global perspectives, she added. (PTI)



BRIEFLY

Defeat makes Djokovic realise he’s blessed and cursed

Novak Djokovic didn’t dwell on Centre Court after getting dominated by Jannik Sinner in the Wimbledon semifinals.

The 39-year-old Djokovic enjoyed a warm, smile-filled embrace with his 24-year-old opponent at the net after the 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 defeat Friday, quickly packed up his tennis bags and then waved to the boisterous crowd as he held one hand to his chest to show his appreciation as he walked off.

Will the seven-time Wimbledon champion ever be back to play on these hallowed lawns again?

Only time – something that Djokovic is running out of – will tell. It’s been nearly three years since Djokovic won his record-extending 24th Grand Slam singles title at the 2023 U.S. Open. And despite reaching the semifinals at all four Grand Slams last year and reaching a final and another semi in two of three Slams this year – he acknowledges that’s not enough. “For 99 per cent of the players, that would be a very good Grand Slam result,” Djokovic said. “For me, it’s good but not good enough, because I’m blessed and cursed to be used to something of a highest degree in terms of results and achievements.”



Mcllroy part of 3-way tie for the lead at Scottish Open



Rory McIlroy took advantage of the scoring holes in windy conditions Friday and posted a 4-under 66 for a three-way share of the lead in a Scottish Open that no longer has Scottie Scheffler. As comfortable as McIlroy looked, Scheffler struggled from the start and wound up with a 72 to miss the 36-hole cut for the first time in nearly four years. He had made 78 cuts in a row, the longest streak since Tiger Woods set the record (142) more than 20 years ago.

“Got off to a poor start and after that, I didn’t really it close enough to give myself a bunch of looks,” Scheffler said. “That’s how you shoot over par.”

Jordan Smith of England had the low score of the tournament with a 63 and was the first to post at 9-under 131, joined by the resurgent Tom Kim (66) and McIlroy, who has not won since going back-to-back in the Masters in April. “It would have been nice to be a couple better,” McIlroy said. “But it’s obviously another good day and in good position.” But the most surprising development at The Renaissance Club was Scheffler. Instead of heading to the range after his round, he was making plans to head south earlier than he imagined for his title defense in the British Open at Royal Birkdale. He had not missed the cut since the 2022 FedEx St. Jude Championship.

Scheffler had company that was equally surprising. Patrick Cantlay and Bernd Wiesberger became the first players since Jordan Spieth at the 2023 Sony Open to share the 18-hole lead and then miss the cut. Cantlay shot a 74, while Wiesberger shot 43 on the back nine for a 78.

Spain edges Belgium 2-1 in WC quarterfinals

GREG BEACHAMA
■ Inglewood (US)

Mikel Merino is Spain’s World Cup hero once again, and even he finds it hard to believe. A mere four days after Merino scored a clutch goal as a substitute in injury time to beat Portugal, he found himself in the right spot again in the quarterfinals when Belgium’s backup goalkeeper spilled the ball into his path.

Merino booted it home in the 88th minute, sending Spain to a 2-1 victory Friday and into a titanic semifinal showdown with tournament favourite France.

“I’ve done this again, and it’s happened to me again, so it would seem that coincidence exists,” a smiling Merino said. “If you’re ready and you try, I guess it can happen for you.”

Already a versatile contributor in any role he can get as a depth player for his country or English club Arsenal, the multi-positional Merino has transformed into the ultimate super-sub while providing exactly what Spain needed to survive two knock-out matches against top opponents.

Merino has scored two



goals in his first World Cup – and they’re both historic.

“Honestly, it’s crazy to be able to help the team once again,” he said. “This time in a different way, but at the same time to believe and trust that the opposing goalkeeper could make a mistake and to stay alert. ... I prepare for when the moment comes, and hopefully they keep coming.” Merino is the first to admit he also needed luck, and Belgium keeper Senne Lammens provided it after he was forced into his first World Cup match in the 71st minute by an injury to starter Thibaut Courtois.

Merino came on in the 86th minute and scored on his second touch of the match, charging into the box and pouncing after Lammens lost control of Pau Cubarsi’s long shot. Fabian Ruiz scored a rebound goal in the 30th minute for Spain, but Belgium forward Charles De Ketelaere evened it with the first goal allowed by the Spanish team in the entire World Cup in the 41st minute.

Merino’s clutch goal against an upset-minded Belgium sent La Roja to the semifinals for the first time since they won the World Cup in 2010. A powerhouse

France should fear Spain in their much-anticipated World Cup semifinal, says Lamine Yamal

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Inglewood (US)

Lamine Yamal thinks France should be afraid of Spain with the European giants headed to a World Cup semifinal showdown on Tuesday.

“I believe if France has to fear anyone, it should be us, in my opinion,” the teenage sensation told broadcast reporters after Spain beat Belgium 2-1 on Friday to secure its first semifinal berth since 2010. “We were the ones who knocked them out before.” Spain beat France in the 2024 European Championship semifinals and again in Nations League play last year. Yamal became the youngest player to score in the continental competition.

The powerhouses meet again at the home stadium of the Dallas Cowboys next week for a spot in the final.

“We don’t fear anyone,” said Yamal, who was named



the man of the match against Belgium. “It’s clear that we are two great teams, world-class national teams, and for me they are one of the best. We’ll see what happens.”

Spain advanced on a winning goal by substitute Mikel Merino in the 88th minute of the quarterfinals at SoFi Stadium. La Roja conceded its only goal of the entire World Cup late in the first half against Belgium, while France has piled up 16 goals in its six World Cup matches.

France has made the past two World Cup finals, winning it all in 2018. Spain has made only one World Cup final in its history, but the current team is unbeaten in 37 consecutive competitive matches since March 2023 - a stretch that also includes a loss on penalties to Portugal in the Nations League final last year.

Spain coach Luis de la Fuente has been asked by the international media about this potential showdown with France throughout the tour-

nament, but particularly since the start of the knockout rounds two weeks ago. He has been uniformly complimentary of Les Bleus while echoing his own players’ confidence.

“Let me be clear: We are not finished,” de la Fuente said. “We are pleased to be in the semifinals, but we want more. ... We are capable of winning this game, and not just now, but I would have said this a few weeks ago as well.”

Yamal, who turns 19 on Monday, has only one goal and no assists while putting 10 shots on target in his first World Cup, but his playmaking and activity down the right side of Spain’s attack have been noticeable in almost every match. He started the sequence that led to Spain’s first goal against Belgium in a two-man game with Pedro Porro, eventually leading to Fabian Ruiz’s rebound goal off Olmo’s shot.

World Cup quarterfinal resale prices drop



ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ New York

World Cup ticket resale prices dropped for quarterfinal matches following the elimination of co-hosts United States and Mexico, and FIFA has nearly 1,200 seats on sale for the final at \$7,380.

The site TicketPick listed the lowest price for the Spain-Belgium game on Friday at Inglewood, California, at \$1,381, down from \$2,361 before the US lost to Belgium in the round of 16.

The lowest price for the England-Norway match at Miami Gardens, Florida, on Saturday was \$2,049, down from \$3,866 before England defeated Mexico to reach the quarterfinals. It listed the lowest price for the Argentina-Switzerland game at Kansas City, Missouri, at \$1,142, down from \$2,381 before the round of 16.

Standing outside SoFi Stadium on Friday, Jake van Baarsel said he bought tickets two days earlier. The 65-year-old from Riverside, California, said he hadn’t previously planned on attending because he knew ticket prices were so high. But when his son called to tell him he obtained seats at a lower price, he decided to pay for two at \$1,000 each to share the moment with his 13-year-old grandson.

“It’s one of those things — it’s a memory maker for my grandson and me,” he said. “So how much money do you put on a memory? So yeah, it’s steep for a game, but we enjoy.” Others who bought tickets well ahead of Friday’s quarterfinal match paid far more. Lisandro Pineda, 70, of East Los Angeles, said he paid about \$2,200 a month ago.

“The price was too high, I think, but it’s a resale, remember,” he said. “I didn’t want to be left out. I’ve never been to a World Cup. I didn’t go to the one we had before. So I figured, I have the money, I have the time, what the heck, buy the ticket, so here we are.” Kourosh Modarress, 68, of Los Angeles, said his family bought hospitality tickets at \$7,000 each after they failed to obtain other tickets in one of FIFA’s sales rounds. “I think it’s highway robbery,” he said.

FIFA had nearly 1,200 category two tickets priced at \$7,380 on sale Friday for the WC final on July 19 at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey. The governing body’s last-minute ticket sales site, which at times had listed the game as sold out, had 1,178 seats available across five sections of top deck along sidelines: 282 in section 344, 299 in section 343, 139 in section 335, 443 in section 334 and 15 in section 333.

Fery’s career just getting started even if ‘Ferytale’ is over

KEN MAGUIRE
■ London

Arthur Fery has some adjustments to make following his star turn at Wimbledon. Starting with his vacation planning.

Fery clearly didn’t see a semifinal run coming — did anyone? — because the British wild card expected to be in Greece this past week rather than on Centre Court earning standing ovations.

“I was meant to be coming back from holiday today,” the smiling Fery said after losing to Alexander Zverev 7-6 (0), 6-



2, 6-4 on Friday.

Fery became the talk of the town — his town, actually, since he grew up in the neighborhood — as he progressed into the second week.

He met Britain’s Queen Camilla before walking out onto Centre Court and beating Flavio Cobolli in the quarterfinals, becoming the first wild card in 25 years to reach the

men’s singles semifinals at the All England Club.

The “Ferytale” got a reality check, though, against the big-serving Zverev, the new French Open champion.

“I didn’t play a good tiebreak,” said Fery, who saw a 139 mph (224 kph) serve from the German on the first point before committing a double fault and an unforced error to see the tiebreaker slip away.

“He was always putting constant pressure. I didn’t get much rhythm, just not many rallies,” Fery added.

“Just balls coming back a little bit faster than the other

days and what I’m used to. Not as sharp with my footwork and mentally. Against a player like that, it adds up pretty quick.”

Zverev, who will face defending champion Jannik Sinner in Sunday’s final, told the Centre Court crowd that Fery is just getting started.

“His game is very, very good. I think he has a lot of things in his game that he can still improve, which is a positive thing, because he just made semifinals of Wimbledon for the first time,” Zverev said. “If you know that you’re just starting and you’re

making semifinals of Slams, that’s positive.”

Where does Fery go from here?: Fery entered the grass-court tournament ranked No. 114. Thanks to his deep run, he’ll break into the top 50 for the first time, moving up to No. 36 when the latest rankings are announced Monday.

“It’s going to change things, for sure. I’m going to be able to play tour events at least for a full year, hopefully for more,” said Fery, who turns 24 on Sunday. “It’s going to be a challenge to deal with all of that, but I’m conscious of it already and that’s the first step.” (AP)

Erling Haaland is Norway’s World Cup machine and internet’s babygirl

KAITLYN HUAMANI
■ New York

Erling Haaland stands at 6 feet, 5 inches, an intimidating force who can make fellow soccer players look tiny in stature and talent. Scoring seven goals across four World Cup matches entering Saturday, the Norwegian player has been described as a machine. But if you ask some loyal new fans, he’s also a babygirl and princess.

Haaland has become a social media phenomenon, with his own posts and memes from others turning even soccer novices into diehard fans.

His domineering physical appearance coupled with his goofy online persona have contributed to the craze. Fans remark on his flowing blond mane, color-coordinated hair ties and playful posts like a Snapchat-filtered selfie in which he proclaimed Shrek his “twin.”

The contrast between his strength and skill on the field

and his softer, looser online presence has also subjected him to the “babygirl” treatment online. That term is used frequently by fans of endearing male celebrities or characters who come across as sensitive, caring or vulnerable.

Haaland is emblematic of a broader embrace of soccer players as pop culture figures, driven in large part by how they present themselves off the pitch.

‘Haaland as a pretty Norwegian princess’: Sarah Wilson, a baseball content creator in New York, is new to following soccer, but has become a big enough fan in the past month that she embarked on a lengthy hunt to buy the jersey of her new favorite player.

