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DELHI TURNS INTO FORTRESS

40,000 personnel deployed; 45 Metro stations shut, trains cancelled ahead of CJP protest



Security personnel stand guard near Janpath metro station ahead of a proposed protest call by the CJP in New Delhi

PANKAJ KUMAR

RAJESH KUMAR/PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH/ABHINAV KUMAR JHA ■ New Delhi

Delhi turned into a fortress after the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) was denied permission to protest at Jantar Mantar on Saturday. An unprecedented security clampdown began on Friday with 45 Metro stations closed, and Delhi-bound trains cancelled. More than 40,000 security personnel were deployed across the national Capital; the city's border points, railway stations, bus terminals, hotels, and other sensitive locations saw intensive checks, and social media was asked not to share misleading information. Internet services will be suspended within a four km radius of Jantar Mantar from 10 pm tonight to 10 pm. Colleges postponed examinations, while schools decided to switch to online teaching.

The New Delhi Traders Association (NTA) advised shops, offices, restaurants,

CJP PROTEST: DELHI UNDER SECURITY LOCKDOWN

● Dipke urges public to attend protest

CJP founder Abhishek Dipke on Friday urged people to come to Jantar Mantar in large numbers for the protest demanding CEC Gyanesh Kumar's resignation, and said he would not be intimidated even if he was detained or faced action under stringent laws.

● No Internet within 4 km of Jantar Mantar

Delhi Police sources said internet services will be suspended within a 4-kilometre radius of Jantar

and other establishments in Connaught Place to remain closed as a precaution. Restaurants and hotels were also advised to restrict bookings while the police are reportedly coordinating with cab aggregators like Ola and Uber to regulate movement

★ Railways cancels trains

In a rare move, the Railway Board on Friday cancelled dozens of trains scheduled to arrive at New Delhi and Hazrat Nizamuddin railway stations between 4 am and 2 pm on October 10, ahead of a massive protest.

● 20 zones set up across New Delhi district

Delhi Police has divided the New Delhi district into 20 zones to maintain law and order ahead of the

towards Lutyens' Delhi. The Sarai Kale Khan and New Ashok Nagar Namo Bharat stations in Delhi will also remain closed from 9 pm tonight, ie, October 9, until 10 pm on October 10.

As the slew of restrictions rolled out, the Delhi police,

CJP-proposed protest, officials said on Friday. Additional CCTV cameras have been installed at important locations in New Delhi.

● Delhi Metro to restrict entry at 45 stations

Entry and exit gates at 45 Delhi Metro stations, including Rajiv Chowk, New Delhi, Central Secretariat, Patel Chowk and Kashmir Gate, will remain closed from 9 pm on Friday till further notice due to security reasons ahead of a proposed protest at Jantar Mantar on Saturday.

Explaining the need for the massive arrangements, the Delhi Police said they were to prevent protesters from staging an unauthorised sit-in at Jantar Mantar and maintain law and order across the city amid the possibility of large-scale mobilisation.

Letter to Every Citizen", it said that beyond uniforms, opinions and disagreements, everyone is human first.

Meanwhile, the Home Ministry has directed all States and union territories to coordinate with Delhi Police and take preventive measures to stop CJP supporters from mobilising towards the national Capital. Citing potential law-and-order concerns, the MHA flagged intelligence inputs suggesting protesters could try to enter Delhi despite the police rejecting the group's request to hold a gathering, and called for real-time intelligence sharing and strict implementation of preventive measures.

The win came on a day when the INDIA bloc leaders met President Droupadi Murmu on Friday demanding Gyanesh Kumar's resignation, and the national capital, Delhi, braced for a CJP protest likely on Saturday.

The BJP swept the West Bengal Assembly bypolls, trouncing its rivals by a record margin in politically significant Nandigram and

Don't bring Delhi to a halt: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Expressing concern over the restrictions on public transport announced ahead of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) protest in Delhi, the Supreme Court on Friday directed the Government to ensure "everything is not brought to a halt" and citizens don't face difficulties.

"You cannot use a hammer to kill a sparrow," the court observed. "We are mainly concerned about the complete closure of metro station entries; we have serious concerns about this," the Court said, adding, "Take corrective steps keeping in mind difficulties for citizens."

The Supreme Court said, "The law enforcement agencies have the right to take steps to restrict unruly movement; citizens should not be unduly harassed." The Court also asked the Government to consider designating an alternative venue to Jantar Mantar for peaceful protests in the national Capital.

A Bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Jodymalya Bagchi and V Mohana told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, that the court was con-



The Supreme Court building in New Delhi.

cerned with the complete closure of these Metro stations from 9 pm on Friday till further orders, and cancellation of main and express trains. "One very important principle that we follow for every citizen is the principle of proportionality... You have to prevent certain things. Take measures only to the extent necessary to prevent them," the court was con-

INDIA bloc meets President

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

A delegation of INDIA bloc leaders led by Congress met President Droupadi Murmu on Friday evening and handed over a memorandum to her on alleged "vote chori", with Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi saying he was shocked that the President did not deny the "election theft" charge and "accepted" what the opposition leaders stated.

President Murmu sought proof of "vote chori" from the leaders. The INDIA bloc will hand over the evidence it has to her when she is ready to accept it, Rahul Gandhi said, briefing the media after the delegation comprising him, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, TMC chief Mamata Banerjee, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, NCP (SP) Supriya Sule, SP's Rajeev Rai, BJP's Manoj Jha, VCK chief Thol. Thirumavalavan, CPI(M) general secretary M A Baby and CPI's D Raja met her.

The former Congress chief also said the



Opposition leaders meet President Droupadi Murmu.

opposition leaders would meet Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Monday and hand him a memorandum as well. "Carrying a big 'Save Democracy' banner, INDIA bloc MPs marched from Parliament House to Vijay Chowk, where they were stopped by the police, who had put up barricades.

After that, the delegation, whose names had been sent to Rashtraapiti Bhawan, headed to meet President Murmu to hand over a memorandum on the "vote chori" issue.

CONTINUED ON P 14

The Bystander



PIONEER IN SHORT

NAVI PILLAY WINS NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

South African jurist of Indian origin Navanethem "Navi" Pillay, a former UN human rights chief whose work helped shape international law on genocide and sexual violence, won the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize on Friday for her efforts to promote peace and international law. The 85-year-old jurist, who grew up under apartheid and went on to hold senior positions in South Africa's judiciary and international legal institutions, dedicated the award to survivors of international crimes and those defending international justice, saying their "compassion and courage continue to ensure that impunity will not be allowed to reign." "We are living through an era when international law and human rights are under significant political attack," Pillay said, pointing in particular to attacks on the International Criminal Court (ICC). One of her most recent roles was chairing the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

JNU dismisses Congress MP in sexual harassment case

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH ■ New Delhi

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) on Friday dismissed Professor Angomcha Bimol Akiojiam, a Congress member of the Lok Sabha from Manipur who taught at the Centre for the Study of Social Systems, with immediate effect after its Internal Committee (IC) inquired into sexual harassment complaints by women students. Bimol Akiojiam, a Meitei public intellectual and filmmaker, won the Inner Manipur seat in 2024 by 1,09,801 votes. At JNU, he taught social and political psychology, identity, conflict, and gender relations.

Vote-Chancellor Santishree D Pandit signed the dismissal order. It states that after looking into allegations of sexual harassment, the com-



mittee recommended a major penalty under the UGC service rules, specifically Rule 11(x) of the Central Civil Services (Classification, Control and Appeal) Rules. The order says, "Upon following the due process and considering all available facts and as per the report of the IC, the punishment of dismissal from the services of the University is hereby imposed on Prof Angomcha Bimol Akiojiam with immediate effect."

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Bypolls test Vijay's clout, BJP's Bengal surge

RAJESH KUMAR/PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi/Kolkata/Chennai

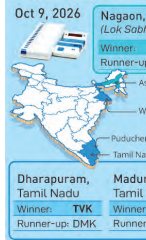
From a test of Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay's star power in Tamil Nadu to a changed political landscape in West Bengal with a resurgent BJP and a divided Trinamool, to the high-stakes Nagaon Lok Sabha contest in Assam, the bypoll results will have serious regional implications amid controversy over CEC Gyanesh Kumar.

The win came on a day when the INDIA bloc leaders met President Droupadi Murmu on Friday demanding Gyanesh Kumar's resignation, and the national capital, Delhi, braced for a CJP protest likely on Saturday.

The BJP swept the West Bengal Assembly bypolls, trouncing its rivals by a record margin in politically significant Nandigram and

Bypoll Results

Oct 9, 2026



Source: Election Commission of India

KBK Poligraphics

scoring a surprise victory in Muslim-majority Rejnagar, consolidating its position barely five months after ending the Trinamool Congress' 15-year rule in

Lok Sabha seat: 1

Assembly seats: 5

Nagaon Lok Sabha seat in Assam. Meanwhile, the ruling All India NR Congress (AINRC) that Thattanchavady constituency in Puducherry. The results were closely watched for the political mood in the four constituencies and the Puducherry Assembly seat.

Addressing a press conference, BJP national general secretary Smriti Irani thanked voters in States where Assembly bypolls were held, saying the results proved that "democracy has won over mobocracy."

"Democracy has delivered yet another resounding message to the mob," she said, referring to the bypoll results. Irani also targeted the Congress, alleging that it has taken no action against its own lawmaker facing sexual harassment charges.

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Jewar airport to be named after PM Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

The Uttar Pradesh Cabinet on Friday approved a proposal to rename the Noida International Airport at Jewar as 'Narendra Modi International Airport, Noida-Jewar', Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said.

Briefing reporters after a Cabinet meeting, Adityanath said the State Cabinet was grateful to Prime Minister Modi for the airport, which he described as a major gift to Uttar Pradesh.



Noida International Airport terminal building.

"The Council of Ministers of Uttar Pradesh expresses its gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for gifting the state the Noida International Airport at Jewar. The Cabinet has approved a proposal to name it Narendra Modi International Airport, Noida-Jewar," the chief minister said.

The airport was set to emerge as Uttar Pradesh's largest airport and a major aviation hub in the country, he said. Adityanath said the State Cabinet also expressed its appreciation for Modi's visionary leadership, inspiring guidance, and unwavering, continued commitment to the state. The CM said the Cabinet once again expressed its appreciation for the PM's leadership.

CONTINUED ON P 14

India slams US over green-card processing halt

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

India on Friday strongly criticised the US administration's decision to suspend the processing of Permanent Labour Certification (PERM) applications for eight major technology companies, warning that the move could affect thousands of Indian professionals seeking permanent residency in the United States.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) also condemned US Vice President JD Vance's description of foreign workers as "indentured servants," calling the language "unwarranted and deeply offensive."



Ministry of External Affairs building in New Delhi.

The measures, announced by the Trump administration as part of its efforts to tighten restrictions on foreign workers, cover Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Wipro, HCL Technologies, Microsoft, Adobe, Capgemini

and Cognizant. US authorities have also initiated investigations involving several universities.

The PERM programme is an important step in the employer-sponsored green card process. Its suspension

is expected to create uncertainty for Indian technology professionals pursuing permanent residency after entering the US on H-1B visas.

Responding to the decision, the MEA said the movement of skilled professionals benefits both countries by supporting innovation, research, productivity and economic growth.

"Talent mobility adds value to both economies," the ministry said, noting that Indian professionals contribute to the US technology sector while American companies gain access to highly skilled workers.

CONTINUED ON P 14

No Satcom monopoly in India: Scindia tells Musk

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH ■ New Delhi

Union Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Friday said India does not allow a monopoly in any sector, after Elon Musk claimed that vested interests were blocking licences for Starlink's satellite internet service.

Scindia said there was no question of permitting a monopoly in satellite communications. He added that three parties are in line for final approval of commercial licences, suggesting more than one operator is



Union Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia.

expected to clear the final stage of the process. The statement came a day after a public dispute between Musk and the Government. The SpaceX and Starlink chief had said his company's satcom services were being held up.

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Police shares open letter ahead of protest

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
■ New Delhi

As the Capital prepared for another protest at Jantar Mantar, the Delhi Police took a more restrained approach. Instead of issuing a warning or setting up barricades, they published an open letter that felt more like a gesture in the dark.

In a post titled "An Open Letter to Every Citizen," the police shared a personal postcard. The message read, "Your voice is your right, and your safety is our duty" (Your voice is your right, and your safety is our duty). The postcard also reminded readers that every officer is a person with a family and loved ones waiting at home. It said the only thing that sets them apart is the uniform, not their humanity. The postcard was signed, "With care, Delhi Police."

The surge in public statements came as several student groups and the Cuckooch Janta Party planned to hold protests on October 10 against Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar. The police had already increased their presence at the protest site. In this context, the message was



Security personnel stand guard ahead of a proposed protest call by the Cuckooch Janta Party (CJP) in New Delhi on Friday

meant to address the crowd and remind them that every person in uniform is also a son or daughter, parent or partner.

Officers who have patrolled the capital's streets know how quickly a demonstration can turn into a major law-and-order problem. Moreover, they know the subtle costs of the job: children who can tell their parents by the sound of a key turning at midnight, and

spouses who keep their phones with them throughout each shift. The letter did not mention these sacrifices; it simply urged people on both sides of the barricade to remember they are all human and equally vulnerable.

Readers were surprised by its tone. In such a big city, the police normally make announcements as advisories, traffic updates, and messages

stressing law and order. This time, however, the authorities were careful. Although people might disagree, they did not regard this as hostile behaviour. They accepted the right to protest while also asking everyone to keep things peaceful.

Those with experience of the Delhi Police have said the letter contained something rarely said. A constable who stands in the sun for hours is

still a father who has promised to be home for his child's birthday. A woman officer dealing with a difficult crowd is still a daughter whose mother waits by the window. Although the uniform absorbs the shouts and insults, the person inside carries them.

Reactions to the postcard varied. Many people believed it was a good way to remind others that respect can still exist even when they disagree. Others, however, questioned whether words alone could reduce the tension that arises when protests clash with police lines. The authorities gave no further explanation. The letter remained as it was: short, seemingly handwritten, and sent to all of them.

That night, as people prepared for the next day's gathering, the postcard appeared online. It didn't call on anyone to remain silent; instead, it reminded all officers that they have names in their families and that every citizen who comes up against the police has a life. The police are supposed to protect. In a city famous for bold statements and strong reactions, this quiet emphasis on shared humanity stood out, even if only briefly.

Youth Congress workers in Batman masks detained amid heavy barricading

ABHINAV KUMAR JHA
■ New Delhi

The Youth Congress workers wore Batman masks. They set out from Akbar Road towards Kartavya Path, led by the youth wing's president, Uday Bhanu Chib. The Youth Congress said police detained 25 of them.

The route they tried to take ran through a part of the city that had been rebuilt overnight into a metal maze. Yellow barricades blocked key roads in the city centre, restricting access to Jantar Mantar, the designated protest site. Police had put up two layers of barricades. The Capital had deployed more than 20,000 police and paramilitary personnel.

The Youth Congress did not get the site it wanted. Chib said Delhi Police had refused permission for a demonstration at Jantar Mantar, though the organisation had been asking since September 25. His response targeted the barricades themselves.

Police could deploy and deny permissions, he said, but could not bar the voice of India's youth.

On Janpath, security per-



Indian Youth Congress workers raise slogans as they take out a protest march towards India Gate in New Delhi on Friday

sonnel stood watch for the day's second movement. They are keeping vigil ahead of the INDIA bloc's planned march to Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The opposition MPs began that march indoors. They gathered in Parliament's Central Hall, among them Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Lok Sabha leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, BJP leader Tejashwi Yadav and CPI general secretary MA Baby.

