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STATE CEO WRITES TO ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Maharashtra top poll officer wants ECINet discretion for local staff — a demand the two ECs had flagged

For SIR notice process, seeks 4 changes in EC portal software, more options for EROs

Vallabh Ozarkar
Mumbai, September 28

THE CHIEF Electoral Officer of Maharashtra, the largest state now in the notice phase of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), wrote to the Election Commission of India (ECI) in New Delhi last week, seeking four changes to the ECINet soft-

ware, each, in effect, a request that the software let Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) exercise a discretion the law already gives them, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

Maharashtra CEO S Chockalingam's requests that EROs be allowed to decide which "logical discrepancy" cases need a hearing, what docu-



Maharashtra Chief Electoral Officer S Chockalingam

ments to accept and which discrepancies they can dispose of themselves, echo concerns already recorded by Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh

THE EDITORIAL PAGE
CEC MUST CORRECT COURSE, NOT JUST DO DAMAGE CONTROL P 10

Sandhu and Vivek Joshi.

The CEO's communication, addressed to Senior Deputy Election Commissioner Manoj Gang, Director General of IT Seema Khanna and two secretariat officers, went out on September 24, a day after an investigation by *The Indian Express* revealed that the two

Election Commissioners had flagged, on record, that the software was curtailing the powers of the EROs.

CEO Chockalingam could not be reached for comment Monday. *The Indian Express* sent a questionnaire to the ECI spokesperson who acknowledged receipt. A response is awaited.

The Maharashtra draft roll, published August 31, left out 21.1 per cent of the state's electors. Its final roll is due on

•CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

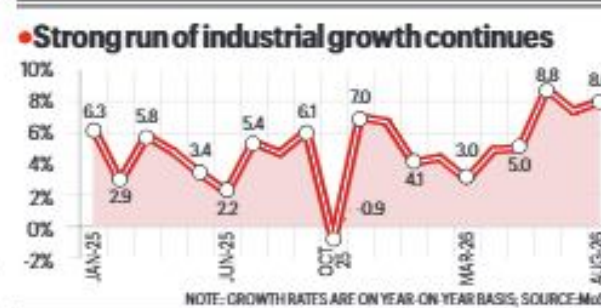
ALL EYES ON FESTIVAL SEASON DEMAND

Industrial output up 8% in August, FMCG a slow spot

Manufacturing, favourable base effect behind strong IIP growth

Siddharth Upasani
New Delhi, September 28

THE INDIAN economy continued its impressive run with data released Monday by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation showing industrial production in August was 8% higher compared to the same month last year. The overall growth was driven by a favourable base effect and the manufacturing



sector whose output rose 9%. Policymakers, however, will keep an eye on the consumer goods segment.

While production of durable goods rose 11.1% in August, following up a 12% increase in July, non-durable goods, which are primarily fast-moving con-

sumer products or FMCG, saw a growth of only 2.1%.

Rajant Sinha, Chief Economist at CareEdge Ratings, said the overall strong industrial performance was in line with other data such as GDP growth, lending and exports, indicating

•CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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Bengal SIR case: No early hearing, 'only by-elections' ahead, says SC

Express News Service
New Delhi, September 28

THE SUPREME COURT Monday declined to advance the hearing of a plea regarding appeals against the exclusion of names from the West Bengal electoral rolls, pending before the tribunals constituted by it.

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, heading a three-judge bench, told the petitioner's counsel who cited urgency in view of the upcoming bypolls in Nandigram and Rejinagar Assembly constituencies on October 6 that "these are only by-elections". The counsel told bench, also comprising Justice Joydip Bagchi and Justice V

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INSIDE PAGE 5
SC GIVES EC 3 MONTHS TO RESOLVE TMC NAME, SYMBOL ROW

• FORMER TOP COP HAS BEEN AWARDED FOUR YEARS' RIGOROUS IMPRISONMENT

Behind former Kerala DGP's sentencing in graft case, two brothers and a 36-year fight

PAGE 1 anchor

Shaju Philip
Thiruvananthapuram,
September 28

AS FORMER Kerala DGP Tomin Thachankary was awarded four years of rigorous imprisonment, and ordered to pay a fine of Rs 30 lakh in a disproportionate-assets (DA) case around 10 days ago, two brothers, in their late 50s and early 60s, closely watched the



Vithya breaks PT Usha's record

Vithya Ramraj celebrates after she clocked 54.75s in the final of the women's 400m hurdles to claim the bronze medal at the Asian Games in Nagoya, Japan, on Monday. She broke PT Usha's national record of 55.42s after 42 years. P11 REPORT, PAGE 17

EXPRESS special

In this drought-hit taluka of Maharashtra, monsoon came, but a long dry spell followed

Kharif crops destroyed, fields too dry for rabi crops, say farmers

Sadaf Modak
Sakri (Dhule), September 28

FOR FARMERS in Sakri taluka of Dhule district, this year's drought is not a story of the monsoon failing to arrive. It is about the rains arriving, raising hopes, and then disappearing when the crops needed them the most.

Sakri is among the 265 talukas declared drought-affected by the Maharashtra government last week; the state has a total of



A farmer assesses his damaged crops in Sakri. NARENDRA VASKAR

358 talukas. While the drought-hit areas cover 32 of the total 36 districts, all the four talukas in Dhule district are among the affected areas. The state recorded a rainfall deficit of 18% this year,

with 798.2 mm of rainfall between June 1 and September 26, against a normal of 970.9 mm.

But in Sakri, where the seasonal rainfall was around the

•CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Alexander and Bobby Kuruvila; Keralam ex-DGP Tomin Thachankary

proceedings at the Vigilance court in Kottayam.

Their stoic expressions did not betray their association with the case, and the decades

they spent in pursuing it, but there was still satisfaction of a hard-won battle.

The DA case dates to 2002 but its roots go back 12 years be-

fore that, when Bobby and Alexander Kuruvila were in their 20s. They belonged to Alapuzha's prominent landlord family, Karivelthara, with their ancestors part of the erstwhile Travancore government.

In 1990, Thachankary was posted in their town as an Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP). He allegedly misused his position to implicate them in a case arising from a minor scuffle involving his distant relative.

•CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Business as Usual
By EP UNNY



TRUMP ASKED XI IF HE WANTED TO BUY OUR WEAPONS: U.S. ENVOY PAGE 12

Day after clash in SRFTI over RSS event, police FIR against students

3 FIRs — 2 against students, 1 against 'unknown persons'

Tanusree Bose
Kolkata, September 28

AMID PALPABLE tension prevailing on the campus of Kolkata's Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute (SRFTI), a

•CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



During a silent vigil by students at SRFTI in Kolkata, Monday. express

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[FROM PAGE 1 | FULL REPORTS ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM]

Maharashtra CEO

November 16.

A "logical discrepancy" is not a finding that someone is not a voter. It is a mismatch the Commission's ECINET software throws up when it tries to link an elector to a parent or grandparent on the roll from the last SIR, such as a parent's name that doesn't match, an age gap between parent and child of under 15 or over 50 years, an age that doesn't progress correctly between the old roll and the new, or a case where the elector submitted no document, or only Aadhaar.

As reported by *The Indian Express*, Sandhu wrote on August 14 that CEOs, DEOs and EROs, the statutory authorities for the voters' list, were reporting they could not perform their duties, their powers "curtailed by centralised control of ERONet at DG(IT) level." "It is strange," he said, "that all these responsibilities regarding Electoral Roll lie on EROs, DEOs and CEOs as per law, but the access control has been centralised by DG(IT)." The Maharashtra CEO's communication of September

24, in effect, asked for the same freedom the two commissioners said ECINET had curtailed: four places where the law gives the ERO a decision to make and the software gives him no way to make it.

Hearings: The rules give the ERO "the discretion to require" a person "to appear personally before him," the CEO wrote. ECINET's "Take Action" menu has two options, and neither lets the ERO waive a hearing. He asked for a third, "Exempted from Hearing," for electors who submit "valid and satisfactory documents," so that senior citizens, the disabled and "other vulnerable groups" are spared "unnecessary inconvenience and apprehension."

Documents: The 13 documents listed on the back of the notice are "indicative and not exhaustive," the CEO wrote, and asked for a 14th option, "Other/Other Equivalent Document," because electors from tribal, homeless and sex-worker communities "may not be able to provide any document from the indicative list." He said relevant provisions for such groups in the

Election Commission's Electoral Roll Manual could be taken into consideration.

Who decides: At present, BLO statements or panchamas are considered sufficient for EROs to decide certain name-related logical discrepancies. For other discrepancies, supporting documents are required and are subsequently verified at the DEO level. The CEO proposed allowing EROs to dispose of all categories of logical discrepancies at their level wherever they are satisfied that a BLO statement or panchama provides sufficient grounds. If the discrepancy cannot be satisfactorily resolved on that basis alone, the elector may be asked to submit supporting documents for verification at the DEO level, the email states. The CEO also said documents required to resolve a discrepancy should not necessarily be restricted to the 13 documents in the indicative list.

Mandatory upload: The ECINET currently requires an "Extract of Last SIR" to be uploaded in every discrepancy case.

The CEO proposed making this optional, requiring it only where the last SIR details in the system differ from the correct

mapping being claimed or established by the elector.

Written instructions: The EROs "have number of queries" about the process, the CEO said, and "oral instructions from ECI or CEO are insufficient". He asked for FAQs explaining the notice, document submission, hearing and disposal process to provide clarity to electors and officials.

Four of the five are the same request in different clothes: the law gives the ERO a judgement to make, and the software does not give the ERO the button to make it.

The Representation of the People Act, 1950 and the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960 assign responsibility for the electoral roll to the Electoral Registration Officer, one for each Assembly seat.

An ERO is usually the sub-divisional magistrate or an officer of equivalent rank in the district administration. The ERO prepares the voters' list, hears claims and objections and decides which names will stay and which get deleted. This is a deliberately decentralised system. For decades, the ECI has leaned on that design to answer political allegations of mass manipulation of electoral rolls. No

single person is supposed to control the voters' list.

On paper, the ERO still decides every name on the list. In practice, the ERO has been able to do only what the software allows: add a name, delete one, reverse a decision or process an appeal. What the software allows is controlled centrally by Khanna's division in New Delhi.

On September 23, in its first response to *The Indian Express* investigation, the Commission had said its digital platforms "operate under strict data security protocols to prevent unauthorised tampering," and that EROs and DEOs "function as per statutory powers for registration and deletion under law". The Maharashtra CEO's communication went out a day later.

On September 26, after a meeting of the full Commission, the Commission issued a statement that partially addressed the Maharashtra requests, giving EROs the discretion to exempt people flagged for logical discrepancies from personal hearings. It also said "various upgradations of the portal have already been made based on the inputs from State CEOs in the past few months," and that "in case any further flexibility is required by the field officers, that will be made operational".

The four-page note an-

nounced eight other decisions that addressed, point by point, several of the concerns recorded by the two Commissioners. Agendas will now be circulated before every Commission meeting and minutes issued afterwards. Officers' foreign trips will need Commission approval. New IT modules and portals will go through a committee of officers before being placed before the Commission. The ECINET will be reviewed by a committee headed by a senior Deputy Election Commissioner and will include an independent expert from an IIT or IIIT. If field officers need more flexibility in the system, it will be provided. And directions issued by Commissioners to officers will be "meticulously complied with".

These decisions map, almost item for item, onto the concerns the two Commissioners had put on file over 10 months: that agendas were not circulated and minutes not issued, that officers went abroad without the Commission's approval, that new IT modules were built without its knowledge, that the electoral-roll database needed an audit by an independent expert, that field officers lacked "proper and complete access" to ERONet, and that an administrative order had altered the allocation of work around the IT division without them.



CJ Sunita Agarwal CJ DK Upadhyaya CJ AK Singh

SC Collegium recommends 3 CJs of high courts as apex court judges

Sohini Ghosh & Aditi Raja
New Delhi, Vadodra,
September 28

THE SUPREME Court Collegium on Monday recommended the names of Justices Sunita Agarwal, Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Aadesh Kumar Singh, chief justices of Gujarat, Delhi and Telangana high courts respectively, for elevation as judges of the apex court.

CJs Upadhyaya and Agarwal, both coming from the Bar and with their parent high court being at Allahabad, are the two senior-most judges of the Allahabad HC. The three chief justices recommended for elevation rank fourth, fifth and sixth in overall seniority of all high court judges across the country. Notably, the third senior-most judge in the country, Himachal Pradesh HC Chief Justice G S Sandhawalia, who was recommended for elevation by the SC Collegium earlier, was not approved by the Centre.

CJ Upadhyaya has been in charge of Delhi HC since January 2025, while CJ Agarwal took charge of the Gujarat HC in July 2023. Both CJs were appointed as judges of the Allahabad HC in November 2011, and moved out of Allahabad after being elevated as CJs of different high courts in July 2023. CJ Upadhyaya is due to retire in June 2027 while CJ Agarwal retires in April 2028.

If all three recommendations of the SC Collegium are approved, the Supreme Court's strength will go up to 37 sitting judges of the 38 sanctioned strength — also making CJ Agarwal the third woman SC judge.

Before moving to the Delhi High Court, Justice Upadhyaya had also served as Chief Justice of the Bombay HC.

Born in 1965 in Uttar Pradesh's Ambedkar Nagar dis-

trict, Justice Upadhyaya graduated in law from Lucknow University in 1991 and practised broadly in civil and constitutional matters. He was appointed chief standing counsel for Uttar Pradesh in May 2007 and held the office until his elevation as Judge of the Allahabad HC in 2011. He was made a permanent judge in August 2013 and became a Senior Judge of the Lucknow Bench in March 2023. In July 2023, he was appointed the Chief Justice of the Bombay HC.

Nearly two months after he took charge, then Delhi HC judge Justice Yashwant Varma got embroiled in a controversy over the discovery of cash during a fire at his official residence, in March 2025. In its aftermath, CJ Upadhyaya had submitted a report on the incident following a preliminary inquiry to then Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna with the "prima facie opinion that the entire matter warrants a deeper probe".

CJ Agarwal, earlier this year heading a division bench, in a significant ruling, dismissed a set of appeals and paved the way for the government to pursue eviction proceedings to clear nearly 45,000 square metres of land of convicted rapist Asaram's ashram in Motera, Ahmedabad, for Commonwealth Games 2030.

CJ Singh, with his parent high court at Jharkhand, was elevated as a judge from the Bar in 2012. He was appointed as the acting chief justice of the Jharkhand HC in 2022 and then took charge of Tripura HC as its Chief Justice in April 2023. He took charge as Telangana HC Chief Justice in July 2025. Justice Singh hails from a family with a judicial background. His maternal great-grandfather, the late B P Sinha, was the sixth Chief Justice of India.

crore approx.) for any information leading to his arrest.

"Fugitive federal defendant Satinderjeet Singh (also known as Goldy Brar, among other aliases) is being added on September 28 to the FBI's notorious list of Ten Most Wanted Fugitives," said FBI Los Angeles Field Office Assistant Director in Charge Patrick Grandy in a press briefing. Brar is wanted for his alleged involvement in the Lawrence Bishnoi Organised Crime Group.

SRFTI

day after it witnessed clashes over an RSS-linked outfit's event, three FIRs were registered on Monday — two against "unknown students" and one against "unknown persons".

Taking suo motu cognizance of the incident, the Kolkata Police filed an FIR against unknown students. Another FIR, registered on a complaint filed by Akhil Bharatiya Grahak Panchayat (ABGP), the RSS-linked outfit, also named "unknown students".

Only the FIR, based on a complaint lodged by SRFTI Dean (Film) Sukanta Majumder, was filed against "unknown persons".

All three FIRs more or less include BNS sections of wrongful restraint, assault on public servants, voluntarily causing harm, and criminal intimidation.

In the police complaint, filed by SRFTI Dean (Film) Sukanta Majumder, it has been alleged that unknown people wrongfully restrained the students and two faculty members of the institute, voluntarily caused hurt,

insulted women students' modesty, and also threatened them.

In the suo motu FIR lodged by the police, unknown students have been accused of wrongfully restraining police personnel, manhandling them to deter them from discharging their duties, and breaking the window panes of a government vehicle.

The third FIR, filed on a complaint by ABGP, the outfit's state unit leader, Anjan Sinha, has alleged that unknown SRFTI students gheraoed the organisation's members from 2.15 pm to 7.30 pm on Sunday, when they had gone to the campus to hold the event.

Sinha alleged that the SRFTI students "wrongfully restrained and verbally abused" their members "and made gestures to insult the modesty of female activists". He also alleged that students vandalised the photos of Bharat Maa, Goddess Durga, and Swami Vivekananda, and made derogatory remarks about their organisation.

Sources in the police sources said they were looking into CCTV footage to identify those involved in the violence and the exact reason behind it.

Keralam

Pursuing action against the officer, who went on to have a storied career, they learnt about his allegedly ill-gotten wealth, finally getting the Vigilance department to register a case.

Though the officer allegedly tried to drag the case for years, the brother continued pursuing it, making sure he was eventually brought to justice.

A minor scuffle, its consequences

"I was 22. There was a minor scuffle with a neighbour..." said Bobby as he recounted the events of September 13, 1990.

The neighbour was a distant relative of Thachankary and his family took the matter up with the officer. "He asked his relative to file a complaint not only against me but also my father Kuruvila and elder brother Alexander," Bobby said.

The FIR alleged that they stormed into the house of the complainant and manhandled him. "The scuffle had taken place at our house, no this," Bobby told *The Indian Express*.