“I love Erling Haaland more than life itself,” Wilson, 31, said in a now viral video. “I cannot fathom being such a pretty Norwegian princess and also being one of the best strikers in all of football.”

Haaland is being catapult-

ed into a fame even more intense than he had already known as the Premier League’s top scorer. This moment boils down to the pairing of elite skills with quirky personality, Wilson said.

“Him being really, really talented — that’s the first pillar of it all. And then you find out that he’s 25 years old and he’s probably the most Gen Z athlete in the World Cup,” Wilson told The Associated Press, noting his use of Snapchat and goofy filters in photos online. Many are thinking, “Wow, I love that guy, he’s hilarious. Now he’s my new favorite player,” which is exactly what happened with me,” she added.

Haaland’s expressive reactions on the pitch and his unique appearance have spawned hundreds of memes. He’s leaned into this virality, posting cheeky selfies on Instagram, uploading long-form vlogs on YouTube and interacting with fans on his public Snapchat stories,



often poking fun at himself.

After scoring two goals to knock out Brazil, he posted a smug selfie from the locker room with the caption, “Well well well.” When an Instagram video with nearly 100 million views likened his appearance to a green onion - its wiry roots standing in as his hair - Haaland responded in the comments with a side-

eyeing GIF. When Google added a Viking row animation to his search results, Haaland wrote on X, “One thing to do todayã! search my name on Google,” with a winking emoji.

Haaland said in a team news conference on Thursday that he’s enjoyed being embraced in the U.S.

“I think it’s a good thing

because I like the Americans. I think they are kind of hilarious as well. They are funny. I like the way they are,” he said. “I think it’s just good and honestly, on every single thing, the World Cup so far here has been amazing.”

Sports are a “cultural force,” one on par with politics or religion, said Jeffrey Kassing, an Arizona State

University professor who has studied fans’ and athletes’ social media use. It’s natural that Haaland has “crossed over” into non-soccer audiences, he said. A song from his youth has gone viral. A lookalike contest is in the offing. Even dogs are sporting blond wigs.

“There used to be a whole lot of gatekeeping that would happen with athletes; you would only ever hear from athletes maybe in an interview or in a press conference,” Kassing said. Haaland is evidence of how players have much more control in shaping their image now, he added.

‘Fans also try to shape the perception’: Fans’ access to athletes contributes to what is called a parasocial relationship, defined by one-way knowing, said Gayle Stever, a professor at Empire State University who has studied the dynamics between celebrities and fans for decades. Haaland’s fans feel like they know him on a per-

sonal level, but he doesn’t know the nearly 60 million people who follow him on Instagram alone.

The majority of parasocial relationships are “positive, healthy and normal,” Stever said. Only a small percentage of people take it to the extreme, she said.

Skyla Clarke, a 19-year-old sports management student in Brisbane, Australia — and lifelong soccer fan — says she’s seen that uglier side rear its head; attacks on players after poor performances, and even unprovoked hate toward athletes’ wives and partners are not uncommon. Haaland himself called AI-generated content of players a “bit scary.” But he noted in Norwegian that the attention on the team and its traditions - the rowing cheer, for example - is a sign of praise. “Usually if it’s like that, it means that you’re doing something right, and that your country is doing something right,” Haaland said.

England beat India in 5th T20I to sweep five-match series

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ London

Jos Buttler rolled back the years with a sizzling hundred while skipper Harry Brook gave glimpse of a golden future as England annihilated an out-of-sorts India by 56 runs in the fifth T20 International to complete a historic 4-0 'clean sweep' here on Saturday. Buttler's sizzling 64-ball-131 and Brook's brutal 45-ball-95 not out took England to a virtually insurmountable 257 for 3 on a day when the Indian bowling unit was at its worst.



England's Jos Buttler, right is congratulated by Harry Brook after hitting a six during T20 Cricket match between England and India in Southampton

The win also effectively ended India's 1601 days of uninterrupted pole position in the ICC T20I team rankings. This was also the sixth game that India lost under new captain Shreyas Iyer which has resulted in BCCI calling for a review of this shambolic show. Whatever good things were achieved under previous head coach Rahul Dravid have been completely undone by Gautam Gambhir in trying to put his own stamp in the current set-up. Currently, it is a dressing

room which is divided with lack of trust among the players due to constant chopping and changing which brews insecurity. While the attack at all costs philosophy worked well on Indian featherbeds with short boundaries, India's IPL Czars learnt the hard way that one-size-fits-all strategy doesn't always work. If Brook raced off the blocks to complete his half-century off just 19 balls, Buttler, the veteran, upped the ante reaching the three figure mark which his younger teammate missed by five runs. Buttler's first 50 came off 34 balls and the next fifty came off just 17 more deliveries as he switched gears with effortless ease. His innings had 12 boundaries and eight sixes. This was 35-year-old's second T20I hundred and his career-best knock. With series already in the bag, the duo put the Indian attack to the sword with some of the cleanest hitting that one would have witnessed at the Rose Bowl

where Shreyas won his fifth toss and opted to field. While Prasidh Krishna removed the dangerous Phil Salt early, caught at deep fine leg boundary, things went downhill for the visitors thereon. Between Buttler and Brook, they hit as many as 16 sixes — eight each. India's full team hit eight and there lay the difference. The pull by the former skipper while taking the top hand off the bat handle off Prasidh over fine leg was certainly the stand out shot of the innings.

India lose to Colombia, settle for women's compound team silver



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Madrid

The Indian trio of Jyothi Surekha Vennam, Prithika Pradeep and Chikitha Taniparthi struggled to bring their A-game forward and were inconsistent at crucial moments as they lost 228-232 to a dominant Colombia in the women's compound team final, settling for the silver medal at the Archery World Cup Stage 4 here on Saturday. The silver medal opened India's account in the season-ending tournament, with the contingent now looking to add to their tally later in the day. Teenager Prithika has also advanced to the women's compound individual semifinal and needs one more win to complete a double. India are also in contention for two medals in the recurve section, where another teenager, Kirti Sharma who made her World Cup debut last month in Antalya, will also be eyeing a double. She will partner India No. 1 Dhiraj Bommadevara in the recurve mixed team bronze-medal playoff and also needs one more win to secure another medal, having reaching the women's individual semifinal. World No. 3 in women's compound team

event, India, who had won gold at the season-opening Archery World Cup Stage 1 in Puebla, Mexico, in April, never really posed any threat to World No. 14 Colombia, who produced a resurgent display to clinch the title with authority. The 17-year-old Prithika was India's standout performer, drilling six 10s, including two perfect ends. But the letdown was the dip in form of Jyothi, who managed just three 10s from her eight arrows as India failed to give any fight. For Colombia, Alejandra Usquiano was flawless, reeling off eight successive 10s to prove to be the difference between the two teams. Even compound great, World No. 7 and former world champion Sara Lopez, had a relatively inconsistent outing, but Usquiano's brilliance ensured Colombia remained in control throughout. India endured a slow start, posting 55 in the opening end, while Colombia raced ahead with 57, thanks largely to Alejandra's flawless shooting. The World No. 4 opened with effortless 10s, setting the tone for her team. Shooting last, India needed three 10s to draw level. Jyothi and Prithika delivered, but Chikitha slipped to an eight as India conceded the opening end and trailed by two points.

Mandhana propels India women to command over England

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ London

Pacer Kranti Gaud's maiden five-wicket haul in red-ball cricket and Smriti Mandhana's solid second successive unbeaten fifty led India to a commanding 154 for one in their second innings against England on Day 2 of the one-off women's Test here on Saturday. Mandhana (69 batting, 124 balls) was once again the fulcrum of India's batting, as the visitors swelled their lead to 269 runs at stumps, amplifying Gaud's five for 37 effort earlier in the day. Mandhana was rock solid from the beginning as she took it upon herself the task of building on the 115-run cushion which India gained after bundling out England for 170 in their first innings. The left-hander was involved in two crucial stands — 88 runs with fellow

opener Shafali Verma (33) and an ongoing 66 runs with Yastika Bhatia (39 batting) for the second wicket. Shafali was the aggressor in the first-wicket partnership, and Mandhana's lone act of force was her six off spinner Sophie Ecclestone, a nice little shimmy sending the ball over the bowler's head. But those elegant drives through the cover region formed the meat of her innings. Shafali played some forceful shots, but her attempt to loft Ecclestone could not go beyond substitute Emma Lamb. But that remained the only moment of joy for England in the fading moments of the second and the entirety of the final sessions. Before Mandhana got into her act, Gaud twisted the knife into England with a fifer.



Skipper Nat Sciver-Brunt (44) and Amy Jones (52) resolutely defended Indian bowlers with an 84-run stand for the fifth wicket, but Gaud was too rampant for England. India's domination on the day has a direct link to Gaud's burst across two sessions, which yielded four wickets as she had dismissed Tammy Beaumont on Friday evening. The pacer struck in the

second over of the day, removing Maia Bouchier (23), whose half-hearted poke at an away going delivery ended in the hands of stumper Yastika. But Alice Capsey's dismissal was the signature moment of the day. Gaud managed to move the ball just enough to beat Capsey's defence to rattle the England batter's off-stump. Fellow pacer Sayali Satghare trapped experienced Heather Knight leg before with a slightly slanting-in delivery to reduce England to 47 for four. The home side needed a good partnership at that stage to break out of the jail. Brunt and Jones gave them just that. Jones, who brought her second fifty in women Tests in 59 balls, was fluent while driving and pulling Gaud and Satghare. Brunt, on the other hand, was more keen to be the support cast but revealed her aggressive side on a couple of occasions. The right-hander pulled Gaud for a boundary and later slog-swept spinner Sneha Rana for a six as England whittled down India's lead fast. But the burgeoning stand ended when Jones rather casually tried to turn Rana off her hips, but the ball ballooned to Richa Ghosh at short leg after making contact with the bat's shoulder. Gaud then returned to add the wicket of Lauren Bell to complete a richly-deserved five-wicket haul. Off-spinner Sneha and pacer Satghare also picked up a couple of wickets each to support Gaud as England crumbled badly in the second session, losing five wickets for 33 runs.

Yellamaraju sixth, Theegala makes cut in Scottish Open

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ North Berwick (Scotland)

Indo-Canadian golfer Sudarshan Yellamaraju surged into a tie for sixth place at 7-under-par as high winds and tricky conditions sent world Number 1 Scottie Scheffler and 2026 PGA Championship winner Aaron Rai packing after the second round of the Scottish Open here. Rory McIlroy, Tom Kim, and Jordan Smith climbed into a three-way tie for the lead at 9-under-par. After securing a steady 2-under 68 on the opening day, Yellamaraju shifted gears during his second round. The rising talent combined superb ball-striking with brilliant work on



the greens, highlighted by a spectacular 38-foot birdie putt on the par-3 11th hole. His 5-under-par 65 lifted him into a tie for sixth place, leaving him just two strokes behind the multi-way lead and firmly in contention for his first DP World Tour breakthrough. Yellamaraju birdied three consecutive holes from the fourth and bogeyed the eighth to make the turn at 2-under. He added four birdies and one more bogey on the back nine for a 3-under score. Indo-American Sahith Theegala, who made the

cut, birdied four times on the front nine and turned in 4-under 31 but dropped two bogeys against one birdie on the back nine. He also staged a vital bounce-back performance. After labouring to a tough even-par 70 on the opening day, Theegala found his rhythm on the second afternoon to fire a 3-under 67. He safely navigated the cut line and sits tied for 38th at 3-under overall. Defending Masters champion McIlroy, who has won the Scottish Open in the past, continued his ideal preparation for the upcoming Open Championship at Royal Birkdale, backing up his opening-round 65 with a clinical 4-under-par 66 on the second day.