The plan was a foot march from Central Hall to Rashtrapati Bhavan, with the possibility of courting arrest if they were

stopped. Rashtrapati Bhavan had asked to cut the delegation from 15 leaders to 10.

The appointment with the President was at 8 pm. After the day's marches, the city was set to shut down for the next one.

Delhi Police wrote to the Metro operator asking it to close entry and exit gates at 57 stations from 9 pm, ahead of a protest the Cuckooch Janta Party planned for October 10. Several incoming trains had also been cancelled.

The Government ordered retail liquor shops shut on October 9 and 10.

Police divides district into 20 zones ahead of protest, security tightened with extra CCTV

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
■ New Delhi

Delhi Police has divided the New Delhi district into 20 zones to maintain law and order ahead of the Cuckooch Janta Party's proposed protest at the Jantar Mantar on Saturday. Each of the 20 zones will be monitored by a joint commissioner, a deputy commissioner and an additional deputy commissioner of police to ensure close supervision of the security arrangements.

Special commissioners heading various units will

also closely monitor the zones and coordinate with senior officers, whenever required, to respond to any law-and-order situation, a source said. Additional CCTV cameras have been installed at important locations.

New Delhi, Central Delhi and North Delhi districts as part of the security measures, the source said. The arrangements were discussed at a meeting of senior Delhi Police officers at the police headquarters on Friday to review the security arrangements ahead of the CJP protest.

In a post on X, joint

Commissioner of Police (Central Range) Madhur Verma urged Delhi Police personnel to practise restraint. Verma said the police's strength lies in handling crowds with "discipline, dignity and minimum force".

The post comes as the force deals with weeks of back-to-back demonstrations. Reports this week said the pressure has continued since the Jantar Mantar protests earlier this year, with the latest round beginning on October 2 when Opposition parties demonstrated against the Election Commission over the special



Security personnel stand guard near Jantar Mantar in New Delhi

elective rolls. Officials said the same teams are often moved from one site to the next with little rest, and that backup units have been kept close by. The Delhi Police has also posted more personnel on the ground. A post on October 7 showed injured women officers at a protest site, one with a torn badge and another with a bleeding hand. One report said the posts follow the force's "negative" portrayal during the July protest at Jantar Mantar.

Delhi Police said more than

118 personnel of the Delhi Police and central forces were injured during the July 20 protests, including officers of Special Commissioner, Joint Commissioner, Additional Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner ranks.

Police said 60 protesters were also injured, while organisers said hundreds were hurt. It has also been reported that the Rapid Action Force used pellets that day, after Delhi Police had said none were used. Delhi Police registered an FIR in August over pellet injuries to 19-year-old. The police have also moved

against social media content. A notice from the force's IFSO unit, dated October 5, asked X to remove 11 posts that police said showed their intervention without the context of earlier obstruction and resistance. On October 6, police arrested Nadeem Ahmed Ameen from Mewat for allegedly circulating a fabricated AI-generated video involving a police personnel. Additional DCP (New Delhi) Manjeet Sheoran on Friday asked journalists to keep their distance from protesters, alleging that some media personnel obstruct police work.

PEOPLE | PLANET | PROGRESS

Driving Growth Through Responsible Mining & Innovation

Chairman's Statement for the 68th Annual General Meeting of NMDC LTD.

Dear Shareholders,

It gives me immense pleasure to present the Annual Report of NMDC Limited for the financial year 2025-26, a year marked by strong performance, significant milestones and continued progress towards our long-term vision.

The year 2026 has marked an important chapter in our national journey. Despite global economic and geopolitical uncertainties, India's progress remains steady and decisive. Our real GDP growth of 7.7% in FY26 reflects the strength of our economy and investment momentum. India is also asserting leadership in technology, innovation and global partnerships.

For NMDC, this has been a year replete with 'Eureka' moments where we discovered and rediscovered our true calling and embarked on a journey of profound transformation to harness our real potential. In FY26, we became the first mining company in India to produce more than 50 million tonnes of iron ore in a single year, achieving record production of 53.16 million tonnes and sales of 50.24 million tonnes, scripting history on stone. The numbers reflect an increase of 26.62% in production and 13.15% in sales year on year, which have been achieved organically, by optimizing and exceeding the capacities and capabilities of the existing production and sales equipments and infrastructure. NMDC has proved its resilience with such a quantum jump in production in a single year which is unprecedented and unparalleled in the industry. Through this commendable performance, NMDC has genuinely contributed to the strengthening of the foundation for India's infrastructure and industrial growth.

This operational excellence was fully reflected in the financial performance of the Company which registered new echelons in turnover and other financial parameters. Revenue from operations increased by 33.31% to ₹51,554 crore. Profit After Tax rose by 10.88% to ₹7,421 crore and Net Worth increased by 14.39% to ₹33,836 crore. NMDC invested ₹3,384 crore in capital expenditure during the year while continuing to create value for shareholders through payment of interim dividend @ ₹2.50 per share and proposed final dividend @ ₹1.00 per share for FY 2025-26, subject to shareholders' approval.

India's rapid industrialization calls for secure, reliable and responsibly managed mineral resources. Our Vision 2030 of achieving 100 MTPA of iron ore production capacity is therefore not merely a business ambition, but an important contribution towards India's long-term mineral security and economic growth.

Strengthening the Growth Platform

The next phase of NMDC's journey is focused on converting capacity and ambition into safe, efficient and dependable operations. Our 60 MTPA production target for FY 2026-27 represents an important step towards the 100 MTPA pathway.

Significant progress was achieved in strengthening our integrated mining and logistics infrastructure. The Kharand-Jagdalpur rail-line doubling project achieved 98% overall progress, with 140 km completed and operational. Further, the Company has successfully commissioned its Sish Pipeline Project on 28th September 2026, with the production of the first batch of fired pellets at its Pellet Plant in Nagarnagar, Chhattisgarh. This milestone marks the successful integration of commissioning of the new Sish SPL system, comprising of Iron Ore Processing Plant (OPP) at Bacheli, the 135 km Slurry Pipeline traversing three districts and 2.0 Million Tonne Pellet Plant at Nagarnagar. These projects will enhance evacuation capacity and improve the overall efficiency of the Balladila value chain.

NMDC also continued to diversify its domestic mineral portfolio. Tokisd North in Jharkhand commenced mining operations in January 2026, marking our entry into domestic coal mining. The ground-breaking of Balladila Iron Ore Deposit-4, through NMDC-CMDC Limited, was undertaken in February 2026, with commencement of commercial operations. Significant progress in the development of Balladila Iron Ore Deposit-13, which is also a part of NMDC-CMDC Limited, were undertaken during FY 2025-26, leading to its commercial operation in the months that followed.

It also makes me proud to inform that NMDC, in true recognition of the tireless and dedicated efforts of its human capital, made concerted efforts to provide quality life to its employees in the projects by commissioning new housing and ancillary facilities during the year and also undertaking the commencement of a few other such projects in its townships at Balladila and Anandpur complexes.

Our earnestness and seriousness to emerge as a world class, global mineral behemoth took a significant leap with the opening of our offices in Dubai, UAE and Sydney, Australia. These offices are expected to support in NMDC's mineral diversification journey abroad.

Technology, Sustainability and People

State of Art Technology and innovation are an integral part of NMDC's operations with an objective to improving operational visibility, decision-making, productivity and safety. Initiatives taken up include Digital Project Management Unit, Integrated Sampling, Digitally Enabled Drilling and Blasting, Real-Time Material Visibility and Integrated Sustainability Data Systems.

Our commitment to responsible growth remains equally strong. NMDC is pursuing greater energy and resource efficiency, increased renewable energy utilisation, improved water and land stewardship and lower-carbon logistics. Our Net Zero Strategy and Roadmap provides a structured direction for reducing the environmental footprint and operational carbon.

Our people remain at the heart of this transformation. Safety continues to be a non-negotiable priority, complemented by focused investments in human capital through skill development, leadership enhancement and digital capabilities.

Through our CSR initiatives, NMDC also continues to contribute to healthcare, education, skill development and community infrastructure, particularly in the regions surrounding our operations.

Corporate Governance

Corporate governance remains a cornerstone of NMDC's organisational ethos, underpinning every aspect of our operations and decision-making. We are committed to creating sustainable long-term value for all our stakeholders including shareholders, customers, suppliers, creditors, the Government of India, State Governments, regulatory authorities, and the communities we serve. Guided by the highest standards of integrity and accountability, we strive to ensure full compliance with applicable laws and regulations, both in letter and spirit. Through transparent governance practices, prudent risk management and responsible decision-making, we continue to strengthen stakeholder confidence and safeguard value creation.

Looking Ahead

The year ahead will be the year of execution, consolidation and transformation. Stabilising our higher production base, reaching the 60 MTPA production milestone, completing critical infrastructure projects and advancing the next phases of capacity expansion will remain key priorities.

The journey towards 100 MTPA will require operational excellence, disciplined capital allocation, strong project execution, technology adoption and unwavering commitment to safety and sustainability. At the same time, NMDC will continue to explore opportunities for diversification into critical and strategic minerals, both domestically and internationally, in alignment with India's evolving mineral security needs.

I am confident that NMDC has the resources, capabilities and institutional strength to meet the opportunities and challenges ahead. We are building an enterprise that is larger in scale, stronger in capacity, smarter through technology and more responsible in its operations.

I express my sincere gratitude to the Government of India, Ministry of Steel, Ministry of Mines, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, other Government Departments and the State Governments for their continuous guidance and support.

I also thank our employees and their unions, customers, suppliers, partners, host communities, regulators and shareholders for their continued trust and confidence.

Together, we will continue to build NMDC as a globally competitive mining enterprise and remain at the heart of India's journey towards a stronger, more self-reliant and mineral-secure future.

Jai Hind

Amritava Mukherjee
Chairman and Managing Director



No deletion hearings based solely on bulk objections

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A voter in India can no longer be dragged into a deletion hearing because somebody else filed a status report against names on the roll.

Amid reports of people filing forms in bulk to remove electors from voters' lists, the Election Commission of India (ECI) on Friday set limits on how many such objections individuals can submit. The ECI has prescribed limits on the number of Form 7

applications an individual elector can file to object to the inclusion of names or seek deletion of names from electoral rolls. During the claims and objections period, an individual elector can file a maximum of 10 Form 7 applications throughout the entire period.

In a letter dated October 9, the Commission told the District Officers of all states and Union Territories that an individual elector can file at most 10 Form 7 applications during the entire

claims and objections period. During continuous updates to the electoral rolls, the limit is five per month. The cap applies to both online and offline filing.

Form 7 is used to object to the inclusion of a name in the electoral roll or to seek its deletion. The Commission said it had noticed individual electors filing objections in bulk on unattended grounds. This caused avoidable inconvenience to the elector who was the subject of the objection. It also added to the



workload of field-level staff. The letter says the rules were not clear enough on one point. The number of

applications an individual could file online was fixed at six at a time, subject to disposal. But the number of

physical forms that could be submitted in bulk was never defined. This left it to the judgment of electoral registration officers, creating problems for officials on the ground.

The Commission also recalled existing norms. The Manual on Electoral Rolls, 2023, says it should not entertain claims and objections presented in bulk by an individual, including those sent by post. It also requires personal cross-verification by the officer where the same

person is the objector in more than five cases.

For the SIR period, the Commission had already allowed booth-level agents of recognised political parties to file applications in bulk, with a condition. They cannot submit more than 50 forms a day to the booth-level officer before the draft publication, and no more than 10 a day after that.

The letter spells out safeguards that officers must follow. Under the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, only a person whose name is already on the roll of that constituency can object to a name there. Any objection not lodged within the specified period, or not in the specified form and manner, must be rejected.

Officers have been told to ensure the form is fully completed. The officer must sign it at the proper place. A seal of the signature cannot replace the original signature. Officers must also check the genuineness of the applicant against the electors list.

CAQM pulls up 3 states over fuel station camera lapse

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The CAQM has summoned senior transport department officials of Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh Governments for failing to install automated number plate recognition cameras at fuel stations in the states' NCR districts by the September 30 deadline.

In three separate notices, all dated October 8, the Commission for Air Quality

Management (CAQM) asked the three states' transport commissioners and secretaries in charge of the transport departments to appear before it next week to explain the reasons for non-compliance.

"You are also directed to submit a comprehensive updated status report—the reasons for delay in installation, integration and operationalisation of the automated number plate recognition (ANPR) based tech-



nology-enabled enforcement system—and a detailed, time-bound action plan for complete installation," said the CAQM in the notices. The notices relate to CAQM's Direction 101, issued on May 15, which directed that, from October 1, fuel stations within the NCR do not dispense fuel to vehicles without a valid PUC, as identified through the ANPR system or other technology-enabled systems. The Commission also

directed authorities in Delhi and NCR states to ensure installation, integration, and operationalisation of systems like ANPR cameras, integrated with VAHAN and the PUC database, at all fuel stations within their respective jurisdiction on or before September 30. For Haryana, the system installation was planned for more than 2,700 fuel stations in the NCR districts. Similarly, Rajasthan had 362, and Uttar Pradesh 987

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Thiruvananthapuram

The Kerala Cabinet on Friday cleared a bill seeking to provide legal guarantee for the care and protection of senior citizens, with the government aiming to get it passed during the upcoming Assembly session beginning on October 12, Chief Minister VD Sathesnan said.

While Sathesnan highlighted the matter during an interview to PTI videos on Friday



Cabinet meeting, Sathesnan said the bill would be published before being introduced in the Assembly. Describing the proposed legislation as a revolutionary initiative, he said Kerala was the first state in the country to establish a separate department of Senior Citizens and that the proposed law would be the "first of its kind" in the world to provide a legal guarantee for the care of the elderly through legislation.

Delhi turns into fortress

Learning that what senior officers believed were two serious lapses during the CIP attempt in July, the Delhi Police has drawn up what it calls a 'fail-safe plan' for the Jantar Mantar protest on Saturday. As part of this, it has refused every permission sought, planned how to restrict protesters within their districts, set up dedicated detention centres in NCR districts, and sent 37 blocking point teams to New Delhi districts, each pinned to a specific district or unit.

Police said the elaborate security arrangements aim to prevent protesters from staging an unauthorised sit-in at Jantar Mantar and to maintain law and order across the city amid the possibility of large-scale mobilisation. Addressing a press conference, joint Commissioner Nupur Prasad said on Friday that police have denied permission for the proposed October 10 demonstration, citing the short notice given for the event and alleged violations of rules. Other prominent states where the CIP attempt is the application seeking permission for the demonstration was submitted on October 7, just three days before the proposed gathering, adding that rules require such applications to be submitted at least 10 days in advance.

Police said the application did not meet the stipulated notice period and that the conduct of the July demonstration had raised concerns over compliance with directions issued by authorities. As part of the security arrangements, Delhi Police conducted mock drills at several locations.

Section 144 of the Bharatiya Sakshata Sanhita (BNS), the provision for curfew orders, is in force in New Delhi district. It empowers authorities to issue orders to prevent potential disturbances.

Heavy security bandobast has been made, with several Armed Police Forces companies expected to be involved in the security arrangements. Liquor shops across Delhi have been ordered to remain closed on October 9 and 10 as a preventive measure. Entry and exit gates at 57 Delhi Metro stations, including Rajiv Chowk, Nizamuddin, Central Secretariat, Rajiv Chowk, and Kashmere Gate, will remain closed from 9 pm on Friday till further notice. According to the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), restrictions will also continue on October 10, with the interchange facility remaining available at all affected stations except for the New Delhi metro station. Other prominent states where entry and exit gates will remain closed include Jaipur, Mandi House, Barakhamba Road, Supreme Court, Indraprastha, ITO, Delhi Gate, Khan Market, Jama Masjid, Chandi Chowk, Hauz Khas and INA. The list also includes Shaheen Bagh, Jamia Millia Islamia, Connaught Place, and the State Emblem of India, Ashram, Sarai Khan-Nizamuddin, Welcome, Shahdara, Rithala, Rohini, Azadpur, Kashmere Gate and Shivaji Stadium, among others.