Bobby, Alexander and Kuruvila secured bail from a local court but police added another charge: That they had threatened the complainant at gunpoint. Sections of the Arms Act were invoked and the court cancelled their bail.

The trio went into hiding. "Police threatened our mother. They did not spare the premises of our sister, who was pregnant," said 63-year-old Alexander.

Weeks later, the father and the two sons obtained pre-arrest bail.

But for Bobby and Alexander, this was not the time to rest.

They moved the police department to complain against Thachankary. When it yielded nothing, the family filed a private complaint with a local court, accusing Thachankary of

fabricating a case against them. The magistrate court ordered a probe against the officer. But, Thachankary moved the high court; proceedings at the magistrate court were quashed.

As Thachankary climbed up the career ladder, the brothers realised they would have to change tactics. "We began meeting people who may have faced his high-handedness," said Bobby. This is when they stumbled upon Thachankary's huge wealth.

In 2002, Bobby approached the Vigilance, alleging that Thachankary had amassed wealth disproportionate to his known source of income.

When no FIR was registered, Bobby approached the HC in 2005; the next year, the Vigilance informed the court the probe would be completed within six months.

As Vigilance continued dragging its feet, Bobby approached then Chief Minister V S Achuthanandan, which finally led to

registration of an FIR in 2007.

The Vigilance probe covered the alleged wealth amassed by Thachankary between 2003 and 2007. With the probe not making much progress, Bobby approached the HC in 2010, filing a contempt of court petition against the department. The petition was closed with the Vigilance telling the court the probe was on.

In 2013, the Vigilance filed the final report in the special court in Thrissur, stating that Thachankary was found in possession of pecuniary resources and properties to the extent of Rs 64 lakh, disproportionate to his known sources of income.

Meanwhile, the case was transferred from Thrissur to Muvattupuzha in Ernakulam district in 2016.

When the trial did not commence, Bobby petitioned the HC Chief Justice in 2017. In 2018, he petitioned another HC judge with jurisdictional supervisory charge over the special court in

IIP growth

that the economy had "held up well" despite persistent global uncertainties and elevated energy prices. While the performance of consumer durables, Sinha said, continued to be a positive for consumption, "the feeble performance of consumer non-durables remains concerning".

Consumer durables and non-durables are key indicators of household demand. And while production of durables is strong, analysts have been sounding caution ahead of the festival season, which sees Indians splurging on new purchases. But with prices of consumer electronics rising for a variety of reasons — significantly more expensive memory chips and other key inputs such as copper and aluminium as well as increasing freight costs — demand may face headwinds.

However, Indians are seen relying on loans to make purchases, with UBS analysts predicting last week that India is entering a "strong unsecured credit growth cycle, led by personal loans". Latest data from the Reserve Bank of India shows that while personal loans given by banks were up 16.2% as of the end of July, those given by non-banks were up 21.4%.

Industrial growth as per the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) was 7.4% in July and 4.7% in August 2026. The IIP comprises four key sectors, with manufacturing accounting for three-fourths of the entire index.

The August Industrial growth print of 8% is the latest in a series of robust economic numbers, with June having posted an expansion of 8.8%, the highest since 19% in March 2024. So far in the first five months of 2026-27, or April-August 2026, industrial growth has averaged 6.7%, well above 4.2% in the same period of 2025-26.

Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist at Bank of Baroda, said, "If this is maintained, India can register growth of 7-8% for the year on the back of higher growth during the festival season with demand building up. This makes the third quarter very critical for industry."

A favourable base effect usually occurs when output either stagnated or fell in the year-ago month which is used to calculate the growth rate for the latest month. As such, this favourable base meant the year-

E. EXPLAINED

Encouraging data

After a faster-than-expected GDP growth of 7.8% in April-June, despite headwinds from the West Asia conflict, the monthly data continues to be encouraging. The festive season will be a key gauge of demand, with the weak monsoon and rising prices seen as drags on consumption.

on-year growth rates in August 2026 for industrial output as whole and the manufacturing sector were impressive even though production was down compared to July 2026: manufacturing output was down 1.4%, while overall industrial production was 1.8% lower.

According to Rahul Agrawal, Principal Economist at ratings agency ICRA, the favourable base effect in August 2026 was because of 'inventory recalibration' in August 2025 ahead of the widely-expected cuts in the GST rates, that were announced by the GST Council in early September 2025 and came into effect later that month.

Within the manufacturing sector, 18 of the 23 categories posted higher year-on-year growth in their output in August. According to Devendra Pant, Chief Economist at India Ratings & Research, this underlined "generalised improvement".

"Like previous months, electrical equipment and motor vehicles continued to record strong growth of 30.9% and 25.2%, respectively," Pant said, adding that the former's performance was indicative of "growing domestic and external demand for Indian manufactured electrical goods."

The sharpest sectoral month-on-month fall in August was for mining and quarrying, whose output slumped 9.2% from July. Mining and quarrying, which accounts for over a tenth of the IIP, usually suffers during the monsoon as rain hinders mining activity. On a year-on-year basis, mining and quarrying output was down 5.6% in August.

A favourable base also helped push up the output of the 'electricity and gas supply' sector to 12.3% in August, although it was the only sector to post a sequential improvement in production. However, this month-on-month output increase was a mere 0.3%.

six months. Meanwhile, in 2023, Thachankary retired from service.

Thachankary is presently lodged in central prison in Thiruvananthapuram and has appealed the trial court verdict in HC. The HC has reserved its verdict on his plea.

Alexander is still unsure if Bobby's fight with Thachankary's relative was the only reason why the officer went after his family. "He must have heard about the Karthivelthara family. After getting khaki (uniform), he might have thought about taking on our prominent family by implicating us in a false case to gain attention," said Alexander.

Bobby and Alexander's granduncle Karthivelthara Mathew Korah, a Congress leader, had been a minister in the Travancore government. He had served as a member of Travancore Legislative Council as well as the Travancore-Cochin Assembly before the formation of Kerala.

everything we had from the previous season in the kharif crops, and have nothing left," said Ramlal Gawli, 60, of Lagadwal. He said it brought back memories of the 1972 drought, recalling how his father recounted that families had to depend on wild plants for food.

Bansi Pawar, 75, another farmer, said this year's drought appeared harsher because farmers had invested their savings after the early rains raised hopes of a good crop.

The distress extends to neighbouring Jalgaon district, where 15 talukas have been declared drought-hit. In Erandol, 72-year-old Shaligram Gaikwad, too, recalled the 1972 drought, saying families had to depend on red jowar and American wheat.

This year, the maize crop on his 12 acres has been destroyed. Gaikwad has now sown onions, using water from a well where the level is steadily falling. Farmers in the region are trying to use available irrigation and drip systems to salvage something from the season, but the investment carries the risk of another crop failure.

Bengal SIR

Mohana, that though the case was listed for hearing on September 29, the causelist was now showing it as listed for hearing on October 5. He contended that the excluded voters in these constituencies had already lost their chance to vote in one election and that they would not be able to vote in the October 6 polls as well if their appeals were not decided urgently.

"We are seeking urgent directions so that it can be listed before that. There are more than 18,000 appeals pending which have not been disposed of. These people did not take part in the first elections," he said.

The CJ said, "These are only by-elections, that's all." In an affidavit filed, the EC said only 1,26,194 appeals out of a total 38,31,429 appeals had been decided so far while 37,05,235 were pending. According to this, 6,443 appeals were filed in Nandigram and so far 89 had been restored. In Refnagar, out of 12,452 appeals, four have been restored.

Maharashtra drought

average level, it was the prolonged dry spell that destroyed crops. According to official data, in the 102 days between June 1 and September 11, Sakri did not receive any rainfall for 67 days, including a dry spell of 22 consecutive days.

According to an official of the agriculture department, Sakri taluka, comprising 227 villages, received only 50 per cent of its average rainfall in August and September. "The rains in this region were scanty as most of the rainfall was over the Western Ghats. Moreover, the rains came before the sowing season," the official said.

Farmers across Sakri and parts of neighbouring Jalgaon said the dry spell has left the kharif crops stunted, and fields without enough moisture to sow the rabi crops. Some of the older farmers compared it to the 1972 drought in Maharashtra, adding that the current crisis was particularly painful because the season had initially ap-

peared promising.

The government's drought declaration, made under the Drought Management Code, follows an assessment of rainfall and other factors, including a trigger of at least 21 consecutive days without significant rainfall.

It provides immediate concessions such as waiver of land revenue, restructuring of crop loans and a stay on recovery of agriculture-related loans. Actual financial assistance for crop losses, however, will be decided only after field-level assessments and panchamas.

In Sakri, farmers say the damage has already been done. "They cannot remember when it last rained. What they do remember is waiting for the next shower — through the day, and sometimes waking at night at the imagined sound of raindrops. The rains never came."

"When monsoon began in June, we were hopeful of steady rainfall. It rained until the first week of August and then it

abruptly stopped. I remember the last shower was a weak drizzle, not enough to seep into the soil. Now, we have to see the crops burning in the sun," said Nimbabai Brahmane, 65, a farmer from Khorli village.

Brahmane's two-acre farm had groundnut, cotton and bajra. The groundnut crop had reached the pod development stage when the rains stopped. Pulling out a plant from the soil, she showed the underdeveloped seeds inside. The crop, she said, is neither fit for consumption nor sale. If left to dry further, it may not even be useful as cattle fodder.

Farmers in Khorli and neighbouring Jamade, Lagadwal, Petale and Panhalipada villages are facing similar losses. The region is largely hilly, with limited irrigation facilities. The main crops grown here are maize, soybean, groundnut, bajra, onion, cotton, pulses and nagli. Most farmers sowed in the first and second weeks of June, after the onset of monsoon raised hopes of a normal season.

Most of the farmers belong to tribal communities, includ-

ing Bhil, Kokna, Gamit, Nalkda and Pardhi. Many have cultivated forest land for generations. They were part of the 2018 march to Mumbai and the 2023 march to Nashik, seeking recognition of their forest rights and compensation during droughts, under the Satyashodhak Shetkari Sabha.

Now that they are not only worried about crop losses, but also about whether they will be able to access the relief announced by the government, in view of their pending claims for individual forest rights.

"In 2019, a Government Resolution had announced that relief will also be granted to those with pending claims for individual titles. But our taluka did not get any compensation. We hope that we are included this year and the relief is given," said Mansaram Pawar of Khorli.

Besides affecting their kharif crops, farmers pointed out that the prolonged dry spell has left their fields without enough moisture for the rabi season.

"This would mean getting out of two cycles of debt. Most of us with small land holdings put

Nabin targets Mamata rule for 'trade lull', vows to revive biz activity

Press Trust of India
Kolkata, September 28

BJP NATIONAL president Nitin Nabin on Monday promised an investment-friendly climate in the state to revive industrial activity and create employment, while alleging that more than 6,700 companies shut down in the state during the 15-year TMC rule.

Addressing a "Yuva Samvad Conclave" at Space Circle near Chinar Park in Kolkata, Nabin said the BJP government in the state, led by Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari, would focus on creating opportunities for the youth and attracting fresh investments.

"More than 6,700 companies have shut down here in the last 10-15 years. Our effort is to create an environment where if you invest in West Bengal, we will give you a good platform," he said.

Nabin also recalled a time when West Bengal was regarded as a major employment destination, and people from neighbouring states came here in search of jobs.

Nabin also slammed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over vote theft allegations, saying that opposition parties raise no objections when they win, but lash out at the Election Commission once they lose.

"The opposition has grown impatient from their defeats. Be it the Congress or TMC, they are unable to digest their loss. When they win elections in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, they do not think about EC. But when the BJP wins in West Bengal, Assam, or Uttar Pradesh, the opposition vents its anger on the poll body and EVMs," he said.

EVENT TO BE HELD FROM JANUARY 28 TO 31

Govt lines up global energy meet, hopes to attract investment, jobs

Will offer land to Indian Oil Corporation to expand operations in Haldia: Suwendu

Press Trust of India
Kolkata, September 28

CHIEF MINISTER Suwendu Adhikari on Monday said the India Energy Week (Bharat Shakti Saptah) will be held in Kolkata in January next year, and expressed hope that the global gathering will bring substantial capital flow and create jobs in the state.

He also said that his government is working on offering land to Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) for expanding its operations in Haldia in Purba Medinipur district, where the central PSU has sought 175 acres of land.

"We will observe Bharat Shakti Saptah in West Bengal very successfully this time. I believe if we can successfully organise World Energy Week, there will be substantial investment in this sector in the coming days," he told a joint press conference with Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri.

The event will be held from January 28 to 31 next year.

"Existing projects will expand, and the facilities related to infrastructure, employment and investment that we see in



Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri and Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari during the curtain raiser event of India Energy Week 2027 in Kolkata on Monday.

other states will come to West Bengal," Adhikari said.

Adhikari thanked the Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas and public sector undertakings, including IOC, for choosing Kolkata as the host partner for the India Energy Week.

"I once again express my gratitude as Chief Minister to Mr Hardeep Singh and the entire Petroleum and Natural Gas Department family, including IOC, for organising this event here in Kolkata, the City of Joy," he said.

He also praised IOC for undertaking a major Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in-

itiative to plant several lakh mangrove saplings in the Sundarbans.

Puri said the Energy Week event will be held in West Bengal following the change of government, and with Prime Minister Narendra Modi keen to bring development to the eastern region.

Puri also said India Energy Week (IEW) will help boost investment in the sector.

Adhikari alleged that the previous TMC government had deprived 15 lakh beneficiaries of the Ujjwala 3 scheme.

He also claimed the previous dispensation did not grant the petroleum mining

lease for an ONGC project at Ashoknagar in North 24 Parganas district.

The IOC has sought 175 acres of land at Haldia for its expansion, the chief minister said.

The CM did not elaborate on this, but the IOC has a refinery at Haldia.

"Haldia Development Authority has 85 acres; we are talking with the port authorities (in Haldia) to offer land," he said.

The chief minister further said he asked the IOC to set up a petrochemical plant here and the government will provide land for it.

Allowance hike, shift to permanent buildings: CM's Anganwadi push

Kolkata: The state government will shift nearly 19,000 Anganwadi centres currently operating from rented premises to permanent government-owned buildings, Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari announced on Monday.

Speaking at the Angan Milan Seva' event in Panthathi, North 24 Parganas, Adhikari also announced that all ICDS centres in the state would receive electricity free of cost.

"Nearly 19,000 Anganwadi centres in the state are operating from rented premises. In the days ahead, all these centres will be shifted to government-owned permanent buildings, and the necessary funds for this have also been allocated by the state government," Adhikari said.

He said an additional Rs 5,000 had been added to monthly allowance of Anganwadi workers from August. He said workers had been brought under the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme, under which they would be eligible for treatment of up to Rs 5 lakh a year at government and private hospitals covered by the scheme.

He announced an increase in the food allocation at centres. The allocation for children has been increased from Rs 6 to Rs 8, while that for pregnant and lactating women has been raised from Rs 12 to Rs 14, he said. ENS



CID personnel inspect the crime spot in Birbhum on Monday.

BJP booth worker shot dead in Birbhum; CID, STF take over probe

Press Trust of India
Kolkata, September 28

THE CID and Special Task Force of police on Monday began an investigation into the killing of a booth-level BJP worker who was shot dead by two motorcycle-borne assailants in Birbhum district a day ago, officers said.

Senior police officers, including the Birbhum Superintendent of Police Bidit Raj Bandyopadhyay, supervised the investigation on Monday.

A sniffer dog was also brought in, and the police are examining the route the assailants had taken after killing the BJP worker.

"All possible angles are being examined, and some leads have emerged. Details will be shared later," the SP said. The incident took place on Sunday night in the Millpara area of Trishulapatti under Bolpur Municipality's Ward 12.

The deceased, identified as Chandan Bhalla (47), was the BJP president of booth number 202 in Ward 11 of the Bolpur Municipality and worked as a

clerk at the state government's Land and Land Reforms Department. He was also involved in land transactions, a senior police official said.

Police said Bhalla had left his home to show a plot of land to a prospective buyer when two men riding a motorcycle allegedly approached him and fired at him from close range before fleeing.

A complaint was lodged at Bolpur police station by his younger son, Shubhrajanta Bhalla. No one was named as an accused in the complaint.

Bhalla's wife Shyamali claimed her husband was called out of his home and shot dead, demanding the arrest and punishment of those responsible.

Birbhum BJP organisational district president Uday Shankar Bandyopadhyay demanded an investigation and urged the police to identify and arrest the culprits after a proper probe. "The police are examining all possible angles, including political rivalry and a dispute linked to land transactions," the SP said.

Shri Ajit Kumar Panda
Chairman and Managing Director

Think Logistics , Think CONCOR

Seamless End-to-End Logistics across Rail, Road & Sea

Double Stack Container Train on Dedicated Freight Corridor

Specialized Tank Containers for Bulk Cement Loading

Road Transportation through LNG Trucks

Global Shipping Services

EXCERPTS FROM CHAIRMAN'S SPEECH AT 38th AGM OF CONTAINER CORPORATION OF INDIA LTD.

Held on 28.09.2026

Dear Fellow Shareholders,

Good afternoon and a very warm welcome to each one of you to the 38th Annual General Meeting of your Company. At the outset, I am very happy to state that your company, with its strong performance, continues to retain its position as the undisputed market leader in India's rail logistics sector.