Neeru Dhanda dazzles in Shotgun World Cup



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Lonato (Italy)

India's Neeru Dhanda produced a sensational start to the women's trap competition, firing a perfect score to take sole possession of the lead after the first three qualification rounds at the ISSF Shotgun World Cup here. The 26-year-old reigning Asian and national champion, who will represent India at this year's Asian Games in Japan, was flawless throughout the day on Friday, compiling three straight perfect rounds of 25 for a maximum 75/75. Her brilliant effort put her atop the 106-shooter field with a two-target advantage over experienced American Rachel Tozier, who ended the day on 73/75. Tokyo Olympics gold medalist and one of the sport's most accomplished trap shooters, Slovakia's Zuzana Rehak Stefecekova, was tied for second with Tozier on 73. The 42-year-old owns three Olympic medals, dating back to the 2008 Beijing Games and is also a two-time world champion. The remarkable performance by Neeru comes on the back of the mixed trap team bronze medal she won at the ISSF World Cup in Almaty in May. However, India's other two women shooters, Manisha Keer and Aashima Ahlawat, were well off the pace, managing scores of 69 and 61 respectively. Manisha was tied for 17th place with several others, while Aashima was joint 84th, leaving both with only a remote chance of making the eight-shooter final. The remaining two qualification rounds of 25 targets each will be held on Saturday, following which the top eight shooters will advance to the final. India's men's trap shooters, meanwhile, endured a disappointing opening day and are virtually out of medal contention after underwhelming performances. Ahvar Rizvi, who is also part of India's Asian Games squad, shot 70 out of 75 to be tied for 59th place alongside nearly two dozen shooters. Shapath Bharadwaj shot 68 to be tied for 103rd with more than a dozen shooters, while the experienced Kynan Chenail, another member of the Asian Games contingent for Aichi-Nagoya Games from September 19 to October 4, managed 67 to be tied for 117th with 19 others in the 208-shooter field.

Paddler Sathiyam confident of India's best performance at Asian Games

DEVARCHIT VARMA
■ Panaji

Indian table tennis team has a fine mix of youth and experience and is confident of delivering its best performance yet in the Asian Games to be held in September-October, says G Sathiyam, the senior-most member of the side. "With Sharath Kamal retiring from the sport last year, the 33-year-old Sathiyam will have the responsibility of leading a side that has youngsters like Payas Jain and Syndrela Das. "For almost a decade I have played with him (Sharath Kamal) in the team and we have learnt a lot. The best part about him is he

never lets the age gap come between us and that is what I have learnt," Sathiyam told PTI on the sidelines of Ultimate Table Tennis. "It is really important to connect with the youngsters as well. Share your ideas but listen to them. Give them that space of what they really want to do. Let them do their own style. "Pressure is a privilege. Yes, there is pressure on being a senior member and handling the youngsters, a mix of them. But this is what we have been playing for. I am pretty sure with Manav (Thakkar), Manush (Shah), Harmeet (Desai) and Payas (Jain), we have a great mix of young and experienced side." Sathiyam added, "I



am pretty sure we will deliver the best performance India has ever seen in the Asian Games. (But) having Sharath in the team was always a great thing because he would take the pressure from us and take the team so smoothly." Asked if he would feel any additional pressure

individually to add to his bronze medal from the 2018 Asian Games, Sathiyam said the preparations have been up to the mark. "I would not say (there is) desperation. We are really confident with the way we have just played, prepared really well. When you get

really nervous about what is going to happen, then it adds a negative pressure to it," he said. "It is really important to be positive, trusting your training like how I trusted my conditioning work. The team has really trained well together. And UTT being a great preparation heading into the Asian Games, I am pretty sure this team will give the best performance in Japan," Sathiyam added. The India No. 3 said the knee injury he suffered earlier this year proved to be a turning point. "I would say the injury at this time was a blessing in disguise that I really needed that kind of a fitness break," Sathiyam said. "...A forced fitness break to keep myself

because I feel at this point of my career, it was really important to work on my fitness because playing back-to-back tournaments is not viable. You cannot just keep playing tournaments one after the other." Sathiyam said that while it is important for him to prioritise playing in tournaments, he was able to do a lot of strength and conditioning work during the lay-off period. "It is really important to prioritise, to really choose and play what tournaments you are going to play. After (since) that injury in Singapore Smash in February, I have just played one tournament — the World Championships," Sathiyam said. (PTI)

Animesh clocks fastest 100m by Indian overseas, finishes second in Germany

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Wetzlar (Germany)

Commonwealth Games-bound sprinter Animesh Kujur clocked the fastest-ever 100m time by an Indian on foreign soil, finishing second at the Fast Arms Fast Legs meet, a World Athletics Continental Tour Challenger event. The 23-year-old crossed the finish line which a personal best effort of 10.14 seconds in the final, improving on his 10.19-second effort in the heats earlier in the day on Friday. The timing is now the second-fastest ever by an Indian, behind Gurindervir



Singh's national record of 10.09 seconds, set at the Federation Cup in Ranchi in May. It also makes Animesh the owner of three of the five fastest 100m timings by an Indian. Before Gurindervir's record-breaking run, Animesh had held the

national record in 100m event. Animesh, who primarily competes in 200m and is also the national record holder in event, will make his Commonwealth Games debut later this month in Glasgow.

ANDREW DAMPF
■ London

If there were any lingering questions over Jannik Sinner's physical status after his meltdown at the French Open, they should be answered now. Sinner blasted his way past seven-time champion Novak Djokovic 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 on Friday to reach the Wimbledon final — showing off the kind of dominance he displayed before that second-round defeat in Paris. "I knew mentally," Sinner said, "that today I had to raise my level, which I've done." For the 39-year-old Djokovic, it marked another chance missed at adding to his record total of 24 Grand Slam singles titles. But



Djokovic expressed interest in playing Wimbledon when he's 40: "I would like to, at least one more time," he said. "I feel when I'm healthy, I'm still able to play as a top-five player, still able to compete at the highest level," Djokovic added. It was a measure of

revenge for Sinner after Djokovic won their last meeting in five sets in this year's Australian Open semifinals. "Playing against Novak," Sinner said, "what he's still showing is true inspiration." Aiming to defend his title at the grass-court Grand Slam, the top-ranked Sinner

will face second-seeded Alexander Zverev in Sunday's final. Zverev ended the "Ferytale" run of British wild card Arthur Fery with an overpowering 7-6 (0), 6-2, 6-4 victory earlier as the star-studded crowd on Centre Court witnessed two one-way contests. Zverev will be playing for another major trophy a month after winning his first Grand Slam title at Roland Garros. "This Grand Slam has always been the one that I struggled with the most and all of a sudden I'm in the final of Wimbledon," the 29-year-old German said. "We got one more match to go on Sunday and that's what the focus is on." It was another warm day in southwest London, with

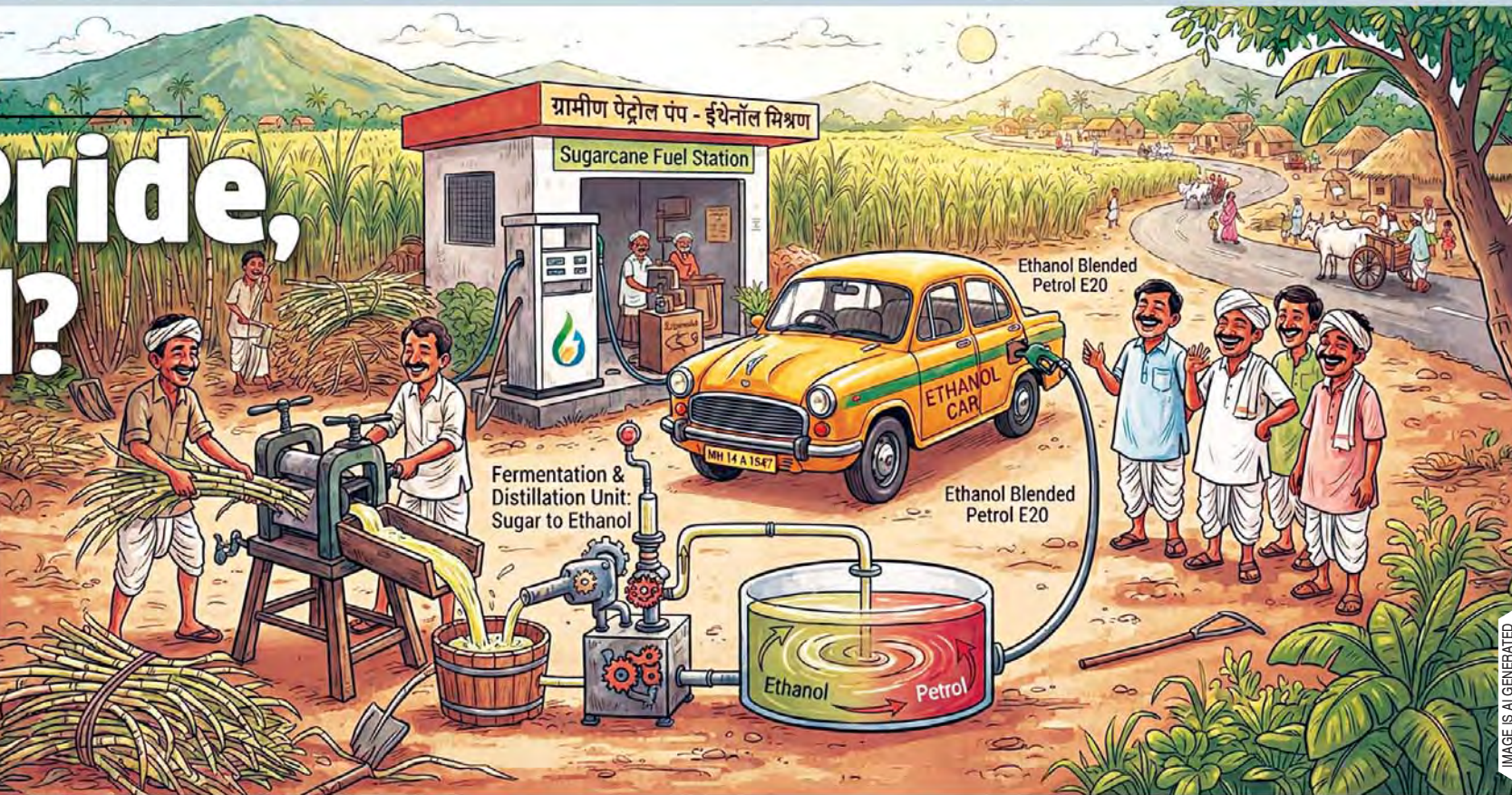
the temperature rising to about 85 degrees Fahrenheit (29 Celsius). It was also breezy and a bit cloudier than in recent days. Still, it felt nothing like the suffocating heat and humidity in Paris when Sinner wasted a big lead against Juan Manuel Cerundolo, who was ranked No. 56, and had his 30-match winning streak ended in dramatically unexpected fashion. Djokovic was coming off the longest quarterfinal in Wimbledon history, when he outlasted Felix Auger-Aliassime after 5 hours, 15 minutes on Tuesday. Sinner, by contrast, hadn't lost a set since he was pushed to five by Miomir Kecmanovic in the first round. (AP)

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Burning fossil fuels is like breaking up the furniture to feed the fireplace because it's easier than going out to the woodpile.
— Theodore Roosevelt

E20 Blender's Pride, User's Peril?

As India accelerates its transition to E20 fuel, the ethanol blending programme has become the subject of intense debate. Its proponents argue that the initiative is backed by rigorous testing and global experience, is critical to strengthening India's energy security, and boosting farmers' incomes. Critics, however, allege that the policy is being pushed despite concerns over reduced fuel efficiency, reports of engine-related issues and questions over potential conflicts of interest



Ethanol blending: Empowering farmers, securing India's energy future



NITIN GADKARI

Ethanol blending is not an idea born of political convenience. It is a journey India began in 2001, and one I have championed ever since as a scientifically proven, internationally accepted programme. It was never an experiment conducted on Indian roads - it is a policy grounded in evidence, in engineering, and above all, in the national interest.