Railway services are also expected to be disrupted, with several trains scheduled to arrive at or depart from New Delhi and Hazrat Nizamuddin railway stations between 4 am and 2 pm on Saturday cancelled. Railways have cancelled 61 Delhi-bound trains between Friday and Saturday. Railways cancelled 40 trains on Friday, and 20 stand cancelled for Saturday. The restrictions aim to prevent large groups from gathering on sensitive locations and moving toward areas where demonstrations are not permitted.

The proposed measures could affect officers, students, shoppers and other commuters who rely on the metro for daily travel. Passengers have been asked to use alternative transport arrangements. The Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) also issued an advisory to social media operators on October 8, expressing concern over the online circulation of false, misleading, manipulated, or out-of-context information related to the ongoing protests. The IT Ministry has expressed apprehensions about unlawful content may disturb public order and social tranquility, raise law-and-order concerns, and incite violence.

Meanwhile, police have stepped up monitoring of social media platforms, with more than 200 content creators reportedly under scrutiny in connection with the protests.

Borders of the national Capital will also face heightened surveillance, and additional security cameras have been installed. Police sources said restrictions on vehicles entering New Delhi after 6 am on Saturday are possible, depending on the security situation and the situation on the ground. Police are checking hotels, lodges, guest houses and dharmshalas as part of the preven-

tive security exercise. Police are also issuing appeals from various mosques and temples, urging people to maintain peace. But terminals across the Capital will witness heightened vigilance, with security personnel monitoring passengers and vehicles arriving from neighbouring States. The airport and its approach roads are expected to remain under heavy surveillance, with about 200 passenger movement orderly. Travellers heading to the airport have been advised to allow extra time for possible congestion and security checks when planning their journeys.

Police will closely monitor people linked to the protest and assess attempts to mobilise supporters on social media.

More than 200 content creators have reportedly come under scrutiny as part of the monitoring exercise. Police teams are examining online posts and messages relating to mobilisation, gathering points and the proposed demonstration. Police said security personnel will monitor developments throughout Saturday and respond to any incidents, including crowd build-up, traffic obstructions and attempts to breach barricades.

Don't bring Delhi to a halt: SC

"But that does not mean you use a hammer to kill a fly. That principle must be kept in mind," CJ Kant said Mehta.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said he understands the concerns of the court and will discuss with the authorities concerned. Still, he said that the remark of the CJ on use of a hammer was just an example and it should not be reported that the government is using the government that it is using a hammer to kill a fly.

CJ Kant said, "Exercise caution in abundance. There is nothing wrong with that. You are responsible for maintaining law and order. But that responsibility is not merely about protecting the State's property, but about protecting people. That is your sovereign duty." The bench said daughters, young children, senior citizens, very old adults, and patients who travel by public transport need protection. "There is absolutely no difficulty with taking appropriate measures. But make sure nothing is brought to a halt. There cannot be complete prohibition," it said.

"If you want to restrict unruly movement, you can do so. But that does not mean you can bring everything to a halt and leave people without any transport facility," it said. Justice Bagchi said that while reducing the frequency of trains and Metro services can be a regulatory measure, the complete closure of services till further orders would be an extreme step.

"If tomorrow anything untoward happens, who will be responsible? Some measures are required but proportionately," she said. Mehta said the impression given by the lawyers on the other side that the entire city has been shut down is far from the truth, and claimed the authorities have taken only proportionate measures in view of the violence that followed the July 20 Parliament attack attempt by the CIP protesters. "I have taken instruction, and I am being told that the internet shutdown was only effective in certain sensitive pockets in the vicinity of the President's House in a radius of 4 kilometres and that too will be reviewed based on the security situation," he said.

The bench stated that it is confining the consideration only to the issue of transport services, as none of the parties, who have organised the protest on October 10, were before the court. When advocate Vrinda Grover raised the issue of police visiting mosques and hotels and advising people not to join the protests, the bench told her that it would not go into the issue based on statements made. None of the aggrieved parties was before it.

The bench also asked the Centre to consider designating another location for peaceful protests in place of Jantar Mantar.

JNU dismisses Congress MP in sexual...

The university sent the order to his address at House No. 1337, Type-V, Poorvanchal Complex Old, on the JNU campus. Women students

reportedly filed complaints on May 18. The issue surfaced when one student described an alleged incident during a viva exam in a student-only messaging group, prompting others to share similar stories.

People familiar with the complaints say they involve sexually suggestive remarks in classes and vivas, inappropriately advances at gatherings at the professor's on-campus home, requests for students to visit his official residence, and, in at least one case, an offer of higher marks in exchange for sexual favours. The university's public order does not mention these details.

The committee's findings state that the panel found the allegations of inappropriate personal questions, sexually suggestive interactions, unwelcome physical contact, showing sexually explicit material without warning, unnecessary physical closeness, and irregular conduct during vivas were proven.

The panel concluded that accounts from complainants, independent witnesses, witnesses for the professor, and the professor's own statements "substantially corroborate the allegations." They also noted a repeated pattern of behaviour that did not fit the proper boundaries of a teacher-student relationship.

The findings mention questions in academic settings about dating history, Valentine's Day plans, boyfriends, and whether someone the professor's age might be interested in a student. They also describe the use of the word "quicksie," explained with sexual meaning and gestures, and requests for female students to hold his hand, pinching even when students hesitated, and showing the film Lust Stories in class without enough warning about its content.

Accounts also mention sexist jokes and negative remarks about regional groups. The committee found that the professor engaged in an intimidating, offensive, and hostile learning environment with no academic justification. The inquiry lasted longer than the usual 90 days, with the summer vacation from May 27 to July 3 given as the reason for the delay. The committee gave its report to the Vice-Chancellor on Friday afternoon.

According to the service rules, dismissal is a major penalty and usually means the person cannot work in government jobs in the future, while removal does not have this effect. Last month, the Aklhi Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) protested on campus, saying 11 women students had complained months earlier and calling for a prompt inquiry free from political interference.

In September, the Delhi Commission for Women also asked JNU for a report after a video surfaced in which students described their complaint. Aklhi Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad. In September, he told reporters in Manipal that the published accounts were "unverified, intentional, unethical and illegal." He objected to what he called a media trial and said the truth would come out in court.

INDIA bloc meets President

Briefing reporters after a meeting, Kharge said the INDIA bloc leaders sought a return to a ballot paper instead of EVMS for future polls. "The President asked for evidence of 'vote chori' which we will provide," he said.

Rahul said the INDIA bloc's memorandum to the President clearly stated that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has devised a return to a ballot paper instead of EVMS for future polls. "The President asked for evidence of 'vote chori' which we will provide," he said.

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"The President in no way denied what we said; she did not question what we said... she accepted our statement and sought proof of 'election chori'." The leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul said he told the president that the country knows proof of 'election chori', as state after state has been 'stolen'. "We will happily take proof of 'election chori' to the President when she is ready to accept it," said Rahul.

ing" of the country by Prime Minister Modi, Union Home Minister Shah and the CEC through a criminal conspiracy of "vote chori."

Bypolls test Vijay's clout, BJP's Bengal surge

"Congress talks of smashing patriarchy, but is not taking any action against its own MP facing sexual harassment charges," she said, referring to now-dismissed JNU professor and Congress MP Angomcha Bimol Akoljam.

The BJP steamrolled its rivals in Nandigram and scored a surprise win in Muslim-majority Rejnagar, underlining its expanding political reach in West Bengal barely four months after ending TMC's 15-year rule, as a fragmented opposition struggled to mount a challenge in the ruling party's first electoral test.

The twin victories carried contrasting but politically significant messages: in Nandigram, the BJP consolidated its hold over a constituency center to Chief Minister Sudesh Adhikari's political rise; in Rejnagar, it signalled its ability to expand beyond its traditional electoral base. Hasirani Rath, the BJP candidate in Nandigram and mother of Adhikari's slain political assistant Chandranath Rath, won by 122,753 votes, polling 1,64,427 against 41,674 for Congress nominee Mimata Banerjee. CIP candidate Sant Gopal Giri finished third with 5,779 votes.

In Rejnagar, BJP's Mananvash Sarkar defeated AM Jananta Unnayan Party nominee Golam Nabi Azad by 75,816 votes. Sarkar secured 1,29,914 votes, while Azad, son of AJP founder Humayun Kabir, got 54,098.

In Rejnagar, Muslims account for around 70 per cent of the population, according to figures cited during the campaign. The constituency has traditionally witnessed competition among the TMC, Congress and regional political formations, with minority votes playing an important role.

India slams US over green-card processing...

The ministry added that international talent strengthens corporate competitiveness, encourages job creation, and generates economic value in the United States.

New Delhi described professional mobility as a significant mutual benefit and said the latest restrictions did not support the countries' shared objectives.

The Indian Government took particular exception to Vande's comments criticising technology companies for employing foreign workers.

Vande alleged that some corporations recruit workers from abroad to replace American employees and reduce labour costs. He argued that such practices could disadvantage domestic workers and questioned the presence of some foreign employees in the country.

India rejected this characterisation, arguing that it failed to recognise the qualifications and economic contributions of Indian professionals.

The MEA also pointed to the historical role of Indians in the development of the United States, stating that generations of immigrants had helped shape the country through their work, entrepreneurship and innovation.

Microsoft, one of the companies affected by the US action, defended its employment practices and most of its H-1B filings involved workers already employed by the company.

Microsoft added that applications for new employees involved individuals already legally present in the United States. According to the company, these filings accounted for about 1% of its US workforce.

The company said it supported the American workforce and would provide the administration with additional information about its visa applications. The suspension of PERM processing does not automatically invalidate existing H-1B visas or change the immigration status of current holders. However, it could delay or disrupt the permanent residency process for eligible employees of the affected companies.

US Labour Secretary Keith Sanderling announced the restrictions on Thursday, stating that Vande's comments criticised the independent labour certification applications involving the companies concerned or continue process-

ing their pending applications.

The action forms part of the administration's wider effort to scrutinise the employment of foreign nationals and prioritise American workers. The affected companies have substantial operations in India and employ large numbers of Indian technology professionals, making the policy particularly significant for Silicon Valley. The move also creates employment opportunities in the US. The latest decision comes amid broader tensions between New Delhi and Washington. Relations have faced challenges following US tariff measures imposed last year, disagreements over President Donald Trump's claims about his role in de-escalating the India-Pakistan military confrontation in May 2025, and increased H-1B visa fees. Despite these differences, both governments have worked in recent months to stabilise ties and advance negotiations toward a bilateral trade agreement. However, they have not yet reached a final agreement.

Separately, Trump has signed legislation authorising punitive tariffs of up to 100 per cent on imports from countries that purchase Russian oil, potentially affecting major buyers such as India. The green card processing restrictions add to a growing list of contentions between the two countries, particularly given the importance of the Indian technology workforce to US businesses and the wider economic relationship.

India has maintained that skilled-worker mobility should be viewed as a source of shared economic advantage rather than a threat to either country's interests. The MEA said it would continue to follow the issue as developments unfold.

No Satcom monopoly in India: Scindia tells Musk

The Department of Telecommunications rejected the suggestion that domestic business interests were responsible. It said every state in India has the country must demonstrate compliance with security norms.

Officials have treated the delay as unfinished regulatory requirements rather than a decision to keep Starlink out. Applicants must meet technical and security conditions before the government can issue a commercial licence. The government has said that the licensing pipeline apply to all companies seeking to offer satellite broadband, not just one applicant.

Scindia's comments widened that response by eliminating the possibility of a monopoly and referring to three parties nearing final agreement on Thursday. The licensing pipeline was open to competition. However, he did not name the three applicants nor specify a date for the grants.

Starlink has been seeking permission to operate in India for several years. Its service relies on low-Earth orbit satellites to deliver broadband, including in places where ground networks are thin. Over the same period, Indian rules on spectrum, security clearance and foreign participation in satellite communications have continued to be applied to individual applicants.

The change on Thursday brought the disagreement into the open. Musk's posts presented the delay as being caused by interests opposed to Starlink's entry. In response, the Telecom Department stated that meeting security requirements is a task that independent agencies are being helped by local companies were without foundation. On Friday, Scindia returned to the point with a more general statement: no sector, including satellite communications, is set aside for one operator only.

Jewar airport to be named after PM Modi

PM laid the foundation stone of the Greenfield Noida International Airport at Jewar on November 18, 2025. The airport is under Phase-I on March 28, 2026. Commercial flights started on June 15.

Developed as the second international airport for the Delhi-NCR region under a public-private partnership between the UP government and the private sector, IndiGo Air, it aims to significantly boost regional logistics and connectivity.

Govt put in place undeclared emergency in Delhi: Kharage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Congress on Friday attacked the Modi Government over the unprecedented curbs in place in Delhi ahead of the BJP-led protest, alleging that there is an "undeclared emergency" in the national Capital and that the Centre is scared of the people.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharage made a play on the iconic Sholay dialogue to take a swipe at the government over the restrictions in place ahead of the protest.

The protest call has been given by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) and some student organisations against Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over alleged irregularities in the functioning of the Election Commission, speaking with reporters in the Parliament House complex, Kharage said, "They (the government) are



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharage

scared. 'Aur jo aadmi darta hai wo aaj nahi toh kal mara hai.' His remarks were an apparent play on the iconic dialogues delivered by the character Gabbar Singh - 'Jo dar gaya samjho mar gaya' - in the 1975 cult classic Sholay. Kharage also said two commissioners of the Election

Commission have come out openly and stated that CEC Gyanesh Kumar has made a "mistake". "Both commissioners themselves said that we raised objections several times and explained to Gyanesh Kumar, but he did not agree. Despite the objec-

tions of the two election commissioners, the Modi government is not ready to remove Gyanesh Kumar from his post," Kharage said.

"Gyanesh Kumar is a small fish, but behind him are (Narendra Modi-Amit) Shah and their government. The Modi Government wants all rights to be stripped away and dictatorship to be imposed. If dictatorship comes, democracy will end, which will also wipe out the Constitution and all rights. We are fighting for the sake of democracy, the constitution, and the people's interests," Kharage said.

"Today, we will meet the President on this issue and tell her that we have reached this point only because of the right to vote. If the right to vote is taken away, complete dictatorship will ensue," he said. Congress general secretary in-charge communications KC Venugopal alleged that there was an "undeclared emergency" in place in Delhi.

Government is afraid of Gen Z, has imposed Emergency: CJP leaders

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

Leaders of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) lashed out on Friday, claiming that the Centre was "afraid of Gen Z" and had resorted to imposing an "Emergency" as authorities ordered a shutdown of transport networks and transformed the national capital into a fortress ahead of a planned protest in Delhi.

The crackdown comes as CJP prepares for a massive demonstration at Jantar Mantar on Saturday to demand the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar over alleged irregularities in the Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

Slamming the government's pre-emptive measures, CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke condemned the central government for restricting public movement to block demonstrators and



said that the Centre "is afraid of Gen Z". Speaking to reporters at the Mumbai airport after returning from Bengaluru, Dipke maintained that CJP volunteers will proceed with the plan to protest at Jantar Mantar on Saturday.

"Shut down the entire country if you are so scared of the youth," Dipke said.

Thirty-eight trains, including Mail and Express, originating from various stations in other States and scheduled to arrive at New Delhi and Hazrat Nizamuddin stations between 4 am and 2 pm on October 10 have been cancelled, while train oper-

ations at other stations in Delhi will remain normal. Entry and exit gates at 57 Delhi Metro stations, including Rajiv Chowk, New Delhi Central Secretariat, Patel Chowk and Kashmere Gate, will remain closed from 9 pm on Friday till further notice due to security reasons ahead of the proposed protest.