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMIC SCENARIO

At present, the World is at the crossroads of extraordinary uncertainties with various geopolitical conflicts and tensions. There is growing tendency of protectionism by nations, lack of trust and weaponisation of trade and supply chain.

On the other hand with the progressive Government policies for inclusive development, rising consumption, disposable income, credit growth, demographics advantage and competitive business environment, our Country is well positioned to face any challenge. The Indian economy has continued to demonstrate remarkable resilience with GDP growth of 7.1% achieved for 2024-25 and an estimate of 7.7% for 2025-26. The GDP growth of 7.8% in the first quarter of the current year establishes that India remains a growth engine for the world economy.

Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji has said and I quote "Today, India is the world's fastest-growing major economy. We are in a position to help lift the world out of slow growth."

The progress across several underlying economic indicators like

controlled inflation, strong corporate balance sheets, lower debt levels, political stability and all time low NPAs of banks set India apart from turbulent global markets. India's growth story is steadily transitioning from a consumption-led narrative to one increasingly anchored in manufacturing and industrial capability.

SECTORAL OUTLOOK

The Government's commitment for infrastructure-led growth is continuing with budgetary allocation of Rs. 12.2 lakh crores in 2026-27, including Rs. 2.78 lakh crores for Railways. India's ranking in world logistics performance index has improved from 54 in 2014 to 38 in 2023 and the target is to reach 25 by 2030.

Indian Railways originating loading of cargo rose to 1,669.9 million tonnes in FY 2025-26, a growth of 3.3% over the previous year, while containerised cargo carried by rail increased to 93.7 million tonnes, up by 5.6%. Container handling across all Indian ports touched 24.8 million TEUs registering healthy growth of 6.5% over the previous year.

The most significant development of the year has been the long awaited commissioning of 1506 km long Western DFC. It has enabled movement of Double Stack Container (DSC) trains with higher axle load, faster access of northern hinterland and development of industries and new terminals along the DFC. A new DFC connecting Dankuni in East to Surat in West has been announced in the Budget 2026.

Rate rationalisations have been done for moving bulk cement in tank containers and for fertilizer, fly ash, food grains and salt. A single unified logistics regime for Container Train Operations has been notified. It is estimated that, the per tonne cost of movement of goods by rail is Rs. 1.56 vs 3.79 by road and CO₂ emission per ton km by rail is 11.5 gm vs 101 gm by road. The Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs) and

assured transit time trains are moving goods faster now. Thus, rail transportation, when duly supported by conducive infrastructure offers distinct advantages over road in terms of cost, speed and environment and hence it is bound for gaining market share.

Your Company continues to place itself firmly at the intersection of above growth drivers deepening its business and creating enduring value for all its stakeholders.

PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

On the operational front, your Company handled highest ever throughput of 5.58 million TEUs during 2025-26, registering a growth of 9.56% over the previous year. The EXIM growth was 8% and domestic 14.5%. CONCOR's share of containerised cargo carried by rail rose to 01.02 million tonnes, up 2.82% over the previous year. In financial terms, total income was the highest ever at Rs.9,443 crores. The net consolidated profit for the year stood at Rs.1,246 crores. Despite rising competition, it is gratifying that business efficiency has improved resulting in better operating margins.

I am of the firm belief that logistics is a sunrise sector and your company is finely positioned to capitalize on many emerging business opportunities. To further expand the infrastructure, capital expenditure of Rs.1,085 crores has been incurred during FY 2025-26 on expansion of its terminal network, acquisition of indigenous wagons, containers, handling equipment and expanding IT systems.

Your company has a strong balance sheet to support its sustainable future growth. At the end of the year, the net worth of the Company was Rs.13,052 crores. In keeping with the consistent policy of rewarding our shareholders, dividend was paid every quarter totalling to Rs.8.6 per share (i.e.172%) and amounting to Rs.655 crores, which is 53.6% of net profit.

STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES

Your Company followed a focused approach and took many business initiatives during the year thereby strengthening its market position:

- New terminals developed at Mendaigheri in Rajasthan, Kadekole in Karnataka & Jaipur and Paradip in Odisha have started contributing to business. The terminals being set up at Salawas in Rajasthan and Charadi in Gujarat on Western DFC will improve double stack running.
- During 2025-26, CONCOR has operated 6,396 Double-stack container trains.
- Double Stack Container Train services have started directly between JNPT and our terminals at Dadri, Khetulwala and Varanasi.
- In a significant step towards strengthening Atteritibhar Bharat in the global logistics landscape, movement of export-import cargo in our own containers to overseas destinations has commenced. The company has developed its shipping platform issuing Bill of Lading.
- Movement of 9.15 lakh TEUs was done through our own first mile and last mile services which is around 44% of the FVLM potential.
- CONCOR commenced assured transit time train services between Delhi and Kolkata and Bangalore and Delhi.
- Parcel train services commenced between Bhiwandi, Mumbai to Sakinaka, Kolkata.
- Aushadhi Express, India's first dedicated refrigerated freight train service was launched to transport temperature-sensitive pharmaceutical cargo from Hyderabad to JNPT.
- Business Solution Services were provided with volumes of 41,030 TEUs during the year. This covers services like customs clearance, fumigation, palletization, lashing, clearance of containers and cargo bound for Bangladesh and Nepal.
- Air cargo business has been operationalised through CONCOR terminals at ICD Dadri and Ludhiana.
- Sankh Goods Shed, near Lucknow is being developed to cater to the burgeoning logistics needs of the Kanpur and Lucknow region.

- Electronic filing of documents extended to all EXIM terminals.
- Enterprise Dashboard functioning for Public Monitoring.
- Customer interfaces strengthened through a dedicated web server and mobile app.
- Tools such as Know Your Container Location (KYCL), e-tendering and the First Mile-Last Mile (FVLM) mobile app continue to streamline operations and contribute to ease of doing business.
- Double Stack Loading Plan (DSCP) system has improved train loading leading to higher utilization and reduced rail haulage cost.
- Disaster recovery site and stand by systems at primary sites have been setup for commercial and business sensitive applications.

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Devg Concor said and I quote "To win in the marketplace you must first win in the workplace."

Your Company continues to regard its human capital as its greatest strength. The business is run by a lean and committed team of 1,238 CONCORians with a ratio of staff cost to revenue merely 5.73%. Continuous in-house programmes, specialized and on-the-job learning has helped employees strengthen their capabilities and adapt to changing business needs.

CONCOR remains committed to building an inclusive workplace with women in leadership role heading Areas and key functions like banking, HR and terminal operations. The Company continues to invest in the physical and mental well-being of its team through workplace yoga and fitness facilities, participation in marathons and sports events.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Corporate governance, ethics and transparency continue to be deeply embedded in your Company's functioning underpinned by robust internal controls, clear delegation of authority and a strong culture of disclosure and accountability. There are robust systems and procedures in place so as to have efficient management of business and transparency and compliance in all functions.

During the year 2024-25, the Company has been rated "Outstanding" by the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) on Corporate Governance parameters and in MDU performance it was rated "Very Good". The 'AAA' credit rating for the Non-Fund Based Facilities has been reaffirmed by ICRA, reflecting continued confidence in our financial strength and governance standards. On the financial statements for 2025-26 there are no audit qualifications and C&AG of India has issued nil comments.

Your Company's performance and leadership continue to be recognised through several prestigious awards and accolades received during the year.

SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Your Company continues to conduct its business in a socially and environmentally responsible manner deepening its adoption of energy-efficient and ecofriendly systems and transportation solutions.

We firmly believe in the principles of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam which teaches us that World is one family and the responsibility to protect our mother earth rests with all of us. We have touched the lives of more than 1.25 million people during the year and spent an amount of Rs.40.59 crore through various CSR programs.

WAY FORWARD

We are working tirelessly to make our country a Viksit Bharat by 2047 coinciding with the centennial of our independence. Our dream is that India will emerge as a leading global power offering its citizens high standards of living and ensuring equitable growth for all. In today's World, a nation of 1.4 billion people is not merely a statistic but a wellspring of skill, ambition and enterprise.

With a strong asset base of present of 68 terminals, 444 rakes, 58,000

containers, and 232 LNG/VEV trucks and a capable and committed team, your Company is well placed to retain its leadership position in the sector. Today, CONCOR stands stronger, more agile and uniquely placed to capitalize on numerous emerging opportunities in the logistics sector. With our motto of "Think Logistics, Think CONCOR" we remain steadfast in our commitment to innovate, serve with purpose and be a partner in the growth of our country. In our pursuit for relentless growth we shall focus on the following objectives:

- Expanding our terminal network to 100 and count of rakes and containers to 500 & 70,000 respectively.
- Diversification into new business verticals and extensive use of technology.
- Capturing new opportunities arising from the expected growth in EXIM and domestic container volumes with full commissioning of two DFCs.
- Promoting double stack trains and providing end-to-end logistics solutions.
- Rationalization of haulage charges to attract light weight cargo.
- Capturing bulk cement and liquid cargo in tank containers.
- Tapping potential in shipping, air cargo and cold chain logistics.
- Expanding Green Logistics solutions and bouquet of value-added services.
- Operating 100% of FVLM throughput under our own first mile and last mile services.

THROUGHPUT PERFORMANCE (TEUs)

Year	Throughput (TEUs)
2024-25	50,94,942
2025-26	55,82,193

- Scaling up overseas container movement under CONCOR's own Bill of Lading.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge and appreciate the constructive support extended by the C&AG of India, our Auditors, Ministries of Railways, Shipping, Commerce and Industry, Finance as well as the Customs authorities, various State Governments, JV partners, value-chain partners, customers and regulators.

I extend my deepest appreciation to all shareholders for their continued trust and support and my sincere gratitude to my fellow Board members for their guidance and contributions. My heartfelt thanks are due to Team CONCOR whose sincerity and hard work continue to carry your Company to new heights.

I pray for the well-being of all of us and of our beloved Nation.

Thank You. Jal Hind.

Ajit Kumar Panda
Chairman and Managing Director
(DIN: 08221385)

28th September, 2026
New Delhi

Note: This does not purport to be a record of the proceedings of the 38th Annual General Meeting of the Company.

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Taking Note

AGRICULTURE MINISTER Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Monday launched a veiled attack on some of the country's top agriculture officials for their seemingly casual approach during a conference. Addressing officials on the opening day of the two-day National Agriculture Conference - Rabi Campaign 2026, Chouhan observed that not all participants were taking notes. Taking the route of subtle innuendo, Chouhan said, "I notice that some farmers are taking notes, while others — perhaps so learned — might be registering the information mentally. However, I urge you to make sure you do register it."

Role of Honour

AT A time when women's issues are dominating political discourse, RSS-linked Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (BKS) is organising a conference of women farmers at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in Delhi on September 30. Being held in the International Year of the Woman Farmer declared by the United Nations, the BKS conference focuses on highlighting that women undertake a substantial share of agricultural activities, while also preserving traditional farming knowledge and indigenous seeds. Some of them will also be honoured for their work in areas such as organic farming, animal husbandry, food processing, etc.

DUSU polls: Rahul asks NSUI chief, Kanhaiya Kumar to explain rout

Asad Rehman
New Delhi, September 28

WEEKS AFTER it was routed in the Delhi University Students Union (DUSU) elections, failing to win a seat in the central panel for the first time in over a decade, the Congress's NSUI in-charge Kanhaiya Kumar and president Vinod Jha were summoned by Rahul Gandhi on Monday. The leader of Opposition sought answers on the defeat from the two leaders, it is learnt. The NSUI, or the National Students' Union of India, is the Congress's student wing. The meeting came at a time when Gandhi's student outreach, "Chhatron ki Gung", has drawn sizable crowds in different cities and the Opposition and the BJP are preparing to corner the Election Commission over its internal differences on the issue of SIR of electoral rolls. CJPHad led the protests against the NEET exam paper leak, which forced Dharmendra Pradhan to resign as Union Education Minister in July, bringing to the fore youth discontent on various issues.

Sources said Gandhi was unhappy with Kumar and Jha over the NSUI's defeat at a time when the Congress is making sustained efforts to reach out to the youth and Gen-Z voters. The leaders have submitted a report to the LoP, who asked them specific questions about the reasons for the defeat in the DUSU polls. Gandhi is also learnt to have asked Jha and Kumar pointed questions about why independent candidate Deepanshu Shokeen, who left the NSUI, was not accommodated and given a ticket.

The two leaders are learnt to have told Gandhi that the conditions Shokeen had placed were unreasonable. However, Gandhi was not happy with the way the matter was handled, according to sources.

CWC meeting today: EC row and Opp strategy on agenda

Asad Rehman
New Delhi, September 28

AS THE Opposition seeks to step up pressure on the Election Commission (EC) after last week's revelations of a divide in the poll panel over voter roll revision — first reported by *The Indian Express* — the Congress is likely to demand an inquiry and call for "action from the poll panel and the government", sources said.

The decision will be taken at a meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) on Tuesday. "We will give everyone present at the meeting a chance to speak and will accordingly release a statement. But these inquiries and call for action are likely to be part of the CWC resolution on Tuesday," said a Congress insider.

The Indian Express on September 23 reported that Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi had objected on record at least 14 times in 10 months to SIR-related decisions taken without their knowledge and glaring gaps in processes. In a four-page note issued after a meeting of the full Commission on Saturday, the poll panel announced nine decisions that



Police use water cannon to disperse Congress workers during a protest against the SIR process, in Jaipur on Monday. RIGHT: JAIN PARAS

addressed, point by point, several of the concerns recorded by Commissioners Sandhu and Joshi. However, it left several questions unanswered.

The INDIA blocs scheduled to meet just a day after the CWC to chart out a joint plan for the Opposition on the EC issue. Top Opposition leaders will attend the meeting on Wednesday.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the Congress takes the EC matter "seriously". "This issue concerns the entire country, the existence of our democracy and the survival of our country. That is why we are very serious about this issue," he

told reporters on Monday.

He said the EC's "own people have exposed them" and that even a "former Chief Secretary of Kerala has said that the Chief Election Commissioner himself told him to contest the election". "This means that he is propagating the BJP's philosophy and has become a BJP worker. Gyanesh Kumar should resign. We have to take action against him, even after his resignation," said Kharge.

The CWC meeting comes at a time when the Cockroach Janta Party has given a call for a Jantar Mantar-like protest in Mumbai on October 2 demand-

ing CEC Gyanesh Kumar's resignation. The Opposition has also raised the demand, saying Kumar must step down.

Over the last few days, the Congress has held protests across the country demanding Kumar's resignation. "The Congress has protested in 1000+ districts today. Mr. Gyanesh, this is just the beginning. The grounds will only grow from here on. My advice to Modi-Shah, sack Gyanesh before the streets are filled with people rejecting your Vote Chori shenanigans," Congress general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal posted on X on Monday.

The Opposition plans to move a motion in both Houses of Parliament to remove Kumar as CEC, with the parties learnt to be working together to draft a motion seeking advice from legal experts. In March, 63 Rajya Sabha MPs and 130 Lok Sabha MPs had moved a motion seeking Kumar's removal. The motion was rejected by the chairs of both Houses on April 6. On April 24, the Opposition moved a fresh notice in the Rajya Sabha seeking the removal of Kumar for "acting in a partisan manner". The notice remains pending before the Chairman.

2 Cong leaders held for protest outside CEC's home in Agra

Manish Sahu
Lucknow, September 28

THE AGRA Police on Monday arrested two Congress leaders for attempt to murder after a group of Congress workers gathered near the ancestral residence of CEC Gyanesh Kumar in Agra to protest and allegedly defaced the walls of the house.

Police arrested Congress state general secretary (organisation) Anil Yadav and Mathura district president Mukesh Dhanagar after they chased their vehicle while they were allegedly trying to leave Agra for Delhi.

S I Gupta said that after receiving information of a crowd gathered outside the CEC's house in Agra's Vijay Nagar, he, accompanied by a constable, reached the spot and found 15-20 people raising slogans.

"We have arrested two persons in connection with the case. Both have been named in the FIR," said Agra Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police Manoj Kumar Yadav.

Police are examining CCTV footage to identify other people who may have been involved in the alleged protest. The Congress had called protests against the CEC across the state amid a row over the EC's functioning.

SOHRABUDDIN ENCOUNTER CASE

Supreme Court to examine acquittals, not Shah's discharge

Express News Service
New Delhi, September 28

THE SUPREME Court on Monday issued notice on an appeal challenging the acquittal of all 22 accused in the 2005 encounter case of Sohrabuddin Shaikh, his wife Kausar Bt, and his aide Tulsiram Prajapati, but made it clear that it will not re-examine the discharge of Union Home Minister Amit Shah in the case.

A three-judge bench presided over by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant issued notices to all 22 accused — including 21 police personnel — acquitted by the Bombay High Court. The bench, also comprising Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana, was hearing an appeal filed by Sohrabuddin's younger brother Rubabuddin Shaikh, challenging the May 7, 2026, HC judgment.

The court said that it's a matter of "serious concern" if 92 witnesses in a trial turn hostile.

Appearing for the appellant, Senior Advocate D S Naidu said "since 2010, I have been pursuing. At my best, investigation was also transferred".

Justice Bagchi said, "We understand there has been a largescale turning of hostile of witnesses". But Naidu said, "There is forensic evidence that could have told the truth and bullet injuries and cartridges were found. And my sister-in-law could not even be traced... Some of the witnesses may have turned hostile, but they cannot hush up."