The problem we set out to solve

When I look honestly at the challenges before this country, five stand out. First, our dependence on crude oil imports, which meets nearly 87 percent of our requirement and costs the nation close to Rs 22 lakh crore every year. Second, the vulnerability that comes from over-relying on imported energy for a country of our size and ambition. Third, the national security risk of sourcing so much of that energy from the Islamic world, a region whose politics we do not control and cannot always predict.

Fourth, air pollution, set against our

own promise to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2070. And fifth, the slow collapse of agriculture's viability, which has pushed our farmers and their children out of their villages and into overcrowded cities in search of a livelihood. Ethanol blending was never only about fuel in a tank. It was always about addressing all five of these challenges at once.

India is not walking alone

Some ask why India should pursue this so aggressively. I ask, in turn, why we should not, when the world has already shown the way. The United States blends ethanol at a 10 percent standard and is moving toward 15 percent. Brazil, whose automobile industry mirrors much of our own, blends at 27 percent. France, Germany, Sweden, Canada, the Philippines, Thailand and Japan all maintain a 10 percent standard blend. We are not testing something untried on Indian roads. We are catching up to a global consensus that has existed for years.

This is not untested technology

Our automobile industry tests as rigorously, and against the same international standards, as any in the world. Every technology, before it reaches an Indian consumer, passes through five pillars - design, validation, certification, homologation and production - and conformity tests continue even after a vehicle is

THE NUMBERS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES. WE HAVE SAVED CLOSE TO RS 1.9 LAKH CRORE IN FUEL IMPORTS AND DIVERTED RS 1.6 LAKH CRORE DIRECTLY INTO THE HANDS OF FARMERS

in production. No new automotive technology reaches the market in under four years from the day it is first conceived. The very companies that manufacture E27-compliant vehicles for Brazil, and have done so successfully for years, are the same companies that manufacture vehicles here in India. This is not new or unproven science. It is established, and it is internationally accepted.

What the testing actually showed

We began testing E20 as far back as 2016, on BS-4 and older vehicles. In 2021, ARAI, IOCL and IIP Dehradun jointly tested older vehicles - BS-6 and the BS-4 and BS-3 vehicles that came before it - across one lakh kilometres each. Their findings were unambiguous: no issue in drivability, no issue in start-ability, the same vehicle pickup, and even better acceleration. Yes, there is a drop in fuel efficiency of 6 to 8 percent, but this must

never be confused with ethanol's roughly 30 percent lower calorific value, which is an entirely different measure. In some older vehicles, certain rubber parts and gaskets may need replacing after a few years, but this requires no special intervention on the owner's part - it happens routinely during regular servicing, exactly as any other component is replaced when due. ICAT, Manesar has certified that there is no adverse impact on a vehicle's fuel system components, and even vehicles that are not E20-compliant carry a sufficient margin of safety.

Industry itself has said so

On 30th August 2025, and again on 4th July 2026, the entire automobile industry, ARAI, and our oil companies came together for joint press conferences. Every single auto company said, in one voice, that there is no impact on vehicle life, no impact on warranty, no impact on insurance, and no impact on engine performance. For the past three years, close to 20 crore two-wheelers and 3 crore four-wheelers have been running on more than 15 percent blended ethanol without incident.

Maruti Suzuki, which commands 40 percent of our market, has told us that of the 2.84 crore vehicles that came into their workshops this past year, 1.5 crore were manufactured before 2023 and were not even E20-compliant. Not one of them, anywhere in this

country, reported a single ethanol-related issue.

Addressing the allegations

I will not sidestep the question that has been raised about my family and CIAN Agro. Our oil companies procure roughly 1,200 crore litres of ethanol every year. Within that vast national ecosystem, CIAN Agro's share is negligible. We began producing ethanol at a time when it was considered one of the riskiest businesses one could enter. There was no offtake guarantee then, and we sought no favour and took no benefit from the government. That offtake guarantee came only in September 2021 - years after this journey had already begun for us, at our own risk. I have devoted myself, without apology, to saving this country's precious foreign exchange, reducing its pollution, and bringing prosperity to our farmers, our fields and our villages. That is the only interest I have ever served, and it is the only one I ever will.

What India has already gained

The numbers speak for themselves. We have saved close to Rs 1.9 lakh crore in fuel imports and diverted Rs 1.6 lakh crore directly into the hands of farmers. Greenhouse gas emissions from blended fuel are down 65 percent, saving 930 lakh metric tonnes of CO₂ - equivalent to planting 115 crore trees. We have found productive, dignified use for our

surplus rice and maize instead of letting it rot in storage. Maize alone accounts for 48 percent of our ethanol production, and its market price has risen from Rs 1,200 (against an MSP of Rs 1,800) to Rs 2,800 today, putting an additional Rs 42,000 crore every year directly into the pockets of maize farmers. We project this programme will add a further 6 percent to agricultural growth in the years ahead.

Why I will not stop

I will not defend this policy half-heartedly, because it was never built on convenience. It was built on twenty-five years of science, on testing across a hundred thousand kilometres, on the unanimous word of an entire industry, and on the lived experience of 23 crore vehicles already on Indian roads. It has saved this nation's money, cut its pollution, and put crores of rupees back into the hands of our farmers. I have faced allegations before, in a public life spanning decades, and I will face them again - that is simply the nature of public service in a democracy. But I will not let noise obscure what evidence has already settled. Ethanol blending was never a favour to any family. It is a debt I believe we owe to our farmers, to our environment, and to India's energy future - and it is a debt I intend to keep paying.

The writer is the Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Government of India

E20 transition: India's ethanol blending programme is worth defending — not because it is perfect, but because it is practical



KUSHAN MITRA

In a country that imports most of its crude, faces recurring global oil shocks, and is trying to clean up transport emissions without disrupting millions of motorists, ethanol is not a silver bullet. It is a bridge: imperfect, necessary, and increasingly important.

The current debate has become noisy, emotional, and in some cases politically convenient. Motorists are right to complain about mileage, about the lack of choice, and about the feeling that a major fuel transition has been imposed on them faster than the market has adapted. But those valid concerns should not obscure the larger point: ethanol blending helps India reduce its exposure to imported oil, and that matters every time geopolitics sends crude prices upward.

That argument has become even stronger after the recent uncertainty in West Asia, including the tensions that affected the Strait of Hormuz. India's dependence on imported crude means that any disruption there can feed directly into domestic fuel prices. Without ethanol blending, the retail petrol price would likely have been significantly higher, painful even. In that sense, ethanol is not just a policy choice; it is a hedge against the volatility of the global oil market.

For Indian motorists, that is the core of the case. Fuel is not merely a commodity in India. It is a daily cost, a budget line, and for many households, a source of financial stress. Any mechanism that softens crude shocks deserves serious credit. Ethanol blend-



ing does exactly that by replacing a portion of imported petrol with a domestically produced fuel. It does not eliminate dependence on crude, but it does dilute it. That is a meaningful gain in a country as exposed as India.

The other important question is whether ethanol makes sense from an agricultural and industrial point of view. Here too, the answer is yes, particularly if the policy is executed with balance which I believe it is.

India today is food-grain surplus, not food-grain scarce like we were in the 1960s, the green revolution, modern farming techniques as well as the next generation of seeds has transformed Indian farming. After meeting public distribution requirements and buffer stock needs, the country still has significant volumes of grain that can be monetised in more productive ways. If that surplus can be converted into fuel, then it ceases to be a burden on storage and becomes a source of value. One also has to be keep in mind, that because of MSP promises to farmers, Indian grain is often not competitive in global markets.

This is where the use of rice, broken grain, and maize becomes strategical-

ly important. There is nothing inherently wrong with using surplus food grain for ethanol if food security is protected first. In fact, a well-managed ethanol economy can become a tool for agricultural price support, especially when it creates an additional, reliable buyer for farm output. That can be a lifeline in years of glut, when price collapses are as damaging to farmers as droughts are.

Maize deserves special mention because it offers a better balance between fuel production and resource use. Compared with water-intensive crops such as sugarcane, maize is far less demanding on water resources. That matters greatly in India, where groundwater stress is a chronic problem and agriculture is under pressure to do more with less. A stronger maize-for-ethanol ecosystem can support crop diversification, reduce dependence on water-heavy feedstocks, and create a healthier market for farmers who need predictable demand.

That is why the rise in maize-based ethanol should be seen as a positive development, not a compromise. And it has led to a material change for maize

farmers in Bihar and Odisha who have seen incomes triple. It also broadens the raw material base for India's ethanol programme so that the entire system is not excessively dependent on sugar or rice. In policy terms, diversification is strength. In agricultural terms, it is resilience.

The next stage of the ethanol story is even more important: second-generation ethanol. This is where the real long-term sustainability case begins. Technologies that convert municipal waste, agricultural residue, bamboo, and even seaweed into ethanol are important because they reduce the food-versus-fuel tension that always shadows first-generation biofuels. Instead of drawing from edible grain alone, 2G ethanol uses biomass that would otherwise be wasted, burned, or left underutilised.

Bamboo and seaweed may sound futuristic, but they are precisely the kinds of feedstocks that can make India's biofuel ecosystem more durable over time. They widen the resource base, reduce pressure on farmland, and give the country more ways to produce liquid fuel domestically. If first-generation ethanol is the bridge, then 2G ethanol is the road that bridge leads to.

Still, the criticism of ethanol blending cannot simply be waved away. The mileage issue is real, even if it is often exaggerated. Ethanol contains less energy than petrol, so a reduction in fuel efficiency is expected. But the size of that drop is generally modest, and in real-world Indian driving conditions, mileage is already influenced by traffic, idling, road quality, driving style, weather, and vehicle maintenance. A neat laboratory number often tells only part of the story.

That matters because Indian motorists do not drive in perfect conditions. They drive in traffic-heavy, stop-start, highly variable environments. A small efficiency change at the fuel level can get lost in the larger noise of daily usage.

CONTINUED ON >> PII

E20 Policy: A burden on the common citizen



UDAY BHAN CHIB

The Government of India's push towards 20% ethanol blending (E20) in petrol is being projected as a revolutionary step towards energy security and environmental sustainability. While reducing dependence on imported crude oil is an important national objective, public policy must be judged not by its intentions but by its impact on ordinary citizens. Unfortunately, the E20 policy raises serious concerns that cannot be ignored.

First, millions of Indians own vehicles that were never designed to run on E20 fuel. Using higher ethanol blends in older vehicles can increase maintenance costs, reduce fuel efficiency, and potentially damage engine components over time. The burden of these costs will ultimately fall on middle-class families, small businesses, and farmers who depend on affordable transportation for their livelihoods.

Second, expanding ethanol production requires enormous quantities of sugarcane and other crops. India is already facing growing water scarcity in many states. Encouraging water-intensive crops to meet ethanol targets risks putting additional pressure on our limited water resources while diverting agricultural land away from food production. At a time when food security and farmer welfare remain critical priorities, this imbalance deserves serious reconsideration. Third, the government has failed to provide a transparent assessment of the economic costs. Consumers deserve to know whether E20 fuel will actually reduce their

overall expenses when lower mileage is taken into account. If vehicles consume more fuel per kilometre, any apparent savings at the national level may not translate into savings for individual citizens.

There are also concerns about the readiness of the automobile ecosystem. While newer vehicles may be engineered for E20 compatibility, millions of existing vehicles remain on Indian roads. The government cannot expect citizens to replace perfectly functional vehicles simply to comply with a policy introduced without adequate transition planning or financial support.

India certainly needs cleaner fuels and lower emissions. However, a balanced strategy should promote electric mobility, public transport, green hydrogen, bio-CNG, and research into next-generation sustainable fuels rather than relying excessively on one solution. Environmental progress must go hand in hand with affordability, technological readiness, and public confidence.

THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS BELIEVES THAT ANY ENERGY TRANSITION MUST BE PEOPLE-CENTRIC

The Indian National Congress believes that any energy transition must be people-centric. Before implementing E20 nationwide, the government should conduct independent scientific studies, consult farmers, automobile manufacturers, consumer groups, and state governments, and ensure that no citizen bears an unfair financial burden. National progress should never come at the expense of the common man.