Speaking at an event in Mumbai in the evening, Dipke said that the BJP-led Centre was afraid of Gen Z, and dared the Government to arrest him.

"I feel like laughing (at the government's move), Delhi is not a private property of Narendra Modi and Amit Shah. On one hand, you say protests lead to inconvenience. On the other hand, you have shut down the Metro (stations), railways and blocked roads. Will this not lead to inconvenience?" he asked.

Why security forces were being moved from Kashmir and Naxal-hit areas to Delhi, Dipke asked, adding, "Why is the government treating the youth like Pakistanis?"

If his arrest was the solution to the problems facing the country, the government should put him behind bars, he further said.

Targeting CEC Kumar, Dipke said he must face punishment for what he had done, and the SIR must be scrapped.

CJP leader Saurav Das compared the situation in the country to Emergency, claiming that party volunteers were being detained in BJP-ruled States and some had been put under house arrest.

PM seeks greater attention to adolescent girls' health

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday called for greater focus on the health, nutrition and overall development of adolescent girls and suggested developing age-appropriate modules for children on women's safety, dignity and empowerment.

Addressing a departmental summit on women and child development here, the prime minister also underlined the importance of preventive action through the convergence of efforts across various departments on the issue of women's safety.

He made the remarks while chairing the valedictory session of the two-day National Departmental Summit organised by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

The Summit, part of the series of departmental summits envisioned by the PM, brought together ministers and senior officials from States and Union Territories for



focused deliberations on nutrition and early childhood care, child protection, women's safety and empowerment, and strengthening delivery of services through greater convergence, according to a statement issued by his office.

He suggested that States could take this model further by organising similar chintan shivirs at the district level

and at municipal and metropolitan levels.

Modi also suggested dedicated chintan shivirs for Anganwadi Workers, enabling them to exchange experiences, innovations and practical solutions from the field. Emphasising the principle Jan Bhagidari, he said an Anganwadi centre should not function as an isolated institution; it must be a centre of community participation.

He said families living around Anganwadi centres could also be encouraged to contribute on special occasions by sharing nutritious food, toys and locally relevant items for children.

The PM also sought deeper engagement of universities and educational institutions with Anganwadi centres.

"Universities could adopt nearby Anganwadi centres and undertake social impact studies, creating opportunities for students to contribute while also generating useful insights for improving service delivery," he said.

Govt will fall if Opposition keeps up pressure: Rahul

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday said there is a "much deeper problem" than Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar and it requires termination of the current government.

This is something that is worth fighting for and dying for, he said.

The Chief Election Commissioner is only a service provider and he has gall to say he will not meet elected representatives of people, Gandhi said, lashing out at Kumar.

"If we continue to push the way we have in last three-four days, I guarantee this government will fall," the former Congress chief said.

"There is a much deeper problem than Gyanesh Kumar and it requires termination of this current government," the leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha said.

This is something that is worth fighting for and dying for, he said.

The Chief Election Commissioner is only a service provider and he has gall to say he will not meet elected representatives of people, Gandhi said, lashing out at Kumar.

NEET-UG leak: Panel seeks NTA accountability to Parliament

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A Parliamentary Standing Committee examining the role of the National Testing Agency (NTA) in the wake of NEET UG paper leak and cancellation Friday called for a legislative mechanism to ensure the agency's accountability to both Houses of Parliament.

NTA's role in the examinations conducted by the NTA was a matter of social justice and national integrity, the Parliamentary Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports, in its detailed report today said. "The education department may introduce appropriate Parliamentary framework that ensures accountability to Parliament."

The committee, while recognising NTA's past efforts at improvement, said the cancellation of NEET (UG) 2026 implies that further improvement is necessary.

The NTA on May 12 cancelled the NEET (UG) 2026



exam conducted on May 3 amid allegations of paper leak.

"Organised networks that profit from examination fraud are adaptive and resourceful, and will always seek the weakest link in the chain. The NTA therefore needs adequate staff, robust security protocols, clear accountability mechanisms, and digitalisation of operations and examinations to ensure that it stays ahead of any challenges," said the panel.

Among major reforms the panel suggested are conduct of examinations in the computer based test mode instead of pen and paper and also involvement of government owned and operated centres to hold entrance tests and reduction in reliance on private centres.

The committee further recommended broad basing of question banks and suggested that students who arrive later at exam centres be allowed to sit for the test after recording an undertaking.

The Committee notes that investment in question banks is the most viable defence against paper leaks in the long-run. The repeated use of the same question sets or the practice of having examiners set new question papers every year can be a risk to the integrity of the examination process.

Omar Abdullah bats for global capability centres in Jammu and Kashmir

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jammu

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday batted in support of setting up global capability centres (GCCs) in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

Omar was speaking while widely addressing a two-day J&K global capability centres summit 2026 organised by the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Jammu, in collaboration with the Jammu and Kashmir government and Nasscom as knowledge partner.

Recalling an interaction between former chief minis-

ter Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and Infosys founder NR Narayana Murthy at an investment event organised by NASCOM in Srinagar during 2002-2005, Omar said the latter had then linked investment in peace and stability in the region.

"Mufti Sahib, in his speech, told Narayan Murthy that now that you are here, please set up something like Infosys in J&K. And Narayan Murthy Sahib replied... you give me six days of peace and calm, and on the seventh day I'll come and invest," Omar said while addressing a workshop on GCCs virtually.

"Thankfully today, we don't

count our periods of calm in days, we don't count them in weeks, we don't even count them in months. I think it's safe to say that we count them in blocks of years," he said.

Omar said the success of creating a business-friendly environment should not be measured by the number of centres established immediately, but by the beginning of a sustainable investment journey.

Acknowledging the perception challenges facing Jammu and Kashmir, the CM said these were rooted in the region's past and not its present, adding that the government was making efforts



Chief Minister Omar Abdullah

to change the narrative about Jammu and Kashmir and investment.

He said J&K could learn from the experiences of other regions and use its late entry

into the GCC sector to its advantage. Drawing a parallel with the evolution of railway services in India, he said Jammu and Kashmir had entered the railway network

with the Vande Bharat trains, bypassing earlier stages of development. "Coming late to the party is disappointing, but it's not always disadvantageous. We can learn from the experiences of others. We don't have to reinvent the wheel. We just have to use it better," he said.

"I would be told, I wouldn't measure the success of this GCC workshop by suddenly having a hundred GCCs. We'd be quite happy to have one. One will lead to five, five will lead to 25, and the story will grow from there," he said.

Omar said Jammu and Kashmir wanted investors to choose the region on the

basis of its economic potential and business competitiveness rather than sympathy over its difficult past.

He said Jammu and Kashmir was not in a position to compete immediately with established IT hubs such as Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Chennai, but could explore opportunities to attract GCC investments in competition with tier-II and tier-III cities such as Jaipur, Pune, and Mohali.

He said the Union Territory had inherent advantages, including a network of reputed educational institutions that produce talented young people with a strong

academic foundation. Institutions such as IIT Jammu, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, the University of Jammu, the University of Kashmir, and the Islamic University of Science and Technology were producing talented youth, he said.

However, due to a lack of adequate opportunities, many of these young people were compelled to seek employment in the GCC sector outside Jammu and Kashmir, he added.

Omar said attracting GCCs could help create local employment opportunities and retain talent within the Union Territory.

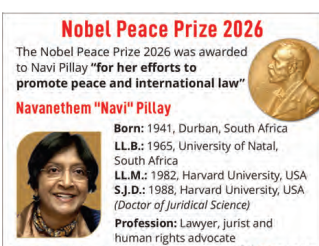
Indian origin Navi Pillay wins Nobel Peace Prize

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Oslo

South African jurist of Indian origin Navanethem "Navi" Pillay, a former UN human rights chief whose work helped shape international law, genocide and sexual violence, won the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize on Friday for her efforts to promote peace and international law.

The 85-year-old jurist, who grew up under apartheid and went on to hold senior positions in South Africa's judiciary and international legal institutions, dedicated the award to survivors of international crimes and those in particular to attacks on justice, saying their "compassion and courage continue to ensure that impunity will not be allowed to reign".

We are living through an era of international law and human rights are under significant political



Source: www.nobelprize.org

attack," Pillay said, pointing to the International Criminal Court (ICC). One of her most recent roles was chairing the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In September 2025,

the commission concluded that Israeli authorities and security forces had committed to commit genocide against Palestinians in Gaza.

The commission also concluded that Israeli President Isaac Herzog, Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu and then Defence Minister Yoav Gallant had incited genocide. Israel rejected the findings. The conclusions were those of an investigative body, not a final ruling by an international court. In separate remarks following the Nobel announcement, Pillay referred to the Gaza report as her most recent work, saying it had named what was happening there as genocide.

Pillay is also serving as a judge in a case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in which The Gambia has accused Myanmar of violating the Genocide Convention. She was selected by The Gambia to sit in the proceedings.

Pillay learnt of the Nobel award while attending a forum in Nuremberg, Germany, where Nazi leaders were tried after World War II. She said it was fitting that the announcement came while

she was in Courtroom 60, where the trials were held. Warning that efforts to weaken international criminal justice threatened to undo progress made since the Nuremberg trials, the jurist said on Friday: "The risk is retreating us to a world in which power rather than law determines whose suffering matters."

In a message to political leaders, Pillay said they had a legal obligation to protect human rights and refrain from war.

"My message to leaders, political leaders, is that you are under legal obligation," she said. "No matter what other obligation you have morally, you have a legal obligation to protect human rights and refrain from war."

Born in Durban on September 23, 1941, to Indian parents of Tamil descent, Pillay grew up in a poor family under apartheid.

West Bengal bypolls: BJP holds Nandigram, makes Rejinagar inroads

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kolkata

The BJP on Friday steamrolled its rivals in Nandigram and scored a surprise win in the bypolls, underlining its expanding political reach in West Bengal barely four months after ending TMC's 15-year rule, as a fragmented opposition struggled to mount a challenge in the ruling party's first electoral test.

The twin victories carried contrasting but politically significant messages: in Nandigram, the BJP consolidated its hold over a constituency central to Chief Minister Suvedu Adhikari's political rise; while in Rejinagar, it signalled its ability to expand beyond its traditional electoral base. Hasirani Rath, the BJP candidate in Nandigram and



mother of Adhikari's slain personal assistant Chandranath Rath, won by 1,27,573 votes, polling 1,66,427 against 41,674 for Congress nominee Milan Pradhan, backed by former chief minister Mamata Banerjee. CPI candidate Santi Gopal Giri finished third with 5,779 votes.

In Rejinagar, BJP's Shankardev Sarkar defeated Aam Janata Unnayan Party nominee Golam Nabi

Azad by 75,816 votes. Sarkar secured 1,29,914 votes against 54,098 for Azad, son of AJP founder Humayun Kabir. Congress nominee Abdulhaki Kafi polled 6,168 votes. In the bypolls, all India Trinamool Congress nominee Rabiul Alam Chowdhury got 3,847. The breakthrough Democratic Trinamool Congress candidate Saifuzzaman Saikh secured 2,044 votes, while the CPI(M) polled 3,797.



Editor's
TAKE

US Green-card freeze tests Indian IT yet again

Washington's suspension of green-card processing for eight companies, including TCS and Infosys, raises questions over due process and election-year politics

On Thursday, the Trump administration barred eight companies – Microsoft, Adobe, Cognizant, Infosys, TCS, Wipro, HCL and Capgemini – from the Permanent Labour Certification programme, PERM, the step most employers must clear before sponsoring a green card. The Labour Department will accept no new applications from them and process none already pending. Existing H-1B visas and approved petitions are untouched.

Washington's stated reason is fraud. A Labour Department inspector-general investigation, launched in July alongside the White House Fraud Task Force, alleges abuse of the H-1B and PERM systems. Yet, at the announcement, no charges had been disclosed against any of them, and no specific regulation was cited. A suspension is an accusation, not a verdict.

Politics is hard to miss. The announcement came under four weeks before the 3 November midterms, with Vice-President JD Vance telling Microsoft to hire American workers and pointing to its 6,000 layoffs in 2025. Crackdowns on foreign hiring play well with voters anxious about jobs, and outsourcing firms make convenient villains. The enforcement may be genuine; its timing is electoral, and its slogan of hiring Americans first suits a campaign season.

For Indian IT, the corporate damage is smaller than the headlines suggest. TCS says its PERM filings were in single digits over two years. Nasscom notes that few H-1B workers reach permanent residency this way. It stocks rose on Friday, helped by TCS's quarterly results. The Indian majors built their model on temporary visas and offshore delivery, not green cards. The real casualties are individual professionals: engineers mid-queue whose employers can no longer file, in a backlog already punishing for Indians. Approved certifications remain usable; the rest are stalled. Many will switch employers; some will come home.

A legal remedy exists. Section 656.31(b) of the Labour Department's regulations, the likely basis, lists it suspend PERM processing while an employer is under investigation for possible fraud, initially for up to 180 days, extendable while the inquiry continues. That presupposes a genuine investigation of each company. If the Department cannot show one, the firms could challenge the suspensions in federal court under the Administrative Procedure Act as arbitrary and unexplained. Some immigration lawyers expect exactly such litigation.

The way forward is threefold. First, localise: TCS plans 15,000 American hires over five years, and its peers should match it. Second, tighten compliance: the Cloudera case shows PERM recruitment must mirror ordinary hiring. Third, diversify – towards Europe, the Gulf and AI-led services – so no single Washington press conference can unsettle a \$315 billion industry. New Delhi should also press Nasscom's point that immigration and skilled-talent mobility are distinct issues. Indian IT has survived every visa scare by adapting. It will adapt again. But it should demand that evidence, not the election calendar, decides when this freeze ends.

India's ambitions hostage to geopolitics

US sanctions and escalating regional tensions have stalled India's ambitions for Iran's Chabahar port, a vital gateway to Afghanistan, Central Asia and beyond. Despite mounting obstacles, New Delhi is betting on strategic patience to keep its regional connectivity vision alive



PARUL CHANDRA

The peaks and troughs that have come to define the development of Iran's strategically located Chabahar port offer a stark reminder of how geopolitics can hamper major infrastructure projects. Vital for Iran, the port is also crucial for India, which views it as a strategic anchor for its own sub-regional connectivity efforts.

The Chabahar project, however, remains severely hobbled by an ever-shifting global landscape. Over the years, the port's development and operational use have been crippled by unilateral US sanctions stemming from long-drawn Washington-Tehran tensions.

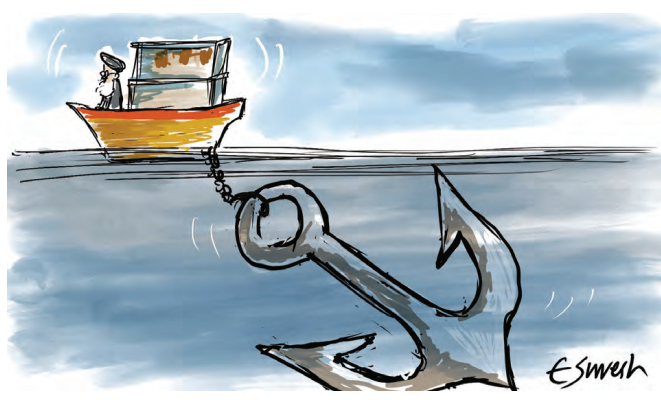
The recent completion of a key rail link between Chabahar and Iranshahr, part of the larger planned 630-km line extending to Zahedan near the Afghan border, should have given India cause for cheer. But use of this rail link by India will have to wait, with Chabahar under sanctions.