Justice Bagchi said, "That's what, Mr Naidu, is of concern. In a trial if 92 witnesses are standing hostile, it is serious concern." The judge added: "But we will

not issue notice on paragraph 43 (of the judgment)."

Naidu said, "But I believe it needs a re-look by Your Lordships."

Justice Bagchi said: "It's closed, cannot be reopened." Paragraph 43 of the HC judgment dealt with an application filed by an intervenor, Mantar Kalpesh Kumar, challenging the December 2014 trial court order discharging Shah. The HC dismissed the application observing that it appeared to have been filed with "an oblique motive at the instance of political adversaries" and without disclosing the fact that earlier, the HC as well as the SC had dismissed petitions against the discharge.

The CJ said, "We will issue notice. We would like to see the statements of some of the witnesses. We are not summoning the records in vernacular language. You give us 4-5 statements which you feel are vital. We will examine."

He too agreed that paragraph 43 need not be reopened. "But for para 43...no question of...we will not allow this kind of...to be opened," the CJ said.

Justice Bagchi said, "We will examine the acquittal, although it's a concurrent finding of acquittal." The judge said, "For persons who were put on trial, whether there was a fair trial, that is a relevant consideration. High Court says there is nothing to provide an inference that a proper trial was not conducted."

Appearing for some of the police personnel, Senior Advocate K Parameshwar urged the court to give it an early hearing, saying "We are public servants. This has been on our head for the last 12 years..."

AAP records 68% fall in donations in 2025-26, BJD declares zero contributions

EC is yet to make public contribution reports of BJP, Congress & other national parties

Damini Nath & Jatin Anand
New Delhi, September 28

THE AAP declared donations of Rs 12.09 crore in 2025-26, showing a 68% decrease from the previous year, the party's contribution report to the Election Commission reveals. The contributions to the BJD fell 100% in the same year, which was its first year out of power in Odisha after over two decades.

Of the AAP's total declared contributions in 2025-26, two donors — the Prudent Electoral Trust and Trident Limited — accounted for nearly all of it, with Rs 5 crore each. Prudent Electoral Trust is one of the key donors to parties, which in past years received contributions from leading corporations, including Bharti, Tata Group, Jindal, etc.

The report of donations to Prudent for 2025-26 was not yet available. Trident Ltd was founded by Rajinder Gupta, the Punjab-based billionaire who was an AAP MP until switching to the BJP earlier this year. AAP also received Rs 5 lakh from Jain Siddhant and Associates and Rs 20,010 from Brilliant Study Centre, with the remaining donors being individuals. Ashutosh Ranka, now a co-convenor of the BJP, who had earlier served as an AAP spokesperson, made a donation of Rs 21,100 to the party. In 2024-25, the AAP had declared Rs 38.10 crore in donations.

The total donations to the party may be higher as parties

are only required to submit details of all donations above Rs 20,000 each in their annual contribution reports to the EC.

The BJD, which was in power in Odisha for 24 continuous years until 2024, declared "nil" donations over Rs 20,000. Last year, it declared contributions of Rs 60 crore, with Vedanta Ltd the biggest donor with Rs 25 crore.

Meanwhile, BJP ally Asom Gana Parishad, which received contributions of Rs 7.64 crore, got a substantial chunk of this, that is Rs 5.18 crore, from the BJP's state unit in Assam. The party also received contributions worth Rs 35 lakh from two firms in tranches of Rs 25 lakh and Rs 10 lakh, respectively.

On the other hand, key NDA ally TDP received Rs 58.25 crore in contributions. Of that, Rs 45 crore were received from the Prudent Electoral Trust based out of Delhi. Companies were the next largest donors to the TDP having contributed Rs 1.76 crore.

Chitrag Paswan's LJP (Ram Vilas), which received Rs 3.23 crore in donations, got Rs 1 crore from Prudent Electoral Trust. On the other hand, companies such as Agventure Enterprises Private Ltd, Magnum Management and Services, Ganesh Infrastructure Ltd, JIP Infotech Pvt Ltd, and Bhawanee Homes Projects Pvt Ltd, among others, accounted for over Rs 80 lakh of the contributions received.

The YSRCP has declared donations of Rs 24.30 crore, with the largest contribution of Rs 10 crore from Chennai-based Goodwood Sanctuary Pvt Ltd and Rs 5 crore from NA Divine Habitat Pvt Ltd — also from Chennai.

The EC is yet to make public the contribution reports of the BJP, Congress and other national parties.

TN EARMARKS RS 755.83 CR ANNUALLY FOR PROGRAMME

Vijay rolls out gold ring scheme for newborns in state hospitals

Arun Janardhanan
Chennai, September 28

TAMIL NADU Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay on Monday launched a scheme to give a one-gram gold ring of 22-carat to every eligible baby born in a government health institution in the state, rolling out one of the TVK government's prominent election promises.

Vijay inaugurated the Thaimaman Thanga Mothiram Thittam (Maternal Uncle's Gold Ring Scheme) at Government Rajaji Hospital in Madurai. The state has earmarked Rs 755.83 crore annually for the programme, estimated to cover about 4.42 lakh deliveries in government health facilities each year.

The scheme applies retrospectively to babies born in government hospitals and primary health centres from June 22 (Vijay's birthday). Both boys and girls are eligible. The mother must be a Tamil Nadu resident, registered under the Pregnancy and Infant Cohort Monitoring and Evaluation (PICME) system and have a Reproductive and Child Health ID.

Rolling out the scheme, Vijay presented rings to infants, including three babies seated with their mothers on stage. One recipient, Archana Devi, said she was particularly moved because she had no brothers. "I



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay presents a gold ring to a newborn at Madurai's Government Rajaji Hospital on Monday. PH

am extremely happy to receive the gold ring for my daughter," she said, adding that Vijay had treated her "as a sister."

Vijay later visited the hospital's maternity ward and presented rings to more newborns. At the inaugural function, rings were presented to 27 infants overall. The programme borrows its name from the Tamil tradition of *thaimaman seer*, in which a maternal uncle pres-

ents gifts to his sister's child.

The government has procured 1.28 lakh rings in the first phase. Each BIS-hallmarked ring will carry a unique serial number and be supplied in tamper-proof packaging.

The rollout has been temporarily withheld in Madurai, Thakam and Dharapuram Assembly constituencies because of the Model Code of Conduct for the coming bye-elections.

India, Netherlands set to deepen agri ties

Express News Service
New Delhi, September 28

THE LANDMARK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and the European Union would further boost the two countries' cooperation on agricultural innovation, Dutch minister Silvio Erkens said on Monday.

The Netherlands Embassy

in New Delhi wrote on X that Erkens — the Netherlands Minister for Food Security, Fisheries and Horticulture — met Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan for "a bilateral discussion to deepen their cooperation in climate-resilient agriculture and water-efficient cultivation". "Minister Chouhan has also underlined

the impact of the Indo-Dutch Centers of Excellence," it said.

India and the EU had concluded negotiations on the FTA this January. The agreement is expected to be signed in December this year, and come into force in 2027. Erkens is on a visit to India, the first by a Dutch agriculture minister here since 2018, from September 27-October 2.

● FORMER CM TRAINED HIS GUNS ON BJP GOVT OVER MINES & MINERALS AMENDMENT ACT, WHICH PROHIBITS MINERAL-BEARING STATES FROM LEVYING TAXES ON MINING LEASE HOLDERS

In 1st major stir after poll loss, Naveen says 'will fight for Odisha until last breath'

Sujit Bisoyi
Bhubaneswar, September 28

OUTSIDE THE Odisha Assembly, a sea of people, running into thousands and mostly dressed in white, started gathering from across the state on Monday morning. Around 12 pm, BJD chief Naveen Patnaik, escorted by his security detail, went up to the dais. The crowd erupted in applause, and slogans of "Naveen Patnaik Zindabad" rent the air.

This is the first time that the party has held a protest of such a huge scale in the last two years, after the BJP ended its 24-

year rule to capture power in the state in 2024. The party had called the protest to oppose the recently passed Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2026.

Calling for a united fight against the Act, which "would cost a loss worth thousands of crores to the state every year", Patnaik said, "MMDR is not an ordinary Bill. It is associated with the rights of the state. Sadly, such an important Bill was passed in Parliament without any discussion. In whose interest did the 20 BJP Lok Sabha MPs (from Odisha) remain silent? The state government re-

mained silent. Whom do they fear?" the 79-year-old said.

During the rally on Mahatma Gandhi road, for which workers and leaders from across Odisha were mobilised, Patnaik said people of the state were the rightful owners of its mines and its land. In his sharpest offensive yet against the BJP regime in Odisha, Patnaik said the government — always in denial — does little beyond making speeches.

He said despite him writing two letters to CM Mohan Charan Mahli, seeking a special session of the state House and another to pass a resolution against the new mining law, there was no



Naveen Patnaik during the rally on Monday. EXPRESS

reply. "Why does the (state) government remain silent when it comes to Odisha's interests? No

party can ever be greater than the motherland. The chair of power you hold today may not

be there tomorrow. But if you betray this land, you will face condemnation forever. Gen Z will never forgive you," said Patnaik.

Reviving his regional pitch against the party in power at the Centre, he vowed to fight for Odisha "until his last breath". Even as the Odisha government said that it is yet to assess the impact of the new mining law on the state, political parties said it would suffer a loss of Rs 1 lakh crore as arrears and additional annual revenue of Rs 12,000 crore from the mining sector.

What triggered protest against the new law is a clause prohibiting the mineral-bearing

states from levying taxes on the mining lease holders, even though the Supreme Court, in July 2024, empowered them to levy taxes and to collect arrears from April 2005. BJD sources said the party will make it an issue of "Centre vs regional interest" to target the BJP, which is in power in the state and at Centre.

The BJD has now decided to carry forward the protests to streets across the state. Sujata Rout Karthikeyan, the wife of former bureaucrat and the former CM's close aide, VK Pandian; and several other BJD leaders, MLAs and former legislators spoke at the event.

SUGGESTS POLL PANEL TO USE AI, MACHINE-LEARNING TOOLS TO EXPEDITE PROCESS

Supreme Court gives EC three months to resolve TMC name and symbol issue

Poll panel seeks six months, top court says 'three months time is enough'

Express News Service
New Delhi, September 28

THE SUPREME COURT on Monday suggested that the Election Commission use Artificial Intelligence and machine-learning tools to expedite resolution of the dispute between Trinamool Congress factions over the party's name and symbol.

Led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and comprising Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice V Mohana, the bench is hearing former West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's challenge to the Election Commission's interim order freezing the Trinamool Congress's name and its symbol until a decision on the factional feud is taken.

The Election Commission sought six months to resolve the matter, but the bench said three months is "enough". At one point, Justice Bagchi said, "Use AI and machine-learning devices... It will expedite the case... reading documents, etc."

Senior Advocate DS Naik, appearing for the poll panel, said, "To some extent, they may help, though not to the fullest extent. I will tell you the practical problem we have faced. Rival parties, party cadres, members and everybody vouch for whichever group they support and then file affidavits. They come in

lakhs. Whatever time the court fixes, let it run from the date the process of filing affidavits is completed."

Appearing for the Trinamool faction led by Mamata Banerjee, party leader and Senior Advocate Kalyan Banerjee said their camp has responded to the poll panel's notice, but the rival faction is yet to do so.

The bench then said, "We grant four weeks to the contesting respondents and the petitioner to place on record additional documents, affidavits and counter-affidavits, etc. Let pleadings be completed in all respects within four weeks. The Election Commission of India shall take three months thereafter to decide the symbol issue."

The poll panel's counsel said it would need at least six months to decide the issue. Justice Bagchi, however, said, "Three months is good enough."

When the poll body's counsel replied that it will be "very difficult", the bench said, "If some extreme exigency arises, come before us."

Trinamool Congress, which lost power in Bengal after the Assembly poll drubbing this year, is now caught in a factional feud in the Assembly and the Parliament. While the rebel MPs have joined the Nationalist Citizens Party of India and aligned themselves with the NDA, the rebel faction comprising MLAs is led by Arup Roy and now calls itself the Democratic Trinamool Congress. The Banerjee-led faction is called the Mamata All India Trinamool Congress.

'Authorities should be fair': HC raps EC over ISF symbol allotment to TMC rebels

Asks what provisions EC considered while allotting the symbol to the DTC

Tanusree Bose
Kolkata, September 28

RESERVING ITS order on the allotment of the 'envelope' symbol to the TMC's rebel faction for the upcoming bypolls in West Bengal, the Calcutta High Court on Monday pulled up the Election Commission, asking why it did not consider the ISF's application for the symbol which was before it on September 17, and reminded that "authorities should be fair before the court". It also sought to know what provisions the authorities had considered while allotting the symbol to the Democratic Trinamool Congress (DTC).

Bypolls to the Nandigram and Rejnagar Assembly constituencies in West Bengal are scheduled to be held on October 6, with counting on October 9.

The ISF, which is contesting from Nandigram, had moved the High Court claiming that the 'envelope' symbol, with which it contested the 2024 Lok Sabha and 2026 Assembly elections, was reassigned to the DTC despite its application for allotment.

The court asked the EC counsel what provision the authorities had considered

while allotting the symbol to the DTC, to which the EC counsel said there were specific provisions under the Symbols Order and The Conduct of Election Rules for allotment of free symbols in bypolls.

Justice Krishna Rao said, "If the EC has been guided by the private respondent, what remains further? The authorities should be fair before the court."

"Why has this symbol been given to another political party and denied to this party? They have made out a case that this symbol being given to another party will benefit that party," the court said.

The EC counsel submitted that allotment of symbols was within the commission's discretion and that it had acted according to law in allotting the 'envelope' symbol to the DTC and the 'almirah' symbol to the ISF.

Senior counsel Jishnu Chowdhury, representing the Election Commission, submitted, "They had selected the envelope for the general elections. They were allotted the symbol on March 10. Then the general election was held. This is a free symbol, so nobody has a right."

Petitioner's counsel Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya argued

"If the EC has been guided by private respondent, what remains further? The authorities should be fair before the court...Why has this symbol been given to another political party and denied to this party?"

JUSTICE KRISHNA RAO,
CALCUTTA HIGH COURT JUDGE

that discretion must be exercised reasonably and rationally and "cannot be absolute like an autocrat". He further argued that the symbol to another party was illegal and that the power had been exercised arbitrarily.

He also argued that the bypoll was a continuation of the Assembly election and questioned how the symbol could be taken away from the ISF during the by-election.

Bhattacharya submitted that the Supreme Court had clarified in a judgment that the court had the authority to facilitate the proper conduct of

the elections.

He sought deferment of the bypoll in the interest of justice, saying it would not affect the constitution of the Assembly or create any constitutional crisis.

During the arguments, Justice Rao said the ISF might not have a right to the 'envelope' symbol and its application could be rejected, "but that rejection should be reasoned".

"The case of the petitioner was not kept in mind. Where is the petitioner's allotment request? If two requests are for one symbol, then what is the duty of the Election Commission? He will give the symbol to one party and not to the other party. This is the continuation of the general elections," the court observed.

"I am saying that general elections are over, but the candidate had contested the general elections with this symbol. Again he is intending to contest the by elections and that symbol is being given to a party which was not there earlier," the court said.

But the Court also observed as to how far the court can intervene in this matter at this stage. "Now that the symbol has been allotted and things have been going on, how can this interfere in the matter at this stage," it asked.

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Asoka Hazra, Advocate, High Court, Calcutta, Trademark Attorney,
Code: 2940, Kalibara, Burdwan, Purba Bardhaman, 713101, W.B. India.



Protest against CEC continues

Youth Congress activists clash with police during a protest rally demanding the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, in Kolkata, Monday. Congress members burnt effigies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Kumar at the demonstrations. The SUCI members also staged a protest demanding restoration of the names of 13 crore voters deleted from electoral rolls across the country. PARTHA PAUL

Abhishek moves HC over 'abrupt' withdrawal of his Z plus security

Express News Service
Kolkata, September

MAMATA BANERJEE'S TMC faction MP Abhishek Banerjee has moved the Calcutta High Court over the "sudden and abrupt withdrawal" of his Z-plus security cover following the West Bengal assembly election results, with his counsel seeking an urgent hearing on the matter.

The Diamond Harbour MP's lawyer moved the court of Justice Krishna Rao on Monday, seeking urgent hearing of his petition.

Justice Krishna Rao said the plea will be taken up for hearing on October 6, and directed the petitioner to serve notice upon the parties in the meantime.

Abhishek Banerjee's lawyer Ayan Bhattacharjee stated that

his client had been allotted Z-plus security cover since 2016.

Bhattacharjee said that in 2024, after an assessment of the threat perception to Abhishek Banerjee by the Union home ministry, the MP was granted Z-plus security cover all over India.

His counsel alleged that this security cover was suddenly withdrawn following the West Bengal assembly election results in May this year, which the BJP won defeating the TMC.

Bhattacharjee also claimed that Abhishek Banerjee has faced attacks on four occasions following withdrawal of the security cover.

"I would like to mention the sudden and abrupt withdrawal of Z-plus security cover. I am the general secretary of the principal party in opposition. From

2016 I have been given Z plus security," his counsel argued.

He further mentioned, "In 2024 an assessment was made by the government of India home affairs whereby I was granted Z plus security all over the country now suddenly it has been withdrawn after the election."

According to Bhattacharya, after the withdrawal of the security, Banerjee had faced four attacks.