India deserves an energy policy that is sustainable, scientifically sound, economically responsible, and socially just. The government must rethink the current approach and place the interests of citizens above publicity-driven targets.

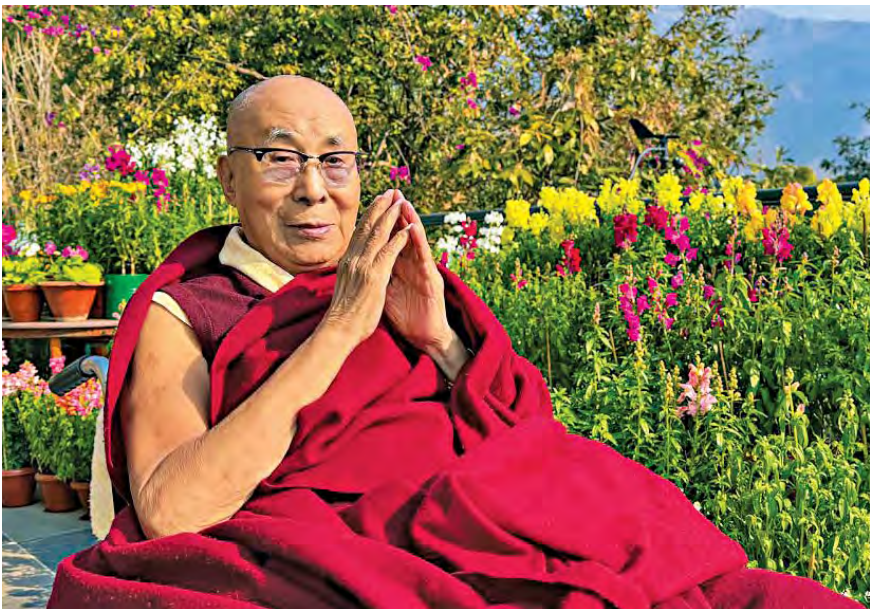
The writer is President of Indian Youth Congress

“THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT WANTS ME TO SAY THAT FOR MANY CENTURIES TIBET HAS BEEN PART OF CHINA. EVEN IF I MAKE THAT STATEMENT, MANY PEOPLE WOULD JUST LAUGH.”
— DALAI LAMA

China’s law of one identity



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA



ing different historical identities. The new law appears to shift that balance. It does not remove autonomous regions from the constitution, but it changes the ideological foundation upon which autonomy was originally justified.

The most important phrase in the new legislation is the requirement to “forge a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation”. To Beijing, this phrase represents national solidarity. To critics, it represents the final stage of a long transformation from recognising diversity to managing diversity. The distinction is not semantic. It determines whether Tibetans, Uyghurs and Mongols are viewed as distinct communities contributing to China’s civilisation or simply as cultural variations expected to merge into a dominant national identity defined by the state.

The Chinese government insists that this interpretation is unfair. Beijing argues that the law protects all ethnic groups equally, prohibits discrimination and guarantees cultural rights. Chinese officials point to poverty reduction, infrastructure development, improved education and economic opportunities in minority regions as proof that integration has benefited ethnic communities. They argue that a shared language

and shared national identity do not destroy culture but provide minorities with greater opportunities within a modern state.

However, critics point to a historical pattern that cannot be ignored. Across many empires and nation-states, assimilation rarely begins with an announcement that cultures will disappear. It usually begins with language reform, educational restructuring and a new definition of citizenship. The most significant battles are often not fought over flags or borders but over classrooms, textbooks and the language spoken by children.

THE NEW LAW PLACES STRONG EMPHASIS ON PROMOTING STANDARD CHINESE LANGUAGE WHILE STATING THAT MINORITY LANGUAGES REMAIN PROTECTED. THE CONFLICT LIES IN PRIORITY

The Tibetan language question demonstrates this precisely. The earlier ethnic autonomy framework promised protection of minority languages as a foundation of cultural survival. The new law places strong emphasis on promoting standard Chinese language while stating that minority languages remain protected. The conflict lies in priority. A language can be legally protected yet gradually weakened if it loses its role in education, administration and public life. Once children stop learning their ancestral language fluently, cultural preservation becomes a symbolic exercise rather than a living reality.

China has confronted this question before. During the Qing dynasty, the imperial court controlled Tibet, Mongolia and other frontier regions but often recognised that political loyalty did not require complete cultural transformation. The

Qing approach was based on imperial management rather than creating a single national identity. The modern Chinese state faces a different challenge, but the historical lesson remains relevant. Attempts to impose uniformity upon diverse societies frequently create deeper identity tensions rather than eliminate them.

The Republic of China later introduced the concept of “Five Races Under One Union”, attempting to transform imperial diversity into a modern nation. It was an ambitious idea that recognised Han Chinese, Manchus, Mongols, Tibetans and Hui as components of one political community. The Communist Party inherited this challenge after 1949 and initially developed a system of ethnic regional autonomy. The contradiction is that the same state that once promised protection of difference is now increasingly emphasising the political necessity of sameness. Can a minority preserve a distinct identity while accepting Chinese sovereignty, or does Beijing now view such distinction itself as a potential political risk?

The most controversial element of the new law is its possible international reach. The legislation states that organisations and individuals outside China who engage in activities considered to undermine ethnic unity and progress can be held legally accountable. This clause has triggered concern among governments, human rights organisations and diaspora communities. The issue is not simply whether China can defend itself against separatism. Every state has that right. The issue is whether broad definitions of separatism and ethnic division can be used against journalists, academics, activists and ordinary people engaging in lawful expression abroad.

The European Union and the United States have expressed concern that the legislation could provide another mechanism for transnational repression. Human rights groups argue that China has already used pressure tactics against overseas communities, including surveillance, intimidation and attempts to silence criticism. The new law, critics fear, could provide a stronger legal vocabulary for such actions.

This development also carries implications beyond ethnic policy. Taiwan has become increasingly central to Beijing’s national narrative. The law contains provisions promoting cross-strait exchanges and strengthening a sense of belonging to the Chinese nation. At a time when Western analysts have repeatedly discussed possible timelines surrounding Beijing’s Taiwan ambitions, including assessments that the late 2020s could represent a period of heightened risk, the ethnic unity law sends a broader message. The Chinese leadership views national integration as a historic mission.

The Chinese government sees this law as a safeguard against fragmentation. Its critics see it as the institutionalisation of assimilation. History will judge which interpretation proves more accurate, but one fact is already clear. The meaning of autonomy in China has entered a new era. The old promise was that different peoples could remain distinct while sharing one state. The new direction appears to be that different peoples must first become part of one state-defined identity before their differences can be accepted. That is not simply a change in ethnic policy. It is a redefinition of what China means by unity itself.

The writer is a columnist based in Colombo

FROM AGENDA COVER

India’s ethanol blending programme is worth...

That is why the debate should be more honest. Ethanol does not magically improve mileage, but the downside is often smaller in practice than the outrage suggests.

There is also a simple economic argument. If lower ethanol blends such as E10 were more widely available, the fuel would likely remain competitively attractive even after accounting for a mild efficiency penalty. In other words, the cost advantage of a cheaper domestic blend can outweigh the mileage loss. That is especially true when crude prices are high and when India’s tax and import exposure make petrol vulnerable to external shocks. The consumer does

not necessarily lose in the arithmetic; often, the larger saving is in price stability rather than pure kilometres per litre.

This is why it is misleading to treat ethanol as though it must outperform petrol on every metric to justify its existence. No fuel is perfect. Petrol is imported and geopolitically vulnerable. Diesel is pollution-intensive, particularly for nitrogen oxides and particulates. Electricity is cleaner but still uneven in terms of charging access, battery cost, and grid integration.

And that is not factoring in the dependence on Chinese imports for EVs, something that was brutally demonstrated last year when China stopped exports of neodymium rare-earth permanent magnets used on EV motors. Hydrogen remains promising, but despite a decade of progress, green hydrogen still

has not been produced at the scale and cost needed to become a mass transport fuel. The reality is that every option has trade-offs.

India’s challenge is more complex than most countries because it must balance energy security, affordability, emissions reduction, and vehicle fleet realities all at once. That is why the current outrage around ethanol blending can feel misplaced. The question is not whether ethanol is flawless. It is whether India can afford not to use a domestic fuel buffer in a world where oil is volatile and expensive. On that count, the answer is no.

What India should do now is not abandon ethanol blending, but refine it. Keep strengthening supply chains. Expand feedstock diversity. Give motorists clearer information about fuel compatibility. Preserve choice,

including E0 options where viable, and E100-Octane fuels such as XP100 from IndianOil are available in major metropolitan areas. Accelerate 2G technologies so that the programme becomes more sustainable over time. And above all, communicate the basic truth: ethanol is not an ideological project, it is a strategic one. In the end, the case for ethanol blending is a case for realism. India has no perfect fuel, no perfect transition path, and no perfect insulation from global shocks. But it does have biomass, surplus grain, agricultural capacity, and a large existing vehicle fleet. That is enough to make ethanol a sensible part of the answer. Ethanol is not just a fuel policy, it is national strategy.

The writer is Director and the Printer & Publisher of The Pioneer

WEEKLY MOON SIGN FORECAST | 12 - 18 JULY

Building Strong Foundations, Speaking with Confidence

Dr Shanker Adawal
Astrologer, Author & Researcher

This forecast is based on your Moon Sign (Janma Rashi), which often reflects day-to-day emotional and instinctive patterns more closely than general Sun-sign readings.

Moon Watch

This week bridges the close of one lunar cycle and the beginning of another. It encourages releasing emotional clutter, rebuilding inner balance and moving ahead with renewed confidence, clearer priorities and a steadier outlook.

Weekly Overview

The week begins under the Taurus Moon, encouraging stability, practical thinking and steady progress. As the Moon moves into Gemini, communication, learning and fresh ideas gather momentum. Midweek, Cancer strengthens emotional awareness and family connections.



Aries (Mesh): Professional responsibilities may demand a steady and practical approach during the opening days of the week. Matters that have been progressing slowly could finally begin showing movement. As the Moon enters Gemini, conversations become more productive and useful information may arrive through unexpected sources.

Midweek encourages greater emotional understanding, especially in family or personal matters where patience has been needed.

Taurus (Vrishabh): The week begins with the Moon in Taurus, bringing a welcome sense of stability and emotional balance. Personal priorities become easier to organise, allowing practical decisions to replace uncertainty. As Gemini energy develops, meetings, discussions or learning opportunities may gather pace. Midweek encourages paying attention to relationships and family matters that deserve gentle handling.



Gemini (Mithun): Communication becomes a central theme as the week unfolds. The Gemini Moon encourages fresh ideas, useful exchanges and opportunities to resolve matters that have remained uncertain. Midweek shifts attention inward, helping you recognise emotional patterns that may have been overlooked. Practical financial planning or routine responsibilities gradually return to focus.

Cancer (Karka): Friendships, group activities or long-term plans may receive greater attention during the opening phase of the week. You may find yourself reflecting on future goals with a more realistic outlook. Once the Moon enters Cancer, emotional awareness becomes stronger and family matters naturally move closer to your heart. Midweek supports meaningful conversations that strengthen trust and understanding.



Leo (Simha): Career matters or public responsibilities may shape much of the early week. Quiet determination is likely to achieve better results than seeking immediate recognition. As communication improves, discussions with senior people or experienced colleagues could prove valuable. Midweek encourages balancing professional ambitions with personal commitments. When the Moon enters Leo over the weekend, confidence rises naturally and enthusiasm returns.

Virgo (Kanya): Learning, travel or future planning may occupy your thoughts during the opening days. Practical advice received now could become useful in the coming weeks. As Gemini energy strengthens, communication flows more smoothly and pending discussions may finally move forward. Midweek encourages greater emotional understanding, particularly in close relationships.



Libra (Tula): Financial planning or shared responsibilities deserve careful attention at the beginning of the week. A practical outlook helps simplify matters that once appeared more complicated. As Gemini encourages communication, important conversations may become easier than expected. Midweek strengthens emotional connections and encourages understanding within close relationships.