Construction of the Chabahar-Iranshahr-Zahedan rail link has also suffered from prolonged delays. But Iran now says the entire Chabahar-Zahedan rail link, designed to carry 7.7 million tonnes of freight and 2.2 million passengers annually, will be ready by January next year. Once operational, this rail link could be a game-changer for regional connectivity and commerce.

Chabahar and Iranshahr are key cities in its Sistan Baluchistan province, which shares long, porous borders with both Pakistan and Afghanistan, while Zahedan is its capital. Iran is also hopeful that the Chabahar connectivity project will bring economic prosperity to this underdeveloped province.

Yet, India's ability to utilise this infrastructure remains on hold. Amid Iran's ongoing conflict with the US and Israel, the Strait of Hormuz, which is so vital for global trade and commerce, has been under a blockade. First imposed by the Iranians after military strikes by the US and Israel, Washington also initiated a naval blockade in retaliation.

With the Strait of Hormuz becoming a choke point, Chabahar, Iran's only oceanic port located close to the Gulf of Oman and overlooking the Indian Ocean, can be an alternate trading gateway. For India, Chabahar port also offers an invaluable sea-land route to landlocked Afghanistan, Central Asian countries and even Europe, effectively bypassing its hostile neighbour Pakistan and giving it the much-needed access to countries in its extended neighbourhood and beyond.



CHABAHAR AND IRANSHAHR ARE KEY CITIES IN IRAN'S SISTAN-BALUCHISTAN PROVINCE, WHICH SHARES LONG, POROUS BORDERS WITH BOTH PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN, WHILE ZAHEDAN IS ITS CAPITAL. IRAN IS ALSO HOPEFUL THAT THE CHABAHAR CONNECTIVITY PROJECT WILL BRING ECONOMIC PROSPERITY TO THIS UNDERDEVELOPED PROVINCE

The writer is a policy analyst; writes on international issues

With the likelihood of Pakistan allowing transit rights to India in the foreseeable future being remote, Chabahar seems a viable alternative route to Afghanistan and beyond. The denial of transit rights by Pakistan found indirect mention by a senior Indian diplomat, who was recently in Islamabad to participate in the SCO coordinators' meet, where he stressed the need for regional connectivity.

To secure this strategic foothold, India has assisted Iran in developing the port's Shahid Beheshti terminal. However, the US sanctions have seriously impacted India's ambitions to use the Iranian port. The waiver India had obtained for using the port lapsed on April 26 this year. The Trump administration, which has been riding roughshod over Indian interests, threatening tariffs of up to 100 per cent for purchasing Russian oil being one such instance, did not grant a further extension to the waiver. India had used the previous waiver to good effect, providing humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan.

India, however, was forced to withdraw hastily from operating the Shahid Beheshti terminal in Chabahar for fear of inviting US sanctions.

This has been a huge setback for India's regional connectivity ambitions. Amid heightened US-Iran tensions, it's unlikely that a sanctions waiver will come again anytime soon. While Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, during his visit to India last month, pressed upon New Delhi to increase its investments in Chabahar and deepen economic ties with his country, US sanctions preclude any such

thing happening for now.

The ongoing sanctions on this strategic connectivity project are part of US strategy to apply maximum pressure on an adversary that has, over the decades, refused to be cowed down by Washington's air-twisting tactics.

Beyond trade access, Chabahar for India can serve as a strategic counterweight to Pakistan's Gwadar port, which is located just 140 km away and has been built with China's assistance. India has justifiable concerns about China actively using Gwadar as a military outpost.

In the long term, India also envisions Chabahar as the marlin anchor for its ambitious International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a multi-modal transport network to access regions beyond its extended neighbourhood, right up to St Petersburg in Russia and beyond.

Backed by India, Iran and Russia, the INSTC project, however, also remains a challenging one, given the geopolitical turmoil that is currently at play. The continuing Russia-Ukraine war and the consequent nosedive in Moscow's relations with European countries are further setbacks for this ambitious connectivity project.

Despite all these formidable obstacles, India has demonstrated strategic patience, maintaining its long-term investment in Chabahar in the hope that shifting geopolitical tides will eventually allow the project to realise its full potential. New Delhi is keeping its fingers crossed.

Daiv Vani

WISDOM FOR A MEANINGFUL LIFE

The Fear That Weighs on the Body

Fear rarely stays in the mind. It settles in the body, and we begin to feel it as weakness, tension and even pain.

Arjuna, the finest archer of his age, stood between two armies at Kurukshetra and suddenly could not fight. He tells Krishna that his limbs are failing, his mouth is dry, his body trembles, his skin is burning, and the great bow Gandiva is slipping from his hand. Nothing had struck him. No arrow had been shot.

Yet his fear of the war, and of what it would cost him, had taken over his body so completely that he could not stand. Krishna did not dismiss his suffering, and he did not hand him a new weapon. He asked him to give up this faltering of heart and rise. The strength was already there. It was the fear that was holding it down. Many of us know a quieter version of this. Someone recovers from an injury, completes the treatment and the exercises, and still carries the pain, because the fear of re-injury keeps the body braced. When that fear is finally recognised and released, healing often follows. Treatment prepares the ground, but the letting go has to happen within. The Upanishads put it simply: the mind alone is the cause of bondage and of liberation.

Today, name one fear that has been quietly weighing on you, do your practical part, and then consciously loosen your grip on it.

—DAIV

World Mental Health Day: Heard, but not yet helped



GRACY ANDREW

2ND OPINION

India's mental health conversation has never been louder. On World Mental Health Day, October 10, campaigns flood social media and webinars multiply. Yet in their absence of homes, people sit alone with a fear they cannot name, a guilt they cannot shake and a system they cannot navigate.

A spectrum nobody prepared you for

Young people can slide from struggling to drowning, and the line is invisible, least of all to those who love them. It may be a teenager who has stopped eating, a boy in full sleeves in summer hiding cuts, a young adult who hasn't left his room in three weeks, or a daughter hearing voices that aren't there. Whether anxiety, self-harm or schizophrenia, in India the story is shared: confused

parents, little support, and a society quick to blame.

The guilt in every home

Then comes guilt. Was it my parenting? Did I push too hard, or not enough? Our culture feeds that voice: treating mental illness as a failure of upbringing. Hear this: schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and clinical depression have strong neurobiological roots. Genetics and environment both matter: academic pressure, peer dynamics, fear of unemployment. A parent's love, however imperfect, did not cause this. Guilt immobilises.

When to worry

Take seriously mood, sleep or appetite changes and withdrawal lasting over two weeks, talk of hopelessness or being a burden, unexplained marks, severe self-neglect, disorganised speech, or hearing things others cannot. If your instinct says something is wrong, trust it. "She seems fine at school" proves little; home is often the only place a struggling child drops the mask.

That is trust, not manipulation.

"Just get help" is not advice

Thepeaks are listed at ₹200 to ₹8,000 a session with no quality filter, and a trained clinician is hard to tell from a weekend-certificate holder. In rural India, families rely on faith healers or silent endurance. A psychiatrist is a doctor who can diagnose and prescribe, essential for schizophrenia or bipolar disorder; a clinical psychologist offers

therapy and assessment, so look for Rehabilitation Council of India registration; counsellors suit milder difficulties only. Affordable help exists, such as ICAL, run by TISS. Ask providers about their qualifications.

The caregiver nobody sees

Who is finding help for the parent? Caregivers wake at 3 am, cancel meetings, smile through exhaustion and rebuild families, friendships and careers around a child's illness, most often mothers. Caregiver burnout is clinically documented. Caring for yourself is not a betrayal of your child: it is a prerequisite for caring. Support, whether therapy, peer groups or honest conversation, is treatment.

The awareness we need

This year's World Mental Health Day theme is "Lived Experiences: Heard, Real Voices, Real Change."

This piece is for the parent whose lived experience is rarely acknowledged. India needs trained professionals, regulated online care, services beyond the metros, schools that spot struggling students early, and workplaces that support caregivers. If you know a parent caring for someone with a mental health condition, call them. Sit with them. Ask how they are doing.

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PIC TALK



Devotees queue outside the Shri Badrinath Dham temple to offer prayers during the ongoing Chardham Yatra and Pitr Puja. PHOTO: PTI

Nana Patekar's unforgettable journey

This refers to the news article "From Darr to Dhandi, Nana Patekar's Unforgettable Film Legacy", published on October 9. Vishwanath, popularly known as Nana Patekar, is an iconic Indian actor, filmmaker and philanthropist who transformed Hindi and Marathi cinema through his intense, realistic performances. He stripped away of glamour and artifice, bringing a distinctive cadence, raw vulnerability and emotional depth to the screen.

Patekar made his debut with *Gaman* in 1978, followed by the Marathi film *Malicha Sakshidar* in 1986. His performance in Mira Nair's *Salaam Bombay!* (1988) earned widespread acclaim. He won the National Film Award for Best Actor for *Krantiveer* in 1994. He received three National Film Awards and several Filmfare Awards. The Union Government honoured him with the Padma Shri.

A soldier in the Territorial Army for 23 years, Patekar also participated in the 1999 Kargil War. *Parinda*, *Krantiveer* and *Agni Sakshi* remain among his landmark films. Beyond cinema, he donated a substantial portion of his earnings and award money to drought relief and rural welfare. He will be remembered for his contribution to Indian cinema's memorable dialogues and commitment to rural communities.

P VICTOR SELVARAJU | TAMIL NADU

Curbing unethical pharmaceutical marketing

The Supreme Court's direction to the Centre to constitute a committee on unethical pharmaceutical marketing is a timely intervention in the public interest. Pharmaceutical companies reportedly offer expensive gifts, hospitalised foreign trips to doctors, raising concerns about prescription independence. The committee should examine whether such inducements influence prescriptions and recommend legally enforceable safeguards.

The Uniform Code for Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices, 2024, needs stricter enforcement. The committee should recommend clear prohibitions, disclosure requirements, independent monitoring, penalties and an accessible complaints mechanism to ensure pharmaceutical companies are held accountable.

Unethical promotional spending may also increase medicine prices, adding to patients' financial burden. In *Apex Laboratories Pvt Ltd v Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax*, the Supreme Court expressed concern about freebies offered to doctors and their potential influence on prescriptions.

The government must establish transparent, enforceable and patient-centred rules. Commercial interests must never compromise the doctor-patient relationship or public health.

AC VINETHI KUMAR | KERALA

Making healthcare affordable for all

The wide variation in hospitalisation costs across States highlights a weakness in India's healthcare system, where access to treatment often depends on location and affordability. High private hospital charges can turn illness into a financial crisis for families.

The parliamentary panel's recommendation to cap essential treatment and diagnostic costs deserves serious consideration. Private hospitals should disclose standardised rates and provide itemised bills, while patients need accessible mechanisms to report overcharging. Strengthening public hospitals through better infrastructure, adequate staffing, essential medicines and diagnostic facilities is equally important. Regular assessments of waiting times and treatment quality can improve accountability. A national framework of minimum healthcare standards, allowing States flexibility to meet local needs, could help address regional disparities. Health insurance schemes must also be monitored to ensure inflated hospital charges do not undermine their benefits.

Affordable healthcare requires transparent pricing, stronger public institutions and accountable private providers. Reducing out-of-pocket expenditure must be a key measure of the effectiveness of India's healthcare system.

M BARATHI | BENGALURU

How red-tape witch-hunts loom over Ladakh and kill bold Governance

A women-owned cooperative has transformed traditional wool craftsmanship into a source of economic independence for hundreds of Ladakhi women. Yet procedural scrutiny surrounding its founding raises a larger question: should bureaucracy judge public initiatives by paperwork alone or by their impact on people's lives?



VK BAHUGUNA

The Centre for Resource Management and Environment has always been looking for innovative bureaucratic steps that bring happiness to people's faces and takes up such cases after proper research. Ladakh, the most beautiful border Union Territory, had long suffered from

neglect and gained political prominence after it was made a Union Territory in 2019 following the abrogation of Article 370. When IAS officer G Prasanna Ramaswamy noticed the windswept heights of Chumur in Leh in 2017, he noticed something that previous generations of bureaucrats had overlooked. Rural women in the harsh terrain of Changthang were quietly hand-knitting exquisite garments using raw Pashmina and yak wool, yet their generational craft earned them pennies while middlemen pocketed millions.

Alongside his wife, a researcher, he set out to change the status quo. What began as "Project Laksh" grew into Looms of Ladakh, a pioneering women-owned cooperative designed to shift value creation back to local artisans. Instead of celebrating a rare operational success story in a complex border region, hyper-procedural questions, administrative inquiries and conflict-of-interest allegations have cast a shadow over the initiative. This trajectory highlights a deeply troubling pattern in remote governance: minor procedural anomalies are weaponised to dismantle genuine grassroots progress, sending a chill through officers who dare to innovate.

Before administrative technicalities obscure reality, consider what this cooperative society of women, named Looms of Ladakh, has built and achieved on the ground. The cooperative expanded from an initial pilot of around 15 to 20 local women in 2017 to over 427 women members representing various Self-Help Groups (SHGs) across villages in Leh, Ladakh, and Kargil, including remote high-altitude regions such as Changthang. The membership comprises rural herder-artisans, homemakers and female dependants of ex-servicemen who previously lacked formal access to luxury-tier weaving and design markets.

The cooperative built grassroots economic ownership by bringing together under one roof employed rural women across remote Ladakhi villages, such as Chuchot and Changthang, training them in natural dyeing, modern weaving and garment production. Unlike traditional government-subsidised schemes that collapse as soon as funding runs dry, Looms of Ladakh was designed as a self-sustaining entity owned by the women artisans themselves, ensuring true financial autonomy. The cooperative used its own earnings to acquire land for its primary Leh hub, without relying on government donations or perpetual leases. Middlemen would not welcome their virtual elimination through this cooperative venture, standing high-end Pashmina, yak wool and camel fleece products under a unified brand ensured that higher-value market returns flowed directly to primary producers rather than regional traders.

Recognising its viable business model, major development institutions such as NABARD backed the cooperative to scale its impact. Let us discuss the impact it made. Before the cooperative was established, primary wool producers sold raw Pashmina and sheep and yak wool at low commodity rates, while finished-garment margins were captured by external traders. The average monthly earnings of individual women increased from a paltry ₹2,000 to ₹3,000 per month to an average of ₹12,000 to ₹15,000 for active traders. Intermediary margins were eliminated upfront, with 37.5 per cent of the sale price of each finished product going directly to the artisan. Further, the cooperative generates its own capital to acquire land and construct its own village-level decentralised processing studios.

What appears in the media about the conflict of interest concerns a marginal procedural matter, completely ignoring the innovative nature of the project. The alleged conflict of interest arising from the couple being co-founders is at the centre of the criticism, as the officer was Registrar (DC) during registration and his wife was a co-founder. Yet the cooperative operates under an elected board of local women artisans, with the officer having provided voluntary guidance during the setup before stepping aside. We need such hand-holding in



The writer is the former Principal Secretary to the Government of Tripura and Chairman of the Centre for Resource Management and Environment

THE AVERAGE MONTHLY EARNINGS OF INDIVIDUAL WOMEN INCREASED FROM A PALTRY ₹2,000 TO ₹3,000 PER MONTH TO AN AVERAGE OF ₹12,000 TO ₹15,000 FOR ACTIVE TRADERS. INTERMEDIARY MARGINS WERE ELIMINATED UPFRONT, WITH 37.5 PER CENT OF THE SALE PRICE OF EACH FINISHED PRODUCT GOING DIRECTLY TO THE ARTISAN. FURTHER, THE COOPERATIVE GENERATES ITS OWN CAPITAL TO ACQUIRE LAND AND CONSTRUCT ITS OWN VILLAGE-LEVEL DECENTRALISED PROCESSING STUDIOS

remote areas. A question has been raised regarding whether formal prior sanction for administrative sanctions were attached to the Initial Geographical Indication (GI) application for Ladakh Pashmina. The application was pursued only via the Ministry of Textiles and the Handloom Export Promotion Council, ultimately registering both the UT Industries Department and the artisan cooperative as co-proprietors. The cooperative has vehemently denied any irregularity, yet the matter has been referred to the Home Ministry.