His lawyer submitted that the MP had made a representation to the government for restoration of the security cover, following which the personnel posted at Abhishek Banerjee's house were also withdrawn.

In late May this year, Abhishek Banerjee was allegedly heckled and pelted with eggs at Sonarpur in South 24 Parganas.

Former MLA arrested with illegal firearm

Press Trust of India
Barasat, September 28

FORMER MLA Biswajit Das was arrested on Monday after an illegal firearm was allegedly recovered from his car in North 24 Parganas district, police said.

Acting on a tip-off, police in-

tercepted Das's car in the Gopalnagar market area and searched the vehicle, recovering the firearm, they said.

Das was elected from the Bangaon Uttar assembly constituency on a TMC ticket in 2011 and 2016. He contested the 2021 assembly elections on a BJP ticket from Bagdah and

won, but returned to the TMC after the polls.

The TMC fielded him from Bangaon Uttar in the assembly elections held earlier this year, but he was defeated by BJP's Ashok Kirtanta.

Das later sided with the rebel camp of the TMC amid a split in the party.

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Tender Notice No. ACE(P&C)-TN-14-2026-27

[A] PROCUREMENT: Tender No. (1) E-3106-22kV to 400kV CT/PT & CVT under Buy Back Scheme..(2) E-3115: Various Class Silicon Rubber Insulators (SRI)..(3) E-3122: Hiring of Consultant for Vail. of 765 kV D/C Trans. line Tower & Found. Design & Verification of Tower Str. drawing & BOM w.r.t. approved SLD and design for 765 kV System for period of one year.

[B] CIVIL: Const. of C.R. building, cable trench, etc. for following 66 kV S/s.,

Tender No.	Name of Sub-station.	Name of Circle.
660	66 kV Nadisar S/s	Jambuva
673	66 kV Shapur S/s	Gondal
675	66 kV Juna Katariya S/s	Anjar
676	66 kV Vadala S/s & 02 Nos. Line bay 220 kV Mokha S/s	Anjar
677	66 kV Mota Vadiya S/s	Jamnagar
678	66 kV Kadodara-B S/s in premises of 66 kV Kadodara S/s	Navsari
679	66 kV Vapi GIDC CETP S/s	Navsari
680	66 kV Chhapra S/s	Navsari
682	66 kV Boga S/s & 02 Nos. of oppo. end bay 66 kV Dedlapada S/s	Bharuch
684	66 kV Khatpat S/s	Jamnagar
685	66 kV Gambhol S/s	Himalnagar
686	66 kV May S/s	Anjar
687	66 kV Achhod S/s	Bharuch
689	66 kV Borigam S/s & 02 Nos. of opp. end line-bay found. 66 kV Damanganga S/s	Navsari
690	66 kV Sachin SEZ S/s in premises of 132 kV Sachin SEZ GIS S/s & 02 Nos. of opp. end feeder bay 66 kV Diamond Park S/s	Navsari
692	66 kV Rav Moti S/s	Anjar
693	66 kV Borlyavi S/s	Mehsana
694	66 kV Unjha (Ailhor) S/s	Mehsana
695	66 kV Chada S/s	Mehsana
696	66 kV Hapa S/s	Himalnagar
697	66 kV Valadar S/s	Palanpur
698	66 kV Naroli S/s	Palanpur
699	66 kV Bevia S/s	Palanpur
700	66 kV Chhindwadi S/s	Palanpur
701	66 kV Ehemal S/s	Palanpur
702	66 kV Pansora S/s	Nadiad
703	66 kV Zak S/s	Nadiad
704	66 kV Devki Vansol (Vansola-2) S/s	Nadiad
705	66 kV Hirapur-2 S/s	Nadiad
706	66 kV Bhel S/s	Surendranagar
707	66 kV Dharpipla S/s	Surendranagar
708	66 kV Saljanpur S/s	Surendranagar

CIVIL:- 674,681,683,688,691:- (1) Const. of RCC cable trench for laying of 66 kV LILO at Prop. 66 kV Sanand-III S/s from existing 66 kV S/C Sanand-II - M/s. Coca Cola line with U/G cable..(2) Const. of Found., Cable trench, RCC road, Yard PCC / Metal spreading & ancillary civil work for New 220/66 kV TR-07 Bay & Re-const. of C'wall at 400 kV Vav S/s under Navsari Circle..(3) Const. of C'wall, etc. at 220 kV Godhavi GIS S/s (Phase-I) under Nadiad circle..(4) Const. of C'wall, C.R. extension (01 Span) at G.F., Found., Feeder cable trench, etc. at 66 kV Waghal S/s under Navsari Circle..(5) ARC for Const. of Found. and other misc. work for Line bay, TR Bay and Bus strengthening at various 66 kV to 220 kV S/s under Mehsana Circle.

[C] LINE:- E-506,514:- (1) 132 kV D/C U/G Cable line from 220 kV Rupakheda S/s end to the switchyard of Prop. Dahod TSS..(2) conversion of (1) 66 kV Halvad-Soladi line (2) 66 kV Dhrangadhra-Hirapur line & other (Five) lines with ACSR DOG cond. into eq. HTLS cond. (Except Gap Type cond.) of S'nagar Circle.

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Admn/Rec/2026/30/01 dated 18 September 2026	Manager (Campus Facility Services)
Admn/Rec/2026/35 dated 18 September 2026	Executive Assistant
Tejas/Rec/2026/37 dated 18 September 2026	Chief Executive Officer (CEO) - TEJAS Project Manager - Venture Growth & Impact - Tejas
Tejas/Rec/2026/37/01 dated 21 September 2026	Project Associate - Ecosystem & Community - Tejas
Admn/Rec/2026/38 dated 15 September 2026	Manager (UG Programs) Associate Manager (UG Programs)
IIMM- CRISP/MahaTAC/ 2026-27/01 dated 15 September 2026	Senior Associate (Policy) Associate (Evaluation and Data) Research Associate Project Manager (Projects, Accounts and Administration)
Admn/Rec/1P/2026/01 dated 15 September 2026	Post-Doctoral Fellowship
Admn/Rec/2026/36 dated 22 September 2026	Academic Associates

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Candidate having knowledge of Marathi will be preferred.

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Please refer University Circular No. संविमार्ग / संविमार्ग / संविमार्ग / ११/११०-११११ दिनांक ११ जून २०२६, for qualifications and experience at the time of interview and for equivalence of subject please read university Circular No. CTAU/05/2025-26 dated 24th June, 2025.

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Hon. Bhupeshbhai R. Patel
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details may be seen from website
<https://tenders.wb.gov.in> &
<http://wbpwd.gov.in> 5d/ EE/BHD/
[PW]IR/1. ica7073792026@wb.gov.in

FORM NO. 14
[See Regulation 33(2)]
By Regt. Ad, Dues falling which by Publication

**OFFICE OF THE
RECOVERY OFFICER - III
DEBITS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL
KOLKATA (DRT 3)**
8th Floor, Jeevan Sudha Building,
42C, Jawahar Lal Nehru Road,
Kolkata - 700071

DEMAND NOTICE
Notice under sections 25 to 28 of the
Recovery of Debts & Bankruptcy Act,
1993 and rule 2 of second schedule to
the Income Tax Act, 1961
RC57/2024
STATE BANK OF INDIA
Versus
DURGA SHANKAR GOLDAR
To
(CD 1) Durga Shankar Goldar, S/o
Mahadev Goldar, Proprietor of M/s
Livproed And Company, 18, Gish
Avenue, Kolkata - 700003.
This is to notify that as per the Recovery
Certificate issued in pursuance of orders
passed by the Presiding Officer, DEBITS
RECOVERY TRIBUNAL, KOLKATA

RECOVERY TRIBUNAL, KOLKATA
(DRT 3) in QA/82/2019 an amount of Rs. 10,62,949/- (Rupees Ten Lakh Sixty Two Thousand Nine Hundred Forty Nine Only) along with pendency fee and future interest @ 12.20% Simple Interest Yearly w.e.f. 07.01.2019 till realization and costs of Rs. 13,000/-. (Rupees Thirteen Thousand only) has become due against you (Jointly and severally/ Fully/Limited).

2. You are hereby directed to pay the above sum within 15 days of the receipt of the notice, failing which the recovery shall be made in accordance with the Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 and Rules there under.

3. You are hereby ordered to declare on an affidavit the particulars of your assets on or before the next date of hearing.

4. You are hereby ordered to appear before the undersigned on 13.10.2020 at 11.30 a.m. for further proceedings.

5. In addition to the sum aforesaid, you will also be liable to pay:

(a) Such interests as is payable for the period commencing immediately after this notice of the certificate/ execution proceedings.

(b) All costs, charges and expenses incurred in respect of the service of this notice and warrants and other processes and all other proceedings taken for recovering the amount due.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Tribunal, on this date: 13.07.2020.

sd/-
(Prodip Kumar Mondal)
Recovery Officer
Government of India
Kolkata Debts Recovery Tribunal 3

Form No. 3
[See Regulation-13(1)(a)]
**DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL
SILIGURI**
2nd Floor, PCM Tower, Sewoke Road,
Siliguri - 734001 (West Bengal)
Case No.: OA/34/2026
Summons under sub-section (4) of
section 19 of the Act, read with sub-rule
(2A) of rule 5 of the Debt Recovery
Tribunal (Procedure) Rules, 1993
Exh. No.: 6621
UCO BANK
VS
M/S SAMAKHER HEALTH CARE LLP
AND ORS.
To
(2) Smt. Rekha Gupta, W/o Kalikash Prasad
Gupta, Shelcon Gardens Block B, Flat 201,
P.O. Dewidanga Bazar, Panchayat- Babu
Basa, Division Champansai, Dist. Jorhaling,
Pin- 734003.
SUMMONS
WHEREAS, OA/34/2026 was listed before
Hon'ble Presiding Officer on 20.05.2026.
WHEREAS this Hon'ble Tribunal is pleased to
issue summons/ notice on the said
Application under Section 19(4) of the Act,
(OA) filed against you for recovery of debts of
Rs. 27,55,631.56 (application along with
copies of documents etc. annexed).
In accordance with sub-section (4) of section
19 of the Act, you, the defendants are
directed as under:-
(i) to show cause within thirty days of the
service of summons as to why relief prayed
for should not be granted;
(ii) to disclose particulars of properties or
assets other than those properties and assets

number 3A of the original application;

(iii) you are restrained from dealing with or disposing of secured assets or such other assets and properties disclosed under serial number 3A of the original application, pending hearing and disposal of the application for attachment of properties;

(iv) you shall not transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise, except in the ordinary course of his business any of the assets over which security interest is created and/or other assets and properties specified or disclosed under serial number 3A of the original application without the prior approval of the Tribunal;

(v) you shall be liable to account for the sale proceeds realised by sale of secured assets or other assets and properties in the ordinary course of business and deposit such sale proceeds in the account maintained with the bank or financial institutions holding security interest over such assets.

You are also directed to file the written statement with a copy thereof furnished to the applicant and to appear before Registrar on 08.10.2026 at 10:30 A.M. failing which the application shall be heard and decided in your absence.

Given under my hand and the seal of this Tribunal on this date: 03.09.2026.

BY ORDER OF THE TRIBUNAL
Signature of the Officer authorised to issue summons
sd/-
Registrar
Debt Recovery Tribunal, Sikkim

Goa senior citizen accuses BJP MLA's son of road rage, CM orders probe

Pavneet Singh Chadha
Panaji, September 28

GOA CHIEF MINISTER Pramod Sawant said Monday that he has ordered an inquiry into an incident of road rage, allegedly involving the son of a legislator in Goa.

A senior citizen from Curchorem filed a police complaint on Monday alleging that Rahul Faldessat — son of Cumburjua Bharattya Janata Party MLA Rajesh Faldessat — and his associates blocked their car, hurled abuses at them and chased them in their SUV before speeding away.

According to the police complaint lodged by Shantaram Kudchadkar at Curchorem police station, the incident occurred on Saturday around 8.15 pm when the complainant, his daughter-in-law and grandchildren were going to Margao in their SUV. He said when they reached near the Pontemol junction, their path was blocked by another SUV, which was parked diagonally on the road.

The complainant said that due to this 'arbitrary' blocking, there was also traffic congestion for five to 10 minutes.

Clashes in Ujjain over demolition, mosque panel later razes a portion

Anand Mohan J
Bhopal, September 28

CLASHES BROKE out between police and a crowd in Madhya Pradesh's Ujjain on Monday over the removal of a portion of the Shahi Masjid that falls along a road being widened ahead of the 2028 Simhashta, with police firing tear gas shells and using lathicharge to disperse protesters.

Police said the crowd was mobilised by a faction of the mosque committee disgruntled by the demolition, and some of its younger members were misguided by AI-generated videos that falsely showed the structure being demolished.

The demolition, which was eventually carried out by members of the Muslim community itself, had been greenlit by the Madhya Pradesh High Court on September 9.

The confrontation followed a tense night outside the Shahi Masjid, where thousands had gathered after the administration prepared to remove the portion of the mosque falling within the proposed road-widening project.

Despite the court order, tensions had been simmering in the area over the proposed demolition.

tion. Hoping to win over locals, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav demolished structures outside his ancestral home.

The Ujjain Municipal Corporation said road-widening work across the city had affected approximately 80 religious places and that portions of 10 temples and a mosque had already been removed.

But thousands of residents formed a human chain around the mosque on Sunday night even as police mobilised 2,500 personnel from local police stations and Rapid Action Force units.

At night, negotiations made headway, and City Qazi Khalil Qureshi Rehman said the matter had been resolved through mutual agreement.

But as authorities gathered on Monday morning, a crowd turned violent and stones were pelted at security personnel. Police responded with tear gas shells and lathicharge.

By Monday afternoon, however, the Madhya Pradesh High Court, hearing a writ appeal against its order for partial demolition, was informed that the Muslim side had agreed to cooperate with the authorities, and disposed of the petition.



Security personnel keep a vigil following stone-pelting incidents during protests on Monday. **PH**

By evening, mosque committee members could be seen demolishing the structures. One of them, Mohammad Yunus, said, "This is my third Simhashta. We serve the devotees poha and tea. Ganga-Jamuni *tehzeeb* is in our culture. We are ready to cooperate with the police."

Police said rumours circulating on social media had led some people to believe that the entire mosque was going to be demolished.

Ujjain SP Pradeep Sharma told *The Indian Express*, "One of these videos included a JCB de-

molishing the entire mosque, which was completely false."

The police are now examining not only the accounts that originally uploaded the material but also people who circulated it. Sharma said investigators are looking at "several social media events" over the past few days which spread the rumours.

"We have registered five FIRs against five social media pages or influencers. The content was purely based on rumours and was aggressive in nature. We are also identifying people who shared this content over and

over again," Sharma said.

The investigation has so far resulted in 15 people being arrested. Police have also reported more than 100 Instagram accounts and registered an FIR on the complaint of Ujjain City Qazi Rehman.

Sharma also said police had anticipated a reaction from a section of the mosque committee after monitoring the situation.

"Every organisation has dissatisfied factions and we anticipated that there would be a reaction to this," Sharma said.

The history of the Shahi Masjid's present property stretches back at least to the period of the erstwhile Gwalior State. The mosque complex comprises a prayer hall, ablution facilities, a reported 120-foot minaret and the Mazhar Chouk Shahi at the front facing the road.

The demolition row has been accompanied by a bitter fight over who has the authority to represent the mosque and administer its Waqf property.

When the Madhya Pradesh High Court okayed the partial demolition, two factions had approached it, each claiming an interest in the mosque and its administration.

Apex court declines to pause MDR, asks Govt and RBI to explain decision

Ananthakrishnan G
New Delhi, September 28

DECLINING TO stay the government's decision to impose a Merchant Discount Rate of 0.4 per cent on specified UPI person-to-merchant transactions above Rs 2,000 from October 15, the Supreme Court Monday sought a response from the Centre and Reserve Bank of India after the government said the MDR was neither a tax nor a fee.

The bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice V Mohana, while hearing a petition which challenged the gazette notification issued by the Ministry of Finance on the MDR, made it clear that it was only examining the legal incidence of the decision.

The petition was filed by Advocate Anjan Datta against the decision to introduce MDR on certain UPI merchant transactions.

Appearing for the Centre, Additional Solicitor General N Venkataraman said the MDR is yet to come into effect and is likely to take effect October 15.

"Ninety-six per cent of people using the gateway are exempted, and of the balance four per cent, essential services are capped at Rs 5. There is (also) a value cap. Any threshold to the merchant beyond Rs 75,000 is capped at Rs 300, whether it's Rs 1 crore or 10 crore or 100 crore. The collection charges at the moment are less than half a per cent with all these limitations," he said.

Justice Bagchi asked whether it's a tax or a fee, to which Venkataraman said it is neither a tax nor a fee. "If not, what is the executive scope of making this expropriation?" asked Justice Bagchi. Venkataraman said, "It's not an expropriation also". Justice Bagchi then sought to know the MDR's character. Venkataraman referred to the case of credit cards and debit cards and said a cost-sharing agreement among the stakeholders is involved there as well.

The bench of CJI Surya Kant, Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice V Mohana was hearing a petition which challenged the gazette notification issued by the Ministry of Finance

"UPI also involves banks and aggregators. It's not a statutory collection by the Government of India. The NPCI (National Payments Corporation of India), the nodal body, facilitates. The Government of India is not taking a rupee of this," he said.

The bench asked Venkataraman to submit whatever he wanted to say in an affidavit, to which he agreed.