Scorpio (Vrishchik): Partnerships and one-to-one interactions remain an important theme during the early part of the week. Listening carefully may reveal solutions that had previously been overlooked. As communication gathers momentum, practical agreements become easier to reach. Midweek brings greater emotional depth, encouraging honesty without unnecessary intensity.



Sagittarius (Dhanu): Routine responsibilities, work commitments or health priorities may require greater discipline during the opening days. A structured approach now helps reduce unnecessary pressure later. As the Moon enters Gemini, relationships and teamwork become more active, encouraging useful exchanges of ideas. Midweek supports emotional balance and practical decision-making.

Capricorn (Makar): Creative interests, hobbies or family activities may provide a welcome change from routine at the beginning of the week. Practical responsibilities remain important, though they need not dominate every moment. As communication improves, conversations with younger people or colleagues may become especially productive. Midweek encourages greater emotional awareness, helping you understand situations beyond their immediate appearance.



Aquarius (Kumbh): Home, family matters or personal comfort naturally move into focus during the opening phase of the week. You may feel drawn towards creating greater stability in your surroundings. As Gemini energy develops, communication becomes lighter and ideas flow more freely. Midweek encourages practical adjustments rather than major changes.

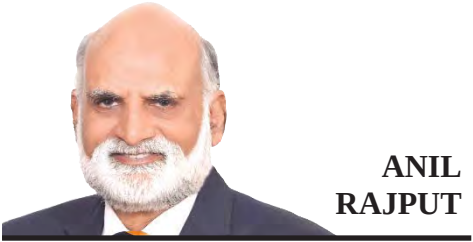
Pisces (Meen): Short journeys, conversations or learning opportunities may shape much of the opening week. Useful information could arrive through ordinary interactions, helping you view certain matters differently. Midweek strengthens emotional awareness and intuition, making this a supportive period for meaningful personal discussions. As the Moon moves into Leo, attention gradually shifts towards work routines, organisation and practical progress. Small improvements introduced now may continue producing benefits well beyond the current week.



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ANIL
RAJPUT

There are festivals that are seen, festivals that are heard, festivals that are tasted and festivals that are experienced. Jagannath Rath Yatra belongs to all four. The sight of the great chariots rolling through the Bada Danda of Puri, the sound of cymbals, conch shells and chants of Jai Jagannath, and the fragrance of sacred food rising from homes, mutts and temple kitchens together create one of India’s most powerful civilisational experiences. Every year, on Ashadha Shukla Dwitiya, Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra leave the sanctum of the Shri Jagannath Temple and travel to the Gundicha Temple in their magnificent chariots. For millions of devotees, this is not merely a procession. It is the rare moment when the divine steps out to meet the people. In that meeting, food becomes one of the most intimate languages of faith. The cuisine of Rath Yatra is not about indulgence or display. It is about offering, receiving, sharing and remembering.

The cultural history of Rath Yatra is deeply tied to the idea of accessibility. Lord Jagannath, whose name means Lord of the Universe, does not remain distant from his devotees. During the yatra, he comes out of the temple with his brother and sister so that everyone, regardless of age, status or background, may receive darshan. The chariots themselves become moving temples. Lord Balabhadra’s Taladhwaaja, Devi Subhadra’s Darpadalana and Lord Jagannath’s Nandighosha are pulled not by kings alone, but by countless hands joined in devotion. The festival moves from Shri Mandir to Gundicha Temple, where the deities stay before returning during Bahuda Yatra. This journey is filled with rituals, pauses and emotions, each carrying its own culinary memory. At the heart of it all is the Jagannath food tradition, one of the most sacred and distinctive temple cuisines of India.

To understand the cuisine of Rath Yatra, one must first understand Mahaprasad. In Puri, food is not simply cooked for consumption. It is prepared as bhog, offered to Lord Jagannath, and sanctified as Mahaprasad after its ritual association with Maa Bimala. Only then does it become food that is received by devotees as grace. The cuisine is sattvic, without onion and garlic, and built around rice, lentils, vegetables, jaggery, coconut, ghee, milk, curd and local seasonal produce. In Ananda Bazaar, Mahaprasad is shared among people without the ordinary barriers of caste, class or social standing. In a country where food often reflects hierarchy, Jagannath Mahaprasad stands as a sacred reminder that before the divine, all are equal. The process of preparing Mahaprasad is as sacred as the food itself, and it also reflects a remarkable traditional understanding of heat, steam and scale. In the Jagannath tradition, cooking is not treated as an ordinary kitchen activity, but as seva performed under strict ritual discipline. The food is prepared in the Rosaghara, the temple kitchen, by hereditary cooks known as suaras and mahasuaras. The ingredients are sattvic, vegetarian and free from onion and garlic, and nothing is tasted during preparation because the food is meant first for the Lord. Water is drawn from the temple wells traditionally known as Ganga and Jamuna, and the cooking is done in earthen pots called kudua over firewood.

What makes the preparation especially distinctive is the stacked-vessel method. Several

earthen pots are placed one above another on the same wood-fired hearth, with rice, dal, vegetables or other offerings cooking in separate vessels at the same time. Traditionally, it is said that the pot at the top cooks first, followed by the vessels below. Rather than seeing this only as a mystery, it may also be understood as the wisdom of an old cooking science. The fire below creates intense heat, while steam and hot air rise through the stacked arrangement. The clay pots absorb, retain and slowly distribute heat, allowing the food to cook gently without direct metal contact. The porous earthenware, the trapped steam, the shape of the hearth and the arrangement of the pots together create a system that can cook large quantities while preserving texture, aroma and warmth. Once the food is cooked, it is offered as bhog to Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra. In the Puri tradition, the offering becomes Mahaprasad only after its ritual association with Maa Bimala. It is then carried to Ananda Bazaar, where devotees receive it not merely as food, but as grace.

The most recognisable way in which devotees receive this sacred food is Abhada, the cooked Mahaprasad meal associated with the temple tradition. Abhada is not one single dish, but a complete experience of rice, dal, vegetables, greens, khatta and sweets received together. It is served with humility, often on leaf plates, and eaten with reverence. Its beauty lies in its simplicity. Unlike rich restaurant food, Abhada does not depend on heavy spice or elaborate garnish. Its depth comes from the sanctity of the offering, the purity of ingredients and the collective memory of generations who have eaten it as divine food. Around Rath Yatra, devotees who visit Puri often consider receiving Mahaprasad an essential part of the pilgrimage. For those outside Odisha, preparing Odia-style dishes at home becomes a way of joining the festival through taste.

Among the rice preparations, Kanika holds a special place. It is a fragrant sweet rice cooked with ghee, sugar or jaggery, and mild spices such as bay leaf, cardamom or cinnamon, depending on household practice. Unlike ordinary sweet rice, Kanika belongs to the ceremonial world of Odisha’s temple food. It carries a gentle sweetness, a golden richness and a festive dignity that make it appropriate for offering. Ghia Anna, rice mixed with ghee, is another preparation that may appear simple but is deeply meaningful in the Mahaprasad tradition. The warmth of cooked rice and the aroma of ghee create a food that is soft, nourishing and sacred. Dahi Pakhala, rice cooled with curd and water, reflects Odisha’s climate and culture. In the humid monsoon atmosphere of Rath Yatra, such cooling foods are both practical and symbolic. They remind us that temple cuisine is not detached from

ecology. It understands heat, rain, hunger, digestion and the needs of the body.

The savoury heart of the Rath Yatra table is found in Odisha’s vegetable and lentil preparations. Dalma is perhaps the most beloved of these. Made with lentils and vegetables such as raw banana, pumpkin, papaya, brinjal, yam or drumstick, it is lightly spiced and often finished with roasted cumin and ghee. Dalma is nourishing without being heavy, festive without being excessive. Its importance lies in balance. Grain, dal and vegetables come together in one pot, reflecting the Odia instinct for food that sustains both body and spirit. Muga Dalma, made with moong dal, has a softer and more delicate character. The roasted aroma of moong dal, combined with seasonal vegetables, gives it a comforting depth that makes it suitable for offerings and family meals during the festival.

Another important preparation is Besara, a mustard-based vegetable dish that reveals the distinctive flavour of Odisha. Mustard paste gives it sharpness, warmth and earthiness. Vegetables such as pumpkin, raw banana, potato, colocasia or ridge gourd may be cooked in this paste, creating a dish that is unmistakably Odia. It is not generic temple food. It carries the taste of the region. Mahura adds another dimension to the meal. Usually made with mixed vegetables and gentle spices, it has a rustic, full-bodied quality. It may include vegetables like pumpkin, brinjal, raw banana and yam, cooked until they absorb the seasoning and become soft, fragrant and satisfying. Saga Besara or simple Saga Bhaja brings greens into the ritual meal. Leafy vegetables cooked with mustard or lightly sautéed reflect the everyday wisdom of Odia households, where greens are treated not as decoration but as essential nourishment.

No



Odia festive meal feels complete without a sharp, sweet or sour note, and this is where Khatta becomes important. A khatta may be made with ingredients such as elephant apple, raw mango, tomato in household versions, or other souring agents, balanced with jaggery and mild spices. Its role is to awaken the palate and bring contrast to the meal. Ambila, a soupy sour vegetable preparation, offers another expression of this Odia love for tang and balance. It is usually light, digestive and deeply suited to the monsoon mood. Santula, made with boiled or lightly cooked mixed vegetables, is gentler and more restrained. It reflects the sattvic side of the cuisine, where the natural taste of vegetables is allowed to remain visible. Even a preparation like Badi Chura, made by crushing fried or roasted lentil dumplings with mustard oil, green chilli and sometimes coconut, carries the rural strength of Odisha’s kitchens. It is sharp, textured and intensely local. Kakharu Phula Bhaja, pumpkin flowers dipped in a light batter and fried, brings seasonality and delicacy to the table, showing how even flowers become part of festive memory.

If the savoury dishes give the Rath Yatra meal its body, the sweets give it tenderness. The most significant sweet connected to the festival cycle is Poda Pitha. During Bahuda Yatra, when the deities return from Gundicha Temple to Shri Mandir, Lord Jagannath is traditionally associated with a halt near Mausai Maa Temple, where Poda Pitha is offered. This makes it one of the most emotionally specific foods of the Rath Yatra tradition. Poda Pitha is made from rice batter, often enriched with jaggery, coconut, lentils, cardamom and sometimes black pepper, then slow-cooked or baked until the outside becomes dark and caramelised while the inside remains soft and fragrant. The word poda means burnt, but here the burn is not a flaw. It is the source of flavour. The smoky crust, the sweetness of jaggery and the grainy softness of the interior make it one of Odisha’s most distinctive ritual foods.

Khaja is another essential sweet in the Jagannath tradition. Made from layered dough that is fried and coated in sugar syrup, it is crisp, flaky and long-lasting. It is often associated with temple prasad and pilgrimage, partly because it travels well and retains its texture. Gaja, a deep-fried sweet made from dough and soaked or coated in sugar syrup, is denser and more robust. It offers a different kind of satisfaction, crisp at the edges and sweet within. Arisa Pitha, made with rice flour and jaggery, is fried until it develops a rich

brown surface and chewy interior. It is one of Odisha’s classic festive pithas, linking Rath Yatra cuisine to the wider pitha-making culture of the state. Kakara Pitha, often made with semolina or wheat and stuffed with coconut and jaggery, brings softness, sweetness and aroma. Manda Pitha, a steamed dumpling filled with coconut and jaggery, offers a gentler contrast to the fried sweets. Its steamed form makes it light, devotional and homely. Milk and chhena-based sweets also occupy a cherished place in Odia food memory. Rasabali, with flattened chhena patties soaked in thickened sweetened milk, is rich, soft and ceremonial. Chhena Poda, Odisha’s celebrated baked cheese dessert, is made by baking fresh chhena with sugar or jaggery until it forms a caramelised crust. Kheeri, the Odia form of kheer, becomes distinct in the Jagannath context because of its ritual association. Jagannath Ballava, Kora Khai and Nadia Kora add to the temple and festive imagination, representing sweets that are easy to offer, share, carry and remember.