The officer is an honest and capable IAS officer, and none of these inquiries involve missing funds, fake beneficiaries or land grabs. They revolve around whether papers were stamped in the precise sequence mandated by bureaucratic rules drafted decades ago. When administrative systems prioritise rulebook adherence over tangible social impact, the message to honest, driven officers is clear: do nothing, risk nothing. When an officer takes an active interest in grassroots development, procedural ambiguities are almost inevitable. In remote geographies such as Ladakh, waiting for formal sanction cycles can delay critical interventions for years. The activities of Looms of Ladakh were also praised by the Prime Minister in Mann Ki Baat. When a nation treats every procedural omission as corruption and every innovative model as a suspect conflict of interest, sometimes at the behest of middlemen who have been eliminated, officers retreat to the safest path of administration: signing files, pushing paper and avoiding bold reform. It must be remembered that the rule of law and procedural discipline matter, but procedure is meant to be a vehicle for public good, not a roadblock to prevent it.

If administrative inquiries choose to punish public servants and civil society partners for minor technical gaps while ignoring transformative, measurable results, society bears the ultimate cost. The hundreds of women artisans across Ladakh who now stand with dignity, earning independent incomes, are living proof of what happens when vision takes precedence over bureaucracy. It is time to reform how public initiatives are judged: evaluate officers by the real-world value they create for citizens, not just the perfection of their paperwork. But the voices of local artisans must be heard in the corridors of power in Leh.

"Earlier, we only knew how to spin raw yarn or weave crude items for household use. When government exhibitions ended, our income stopped. When we asked, 'What next after tailoring?' Project Laksh helped us create our own company so we don't have to rely on middlemen or seasonal handouts."

1. Artisan leader, during early transition meetings in Leh. "We are not just workers receiving wages; we are shareholder-owners of Looms of Ladakh. Being able to run our own enterprise board, manage quality checks and earn regular income right from our villages in Changthang has given us economic independence we never had before."
2. Lobzang Lamo, artisan and former CEO/design officer of the cooperative. "Before this cooperative was formed, local designer garments using our Pashmina were stitched outside Ladakh because we lacked high-count weaving and tailoring skills. Today, we handle the entire process from farm to fashion within our own studios."
3. Tsering Yondol, product officer, Changthang region. These voices must be heard and replicated elsewhere.

Non-duality as the core of religiosity



ACHARYA PRASHANT

On an American podcast, a host put a proposition to me. Religions, he said, are dualistic and separatist. So perhaps humanity must now evolve beyond religion altogether. The conclusion is backwards. We do not have to go beyond religion; we have to go beneath what has passed for religion, to its buried core. And at the core of every religious stream lies not division but the ending of division. At the core lies non-duality.

Consciousness, as we live it, is dualistic. At one end stands the ego, the "I". At the other stand its objects. Here, and there, and the world is there, I am the created, and that is my creator. The objects keep changing; the structure does not. At one end there is always the same claimant: me. Remove that claimant, and duality has nowhere to stand. That is non-duality. It is not even oneness, because oneness too can become an object of thought. The ego that earlier said, "God is separate from me," can learn to say, "Everything is one."

What has changed? The sentence, "I speak for myself." Dharma does not begin with belief in God. It begins with suffering. Suffering in the religious sense belongs to the ego. It is the unease of a centre that experiences itself as incomplete and so keeps reaching outward. Here the ego faces a peculiar difficulty. It is the sufferer, and it is also the one who must look at the suffering. Honest looking reduces suffering, but by reducing the sufferer. The ego senses the danger, so it looks everywhere except at itself. The ordinary man talks of distant things: the faraway market, the faraway future. We easily see that such talk is not religious. But the so-called religious man also talks of distant things; he has merely given them holy names. Whether I look towards the tavern or the temple, I am looking away from myself. Religion therefore has only one legitimate subject: the one living your life.

But merely turning inward is not enough. What happens when you look? Who am I? I am the child of immortality. I am Sachchidananda. The ego has merely swapped an ordinary identity for a magnificent one. Imagine a patient who opens a festering wound before a doctor and says, "Doctor, what you are seeing is not pus. It is the sacred flow of my inner purity." At a recent session, a young man told me that a teacher had taught him, "You are the witness. You are the Atman. You are Sachchidananda." I asked someone to poke his shoulder with a pen. The Atman has no shoulder; why did he flinch? Whatever is high, sacred and true is not flattering description of the ego. It is the name of the ego's absence.

The so-called religious man says, with some pride, "I seek Truth." What a durable identity! Truth, by definition, always remains beyond the next horizon. The seeker can remain a seeker for sixty years, and nothing forces that identity to break. The task is not to find truth somewhere. The task is to find falsehood here. The Veda is not a portrait of truth; it is a mirror.

If non-duality is the core, why does so much religion appear so dualistic? Religions are not conscious actors; the only doer in our world is the ego. So instead of asking why religions buried non-duality, ask why the ego would: because non-duality invalidates it. Popular religion leaves the ego where it is and hands it sacred objects. Harmless, therefore useless. The core can still be found. Few demonstrate this more beautifully than Baba Bulleh Shah. He was born a Sayyid, among the most prestigious Muslim lineages. Yet he took as his murshid Shah Inayat, an Arain of humbler social standing, and when his family came to drag him home, the story goes, he told them to forget their lineage and sit down as servants of his teacher.

Then comes the great movement of negation. "Na main momin vich maseetaan, na main vich kutar diyaan reetaan"; not the believer in the mosque, nor among the rites of unbelief. "Na main Moosa, na Pharaun"; neither Moses nor Pharaoh. He does not reject unbelief to become the perfect believer, or Pharaoh to acquire the exalted identity of Moses. Both poles are denied. The world traps us by presenting pairs and calling the selection between them freedom. The ego chooses either pole, because either pole gives it something to become. Indeed, the apparently higher pole can be the more dangerous one. Beautiful chains are harder to break than ugly ones.

Baba Bulleh Shah goes further: "Na main andar ved kitaabaan, na vich bhaangaan na sharaabaan"; not in the holy books, and not in hemp and wine. One man is proud of the knowledge he has accumulated; another is proud of the knowledge he has rejected. The bowls are different.

The teaching of both bowls is the same. And after all these negations, Baba Bulleh Shah refuses himself even a final positive definition, even the "shivoham" with which Adi Shankara closed his own negations. He returns, stanza after stanza, to "Bulla Ki jaana main kaun"; Bulla, what do I know of who I am? If I am not this and not that, what remains? Neti-neti is not rejection of life. It is love of freedom.

A bird that loves the sky does not sit in its cage composing poems about the sky while protecting the bars. It fights the bars until it bleeds its way free for the sky appears as opposition to the cage. Here is the real test of religion. Ask what happens to the ego. Does the teaching expose it or decorate it? If the ego emerges from religion more assured and more convinced of its specialness, religion has failed. The primitive ego has acquired unprecedented technological power.

The religious task of our age is not to assure man, "You are already divine," but to ask, "Who is the one so delighted to hear that?" We will have to go to non-duality, or not. Who is this "I" that wants happiness, God, Truth, immortality and finally liberation itself?

Look, seek what is false, and when it is seen, have the love to let it go. The world does not lack answers; it lacks mirrors.

On an American podcast, a host put a proposition to me. Religions, he said, are dualistic and separatist. So perhaps humanity must now evolve beyond religion altogether. The conclusion is backwards. We do not have to go beyond religion; we have to go beneath what has passed for religion, to its buried core. And at the core of every religious stream lies not division but the ending of division. At the core lies non-duality. Consciousness, as we live it, is dualistic. At one end stands the ego, the "I". At the other stand its objects. Here, and there, and the world is there, I am the created, and that is my creator. The objects keep changing; the structure does not. At one end there is always the same claimant: me. Remove that claimant, and duality has nowhere to stand. That is non-duality. It is not even oneness, because oneness too can become an object of thought. The ego that earlier said, "God is separate from me," can learn to say, "Everything is one."

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Acharya Prashant is a philosopher and author. His work focuses on self-inquiry and its application to contemporary life

Closing the protection gap: India's journey from health insurance to health security



BK JHA

With an alarming rise in double diseases, Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), India faces unique health-care challenges which require innovative solutions. In pursuance of the Universal Health Coverage goal, health insurance remains a major catalyst. Over the years, India has made significant progress in health insurance coverage. But the main challenge is to ensure that a medical emergency does not become a financial catastrophe for the family. It is promising to note that a transformation is underway.

The latest National Family Health Survey points to the scale of the transformation, with 60.2 per cent of households reporting coverage. This is an encouraging jump from 41 per cent, as per the previous survey. It is evident now that the expansion of Ayushman Bharat (ABPM-JAY), alongside state-sponsored schemes, has been a major growth driver.

Coverage is only the first test. The real test is financial protection. According to research by the Indian School of Business, there was a 35 per cent reduction in loan delinquency in districts where the scheme was implemented, with

increased liquidity for loan repayment emerging as an important mechanism. The study shows that if insurance absorbs a substantial part of that medical shock, household liquidity improves and the probability of financial distress falls. Health insurance, therefore, should no longer be seen simply as a healthcare instrument. It is also an economic resilience instrument. India's health-financing architecture, however, cannot be built around one model. As India's problem is unique, solutions need to be comprehensive of national assurance, state-level schemes, public healthcare and private insurance. At the national level, PM-JAY augurs well, while states can adopt financial protection to their own demographic and healthcare realities.

This is where Goa offers an instructive example of a universal health insurance model. Goa was among the states that recognised relatively early that universal access to healthcare required protection against the cost of treatment. The Goa Government, led by Chief Minister Dr Pramod Sawant, has now enhanced the protection under the state-run flagship health insurance scheme, Deen Dayal Swasthya Seva Yojana (DDSSY). Under the revised structure, families with three or fewer members will receive annual medical insurance coverage



of ₹4 lakh, up from ₹2.5 lakh. Families with four or more members will receive ₹6 lakh, compared with the earlier ₹4 lakh. This is more than a routine revision of insurance limits. The enormous increase in the cost of treatment, medical inflation and the growing burden of non-communicable diseases have altered the financial risks faced by households. The decision of Dr Pramod Sawant, therefore, reflects an important principle: health protection

must evolve with the cost of healthcare. Goa's advantage, however, is not DDSSY alone. The state's health-financing model increasingly rests on several layers: state insurance, AB-PMJAY, government healthcare facilities and publicly supported services.

It is evident that the layered approach can work well for a country as diverse as India. At the top, national schemes provide scale and portability, whereas individual state schemes can respond to local requirements. It is a fact that public hospitals provide the essential infrastructure, and private providers surely add capacity and specialised care.

The experience of smaller states demonstrates why this combination can work. Sikkim, Manipur and other smaller states offer similar lessons in the importance of per capita public investment. But Goa's experience is particularly relevant because it combines a state-funded insurance platform with national health assurance and a substantial public healthcare system.

The next challenge is to ensure that insurance protection does not stop at hospitalisation. The country is facing an alarming rise in NCDs such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, cancer and other chronic illnesses. These

diseases need continuous management rather than a one-time hospital intervention. Hence, the health insurance architecture needs to move to the next level, from hospitalisation cover to protection. Preventive healthcare must become a larger part of the equation. Dr Sawant's emphasis on preventive interventions in Goa is relevant in this context.

The national system also needs better integration. The insurer and the beneficiaries should not face any bureaucratic hurdles. Especially, beneficiaries should not have to understand the differences between a Cigna scheme, a state scheme and private insurance. Now, digital health infrastructure can make eligibility, portability, claims and treatment records more seamless.

It is important to note that nearly four out of ten households still remain outside reported health insurance coverage. And coverage itself says little about whether a family can afford the treatment it needs. India's next target should be adequate, accessible and usable health protection. India has made the transition from limited insurance penetration towards mass coverage. The next transition must be comprehensive health insurance coverage to comprehensive protection.

The writer is a senior journalist and columnist with over three decades of experience. He writes extensively on rural affairs, agriculture, economic issues, healthcare and public policy, with a particular focus on developments impacting the grassroots economy and rural communities

Ratan Tata gave Northeast dignity through healthcare, says Himanta

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Guwahati

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday said that Ratan Tata gave the Northeast dignity through healthcare and ambition through industry. On the industrialist's death anniversary, Sarma said that when cancer claimed thousands of lives in Assam every year, Ratan Tata, through Tata Trusts, helped map 17 hospitals across the state and turned the Assam Cancer Care Foundation from an "idea to a lifeline".

He also reposed the same trust by setting up the Tata Semiconductor Facility at Jajiroad, which will become operational by end of this year, and the township around the area has been named Ratan Tata Electronics City, Sarma said.

Today, on the occasion of Ratan Tata's 'punyatiiti', I remember not just an industrialist, but a friend who chose Assam as few outsiders ever have," he said in a social media post.

"I still recall his visits to our



Ratan Tata with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and CM Himanta Biswa Sarma in April 2022 during launch of Tata Trusts' Cancer Centre launch in Dibrugarh, Assam

state — warm, unhurried, always asking what more could be done for our people, not what more could be built for his company," he said.

When cancer was silently claiming thousands of lives every year, "he did not send a cheque and walk away; he sat with us, mapped 17 hospitals across the state, took Assam Cancer Care Foundation from an idea to a lifeline".

Sarma said that Ratan Tata once told him that his last years were to healthcare, and "Assam became the State where that promise lived".

"That same trust is why, when we spoke of Assam becoming a technology hub, he did not doubt it for a moment," he said. Sarma said that by the end of this year, when the Tata semiconductor facility at Jajiroad

Saraswati Cycle Yojana bridges distance for Chhattisgarh girls



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

For girls in Chhattisgarh's rural, tribal and remote areas, getting to school often meant long walks under challenging terrain and weather conditions. Under the Saraswati Cycle Yojana, this challenge has been removed for more than 330 lakh girls over the past two years. For many, the bicycles they received under the scheme let them keep attending school.

The scheme covers Class 9 students from Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and BPL (Below Poverty Line) backgrounds in Government and aided schools, with the

simple goal of easing their commute to school. Many girls were walking 3 to 5 kilometres a day, sometimes more, to reach class.

Bicycles make a significant difference when distances are long and public transport is limited.

At the Government Girls' Higher Secondary School in Sarangarh, 150 students received cycles. Among them is Chhoti Yadav, who used to walk three kilometres from her village, through summer heat and monsoon mud to reach class. With a cycle, both her travel time and effort have dropped. In nearby Basinbaha, students like Aakanksha Ratte and hostel resident Diksha Sidar



have also found their commute easier. For families who cannot easily afford a bicycle, the scheme makes a practical difference to a girl's ability to attend school regularly.

The scheme is not limited to the plains. In Dantewada, once a Naxal-affected district, 56 girls at Kanva Higher School Porta Cabin Chitaur received cycles this session. In Balod's Gundarabdi block, 32 students at Government Higher Secondary School Achaul also received cycles. At Jawanga's Education City Auditorium in Dantewada, 256 Class 9 students from nearby schools were given free cycles during the School Admission Festival.

In Surguja, 120 students of Government Girls' Higher Secondary School, Balarampur received cycles. In Raipur, a student from Obani village who once walked four kilometres to school each day, the cycle meant reaching class on time, even during the monsoon.