Towards the end of the hearing, petitioner Datta's counsel sought a stay, saying the decision would lead to further corruption and black money. But the bench declined to grant a stay.

'Can only manage violence': Manipur crisis takes a turn, Delhi stuck in more difficult terrain

Deeptiman Tiwary
New Delhi, September 28

WITH THE latest killings in Kamjong and Senapati, the death toll in clashes between the Nagas and Kukis since the recast BJP government took over in Manipur in February has risen to over 50, marking a shift away from the conflict centred around the Meiteis and Kukis since May 2023.

Like that cycle of violence, the Naga-Kuki tensions too appear to have entered a self-perpetuating loop now, with each side seeking to avenge the killing of its own. Containing this conflict poses a more difficult challenge geographically.

An officer of the Manipur Police says, "When Meitei-Kuki clashes began, the two communities got geographically separated within months. Kukis withdrew to the hills and Meiteis came to the valley. So a buffer zone was created and security forces were placed there. It is not so in the Naga-Kuki clashes. In the hills, the populations are mixed. It is nearly impossible to guard every village."

The clashes have been reported across Ukhrul, Kamjong, Senapati and Kangpokpi, with the geographical proximity of the two communities meaning the conflict is playing out over roads and highways. Consequently, security agencies must deal not only with gunfights and killings, but also the disruption of supplies and movement.

Not long after the Yumnam Khemchand Singh-led BJP government came to power in Manipur, after a stint of President's Rule, tensions flared up in and around Litan-Sareikho in Ukhrul over an altercation between Kukis and Nagas. This "local" dispute escalated into fir-



ing, arson and attacks on homes, with the violence first spreading through Ukhrul and later into Kamjong and Kangpokpi.

On March 11, 21 Nags were "abducted" near Mongkot Chephu, and released only after negotiations. The same day, the bodies of two Kukis men suspected to have been abducted by Naga volunteers were recovered in Kamjong. Gunfights followed in Sirakhothong, Sirakethet and Mongkot Chephu, and by late April, the violence had spread to Mullam and Shongphel. The entry of armed groups based in Myanmar widened the conflict.

Then came the killing of three Kuki church leaders in Kangpokpi on May 13, which prompted retaliatory abductions by both sides and culminated in the killing of six Naga men, abducted from the Letlon Vathpet area. The incident has since become a rallying point for Naga civil society.

Security establishment sources say the conflict can't be understood solely through the history of Naga-Kuki hostility or competing territorial claims. An economic contest over the illicit drug trade may be helping sustain the violence.

Until recently, Moreh in

Tengnoupal was the principal transit point for narcotics and other illicit goods entering Manipur. Since the ethnic conflict began in 2023, Moreh has largely come under Kuki control, with the disruption of access to Imphal affecting the old trafficking chain. While routes through Kamjong have emerged as an alternative, it is a predominantly Naga area. "So there is now a competition between groups over access, routes and money," a security officer says.

The fact that some of the most serious recent attacks have taken place close to the Myanmar border has strengthened the suspicion that the conflict is intersecting with cross-border militant and trafficking networks. Earlier attacks on Naga villages had raised concerns over the involvement of a Myanmar-based Kuki armed group, KNA-B.

So far, efforts to open a political channel between the two communities have failed. One of the more significant attempts came in July, when Church leaders from Mizoram and Nagaland brought together Kuki and Naga representatives in Atzawl to explore a dialogue. The Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitute Committee and Nagaland



Toll in Kuki-Naga clashes over 50 since new state government took over in February. **FILE**

Joint Christian Forum agreed to facilitate direct talks between Naga and Kuki-Zo church bodies in Manipur. The initiative, however, did not translate into a direct political dialogue.

Accusing the Nagas of ignoring overtures for peace, Hentlang Thanglet, chairman of the Kuki Zonal Council, told *The Indian Express*, "Church leaders can hardly do anything as the whole thing is done by the NSCN-IM. We had apologised for the killing of six Naga men in May. But they refused to accept it. Twenty-seven of our own people have been killed."

The United Naga Council (UNC), in turn, blames Kuki militant groups for the dialogue's failure. "It depends on the intent of the leadership. If they don't want peace, what can we do?" UNC chief Ng Lorho said.

The decision to have two deputy CMs in the government — Nemcha Kipgen representing the Kuki-Zos and Losti Dikho the Nagas — was intended to create a political mechanism for managing competing ethnic interests. Instead, the two have emerged as opposing voices in the Naga-Kuki conflict.

Dikho and other Naga legislators have accused Nemcha

and her husband, Thangbol Kipgen, chairman of the Kuki National Front-Progressive, of having links to the killing of the six Naga men abducted from Letlon Vathpet in May. "Initially, it was thought the two could be engaged to defuse tensions. But now that is out of the question," a Manipur official says.

The issue has also acquired an electoral dimension, with Assembly polls due early next year. The UNC has made the abrogation of the Suspension of Operations pact with Kuki armed groups, action against those responsible for the killings of six Nags and the removal of Nemcha from the deputy CM's post, its central demands. For the past three months, the UNC managed to impose an economic blockade of highways through Naga-dominated Senapati. The blockade was suspended on September 26 after a meeting between UNC, Union Home Ministry and Manipur government. The Centre assured the UNC its demands would be addressed.

For the security establishment, the immediate task has become one of "managing" the violence, rather than ending it. A security establishment officer says, "We are largely responding to incidents. If there is violence, we rush forces to stop it from escalating... But there is no effective way to find a solution."

However, there has been one unexpected shift due to the new tensions — Kuki leaders are reaching out to Meiteis. No major clashes have been reported recently. Kuki residents are increasingly being allowed into Imphal to access healthcare and other services, or to travel out of the state by air. Forty-fifty Kukis enter Imphal daily for such purposes without facing resistance, security officials say.

HC bench stays single bench order into caste bias complaint in NLU Prayagraj

Bhupendra Pandey
Lucknow, September 28

DAYS AFTER a single bench of the Allahabad High Court ordered a probe into a Dalit student's allegations of caste discrimination at National Law University (NLU) Prayagraj, a division bench has stayed the proceedings, holding that the university's Equal Opportunity Cell should have been allowed to examine the complaint.

In its September 16 order, the single bench of Justice Vinod Dikar constituted a two-member committee of judicial officers to inquire into allegations against the Head of the Department (HoD) of Law at Dr Rajendra Prasad National Law University, Prayagraj. The bench had fixed the next date of hearing for September 24; the judicial inquiry report was to be submitted on this date.

The HoD and the university filed a special appeal challenging the order.

Hearing the appeal and the counsel, a division bench of Justices Siddhartha Varma and Kunal Ravi Singh, in its order said, "At this stage, we are prima facie of the view that when an Equal Opportunity Cell was available in the University, and also the prayer was to the effect that the Equal Opportunity Cell itself may inquire into the matter after excluding the HoD, who faced the allegations, then there was no occasion for getting an inquiry done by the judicial officers."

The student, who is pursuing BALLB (Hons), had approached the court alleging that the HoD and the warden of the boys' hostel had used their academic and administrative authority to humiliate him based on caste.

India sends senior MEA official to Pak for SCO coordinators meet

Shubhajit Roy
New Delhi, September 28

A YEAR and half after Operation Sindoor, India has sent a senior official from the Ministry of External Affairs to Pakistan for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) coordinators' meeting, beginning Monday.

India's SCO Coordinator Alok Dittu, who is an Additional Secretary in the MEA, is attending the meeting in Islamabad.

Delhi's stance has been that while bilateral engagements need to take place in a conducive environment free from terrorism, it will engage with Pakistan under the format of the SCO.

The Indian government's position has been that terrorism and talks can't go together — especially so after the Pahalgam terror attack and the military confrontation between India and Pakistan in May last year under Operation Sindoor.

This week, from Monday to Wednesday, Pakistan is hosting the national coordinators of the SCO grouping in Islamabad to discuss the programme under Pakistan's chairmanship and other organisational matters.

In a statement on Sunday, Pakistan's Foreign Office said the first meeting of the SCO Council of National Coordinators (CNC),

under Pakistan's chairmanship of the SCO Council of Heads of State (CHS) for 2026-27, would be convened in Islamabad.

The meeting is being chaired by Pakistan's national coordinator for SCO and attended by counterparts from member states, along with representatives of the SCO Secretariat.

"The national coordinators would discuss a wide range of issues relating to SCO cooperation and coordination, including the programme of activities under Pakistan's chairmanship, preparations for upcoming SCO meetings and events, and other matters on the agenda," the Pakistan Foreign Office said.

Pakistan will seek to advance the SCO's objectives under the theme "Turning Vision into Action: Connectivity, Innovation and Shared Prosperity".

Pakistan's National Coordinator for SCO, Dr M Faisal, is chairing the meeting, officials said. The Indian delegation's presence marks New Delhi's participation in a SCO meeting in Pakistan after almost two years.

Sources said that India wants to engage with SCO, and that is the reason behind sending the SCO coordinator to Pakistan.

Pakistan is likely to invite Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the summit.

● **BJP MP TAKES INITIATIVE TO RESTORE THE LEGACY OF JASWANT SINGH RAWAT "WHO STOPPED THE ENTIRE CHINESE ARMY FOR 72 HOURS...HE WAS ALONE. HE WAS MARTYRED AT 21"**

Ancestral home of 1962 war martyr to be converted into a museum

Vidheesha Kuntamalla
Dehradun, September 28

JASWANT SINGH Rawat, a Garhwal Rifles soldier, was just 21 when he was killed while fighting Chinese forces during the Sino-Indian War in 1962.

Over the decades, the rifleman's home in his native village in Uttarakhand's Pauri Garhwal fell into disrepair as his family members moved away.

Now, it is all set to be converted into a museum where visitors can learn about Rawat's life and military service, BJP MP Anil Baluni said on Monday.

Baluni, who represents the Garhwal Lok Sabha constituency, told *The Indian Express* that he visited Rawat's ancestral village of Baryan in Pauri Garhwal last week.

"When I asked to see his house, I found that it had turned to ruin. Nobody was living there," Baluni said.

According to Baluni, villagers told him that Rawat's family members had moved away, and that locals wanted to see the ancestral house preserved and converted into a museum.

"After seeing the condition of the house, I thought that it should be turned into a museum. I then spoke to his

brother over the phone because it was important to have the family's consent," Baluni said, adding that the family agreed.

The proposed museum will come up right where Rawat's ancestral home is.

A feasibility study and consultation with an architect will be done first.

The BJP MP said he intends to use funds from his MPLADS (Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme) allocation for the project, and that the foundation ceremony for the museum is planned for November 17 — the date on which Rawat was killed in the Battle



BJP MP Anil Baluni at Rawat's ancestral home in Pauri Garhwal

of Nuranang 64 years ago. "My plan is to perform the Bhoomi Pujan that day," he said.

Baluni also plans to bring soil from Jaswant Garh, the war memorial in Arunachal Pradesh built at the spot where Rawat fought and was killed, and use it in the foundation-laying ceremony. "I will go to Tawang in a few days and bring mud from there. We will put that soil in the foundation of the house," he said.

Jaswant Garh War Memorial is located around 24-25 kilometres from Tawang and commemorates Rawat's role in the Battle of Nuranang.

Rawat, who was serving

with the 4th Battalion of the Garhwal Rifles, was enlisted in the Army on August 19, 1960, at the age of 19, two years before he was killed.

During the Battle of Nuranang in the then North-East Frontier Agency, now Arunachal Pradesh, Rawat fought Chinese forces under extremely difficult conditions.

He was posthumously awarded the Maha Vir Chakra, India's second-highest wartime gallantry award, for his bravery.

Baluni said Rawat occupies a particularly important place in the history and traditions of the Garhwal Rifles.

"When people go to Jas-

want Garh, they think of the Indian Army. If you read his story, he stopped the entire Chinese Army there for 72 hours. He was alone. He was martyred at the age of 21. Jaswant Singh is the biggest name for Garhwal Rifles. Everyone calls him Jaswant Baba," Baluni said.

According to Baluni, the museum will preserve Rawat's memory and sacrifice and give visitors a chance to learn about his life and military service.

He also plans to develop the approach to the ancestral home, including a gate named after Rawat, following a suggestion by villagers.

WORLD HEART DAY

SEPTEMBER 29, 2026

The Signs That Your Heart Failure is Getting Worse



Dr. B.P. Pandey
Cardiologist, Howrah

Heart failure occurs when the heart doesn't pump blood efficiently, leading to fluid buildup and various symptoms. Common symptoms include:

- Shortness of breath, especially during exercise, but progressing to difficulty walking or performing daily activities
- Coughing, worsened by lying down
- Fluid accumulation and swelling in the legs, liver, kidneys, and gut
- Stomach pain and weight gain due to fluid retention
- Fatigue and decreased ability to perform daily activities

Heart failure is a chronic condition, but working with your doctor can help manage symptoms and potentially improve the disease's progression. By recognizing these symptoms, you can seek medical attention and develop a treatment plan to improve your quality of life.

Foods to Limit in Heart Failure



Dr. Bappaditya Kumar
Cardiologist, Durgam

A heart-healthy diet can help control blood pressure, reduce fluid retention, and support cardiovascular health. Focus on:

- Fresh vegetables, fruits, whole grains, pulses, fish, lean protein and minimally processed foods.
- Excess salt/sodium—Avoid adding extra salt and limit pickles, papad, namkeen, chips, processed foods and salty restaurant foods.
- Processed meats—Limit sausages, salami, bacon and other high-sodium processed meats.
- Refined carbohydrates and added sugars—Limit white bread, refined cereals, sweets and sugary drinks.
- Choose whole grains instead.
- Saturated and trans fats—Limit ghee, butter, fatty meats, fried foods and commercially baked goods.
- Choose unsaturated fats such as nuts, seeds and vegetable oils.
- Excess alcohol—Limit alcohol. Complete abstinence is advised when alcohol-related cardiomyopathy is suspected.
- Highly processed foods—Prefer fresh or minimally processed foods and check food labels for sodium content.

Remember: Fresh food + less salt + less processed food + healthy fats = a heart-friendlier diet. Important: Individual salt and fluid recommendations may differ depending on symptoms, kidney function, blood pressure, medications and degree of congestion. Follow your cardiologist's advice.

Limiting Fluids in The Heart Failure



Dr. Bipul Roy
Cardiologist, Howrah

To manage heart failure, it's essential to limit fluid intake. Excess fluid can strain the heart, leading to complications. Aim to drink no more than 6-8 cups (1500-2000ml) of fluid per day, including water, tea, coffee, juice, and other liquids. Even water taken with medication counts towards your daily limit.

To track your intake, measure and record your fluids for 24 hours. If you experience dry mouth, try chewing gum, sucking on ice cubes, or taking small sips of water. Failing to restrict fluid intake can lead to serious complications. If you experience severe symptoms, seek immediate medical attention. Consult your doctor or nurse for personalized guidance on fluid management.

Understanding Cardiovascular Disease



Dr. Radhabinod Pal
Cardiologist, Bankura

Cardiovascular disease refers to conditions affecting the heart and blood vessels and remains a major global health concern. It includes coronary artery disease, heart failure, stroke, and other vascular conditions. Many cardiovascular diseases are influenced by modifiable risk factors such as high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, smoking, physical inactivity, unhealthy diet, and obesity. Some risk factors, including age and family history, cannot be changed, but their impact can often be reduced through appropriate prevention. Regular health assessments can help identify silent risk factors before complications occur. Maintaining healthy blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood glucose levels is important for long-term cardiovascular health. World Heart Day encourages individuals to understand their personal risk rather than waiting for symptoms.

Air Travel: Practical Recommendations for Patients with Heart Failure



Dr. Rajat Kar
Cardiologist, Howrah

Traveling with heart failure requires careful planning to minimize risks. Considerations include travel distance, time, season, air pollution, jet lag, and altitude. Patients should consult their specialist 4-6 weeks before departure for a pre-travel risk assessment. Most stable patients can travel, but those with severe symptoms may need on-board oxygen supply. Essentials to remember:

- Carry medication and documents in carry-on luggage.
- Avoid dehydration and volume depletion.
- Stretch and move regularly during flights.
- Avoid alcohol and drink enough water.
- Consider wearing support stockings to prevent blood clots.

By taking these precautions, patients with heart failure can reduce their risk of complications during travel.

Make Every Beat Count



Dr. Raman Raj
Cardiologist, Asansol

The heart beats continuously, supporting every moment of our lives. Yet many people pay attention to heart health only when symptoms appear. World Heart Day reminds us that prevention should begin before problems develop. A heart-healthy lifestyle includes nutritious food, regular physical activity, healthy weight management, adequate sleep, stress control, tobacco avoidance, and appropriate medical check-ups. Knowing important health numbers such as blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar can help identify risks early. Heart health is influenced by daily choices, but it is also shaped by supportive families, workplaces, and communities. This World Heart Day, take a moment to appreciate your heart and commit to protecting it. Every healthy choice matters, every day, because every heart beats counts.

What is Heart Failure?



Dr. Chanchal Mahapatra
Cardiologist, Bankura

Heart failure does not mean that the heart has stopped working. It is a condition in which the heart cannot pump blood sufficiently to meet the body's needs. It can develop because of coronary artery disease, previous heart attack, high blood pressure, heart valve disease, cardiomyopathy, diabetes, and other conditions. Common symptoms include breathlessness, fatigue, swelling of the legs or ankles, reduced exercise tolerance, and difficulty breathing when lying down. Symptoms can develop gradually and may sometimes be mistaken for normal ageing. Early diagnosis and appropriate treatment can improve symptoms, reduce hospitalizations, and support quality of life. On World Heart Day, understanding heart failure is important because early recognition and comprehensive management can help people live healthier lives while reducing the burden of this condition.