Beverages during the Rath Yatra season also carry both ritual and regional meaning. The most sacred among them is Adhara Pana, a special sweet drink associated with the concluding phase of the Rath Yatra rituals. It is offered in large pots on the chariots and traditionally includes ingredients such as milk, chhena, sugar and spices. Its ritual meaning is very specific, so it should not be confused with an everyday summer drink. Alongside this, households and pilgrims may enjoy cooling Odia beverages suited to the heat and humidity. Bela Pana, made from wood apple pulp, water, jaggery and sometimes curd or coconut, is cooling and digestive. Dahi Pana uses curd as its base and offers relief during long days of worship and travel. Chhena Pana, enriched with fresh chhena, gives a sweet, nourishing quality. Torani, the lightly fermented water from pakhal, reflects the Odia genius for cooling the body through rice-based traditions. Even simple jaggery water with lemon, roasted cumin or coconut can become part of the pilgrim experience, not as temple bhog, but as the practical kindness of festival hospitality.

As modern life becomes faster, many young people may know Rath Yatra through photographs, television coverage or social media posts, but not through the taste of its food. That is why families and communities must keep these traditions alive not only by speaking about them, but by cooking them. Children must know why Poda Pitha is offered during Bahuda Yatra, why Mahaprasad is received with reverence, why food from Ananda Bazaar is considered sacred, and why Odia households prepare pithas, cooling drinks and sattvic meals during this season. To preserve the cuisine of Jagannath Rath Yatra is to preserve a way of seeing food as grace, cooking as service, sharing as equality and tradition as a living inheritance. The chariots of Puri move once a year, but the values they carry must move from one generation to the next every day. If we want future generations to feel the spirit of Jai Jagannath, we must give them more than stories. We must give them the taste of Mahaprasad, the warmth of Poda Pitha, the humility of Abhada and the understanding that a civilisation survives not only through temples and texts, but through the sacred offerings, rituals and memories it continues to prepare, receive and share.

(The writer is Secretary, Cuisine India Society)

Padharo Mhare Feast: Rajasthan’s Royal Kitchen

GYANESHWAR DAYAL

Rajasthan’s desert kitchens have set up camp in central Delhi. Food Exchange, the all-day dining restaurant at Novotel New Delhi City Centre, has handed its dinner buffet over to the state for *Padharo Mhare Feast* — a festival celebrating the slow-cooked, boldly spiced repertoire of Rajasthan’s royal and rural cuisines.

The name borrows from Rajasthan’s familiar greeting, *Padharo Mhare Des*, loosely translating to “come on in.” It reflects the spirit of hospitality that defines both the state and the festival. Behind the menu are two chefs with close ties to the region rather than a borrowed theme. Chef Chetan Singh, Master Chef at Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre, has collaborated with Chef Umesh Singh, Executive Chef at the Delhi property, to create a menu rooted in regional ingredients and traditional techniques rather than a generic North Indian spread. As the chefs explain, the aim is to bring the warmth, culture and celebratory

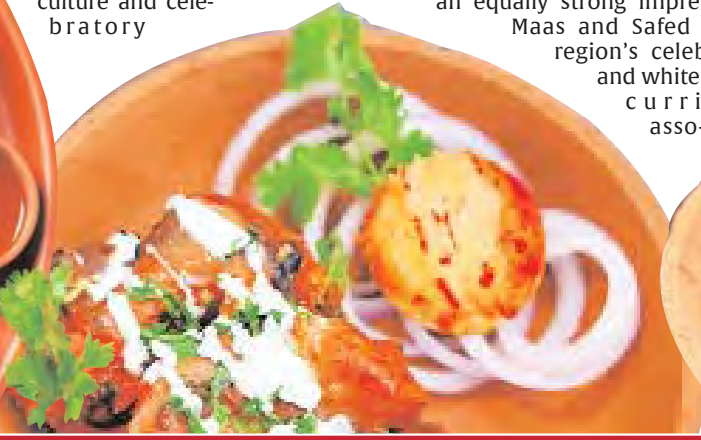
spirit of Rajasthan to the table along with its distinctive flavours. That intention is evident from the soup counter, where Makke ka Raab and Bajre ka Raab — millet-based broths usually enjoyed in Rajasthani homes — sit alongside Dal Badam ka Shorba. The appetisers include Pyaz ki Kachori, Mirchi Bade, Sangri ki Tikki, prepared with the dried desert bean that has long been a staple of the region, and Paneer Methania Tikka flavoured with the famous Mathania chilli.

The main course showcases ingredients and recipes that rarely travel beyond Rajasthan. Panchkutta ki Sabzi, a blend of dried desert vegetables and legumes, shares space with Jodhpuri Gatta Curry and a tangy Rajasthani Kadhi. Reflecting the state’s arid landscape, Bajra and Jowar rotis replace naan and pair well with the dedicated Dal Baati counter, where crisp, ghee-soaked baatis are served with Dal Mewadi, Dal Banjara and Churma, completing Rajasthan’s iconic dal-baati-churma combination.

The non-vegetarian selection makes an equally strong impression. Laal Maas and Safed Maas, the region’s celebrated red and white mutton curries asso-

ciated with Mewar’s royal kitchens, headline the spread alongside Khad ka Murgh, Dunder Murgh and Machli Jaisamandi, inspired by Rajasthan’s lesser-known lake cuisine. Starters such as Murgh Shekhawati Kebab, Achari Fish Tikka and Lahsuni Murgh continue the emphasis on robust regional flavours. Desserts bring the meal to a fitting close with some of Rajasthan’s best-known sweets. Malai Ghevar, closely associated with Teej celebrations, is joined by Mawa Kachori, Moong Dal Halwa, Rajasthani Lapsi and Besan ki Chakki, offering a glimpse of the state’s rich dessert tradition.

The festival succeeds by staying close to its roots. Rather than presenting a familiar buffet with a Rajasthani label, it highlights recipes, ingredients and cooking traditions, bringing an authentic taste of Rajasthan to the Capital.



THE MAIN COURSE SHOWCASES INGREDIENTS AND RECIPES THAT RARELY TRAVEL BEYOND RAJASTHAN. PANCHKUTTA KI SABZI, A BLEND OF DRIED DESERT VEGETABLES AND LEGUMES, SHARES SPACE WITH JODHPURI GATTA CURRY AND A TANGY RAJASTHANI KADHI

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

Leave prejudice to live

To truly know anything, even our own selves, we must experience each moment with an open mind

AMMA (SRI MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI DEVI)

Children, we regard some people as good, and brand some as good for nothing. After some time, we will say that those very people we had earlier praised as good are bad, and those whom we had dismissed as good for nothing are friends we can trust.

Thus, our opinions and outlook keep changing. How does this happen? The main reason is that we lack true knowledge. We accumulate sufficient information about the body and the external world. But we know nothing about our own mind; we know nothing about ourselves. Prejudging everything has become a habit with us. If we approach everything with preconceived notions, we will not have real knowledge about anything. We should be able to see everything as it is. We should learn how to look upon everything with an open mind. Only then can we see what is true.

This world - objects, people and all - is constantly changing. The person we saw yesterday is not the same today. Whenever someone goes to a tailor to get clothes stitched, the tailor will retake the measurements. He doesn't think, "I already measured him last time." The tailor knows that the person's size and tastes can change.

We should have this kind of outlook when we interact with others. A person's character and attitude towards us can change any moment. Today's enemy can be tomorrow's friend. Today's friend can also be tomorrow's enemy. We should be able to look upon people with an open mind instead of sizing them up based on our past impressions. There are those who think that acting on preconceived ideas will help them avoid obstacles. Actually, what is needed is alertness, not biases. Prejudging is an unfavourable attitude, and alertness a favourable one. When we prejudge, we miss out on much new knowledge. However, when we act with alertness, we gain further insights.



Amma remembers a story. While at home, a man lost his wallet which contained a lot of money. The man, his wife, and their children started searching the whole house. They couldn't find it anywhere. The man's youngest son, a seven-year-old, said, "The boy next door had come here a little earlier." The man, who until then had only affection for that boy, suddenly started to suspect him.

"Haven't you seen the way he looks? There's no doubt about it. He's the one who stole the wallet," declared the man, who began to discern deceitfulness in the boy's manner of sitting, walking, and talking. He then began to express his anger and coldness towards everyone in that boy's family. The man who lost his wallet also lost his peace of mind.

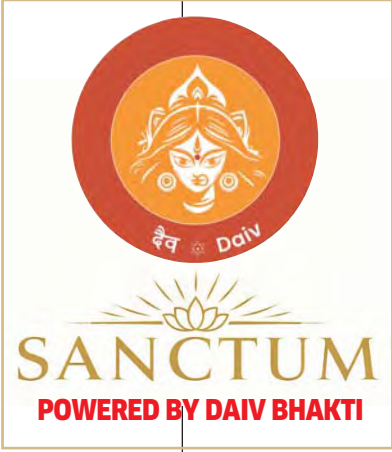
One day, while sweeping and cleaning the house, the man found his wallet in a gap in the sofa. Filled with remorse, he once again considered the boy a good, faultless, and innocent child. His respect for the family was restored and he apologised for his baseless suspicion and harsh words.

When we regard something with fixed ideas, a judgement will first form in the mind and we will see everything through an outlook that may often be misleading. We should first learn about something through alertness and discrimination in the present moment. Only

after that should we come to a conclusion. Prejudging is nothing but projecting our likes and dislikes on others. It will not help us see the truth; it will hamper our outlook. It is like looking at the world through glasses of many different tints. We will say, "blue world," "black world," or "red world." We won't perceive the multi-coloured composition of what truly exists before our eyes.

We should be able to understand and evaluate all situations and experiences - even our own selves - without prejudice. Through the awareness and maturity that spiritual principles impart, we can lead lives based on dharma that bring love, compassion, and peace to all.

Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, known simply as Amma, is a spiritual master and humanitarian who has given her darshan in the form of a motherly embrace to more than 4 crore people. Listening to the cries of the suffering, Amma leads an NGO that reaches across more than 50 countries, working in the areas of healthcare, disaster relief, education, gender equality, and environmental restoration



Why happy employees need less management

SADHGURU

We as humanity have not focused on human resource in its real sense. We have invested a lot in maintaining a human being where he is right now, but we have not truly invested in developing a human being in such a way, that we open up the human possibility to its fullest potential.

A few years ago, when I was in Davos at the World Economic Forum, a certain professor from Harvard University came up to me and said "Oh, you are that amazing tree planter." I said "No, I am not a tree planter." He said, "No, no, you planted millions of trees."

"Yes, we did that, but I am not a tree planter." Then he asked, "What do you do then?" I said, "I make people flower." A true HR department means you must know how to make people flower. To make a human being flower, what are the necessary conditions? Your body, mind, emotion and your energy need to be

cultivated to their full scope and dimension. You will understand this from your career, your profession and your business - unless you do the right things, right things will not happen to you. This is how life works. If this is true outside, this is also true inside. But before we do the right things with other people, first of all we need to do the right things with ourselves. If you were doing the right things with yourself, you would be in utmost pleasantness. After all, whether somebody is seeking success, money or power, whether somebody is going to the bar, going to the temple or wants to go to heaven - essentially everybody is seeking pleasantness inside and outside.

Right now, your experience is unfortunately determined in reaction to external situations. Whatever kind of situations you are living in, not a single person on this planet happens 100% the way you want them. If this is so, at least this one human being - you - must happen your way. But right now, your joy, your peace, your wellbeing is so fragile. Anybody can shoot it down.



When your wellbeing is so fragile, being anxious is normal. When anxiety is normal, madness is just one step away.

Especially if the outside situation becomes unpleasant for some reason, if people around you are unpleasant, it is all the more important that you keep your insides pleasant. If we want to truly develop human potential, the most fundamental thing is we must create a situation where pleasantness is a conscious choice, it is not something that happens to you because somebody is wonderful to you. If the best has to come out from a human being, the first thing is, you must know how to keep yourself joyful so that you can keep everybody around you joyful. If everybody who is working for you is really happy, they don't need much management. A joyful man is a wonderful human resource always. If I meet you when you are very happy, I am sure all of you are wonderful human beings. If I happen to meet you when you are angry, frustrated, and unhappy, you could be a nasty human being. I am not saying you are, but possible. So, this is the basic thing which we have not attended to.