Access to school is a basic need in girls' education, especially where transport is limited, and distance often keeps girls from attending regularly. The Saraswati Cycle Yojana is helping address that challenge. For many girls, the journey to school now begins not with a long walk, but with a bicycle that helps bridge the distance to the classroom.

Lt Gen Sandeep Jain felicitates winners at Indian Army's terrier cyber quest 3.0

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Indian Army's Terrier Cyber Quest 3.0, organised by the Territorial Army in collaboration with CyberPeace, concluded in New Delhi after attracting more than 8,200 teams from over 2,500 institutions across the country.

The national cybersecurity and artificial intelligence (AI) challenge, administered by the Conclave and Prize Distribution Ceremony, followed by an interaction between the winners and Lieutenant General Sandeep Jain, AVSM, SM, Vice Chief of the Army Staff (VCOAS).

Of the more than 8,200 teams that participated, only

47 teams advanced to the final, highlighting the competitive nature of the national-level challenge. The event brought together talent from academia, industry, research institutions, Government and the Armed Forces to address emerging digital threats and technology-driven national security challenges.

The 2026 edition featured 38 tracks; Bug Hunting, AI Kavach and the Creators Challenge. Bug Hunting attracted more than 7,000 registrations and recorded 6,471 entries in its online Capture-the-Flag (CTF) qualifier, with 19 teams progressing to the final. AI Kavach, focused on predictive threat intelligence, automated defence and

anomaly detection, received more than 800 registrations and selected 16 finalists.

The Creators Challenge, which focused on awareness campaigns against deepfakes, phishing, online scams and misinformation, attracted more than 200 registrations and sent 12 teams to the final. The track also aligned with the theme of Cybersecurity awareness month.

The Bug Hunting finale was conducted over 36 hours, from October 5 to 7, in a simulated national-infrastructure sandbox. Shortlisted teams identified and documented vulnerabilities, and an expert jury evaluated their submissions based on severity, originality, and complexity.



Participation spanned several leading educational and defence institutions, including IIT Madras, IIT Kharagpur, IIT Kanpur, the

National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU), Rashtriya Raksha University, Army Institute of Technology, MCTE Mohw, VIT, Chandigarh

University, SRM University, Amrita University, the University of Delhi and Army Public Schools. Industry teams from TCS, Infosys, Accenture, HCLTech and Wipro also participated.

In the Bug Hunting track, NFSU received the most entries with 120, followed by Chennai Institute of Technology with 88, Chandigarh University with 79, Rashtriya Raksha University with 70, and SRM University with 59. In AI Kavach, VIT led with 23 entries, followed by the Army Institute of Technology Pune with 22. IIT Madras received 21 entries, while IIT Kharagpur and Rashtriya Raksha University received 20 entries each.

On October 8, participants vied for key establishments before assembling at the United Services Institution (USI) for the Conclave and Prize Distribution Ceremony. Lieutenant General Sandeep Jain, AVSM, SM, Vice Chief of the Army Staff, and Siddhar Vembu, Chief Scientist and Co-founder of Zoho Corporation, felicitated the winners. Lt Gen Jain also congratulated the winning teams for their performance.

Now in its third edition, Terrier Cyber Quest has expanded its scope beyond conventional cybersecurity to include AI-driven threat detection and digital-awareness storytelling. The initiative reflects the Indian Army's continued efforts to bring together academia, industry, Government and the Armed Forces to address challenges in India's evolving cyber and defence landscape.

Samadhan Abhiyan marks 10 Years, vows child safety push

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Samadhan Abhiyan working on child safety and prevention of child sexual abuse, completed its 10-year journey. Its Annual Day 2026 was organised at the Press Club of India, New Delhi.

The organisation shared its decade-long achievements, grassroots work and future priorities.

It noted that while many know the term 'POCSO', few understand its provisions, and sensitizing parents, and legal representatives is more crucial than children alone. Founder Archana Agnihotri said lack of information is the biggest barrier to child safety.

Dr. chairman Om Prakash Vyas appreciated the efforts and stressed continuous awareness.

Dignitaries including DCW Chairperson Lata Gupta, MLA Shikha Rai, DPCR Members Swati Gupta, Kundan Kanskar, and Major General Dr Atul Bajpai attended.

First-ever NCC launches all-girls paramotor training course in Guwahati

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Guwahati

In a historic first for the National Cadet Corps (NCC), the first-ever NCC All Girls Basic Paramotor Training Course has commenced at the NIMAS Paramotor Node, Guwahati, under the aegis of NCC Directorate North Eastern Region (NER) and HDG NCC, New Delhi.

The pioneering course brings together 30 Senior Wing (SW) girl cadets from four states, Karnataka, Telangana, Assam, and Nagaland, embodying the true spirit of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat.

The initiative marks a significant milestone in NCC's adventure training curriculum and its commitment to Nari Shakti and Yuva Shakti.

The course provides cadets with specialised training in paramotoring, an adventure aere-sport that demands high levels of discipline, physical fitness, mental resilience, and courage. Starting with rigorous ground training, equipment familiarisation, and safety drills, cadets progressively advance to powered flight operations.



orous ground training, equipment familiarisation, and safety drills, cadets progressively advance to powered flight operations.

More than just learning to fly, the training instils core values of leadership, teamwork, decision-making, and overcoming fear. Each sortie pushes cadets beyond their comfort zones, turning apprehension into confidence.

The recognition came during the India Research and Impact Summit (IRIS) 2026 in the national capital, which brought together policymakers, university leaders, researchers and industry representatives to examine the future of India's research ecosystem.

With every flight, the cadets are proving that the sky is not a limit, but a new frontier to be explored. The course stands as a powerful testament to the NCC motto of Unity and Discipline and will pave the way for greater participation of girl cadets in adventure activities.

CEA pitches for MSME-specific approach to NPA classification norms

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran on Friday argued that the Reserve Bank should revisit Non-Performing Asset (NPA) classification norms for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), saying the rules should reflect domestic business practices and cash flow patterns rather than follow a globally uniform framework.

From a policy perspective, Nageswaran said the Finance Ministry has been advocating a review of the norms, highlighting that MSMEs across sectors have different working capital requirements and cash flow cycles.

Under the existing framework, loan accounts are classified as Special Mention Accounts (SMA) based on the period of overdue payments, with categories corresponding to 30 days, 60 days and 90 days. An account is generally classified as a non-performing asset if interest or principal remains overdue



Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran

for more than 90 days.

The Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) said the transition to SMA classification itself can have significant consequences for borrowers, with businesses potentially facing difficulties even before their accounts are formally classified as NPAs.

"The moment you are classified as SMA, then you almost end up becoming already de facto, if not de jure," he said at the 21st National Conference of Inclusive Growth organised by Sa-Dhan here.

"It is better aligned with India's business practices and MSMEs' cash flow patterns,

HISENSE UNVEILS ITS FLAGSHIP MINILED TELEVISION

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Hisense unveiled its flagship UR88 MiniLED television at Vardhaman Electronics, a leading electronics retailer in New Delhi, during its premium presence in India.

Pankaj Rana, CEO, Hisense India; TV Host and actor Shefali Baggia; and Manoj Jain, Director, Vardhaman Electronics, attended the launch.

Rana said Gurugram's young professionals and digitally savvy households are driving demand for larger screens and advanced display technology. Jain said the retailer was pleased to bring Hisense's latest innovation to local consumers.

Two Amrita professors win top honours at Research Awards 2026

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Professors Prema P Nedungadi and Rangasamy Jayakumar of Amrita University have earned the title of India's outstanding researchers at the Faculty Research Awards 2026.

Nedungadi, Associate Dean, School of Computing and UNESCO Chairholder on persons with disabilities, Jayakumar, Professor at the Amrita School of Nanosciences and Molecular Medicine, Kochi, received the honour in the Chemistry domain for research on polymeric biomaterials and their applications in healthcare, particularly in drug delivery, haemostasis, tissue engineering, regenerative medicine and



persons with disabilities.

Jayakumar, Professor at the Amrita School of Nanosciences and Molecular Medicine, Kochi, received the honour in the Chemistry domain for research on polymeric biomaterials and their applications in healthcare, particularly in drug delivery, haemostasis, tissue engineering, regenerative medicine and

ound healing to address complex clinical needs.

The recognition came during the India Research and Impact Summit (IRIS) 2026 in the national capital, which brought together policymakers, university leaders, researchers and industry representatives to examine the future of India's research ecosystem.

CIABC questions Karnataka's AIB tax model, counters BAI revenue claims

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bengaluru

CIABC, the industry association representing domestic Indian-made liquor companies, on Thursday questioned the effectiveness of Karnataka's Alcohol-in-Beverage (AIB) taxation regime and the preferential treatment given to the 'beer' category.

The Confederation of Indian Alcohol Beverage Companies (CIABC) countered claims made by the Brewers Association of India (BAI) that the new tax structure has boosted state revenues and encouraged consumption of milder alcoholic beverages.

Citing state Government data for July-September 2026, CIABC said there is a "clear

divergence" between volume growth and revenue contribution across Indian-made liquor (IML) and beer.

IML sales rose marginally to 171.69 lakh cases (9 litres each) from 169.12 lakh cases a year ago, a volume growth of 1.52 per cent. Despite this near-flat volume performance, IML revenue rose 13.36 per cent, or ₹1,064.52 crore, to ₹9,033.21 crore from ₹7,968.69 crore.

Beer sales jumped 49.69 per cent to 126.68 lakh cases from 84.63 lakh cases. Beer revenue rose 22.85 per cent, or ₹1,852 per cent, to ₹1,463.07 crore from ₹1,234.50 crore. "The contrast becomes even clearer when the incremental revenue is examined," said CIABC as Karnataka revenue growth continues to be driven by IML.

Centre seeks fishers' views on sustainable fisheries plan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

India's efforts to develop the National Plan of Action for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries (NPOA-SSF) have entered a crucial phase, with the Central Government spearheading large-scale community consultations across the coastal states and Union Territories to conduct their own state-level consultations and consolidate fishers' views to frame the plan.

The Union Department of Fisheries is leading the consultation process, with the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO) facilitating and coordinating the exercise.

In a letter, the Department of Fisheries asked the fisheries departments of the coastal states and UTs to designate a nodal officer or team, organ-



ise stakeholder consultations this month, and share feedback with the National Task Force drafting the NPOA-SSF.

Over 20 one-day consultations are scheduled across the eastern and western coasts and the island territories.

Termining the exercise central to the framework, Union Fisheries Secretary Dr Abhikshi Likhi said, "These consultations are not a formality to be completed before the plan is drafted. They are where the plan is written." "This is intended to ensure that the proposed NPOA reflects the concerns and priorities of fishing communities at the grass-roots level," he added.

Experts stress on breaking stigma, open conversations and community participation for mental health

Healthcare professionals call for holistic wellness, early support and stronger community engagement at 'Illness to Wellness' Conference



Mr. Anil Rajput,
Chairperson, Advisory Council,
Illness to Wellness Foundation



(Padma Shri) Prof. (Dr.) Sanjeev Bagal,
Founder & Director, Zenre and Chairman,
Nephron Clinic



Mr. Rajesh Bhushan,
Former Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family
Welfare, Government of India



Prof. (Dr.) Rajinder K. Dhamija,
Director, Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied
Sciences (IHBAS), Government of NCT of Delhi

Ahead of World Mental Health Day 2026, the Illness to Wellness Foundation organised a conference in New Delhi under the theme "Mind Matters: Nurturing & Strengthening Mental Health and Wellness", bringing together leading mental health experts, healthcare professionals, policymakers and other stakeholders to highlight the need for open conversations, stigma reduction, early intervention and community participation in mental health. The conference focused on making mental wellness a broader public health priority through preventive approaches, accessible support systems, healthier lifestyles and greater participation from families, workplaces, educational institutions and communities.

Prof. (Dr.) Rajinder K. Dhamija, Director, Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences (IHBAS), Government of NCT of Delhi, highlighted the need to address stigma and encourage people to seek help. He said, "There is still considerable stigma around mental health, and we need to create an environment where people can come forward and say that they have a problem and need professional help. Mental health cannot be addressed only through clinical and curative medicine; prevention and wellness are equally important. While policies can provide a framework, their implementation requires societal involvement, with families, institutions and communities working together to reduce stigma, improve awareness and encourage people to seek timely support."

Stressing the importance of taking mental health services closer to communities, Mr. Rajesh Bhushan, Former Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, said, "Mental health matters in families, schools, colleges and workplaces. We must remember that India does not reside only in metropolitan cities; we also need to expand access in tier 2 and tier 3 cities and rural areas. The government is strengthening this through initiatives such as Tele-MANAS and by involving frontline health workers such as ASHAs and ANMs in early identification and referral. We also need more people who can provide basic counselling and psychosocial support, so that anyone who needs to talk, share their stress or seek help has access to support. None of this can succeed without the support of the community."

In his address, Mr. Anil Rajput, Chairperson, Advisory Council, Illness to Wellness Foundation, underlined the importance of conversations and supportive environments in addressing mental health. He said, "Mental strength does not mean that we never experience mental stress, fear, doubt or distress; it means having the wisdom, support and resilience to work through them and begin again. We need families where people can speak about their emotional struggles without fear of judgement, and workplaces where wellbeing is recognised as an essential part of a healthy environment. Above all, we need to remove the stigma surrounding mental health and make seeking help as normal as seeking care for a physical health problem. Sometimes, prevention begins with something as simple as a conversation someone asking, 'Are you alright?' and being willing to listen without judgement."

(Padma Shri) Prof. (Dr.) Sanjeev Bagal, Founder



L to R: Ms. Deeksha Malik, Assistant Vice President — Lean Digital Transformation, Genpact; Mr. Ajay Mishra, Global Tech Sales Lead, Accenture Technologies; Dr. Priyanka Tiwari, Professor and Head, Department of Applied Psychology, Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies; Ms. Mansha Bhardwaj, Senior Nutritionist & Metabolic Consultant, Zenre Wellness and Dr. Shamsher Divadeve, Senior Consultant, Department of Neurosciences, Apollo Hospital



L to R: Ms. Kaustubhi Shukla, Clinical Psychologist, PSRI Hospital; Ms. Anita Bokepal, Faculty, Art of Living Corporate Programs; Ms. Nehal Gupta, Clinical Psychologist Consultant, Zenre Wellness; Prof. (Dr.) Rajesh Sagar, Department of Psychiatry, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi; Dr. Renu Gulati, Professor, Department of Applied Psychology, Manav Rachna International Institute of Research & Studies; Dr. Deeksha Kalra, Associate Consultant — Psychiatry, Department of Mental Health & Behavioural Sciences, Artemis Hospital, Gurugram and Dr. Shobha Sharma, Founder & Director, The PsychMind



Anandpeethadishwar Acharya
Mahamandaleswar Shree Swami
Balkanand Giri Ji Maharaj,
Taponidhi Panchayati Shri Anand Akhara

“CONTROLLING OUR SENSES IS ESSENTIAL TO MAINTAINING A CLEAR AND BALANCED MIND. WHEN THE SENSES ARE DISCIPLINED, THE MIND BECOMES CALMER, MORE FOCUSED AND BETTER EQUIPPED TO DEAL WITH THE CHALLENGES OF LIFE”

& Director, Zenre and Chairman, Nephron Clinic, emphasised the need for a holistic approach to mental wellness and early intervention. He said, "We need to look at the mind as part of the whole body rather than focusing only on physical symptoms. Mental health conditions continue to be associated with shame, isolation and stigma, preventing many people from seeking timely help. Mental wellness therefore requires a holistic approach that includes movement, nutrition, sleep, stress reduction and social connection, alongside

early diagnosis and intervention."