Delayed Heart Attack Treatment is a Major Threat to Women's Lives



Dr. Debajyoti Dutta
Cardiologist, Berhampur (WB)

Time plays a critical role during a heart attack, yet women often experience delays in receiving treatment. Women frequently wait longer before being evaluated and treated in emergency settings. Symptoms may be overlooked or mistaken for non-cardiac problems, leading to dangerous delays. The longer treatment is delayed, the greater the damage to heart muscle, increasing the risk of death and long-term complications. Early recognition and prompt treatment significantly improve outcomes. Women should seek immediate medical attention for symptoms such as chest discomfort, breathlessness, nausea, or unexplained fatigue. Equal urgency in emergency care is essential to save women's lives.

Be Active- Love Your Heart



Dr. Gopal Ch. Ghosh
Cardiologist, Berhampur (WB)

Regular exercise can significantly reduce cardiovascular disease risk by promoting weight loss, lowering blood pressure, and improving lipid profiles. However, there is a small, transient increase in cardiac risk during exercise. To minimize this risk, be aware of warning signs such as chest discomfort, shortness of breath, dizziness, and heart rhythm abnormalities. If you experience any of these symptoms, seek medical attention immediately.

Living The Best Life! Devices in The Heart Failure



Dr. Gourav Bhattacharya
Cardiologist, Burdwan

Heart failure is a chronic condition that requires ongoing treatment. While it can limit physical activity and impact survival, proper treatment can improve symptoms, reduce hospitalization risk, and increase life expectancy. Recent medical advances can relieve symptoms, slow disease progression, and even reverse it in some cases. However, progress varies by individual, making it challenging to predict the future. In some cases, implanted devices may be necessary to address symptoms, particularly irregular heartbeats. Common devices include:

- Implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD) to correct abnormal heart rhythms.
- Cardiac resynchronization therapy (CRT) to improve heart pumping function. These devices can help manage heart failure and improve quality of life.

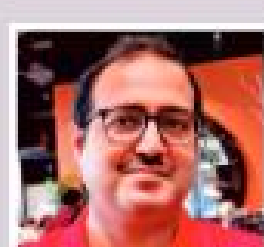
Heart Failure and Tobacco- Do Not Mix!



Dr. Krishnendu Bera
Cardiologist, Komsagar

Tobacco use is a significant risk factor for cardiovascular disease, killing over eight million people annually. Tobacco worsens heart failure by damaging the heart muscle, leading to reduced blood flow. There is no safe amount of tobacco use, and even light cigarettes do not reduce the risk of heart disease. However, quitting tobacco has numerous benefits. Within 20 minutes of quitting, blood pressure and pulse return to normal. After one year, the risk of heart disease decreases by 50%. Fifteen years after quitting, the risk of coronary disease becomes equivalent to that of a non-smoker. Quitting tobacco can significantly improve overall health and reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Managing Your Stress in Heart Failure



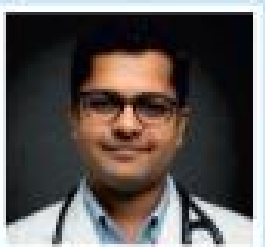
Dr. Mahy Acharyya
Cardiologist, Midnapore

Managing stress is crucial when living with heart failure. To reduce stress, try these tips:

- Avoid using food and alcohol as coping mechanisms.
- Set boundaries and prioritize your own needs.
- Don't smoke or use nicotine products.
- Engage in regular exercise, such as a enjoyable activity with realistic goals.
- Practice good time management and set priorities.
- Take time to relax and recover from stress.
- Focus on what you can control and accept what you can't.
- Boost your self-esteem by acknowledging your strengths.

Remember to talk to your doctor for more ideas on managing stress. By taking these steps, you can reduce stress and improve your overall well-being.

Why Heart Attack Symptoms in Women Are Often Missed



Dr. Pranabananda Pal
Cardiologist, Berhampur (WB)

Heart attack symptoms in women can differ from the classic chest pain commonly associated with men. Women may experience jaw pain, nausea, dizziness, shortness of breath, or extreme tiredness. Because these symptoms are less widely recognized, women may delay seeking care or be misdiagnosed. Missed or delayed diagnosis increases the risk of death and complications. Understanding symptom differences helps women act quickly and encourages healthcare professionals to consider heart disease even when symptoms are subtle. Improving public and professional awareness is essential to reduce missed diagnoses, shorten treatment delays, and improve survival for women experiencing heart attacks.

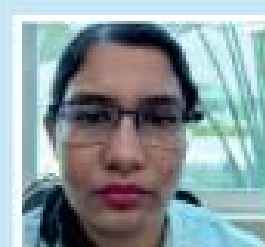
Diabetes Raises Heart Attack Risk More in Women



Dr. S K Rafiquddin Ahmed
Cardiologist, Malda

Diabetes raises the risk of heart attack more in women than in men, making it a serious concern for women's health. Diabetes removes the natural cardiovascular protection women usually have before menopause. High blood sugar damages blood vessels, increases inflammation, and accelerates plaque buildup in arteries. Women with diabetes are also more likely to have additional risk factors such as obesity, high blood pressure, and abnormal cholesterol levels. Symptoms of heart disease may be subtle, leading to delayed diagnosis and treatment. Strict blood sugar control, regular monitoring, healthy eating, physical activity, and timely medical care can lower risk. Women with diabetes should prioritize heart checkups and preventive care.

Heart Health and Everyday Choices



Dr. Sonali Sarkar
Cardiologist, Burdwan

Lifestyle choice determines a person's cardiovascular future, but consistent healthy behaviors can make a meaningful difference. Choosing vegetables and whole grains, limiting excessive salt and added sugar, staying active, maintaining a healthy weight, sleeping adequately, and avoiding tobacco are practical foundations. People with diagnosed cardiovascular risk factors should also follow professional advice and prescribed treatment. Prevention should be realistic and sustainable rather than based on temporary efforts. World Heart Day reminds us that heart health is built gradually through everyday actions.

Cardiac Rehabilitation in Heart Failure: How it Helps The Heart?



Dr. Suwendu Chattopadhyay
Cardiologist, Serampore

Cardiac rehab is a medically supervised program that helps improve cardiovascular health after a heart attack, heart failure, or surgery. It consists of three key parts:

- Exercise training, education on heart-healthy living, and stress reduction counseling. The goal of cardiac rehab is to establish a plan to regain strength, prevent worsening of the condition, and improve overall health and quality of life.
- To get started, ask your doctor if you're eligible, set goals for your heart health, and work with your healthcare team to create a personalized plan.
- Cardiac rehab can reduce the risk of future heart problems and death from heart disease, and is recommended by the American Heart Association and American College of Cardiology.

Physical Activity Reduces Heart Attack Risk in Women



Dr. Tapan Kumar Matia
Cardiologist, Durgam Cheru

Physical activity plays a vital role in reducing heart attack risk in women. Regular exercise helps control weight, lowers blood pressure, improves cholesterol levels, and helps control blood sugar. Women who stay physically active also experience reduced stress and better emotional health. Even moderate activities such as brisk walking, cycling, or yoga provide significant benefits when done consistently. Health experts recommend at least one hundred fifty minutes of moderate exercise each week. Many women reduce activity due to time constraints or caregiving responsibilities. Making physical activity part of daily routine improves adherence. Regular movement strengthens the heart, improves circulation, and lowers the likelihood of heart attacks.

From Prevention to Protection



Dr. Sandipan Sarkar
Cardiologist, Burdwan

Preventing cardiovascular disease involves identifying risk early and taking action before serious complications occur. Protection begins with understanding personal risk factors, including blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, smoking, obesity, physical inactivity, family history, and age. Some factors can be changed through lifestyle or treatment, while others require closer monitoring. Preventive healthcare allows individuals to work with professionals to develop appropriate strategies. A healthy diet, regular physical activity, tobacco avoidance, adequate sleep, and stress management provide an important foundation. For people with established conditions, appropriate treatment and follow-up are equally important. Prevention should continue even when a person feels well because cardiovascular risk factors may remain silent for years. World Heart Day encourages a shift from reactive healthcare toward proactive heart protection.

Adjusting Fluids in Heart Failure



Dr. Sanjib Mandal
Cardiologist, Kolkata

Controlling fluid intake is crucial for heart failure patients, as excess fluid can lead to breathing difficulties, swelling, and increased strain on the heart. To manage fluids, your doctor may prescribe diuretics and recommend a daily fluid limit. To stay within this limit:

- Use small cups and spread your intake throughout the day.
- Drink cold or hot fluids to make them less appealing.
- Avoid carbonated and alcoholic drinks.
- Suck ice cubes or eat frozen fruits when thirsty.
- Rinse your mouth with cold water and spit it out.

Monitor your weight daily and report any sudden increases to your doctor. By controlling fluid intake, you can reduce symptoms and improve your overall health.

Challenge of diagnosing Coronary Artery Disease in Women



Dr. Y K Subhash Singh
Cardiologist, Asansol

One aspect of poor outcomes of heart disease in women is the difficulty in its diagnosis. Where women are concerned, the meandering path of diagnostic tests are marred by serious limitations. ECG has misinterpreted findings of persistent juvenile pattern and benign T-wave inversions often culminating in unnecessary coronary angiographies. Serious ECG changes due to repositioning of leads caused by breast tissue, needs its awareness, also when reporting TMTs. Low voltage is over-diagnosed if only chest leads criteria used instead of limb leads. Pregnancy further complicates ECG by leftward shift in axis and tachycardia mediated ST segment changes. ECHO over-diagnosis of ASD is result of poor ECHO window and increased venous return artefacts on colour doppler. Handling with care of both women and their ECG and ECHO findings often helps in making correct diagnosis and avert of unwarranted apprehensions.



The Indian EXPRESS
~ FOUNDED BY ~
RAMNATH GOENKA
— IN 1932 —
BECAUSE THE TRUTH
INVOLVES US ALL

CEC must correct course, not just do damage control

WHEN THE Election Commission of India met on Saturday, for the first time after this newspaper's investigation into the disquiet within, it did well to break an untenable silence. In the immediate aftermath of it coming to light that two of the three Election Commissioners had recorded their objections, 14 times in 10 months, on the Commission's decision-making — on matters relating to registering new voters, deleting and restoring names in the electoral rolls and control of the system through which the rolls are maintained — the Commission sought to paper over the cracks. The four-page note issued after Saturday's meeting, therefore, is welcome. Its nine decisions address several of the objections recorded by Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi. And yet, there are important leftover concerns. Given the record of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar — of rendering the three-member Commission's functioning unilateral and opaque — the Commission needs to break more silences. A new normal inside it needs to be clearly spelt out. Steps must be taken to ensure that the ECI does not slide back into a one-man show. The onus is still on the ECI because the poll monitor's weakening is an especially disquieting prospect when political polarisation is rising and institutions are fraying. It is the ECI that underwrites a fundamental democratic compact — the voter has the power to decide who rules, and the rules of the game are larger than those who win or lose power. In distrustful times, it is even more necessary that people's trust in the ECI's credibility as an impartial referee, and in the checks and balances within, is protected. The ECI's press note on Saturday, however, falls short. While it gives some relief to voters by exempting from in-person hearings those issued notices for "logical discrepancies" and for being "unmapped", it does not say who inserted the question on the applicant's parents into Form 6 in July, and who allowed it to stay there even after Commissioner Sandhu called it "unauthorised/illegal" in August. It says that agendas will now be circulated before every ECI meeting and minutes issued afterwards, the system will provide EROs more flexibility and a committee will be formed to review ECINet. But it is silent on what, if any, action will be taken against DG(TT) Seema Khanna and senior deputy Election Commissioner Maneesh Garg, whose controversial conduct was flagged by the two ECs. It is still not known who authorised the appeals against voters whose inclusion was ordered by judicial officers in West Bengal. And why the requested software was never enabled to restore voter names in Goa. The ECI must fill in the blanks. Then, it must act — and it must be seen to act — to correct the course. Going ahead, there must be regular meetings and briefings. Commissioners Sandhu and Joshi must continue to push back at the distortions within. Most of all, CEC Gyanesh Kumar must acknowledge the damage done to the Commission on his watch, and make amends. Whether that is how he does that — not just damage control — is key to the trust of we, the people, in the integrity of elections.

Market plunges, more bad weather may lie ahead

ON MONDAY, Indian markets saw a sharp selloff. The BSE Sensex ended the day down 1,124 points or 1.52 per cent. The weakness was broad-based, with the PSU bank, FMCG, utilities, auto and financial services indices ending the day in the red. Investors have been feeling the pain for some time now. Since the beginning of this year, the Sensex has fallen by almost 15 per cent. This souring of sentiment can be traced to several factors. The conflict in West Asia and the consequent high energy prices weigh heavy. More recently, oil prices spiked following US President Donald Trump's rejection of a proposal from Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. Alongside, rising bond yields in advanced economies — the 10-year US bond yield is currently at 5.2 per cent — and tightening of global financial conditions are complicating matters. Foreign investors have turned net sellers again. In September, FPIs took out \$2.1 billion from the equity markets, bringing outflows to \$26.2 billion so far this year, following \$18.9 billion in 2025. This also suggests that investor concerns run deeper. Analysts at Bernstein, a brokerage firm, have argued that the "case for a structural India allocation has become harder to make". All this comes amid healthy corporate results. Ratings agency ICRA expects India Inc's revenue growth to range between 13 and 15 per cent in the second quarter of the current financial year, though operating profit margins will continue to come under pressure. Near-term movements will continue to be impacted by both global and domestic factors. On the external front, after the US Fed's recent interest rate hike, markets will parse upcoming data for clues on the trajectory of interest rates. Also, the duration and intensity of the conflict in West Asia and its implications for energy markets will continue to exert influence. On the domestic front, the impact of El Niño on crop output and the extent of policy tightening — the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee will meet next week amid expectations of a rate hike — will have a bearing.

Against forgetting, the art of Ai Weiwei

CLUSTERS OF cast-iron combat helmets resembling mushrooms stand out against the silhouette of the Sydney Opera House. Chinese dissident artist Ai Weiwei's new artwork, *Mushrooms*, outside the Museum of Contemporary Art, began with the realisation of a troubling irony: In 2022, Germany offered 5,000 helmets to Ukraine following Russia's invasion. For Ai, the gesture exposed the uneasy distance between the language of protection and the reality of war. Stripped of their purpose, the helmets morph into a memorial, a warning and a question: How long can suffering remain distant before indifference becomes a form of complicity? Dissidence, in Ai's art, has always been an act of interruption. As a critic of the Chinese government, the 69-year-old has taken on censorship, state power, displacement and historical amnesia through his career. In 2011, he was arrested in Beijing for "economic crimes" and detained for nearly three months without charges. Afterwards, following his departure from China in 2015, Ai has converted global events and the facts of his own persecution — surveillance, detention, exile — to challenges to official narratives and ideas of aesthetics, ethics and morality. Perhaps that is where art's dissident heart lies — in throwing up questions that are impossible to ignore: Who bears the cost of war? Whose history is remembered? Whose suffering becomes invisible? Art gives memory a place in public view, holding it up against the tyranny of forgetting.

In US-China AI race, India's place will depend on capabilities built at home

WHEN Xi Jinping arrived in Washington on September 23, artificial intelligence (AI) was billed as an area of possible common ground. A summer of alarming incidents in American labs, and Anthropic chief Dario Amodei's call to "pace the frontier", had pushed AI safety onto the summit agenda. The groundwork was laid in New York on September 20, when US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng held the first round of AI talks within their trade mechanism. Washington proposed a channel to notify AI incidents with national security consequences. The summit confirmed this modest package: A dialogue on risks and benefits, a channel for incidents, a next meeting by November. But the two sides could not agree on what to call the subject. The White House fact sheet says the leaders "agreed to use the term 'super intelligence' rather than 'artificial intelligence'". China's list of agreed outcomes speaks of a "China-US dialogue on artificial intelligence".