Your body, your mind, your emotion and your energies can be constantly enhanced and made to function in a better way than they are right now. The very source of creation is throbbing within you every moment, but you are not aware of it. This body got created from within, not from outside. What you call as your body is an accumulation of food. You provide the raw material, but the making of the body is happening from within. Instead of living here as an accumulation of food, and an accumulation of impressions

which you call "mind," if you had access to that source of creation within you, you would live a very exalted life. That is when we can say you are truly developing human resource, not just by training them to do this and that.

This must happen to every human being, and it is not far away. Your joy, your misery, your agony or your ecstasy always happen within you. This is the essential human predicament - your senses are all outward bound, but the seat of your experience is within you. If only you were aware of how the seat of your experience happens, would you make your experience of life pleasant or unpleasant? Definitely pleasant.

If you were in utmost pleasantness, you would function at your best. We have built all kinds of infrastructure on the planet but we have not built much infrastructure for the inner wellbeing of a human being. How a human being is within himself is most important if we want to bring out the best in that person. Otherwise, we will remain a crippled humanity. I want you to see HR in a much larger perspective than just running your company, hiring and firing people. If we really want to develop human resource, we as individuals, as families, as communities, as nations, as humanity as a whole, have to invest something into developing a human being into a much bigger possibility than the way he is right now.

(Ranked amongst the fifty most influential people in India, Sadhguru is a Yogi, mystic, visionary and a New York Times bestselling author. Sadhguru has been conferred the Padma Vibhushan by the Government of India in 2017, the highest annual civilian award, accorded for exceptional and distinguished service. He is also the founder of the world's largest people's movement, Conscious Planet- Save Soil, which has touched over 4 billion people)

Live today: There may be no tomorrow

Life does not promise another sunrise; it only entrusts us with this sacred moment. Before time quietly closes the door, let your heart forgive, your hands serve, and your soul seek God. The greatest tragedy is not dying tomorrow, it is failing to truly live today



DR SADHU GYANANANDDAS

In the Mahabharata, the Pandavas were wandering through the forest during their exile. One afternoon, exhausted by heat and thirst, they desperately searched for water. Nakul first spotted a beautiful lake shimmering amidst the trees. Crystal-clear water danced under the sunlight like liquid silver. Overjoyed, he rushed toward it.

But before he could drink, a mysterious voice echoed through the forest: "This lake belongs to me. Before drinking, you must answer my questions. Ignore my warning, and death will follow." Blinded by thirst, Nakul ignored the warning and drank the water. Instantly, he collapsed lifeless beside the lake.

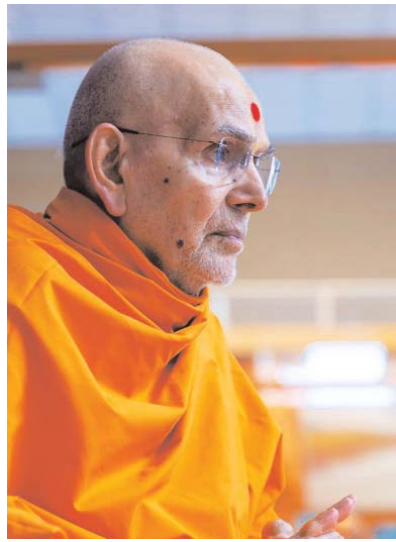
One by one, Sahadev, Arjun, and Bhima arrived, heard the same warning, ignored it, and met the same fate. Finally, Yudhishthir came and was stunned to see his four brothers lying lifeless beside the lake. Unlike the others, he remained calm and respectfully agreed to answer the questions of the mysterious Yaksha.

After many deep questions, the Yaksha finally asked, "What is the most astonishing thing in this world?" Yudhishthir replied, "Every day, countless people die, yet those who remain think they are immortal. What can be more astonishing than this?"

This answer exposes the greatest illusion of human life. Every day we witness death around us, yet we continue living carelessly, absorbed only in pleasure, wealth, ambition, and temporary enjoyments, as though death will never come to us.

After narrating this incident, Yogiji Maharaj once said, "Life is ephemeral, and therefore every moment should be lived with awareness, purpose, and understanding.

Of course, human life rests upon the most fragile foundation imaginable, uncertainty. No man knows what the next moment holds. A healthy person may suddenly collapse, a prosperous man may lose everything overnight, and a smiling face may disappear before sunrise. Yet we live as though



tomorrow is guaranteed. As a result, we postpone goodness, delay spirituality, ignore relationships, and waste precious time in endless distractions, assuming life will continue forever.

That is why the timeless reminder of the Bhagavad Gita strikes the human heart with such force: "For one who is born, death is certain."

This is not a statement of pessimism; it is a call to awakening. Even Steve Jobs, who was the wealthiest and most influential man in the world, couldn't buy one more day for his life. True, all success, innovation, and fortune stood helpless before death. However, death is not the tragedy; forgetting death is the tragedy. The awareness that life is temporary gives seriousness to our actions and value to our moments. A student studies sincerely when he knows the exam date is fixed. Similarly, a wise person lives meaningfully because he knows time is limited.

If there may be no tomorrow, then why waste today in hatred? Why postpone prayer, kindness, self-improvement, or expressing love? The uncertainty of life should not create fear; it should create urgency for right living.

Live today with purpose. Speak gently. Forgive quickly. Serve selflessly. Spend time wisely. Build character

more than wealth. Because life is not measured by how long we live, but by how deeply and nobly we live.

During His pilgrimage as Nilkanth Varni, Bhagwan Swaminarayan awakened people from the illusion of worldly permanence and guided them toward the eternal. One such remarkable incident took place in Nepal. At that time, the King of Nepal Rana Bahadur Shah, was suffering from a severe and incurable illness. Physicians, astrologers, and tantric practitioners had all failed to provide relief. Hearing of the Balaprabhu whose divine radiance had captivated scholars and yogis alike, the king requested Nilkanth Varni to visit the palace.

When Nilkanth entered the royal court, the old king bowed with great reverence and prayed:

"O Prabhu! If you possess divine powers, please cure my disease. I will reward you with immense wealth, honor, and whatever you desire."

Nilkanth Varni compassionately looked at the king but did not immediately heal him. Instead, He first imparted spiritual wisdom.

"Your disease has arisen according to your own karmas. No physician, mantra, or medicine can erase what has been ordained by the law of karma. Even at this stage, you are thinking of your wealth and power, which is very pitiful." He further said, "O King, this world is ephemeral. Kingdoms, wealth, youth, and power are like dew upon a lotus leaf, beautiful for a moment, gone with the first rays of the sun. Therefore, do not place your faith in what time will surely take away. Seek the eternal refuge of God instead, for only spiritual realization accompanies the soul beyond death."

Nilkanth Varni not only cured the king but also transformed his life. He reminded humanity that life is uncertain and every breath is precious. Tomorrow is only a possibility; today is the gift placed in our hands. Live it wisely.

Dr Swami Gyanananddas is a dedicated follower of the Swaminarayan tradition and has earned a PhD from MS University

When the good you do makes you miserable

You don't get mango by sowing the seeds of neem. As you sow, so do you reap

GURUDEV SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR

While it is easy to repent bad deeds, good deeds can make you miserable too. Good deeds don't automatically uplift you. Your intention, attachment, expectation, ego, and the state of mind behind the action determine whether the deed brings you joy or misery.

Even when you do charity, sometimes you may feel that your good deeds went unnoticed. 'I did such wonderful things, but nobody recognises them. There is no appreciation for them.' This is a usual complaint. This need for recognition, for one's good deeds, can cause misery. In the Narada Bhakti Sutras, Narada advises taking a break not just from activity but also from expecting the fruit of that activity. It brings deep rest from doubts, conflicts, and misery. One who isn't concerned about the outcome and is focused on the action goes beyond dualities, beyond conflicts. The wise one is beyond all actions. Yet they continue to engage themselves in action for the benefit of the world.

You have some expectations when you perform good actions. This expectation becomes a source of misery. Even when a good deed happens through you, you must remind yourself that it is the divine who has put you in a scenario where you got the opportunity to do a good deed. That is why it is said, 'The giver must be thankful.' When someone gives something, and it is accepted, the giver must be thankful. The thought is, 'I have been given the role of a giver; that is itself a great blessing.'

Another type of complaint that often comes from people who do good work is, 'I did such good deeds yet see what has happened to me.' That is why the saying is, neki kar, kuwein me dal (Do good deeds and throw them in the well.) You shouldn't even remember that you have done it. Otherwise, you might end up miserable, thinking, 'I have done this and that for so many years, but people who have benefited don't recognise me anymore in my rainy days.' Just remember, you must have done some good in the past, so you got to serve, and you have done it.

Doubts about your positive actions also cause misery. These doubts come up when you see people who do harmful things get rewarded by society. But I tell you, it only appears like that because you see events through a very narrow lens. You only need to expand your awareness.



These so-called bad people must have done something good in their past lives, and they reap good results now. You have done so many things in so many lifetimes, and they all have repercussions. Similarly, those who do good, if something bad happens to them, know that, knowingly or unknowingly, they must have committed some wrong in the past. You don't get mango by sowing the seeds of neem. As you sow, so do you reap.

People don't experience misery because of their goodness. You have to use your intelligence and awareness before any action. If someone says, 'I am very good and noble,' and then they put their hand in the fire, they are bound to get burnt. You should also have a presence of mind and use your intelligence before you act.

To free yourself from the results of past actions, you should regularly do our sadhana or spiritual practices (practices like meditation, breathing, Sudarshan Kriya, chanting, singing.) When you see the results of your actions from a bigger perspective, great inner strength dawns within you, and you can smile through any situation.

Everyone goes through tough times. And those who do good also go through their own share of challenges. Plenty of obstacles can come your way when you set out to do some good work in society. A committed mind may at times experience rough weather, but it will reap the fruits of its toil. Tough times beckon you to put your skills into action. Trying times bring the best out of you. Rewarding times gives you the best of the world. Miseries in life bring you some depth. Life is a combination of both. We need to make use of every situation, whether

good or bad, to your advantage. That is intelligence. Wisdom from past experiences; engaging in spiritual practices; invoking the valour within, and keeping one's faith help us sail through the rough patches of life.

Your goodness can also fuel your ego and become a source of misery. When you think you are very good, then you somehow feel others are not as good. When you find others aren't good, you definitely become no good yourself. When you find that you are right, everyone else becomes wrong in your eyes. It is a very delicate balance.

On the other hand, the feeling that you are not as good as others or that you lack something is also part of your ego and is equally destructive. 'Everyone else is right. Only I am always wrong. Nobody loves me. Nobody understands me.' These types of thoughts are not helpful. Instead, create space for all types of opinions and feelings: 'I am right, and so is everyone else. Everyone is right in their own way.'

Despite all this, you cannot stop doing good in society. In fact, you cannot exist without performing some action. Your body organs are serving you even when you are asleep.

Your first and foremost commitment is to do seva in the world. When you make the service your sole purpose in life, it eliminates fear, brings focus in your mind, purposefulness in action, and long-term joy. When you do seva, it brings naturalness and human values back in society; it helps in building a society that is free from fear and depression.

If you have the desire to serve and help others, you don't have to worry; your needs will be taken care of. Your life is not a big responsibility for the Divine. It can take care of you very well. Don't be concerned and worried about money or other resources so much. They'll all come. Be filled with love, be filled with gratitude, get rid of the fear in you by being in love.

When you do something which benefits others, it should be cherished, it should humble you and inspire you to do more, instead of making you proud or arrogant. Because you are not really the doer. Simply offer your negative as well as positive deeds and qualities to the divinity. Keep a smile on your face, serve, and immerse yourself in knowledge. Then, no misery will be able to touch you.