The conference featured two sessions addressing complementary dimensions of mental health and wellness. The first session, "Healthy Minds, Healthy Institutions: Workplace, Educational & Community Well-being," moderated by Ms. Mansha Bhardwaj, Senior Nutritionist & Metabolic Consultant, Zenre Wellness, brought together Dr. Shamsher Divadeve, Senior Consultant, Department of Neurosciences, Apollo Hospital; Dr. Priyanka Tiwari, Professor and Head, Department of

Applied Psychology, Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies; Mr. Ajay Mishra, Global Tech Sales Lead, Accenture Technologies; Ms. Deeksha Malik, Assistant Vice President — Lean Digital Transformation, Genpact.

The discussion focused on the rising burden of stress, anxiety, burnout and emotional pressures among students and employees, the need for supportive, inclusive and psychologically safe workplaces and educational institutions, promoting healthy routines and work-life balance, strengthening early identification, counselling, referral and support systems, addressing digital stress and excessive screen use, and building community participation and partnerships to foster sustainable mental well-being.

The second session, "Breaking the Silence: A Holistic Approach to Rethinking Mental Health & Redefining Wellness," moderated by Ms. Nehal Gupta, Clinical Psychologist Consultant, Zenre Wellness, featured Prof. (Dr.) Rajesh Sagar, Department of Psychiatry, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi; Dr. Renu Gulati, Professor, Department of Applied Psychology, Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies; Ms. Kaustubhi Shukla, Clinical Psychologist, PSRI Hospital; Dr. Deeksha Kalra, Associate Consultant - Psychiatry, Department of Mental Health and Behavioural Sciences, Artemis Hospital, Gurugram; Dr. Shobha Sharma, Founder and Director, The

PsychMind and Ms. Anita Bokepal, Faculty, Art of Living Corporate Programs.

The session explored the need to break the stigma around mental health and encourage open conversations, while highlighting emotional balance, resilience, self-awareness and purpose; the mind-body connection through healthy behaviours, nutrition, sleep and physical activity; and the role of meditation, mindfulness, yoga and breathing practices in supporting inner well-being. It also examined how traditional wisdom can be integrated with contemporary approaches to nurture balanced, holistic and sustainable mental wellness.

Concluding the conference, Anandpeethadishwar Acharya Mahamandaleswar Shree Swami Balkanand Giri Ji Maharaj, Taponidhi Panchayati Shri Anand Akhara, emphasized the importance of inner discipline in maintaining mental well-being. He said, "Controlling our senses is essential to maintaining a clear and balanced mind. When the senses are disciplined, the mind becomes calmer, more focused and better equipped to deal with the challenges of life. By cultivating self-awareness and inner discipline, we can create greater balance within ourselves and strengthen our mental well-being."

The conference concluded with a shared call for greater awareness, open conversations and collective action to make mental health and wellness an integral part of healthier individuals, families and communities.



West Indies beat India by 6 wickets in second T20I

TAPAN MOHANTA ■ Ranchi

Skipper Shai Hope's unbeaten 120, an ensemble of genius and power, helped the West Indies gatecrash India's party with a stunning six-wicket win in the second T20I here on Friday.

The five-match series is now level at 1-1 after the Windies pulled off the highest T20I chase against India, which was also the overall second highest chase in the format.

Set a record 250-run target, West Indies rode on Hope's knock, which came off 45 balls (64x, 9x6), to reach home.

There was substantial support for the Bajan cricketer from Sheraz Ahmed (84, 37x, 7x4, 5x6) and Romario Shephard (34, 3x6) as WI overhauled the target in 18.3 overs.

For India, Sanju Samson roared back to form with a blistering 82 before Shreyas Iyer and Tilak Varma's rapid knocks powered them to 249/5.

The Windies' chase did not start on a bright note as Mayank Yadav clocked 140-plus regularly



West Indies' captain Shai Hope plays a shot during the second T20I cricket match of a series between India and West Indies in Ranchi on Friday

to strike twice in successive deliveries, removing Kamli Pooran and Shimron Hetmyer.

But Hope and Rutherford tore into India's spin attack, which struggled to grip the ball under heavy dew.

Hope, who struck back-to-back centuries in the preceding ODI series before scoring a fifty in the first T20I, continued his rich vein of form with a 24-ball half-century.

He capped the chase by launching Axar Patel over the ropes for his second T20I century.

Rutherford matched Hope's aggression with a 24-ball fifty, as the pair added 120 runs in just 34 balls to revive the chase.

Hope, who struck back-to-back centuries in the preceding ODI series before scoring a fifty in the first T20I, continued his rich vein of form with a 24-ball half-century.

Hope and Rutherford clearing the ropes with ease.

Shepherd then provided the late flourish, as West Indies plundered 41 runs across the 17th and 18th overs to seal the victory.

Earlier, after four straight low scores, Samson smashed a 21-ball fifty, his ninth in T20Is, to set the tone for Indian innings in an entertaining 97-run partnership (43x) with Ishan Kishan.

It eventually led the hosts to their highest-ever T20I total against the West Indies.

The duo powered India to 139/1 in 11 overs at a run-rate of over 12, with Kishan contributing a 22-ball 43.

However, off-spinner Roston Chase, returning to the attack in the middle overs broke the stand, with two wickets in successive overs.

Kishan and Shivam Dube (7) were bowled while attempting to play across the line. The move to promote Dube to No. 4 failed as he struggled to get going and fell after consuming 10 balls.

Samson's thrilling knock ended in the 15th over, with his ramp shot

over deep backward point going straight to Kamli Pooran.

India lost three wickets for 23 runs in the middle overs but skipper Shreyas Iyer, fresh from his maiden T20I century at Lucknow, carried his form into this match.

Iyer counter-attacked with effortless shots in his 18-ball 40, while Tilak remained unbeaten on 44 (18x).

Tilak also crossed 5,000 T20 runs and kept the pressure on the West Indies with crisp, well-placed boundaries in their 83-run partnership that came off just 32 balls.

India followed the same template with Abhishek Sharma getting into his zone early. He changed at everything as the hosts raced forward to over 10 runs an over after being asked to bat.

There was hardly anything in the pitch for bowlers, and Abhishek hammered spinner Akeal Hosein for a six after holding back for the first five balls.

Samson began unconvincingly with a series of misused shots, and was lucky to survive on six when Pooran failed to hold on to a chance at cover off Hosein. (PTI)

Coach backs Indian women's football team after Russia defeat



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kolkata

Indian women's football team head coach Crispin Chettri backed his young side to continue its development after the Blue Tigresses' lost to Russia in an international friendly.

India went down 0-4 to Russia in the first of two international friendly matches here on Thursday.

Despite the result, Chettri was pleased with the character shown by his players, particularly during the opening stages, and stressed the importance of taking the learning forward as India build towards their long-term goals.

"I think the positive of this match is, although being a young side, we showed character. We are not scared to run. We try to do things which are in our control," Chettri said during the post-match press conference on Thursday.

The Blue Tigresses head coach also highlighted the commitment shown by the players during the team's 25-day camp, pointing to their efforts in dealing with Russia's physical presence and set-pieces.

"The most important thing is we showed character, we didn't give up. So that's the best thing for me," he added.

Archery compound chief coach, who guided India to Olympic quota, still awaits salary

TAPAN MOHANTA ■ Ranchi

India's compound archers made history at the Asian Games by becoming the first nation to secure an Olympic quota in the discipline, but the foreign coach who guided them to the milestone is still waiting for his salary more than five months after taking charge.

American Dave Cousins, appointed as India's chief compound coach in May, is learnt to have "threatened to quit and leave the country" if his pending dues are not cleared.

However, Archery Association of India treasurer Dr Joris Paulose Ummecheril



and a Sports Authority of India official said the payment was delayed due to a "technical issue", which has since been "resolved", and the dues would be "cleared within a couple of days".

Cousins helped India win three gold and one bronze medal at the Asian Games, contributing to the country's historic haul of five gold, two silver and two bronze across recurve and compound archery.

"He has spoken to some officials and said if the dues are not cleared he's leaving home. He's really unhappy with the way he's been treated for three months... he's not been paid so far," the sources claimed.

Meanwhile, the federation is in talks with South Korean Park Chae-soon to take charge of India's recurve programme ahead of LA 2028, with the multiple Olympic gold-winning coach expected to join by December. (PTI)

My focus is now on LA Olympics gold: Aman Sherawat

SUMAN RAY ■ New Delhi

Asian Games gold medalist Aman Sherawat believes he can actually pull off something that no other Indian wrestler has ever achieved – winning a wrestling gold in the Olympics at Los Angeles in 2028.

"I am not thinking about just a medal anymore. My hope is only on gold. I believe that I will win gold for my country in LA Olympics. My bout in the Asian Games final was against the world champion. I defeated him. Now I have full hope that I can do it (get a gold in Olympics)," Aman told PTI in an exclusive interview here on Friday. "I am getting so much confidence from the people of the country. So, I will definitely try my best to bring the gold. Everyone is telling me that in the Asian Games, we knew it was yours. But now we expect you to bring gold in the Olympics. We have full hope from you. That's why you can do it," he said.



Aman pointed out that it was difficult to win a medal in a highly competitive 57kg weight category and to maintain that weight for a long time.

"In this weight, it is not a big deal to come first. It is a big deal to stay in that weight. If you are overweight, you can stay there for many years. But here, there is so much competition," he noted.

The 2024 Paris Olympics bronze medalist felt that it was

now realistically possible for him to dream for a gold in the LA Olympics.

India has won a silver and four bronze medals in men's category and a bronze in women's wrestling in Olympics' history and gold still remains elusive, which Aman is now focussing on.

Aman has won the only gold medal in wrestling in the recently concluded Asian Games for India.

New Zealand's Chapman, Foulkes ruled out of T20I series against India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Auckland

New Zealand have suffered a double injury blow, with Mark Chapman and Zak Foulkes ruled out of the upcoming five-match T20I series against India, beginning in Christchurch on October 22.

Chapman is recovering from a left hamstring tear sustained during the European T20 League last month, while pacer Foulkes injured his right hip flexor during a recent Canterbury training session. The 32-year-old Flox during a left-handed batter who has played 113 T20Is, is on track to



return for the subsequent ODI series against India. Foulkes, however, has no confirmed return-to-play timeline.

Allrounder Josh Clarkson and fast bowler Blair Tigar have been drafted into the squad as replacements for the injured duo.

Shooters spent the week working on match simulations and fine-tuning technical routines.

India will compete across eight individual Olympic disciplines and two mixed team events. The contingent comprises seasoned Olympians with promising young shooters.

Kusale headlines the men's 50m Rifle 3 Positions squad alongside Akhil Sheoran and Adriyan Karmakar. Olympian Arjun Babuta leads the men's 10m air

rifle unit alongside Deaflympics champion Dhanush Srikanth and Paarth Makhlaja, Babuta is silver at the 2026 Asian Shooting Championships in New Delhi.

In the women's rifle events, two-time Olympian Anjum Moudgil anchors the 50m Rifle 3 Positions team with Ayushi Podder and Manini Kaushik. Emerging shooter Arya Rajesh Borse, who won silver at the Buenos Aires World Cup, features in the women's 10m air rifle alongside Khyati Chaudhary and Ismita Bhowal.

Shooters spent the week working on match simulations and fine-tuning technical routines.

Broke Korean invincibility aura: Kumkum Mohod



AJAI MASAND ■ New Delhi

For years, South Korea's dominance in recurve archery has seemed almost unassailable, but Kumkum Mohod believes the aura of invincibility has been shattered and her historic gold medal at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games could embolden India to challenge the Korean stronghold too often.

The 17-year-old from Amravati, Maharashtra, scripted history by becoming the first Indian to win an individual recurve gold at the Asian Games. She also struck gold in the women's team event and added a silver medal with Dhiraj Bommadevara, while her individual triumph secured a crucial Olympic quota place for India at the Los Angeles 2028 Games.

Mohod's defining moment came in the individual final against South Korea's Oh Yejin, a double gold medalist in the under-21 category at the 2023 World Archery Youth Championships. With the contest hanging in the balance, the Indian teenager held her nerve to deliver the decisive blow.

"One day, Korea's invincibility had to be broken. Everyone thought they were unbeatable, but this medal was very important because no individual medal had previously come in recurve. I feel our performances will improve further in future tournaments because everyone will be confident," Mohod said in an interaction facilitated by SAI.

The final went into a shoot-off after the match ended 5-5, and Mohod seized the opportunity to seal the gold with a perfect 10, while Oh managed only an eight.

"My heartbeat was racing at that moment, but I calmed myself, relaxed and told myself that I only had to release the arrow properly and not think about anything else. I knew that was the only arrow that could get me gold, and that patience paid off," she said.

The composure was the product of years of mental preparation. Mohod has trained herself to visualise every aspect of her performance, from her stance and release to the arrow striking the target and the ultimate prize. (PTI)

Keya wins Southern India golf title after tense playoff



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bengaluru

Delhi's Keya Kumar Badugu overcame a nerve-wracking playoff to beat Kolkata's Anaaht Bindra and clinch the Ladies title at the IGB Bio-Green Rotary Southern India Golf Championship for Ladies and Junior Girls on Friday.

Keya and Anaaht finished tied at one-under-par 215 after 54 holes, forcing a playoff to decide the winner. Keya carded rounds of 73, 71 and 71, while Anaaht returned scores of 70, 72 and 73. Priya Kumari finished third with an aggregate of 220 after rounds of 75, 70 and 75.

Anaaht made an impressive start, taking the first-round lead with a two-under-par 70, three strokes ahead of Keya.

She maintained her advantage with an even-par 72 in the second round, while Keya's one-under-par 71 lifted her to second place and cut the deficit to two strokes heading into the final day.

Keya also returned with two silver and a bronze. Gulveer created another piece of Indian sporting history by becoming the first Indian male track-and-field athlete to win three individual medals at a single edition of the Games.

Shown my India connect more publicly, but always proud of it, says Lindblad

BHARAT SHARMA ■ Singapore

In the Formula 1 spotlight, Jafar Lindblad has been vocal about his strong Indian roots more than ever, but the 19-year-old Racing Bulls driver says it is something he has "always" been proud of.

Swedish, who has a Swedish father and British Indian mother, tends to spend more time with the maternal side of his family. Visits to temples and gurdwaras are part of Lindblad's routine when he is back home in the UK.

With India



home to a massive Indian fan base, it is only natural that Lindblad and his team are making a conscious effort to develop a stronger bond with fans in the world's most populated country.

Ahead of a promotional event in India in March, the visuals of Lindblad's nana (maternal grandmother) applying a tila on his forehead generated millions of views on social media. "Recently I've just maybe shown that more publicly, but my whole life it's been something I've been proud of (Indian roots). I really spend a lot of time with my nani and nana (grandparents), having Indian food or watching cricket all together or doing these kind of things." (PTI)

Indian Army athletes script best-ever Asian Games haul with 20 medals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Indian Army athletes were among the major medal winners at recently concluded Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, returning with their best-ever medal haul of 20 at the continental showpiece.

As many as 62 Army athletes were part of the 501-strong Indian contingent and competed in 15 disciplines, winning six gold, eight silver and six bronze medals. Their contribution accounted for nearly one-fourth of India's total tally of 85 medals, comprising 21 gold, 27 silver and 37 bronze.

The Army's six-gold haul marked a 100 per cent increase over its gold-medal tally at the previous Asian Games in Hangzhou in 2023.

"Army athletes accounted for 23.52 per cent of India's total medals, winning 20 of the country's 85 medals, while their



six gold medals made up 29 per cent of India's 21 gold medals," said a release.

Among the standout performers was Naib Subedar Neeru Dhandu, who won two gold and a silver in track shooting. Distance runner Naib Subedar Gulveer

Singh also returned with two silver and a bronze. Gulveer created another piece of Indian sporting history by becoming the first Indian male track-and-field athlete to win three individual medals at a single edition of the Games.