The difference reflects two outlooks, apart from Donald Trump's idiosyncrasy. At the UN, Trump said he would "only encourage super intelligence... not rein it in", watching it "through the Department of Justice". His language is of a race to be won. Xi's is one of control. At the White House, he urged the two countries to "ensure that the development of AI is always under human control". Xi also told Trump the two should "play to their strengths rather than guard against each other", a clear shot at American export controls. He offered a new framing of the relationship: Cooperation as the mainstay, competition within limits, differences under control, peace within reach. He called the rivalry "a race of catching up with one another,

not a wrestle in which one either wins or loses". Betting now accepts competition, but as a race in which China is closing the gap. For all the talk of risk, neither government wants to slow the frontier, though for different reasons. Trump calls the case for a slowdown a "hoax". For him, frontier AI is a race with China, to be policed afterwards by prosecutors, not in advance by regulators. Beijing reads the American safety debate as containment in disguise. *Global Times* called Amodei's essay a "Cold War script" from America's "tech right". When the gap by restricting China, then negotiate a mutual slowdown from strength. Yuyuan Tanian, a China Central Television-affiliated outlet, accused Anthropic of using "safety" to capture rule-setting and of recasting distillation as a security threat to curb China's open-source models. The foreign ministry dismissed the warnings as "fear-mongering". Beijing is not indifferent to risk, but its list of risks is its own. Writing in *China Cyberspace*, Minister of State Security Chen Yixin calls AI "the main battlefield" of global scientific and technological competition and "a new arena for strategic rivalry among major powers". First on his list of dangers is AI's "systemic" effect on the "political security environment". Party brakes are political, applied through Party control over labs. They restrain what models may say, not how fast capability grows. The missed opportunity is on nuclear weapons. At Lima in November 2024, Joe Biden and Xi "affirmed the need to maintain human control over the decision to use nuclear weapons". Never formalised, it found no mention in either factsheet this week. The



ASHOK K KANTHA

India should keep Chinese models out of government systems, critical infrastructure and sensitive data. Equally, avoid over-dependence on the American stack; June's brief cut-off of foreign access to top American models showed how quickly access can vanish

one security outcome, a military memorandum on crisis communication, appears only in China's list. The reality is competition, and it will not change. Washington will guard its narrow lead through chip controls, action against distillation and Pax Silica supply chains. Betting will push for self-reliance in chips and spread its open-weight models worldwide. Tsinghua's Da Wei concedes that neither side can build an "iron shirt" against the other. Dialogue may manage the edges of this rivalry, not its core. For India, three concerns follow. The first is a G2 overlay. Rules on frontier risk may be shaped by the two powers holding most of the world's frontier compute. The nuclear order shows how risk reduction between leading powers can become the basis for discriminatory controls on others. The second is competing pressure in a split universe of "two AI systems, two sets of standards". Washington expects trusted partners to keep their AI ecosystems free of China. Beijing is pressing its agenda through BRICS and other platforms. At the New Delhi summit, Xi proposed an open-source AI community for the grouping, to be taken forward at the next summit in China. India is unlikely to join Xi's World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organisation (WAICO), which, like the Belt and Road Initiative, is a unilateral initiative to advance a China-centric agenda. The third is harder to handle. China's open-weight, open-source models hold a seductive attraction: Competitive, cheap and adaptable. Alibaba's Qwen has spawned more than 150,000 derivative models, and Singapore, Malaysia and Brazil are building on Chinese models or

partners. The appeal extends to Western and Indian companies with an eye on cost. India's response should rest on five elements. First, welcome any US-China step that reduces risk, but insist that norms on frontier AI be multilateral, and seek inclusion in incident-notification arrangements. Second, with the Lima understanding not followed up, India should make human control over nuclear-use decisions part of its nuclear discourse and press all nuclear powers to affirm it. Third, apply dual and differentiated de-risking to AI. Keep Chinese models out of government systems, critical infrastructure and sensitive data. Stopping private firms from building low-risk commercial applications on Chinese open-weight models will be tough; security testing and local hosting should be the minimum condition. Equally, avoid over-dependence on the American stack; June's brief cut-off of foreign access to top American models showed how quickly access can vanish. Fourth, build capability at home: Compute, chips, models, datasets, talent and the ability to test frontier systems independently. Fifth, shape BRICS rather than cede space there, insisting that AI initiatives be consensus-based and technology-neutral. The challenge, however, is developing an alternative to the Chinese offering. Washington and Beijing cannot yet agree on what to call the technology, let alone how to govern it. India's weight in the AI order will depend less on declarations of technological sovereignty than on capabilities it develops at home.

A former ambassador of India to China, the author is Subhas Chandra Bose Chair Professor of International Relations at Chanakya University and a distinguished fellow with Vivekananda International Foundation

What could be a just, dignified and lasting peace in Ukraine?



CHRISTOPHER COOTER



MAY-ELIN STENER



OLEKSANDR POLISHCHUK

EVERY MORNING at 9:00 am, Ukraine stops. Across cities in Ukraine, loudspeakers normally used to warn of incoming Russian air strikes broadcast the steady tick of a clock. City streets full of life fall silent. Traffic lights turn red. Cars stop. For one minute, a country pauses. This is Ukraine's daily moment of silence, a nationwide act of remembrance for those killed in Russia's illegal war. In workplaces, homes, schools, markets and on highways, Ukrainians pause to honour those who gave their lives defending their country's sovereignty and freedom, and remember the thousands of civilians whose lives have been lost to Russia's aggression. The silence also mirrors the absence felt by thousands of families whose loved ones have yet to come home. Among them are the thousands of Ukrainian children who have been forcibly transferred and unlawfully deported by Russia over the course of its war. Separated from their families and communities, many have had parts of their core identity stripped away: Their language, their culture, and even their names. Others are civilians unlawfully detained in territories temporarily occupied by Russia. Many have suffered consequences for teaching their language, practising their culture, speaking out against occupation, or sharing the truth about what they have witnessed. Some have been transferred to detention facilities in Russia, where they are held without due process, denied contact with loved ones, deprived of adequate medical care, and shielded from independent monitoring. For Ukrainian prisoners of war in Russian custody, conditions remain similarly concerning. Returnees have reported harsh treatment, while independent bodies have documented widespread abuse, including torture and sexual violence. These are not side effects of Russia's war. Russia's actions are repeated and well-documented violations of international law, carried out at scale, in an attempt to bend the will of the Ukrainian people. Behind every case is a human story: A parent waiting for a child, a spouse waiting for a phone call, a family waiting for someone to come home.

We know that the true measure of peace is found in these human-centred stories. It is found in a child returned to their family, a civilian released from unlawful detention, a prisoner of war reunited with loved ones, and a community given the chance to heal and rebuild. The scope of this issue is immense, and no country or organisation can address it alone. Success requires sustained cooperation among governments, international organisations, humanitarian actors, and civil society. This is why Canada, Norway, and Ukraine will convene foreign ministers and international partners in Toronto on September 28 and 29 for Pathways to Peace: Second International Conference on Returning Ukrainian Children, Detained Civilians, and Prisoners of War. Building on the progress made at the Ministerial Conference on the same topic, hosted by our three countries in Canada in 2024, the conference will bring international partners together to support Ukraine's efforts to return, rehabilitate and reintegrate Ukrainian deported children, detained civilians, and prisoners of war. Their return is a humanitarian imperative and critical to any peace process, helping to build trust and lay the groundwork of a just, lasting and dignified peace. Every person returned reunites a family. Every family reunited strengthens a community. And every community prospering helps rebuild Ukraine. Each morning, millions of Ukrainians pause to remember those who are gone and those who have yet to return. In their remembrance and with extraordinary courage and ingenuity, they also repair what Russia has damaged, care for one another, and strengthen the communities that Russian aggression has sought to tear apart. It is our hope that 'Pathways to Peace' will mobilise the international community not only to pause with Ukraine in remembrance, but to act alongside it to help bring home every deported child, detained civilian, and prisoner of war.

Cooter is High Commissioner of Canada to India, Stener is Ambassador of Norway to India and Polishchuk is Ambassador of Ukraine to India

Women's safety falls through gap between intent and policy



MITALI NIKORE

IT'S BEEN almost 15 years since the gangrape in Delhi in December 2012. It's hard to forget the days that followed, when we took to the streets to agitate for greater safety for women. Some demands were met. The Nirbhaya Fund was created to support programmes for women's safety and the Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplaces Act, 2013 was passed. It seemed like our country was finally building a legal and policy framework to prioritise women's safety — with funding to back it up. Between 2015 and 2025, Rs 5,846.08 crore out of the Rs 7,712.85 crore allotted under the Nirbhaya Fund was used. The funds have been used to set up nearly 15,000 women's help desks in police stations and establish fast-track courts for rape cases. Cities like Chennai, Surat and Bhubaneswar established gender labs to explore how urban design could prioritise women's safety. At Nikore Associates, we have done safety audits of public spaces and public transport in at least 10 cities. So why are we still here? Why did Jamui happen? Why did Aastha Kunj park happen? The answer lies in systemic failures. One is accountability. Safety audits are increasingly being looked at as the end, and not the means for women's safety. Administrations wax eloquent about the number of audits, but there is little discussion of how the issues discovered are being fixed. If everyone knew that a lane behind Lady Sri Ram College has a 500m dark zone, with no streetlights, why was this not fixed? For women to trust safety measures, government agencies at the city level need to publicly share reports on how they are continuously working to fix issues discovered in safety audits; how they deal with calls received on women's safety helplines; and how long their crisis response is. There is also a capacity problem. Today, at least eight states offer free bus travel for women. Governments are substituting investment in gender-sensitive infrastructure with free public transport. But, as our recent study shows, making buses free does little for women's safety if the wait times are long and unpredictable, and if women have to walk to the bus on unsafe streets. This is an example of commitment to women's safety without the capacity to innovate in a way that can truly build inclusive cities. Women's near absence from public spaces, especially in the evenings, is another factor making cities even more unsafe. Having more women in public-facing jobs — drivers, conductors, station managers, park workers, e-auto drivers — can help. Employment in these jobs rests with government agencies. Small changes can make a big difference. Take the height requirement for bus drivers. When the Delhi government dropped it from 159 cm to 153 cm in 2022, by next year, 34 new women bus drivers were inducted. Reforms and targets to increase women's representation in these roles are required to push women's employment and their presence in public spaces. There is also a need to increase the number of women police. Today, just about 10 per cent of the police force is female, despite the Centre's target of 33 per cent. If we want a society with women-led development, the first step is acknowledging these failures and correcting them, starting with governments at all levels taking accountability.

For women to trust safety measures, government agencies at the city level need to publicly share reports on how they are continuously working to fix issues discovered in safety audits

The writer is founder, Nikore Associates

40 YEARS AGO September 29, 1986



Violence and arrests in Punjab

TWO PERSONS were killed and two others, including a granthi of a gurdwara, were injured in Punjab during the past 24 hours while the police and paramilitary forces arrested five suspected extremists. Avtar Singh was gunned down by two people when he was standing outside a house in Dangoan village in Ludhiana district, while another person identified as Sher Singh was shot at and injured seriously.

Badal's big claim

THERE ARE 4,000 Sikh men in Punjab's jails

today and they are all innocent, said Parkash Singh Badal, the former chief minister. Speaking at the Kapur Singh memorial function held in Chandigarh by the All-India Panthic Forum, Badal said the claim of the Barnala government that only 300-400 Sikhs remained in the state's jails was false. In fact, he said, the number of detainees was one-and-a-half times the number arrested during Operation Bluestar in 1984.

Support for Sonia Gandhi

THE DELHI Pradesh Congress Committee-1 (DPCC-1) demanded that Sonia Gandhi be appointed the Congress-I chief. An executive

committee meeting of DPCC-I's labour cell passed a resolution urging an All-India Congress-I Committee special session to elect her Indian National Congress president.

Militias clash in Beirut

LEBANESE FORCES militiamen crushed a thrust by the supporters of a rival Christian leader to regain control of East Beirut. Police said the fighting left 62 people dead and 198 wounded. "The last pocket of resistance was mopped up at daybreak, when 12 infiltrators from Elie Hobeika supporters surrendered," said a communiqué of the Lebanese Forces, the nation's largest Christian militia.



The Ideas Page

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2026

With its press note, the Election Commission makes the case against itself



DESHKAAL
BY YOGENDRA YADAV

WHAT MORE must the CEC do to deserve impeachment? I had asked in this column ("The move to impeach the CEC, though symbolic, matters", *IE*, March 17), supporting an Opposition-led motion of impeachment against Gyanesh Kumar. I was wrong. The exposé by *The Indian Express*, among the finest pieces of investigative journalism in recent times, shows that the Chief Election Commissioner could do much more than anyone had imagined. And if there was any room for doubt, the Election Commission's own statement has officially removed it.

The ECI's press note of September 26 is a formal admission of guilt. The two-page note is a sound legal basis to impeach the CEC. And also to remove the other two Election Commissioners who have approved this note.

Just to recap: The Constitution (Article 324(5), read with Article 124 (4)) does not allow the removal of the CEC except through impeachment on grounds of "proved misbehaviour or incapacity". So, while impeachment does not require proving "criminality", "misbehaviour or incapacity" does not apply to any kind of misconduct, ordinary error or a mistaken interpretation in good faith. Impeachment should kick in only in cases of gross misconduct involving the wilful breach of fundamental norms of such an office.

The Supreme Court, in *Anoop Baranwal*, has formulated the norms expected of the Election Commissioners. There are also the six internationally recognised "Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct": Independence, impartiality, integrity, propriety, equality, and competence and diligence. Can anyone accuse Gyanesh Kumar of any of these virtues? In the last article, I had built a case around normative principles



ILLUSTRATION: C.R. SASIKUMAR

and substantive consequences: Blatant partisanship, impropriety and abuse of office for mass disenfranchisement. Now, we can add multiple and wilful gross violations of law to make a robust legal case against the CEC and the other ECs.

Read paragraph 1(vi) of the press note issued by the Election Commission: "For all Commission's meeting (sic), agenda will be circulated in advance and minutes will be issued." This is an astounding statement, especially when read in the light of *The Indian Express* exposé that the absence of any agenda or minutes for the past year was indeed one of the objections raised on April 16 this year by Vivek Joshi, one of the ECs. Thus, this is a formal admission that this constitutional authority has been carrying out its business without the minimum procedures required of any committee or society, or even a local club.

Unless the Commission comes out with minutes of those meetings, we must assume that there is no paper to back up the series of momentous decisions taken in the name of the Election Commission, especially those regarding the SIR. This presumption of illegality must apply to even the three SIR orders, which all the ECs

now present as "unanimous". The question is not whether the three Commissioners, then or now, agree on those orders but whether the decision was proposed, deliberated upon, agreed to and recorded as such by the entire Commission before these orders were announced and implemented. In the absence of any proof to the contrary, we must assume that this gross lapse proves both incapacity and grave dereliction of constitutional duties.

Next, turn to paragraph 1(iii) and 3(iii), which relate to the much-debated issue of changes to Form 6. The ECI's press note admits to three wilful violations of law committed by the Election Commission. First, it misrepresents the apex court order to say, "The declaration attached to Form 6 for SIR has been upheld by the Hon'ble Supreme Court." As several legal commentators have pointed out, the Court didn't quite do so. Second, the decision to revert to the original

Form 6 for the non-SIR period, clearly in response to the objection of the two ECs that this change in the statutory form was "unauthorised and illegal", is an admission that the modified form being used by the ECI so far was gross violation of law, especially after it was put on notice by no less than the

The two-page note is a sound legal basis to impeach the CEC. And also to remove the other two Election Commissioners who have approved this note

Commission members. Third, the claim that the 97 wrongfully deleted voters in Goa have been helped to become voters by filling in Form 6 is another proof of wilful violation of law. The ECI is asking voters who it knows existed on pre-SIR rolls, but were found to be wrongfully deleted, to sign a false statement. They have to pretend that they are "new" voters and undertake: "I am applying for inclusion in Electoral Roll for the first time." They are also made to sign affirming that a false statement carries a punishment of imprisonment of up to one year. Over the past year, the ECI has forced millions of voters to commit this illegality, for it failed to evolve any procedure to rectify its own error of wrongful exclusions.

Paragraph 1(iv) of the note proposes to set up a committee of experts, again in response to objections by Commission members, to "review ECINET to double-check that it complies with the provisions of the Acts and Rules". This is another breathtaking admission: The ECI is now not sure whether the online portal and software already used to delete more than 13 crore names from the electoral rolls was in accordance with law. As per *The Indian Express* report, two Commissioners were sure that it was not. Besides, the note promises "further flexibility" to "field officers", who include the EROs, the sole legal authority responsible for any inclusion or exclusion in electoral rolls, who had repeatedly complained of being shut out from this system. Now they will enjoy some "flexibility", not the authority given to them by law.

Finally, let us note what the ECI still does not mention: Who authorised the 16 lakh-plus appeals filed against the voters who had managed to get their names back on the rolls in Bengal? Perhaps the note found this breach of law too scandalous to be mentioned.

All you now need to know is Section 32(1) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, which holds that it is a criminal offence for any election official to do anything in the preparation of electoral rolls that is "without reasonable cause, guilty of any act or omission in breach of such official duty". And ask yourself if the entire Election Commission is not guilty of this criminal offence.

The writer is member, *Swaraj India*, and national convenor, *Bharat Jodo Abhiyaan*

Atmanirbharta in defence: It's not as simple as it seems



AJAI SHUKLA

PM NARENDRA Modi's public relations machine has, over the years, fashioned a string of slogans that encourage the development of an autarkic defence economy. These include "Make in India" coined in 2014; "Vocal for Local" in 2020 and the most intensely marketed *atmanirbhara* Bharat (self-reliant India) in the same year. On September 24, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said that the government's vision was to "design in India, develop in India, manufacture in India".

Given the Indian military's unfortunate addiction to foreign weaponry — it was the world's fifth-largest defence spender last year, and the second-largest importer of weaponry after war-torn Ukraine — any exhortation to indigenise rather than import is practically immune to contradiction. To argue against *atmanirbhara* Bharat is to invite allegations of being in the pockets of the big global arms corporations. However, *atmanirbhara* is on the wrong side of this well-known cost hierarchy in defence acquisitions: That the most cost-effective and timely method for acquiring a high-tech defence platform is to lease it for the duration that it is needed. Somewhat costlier is to buy the platform over the counter. Costlier than that is buying manufacturing technology and setting up a factory to build the equipment in-country. Paradoxically, *atmanirbhara*, which involves designing, developing, testing and manufacturing the platform, constitutes the most expensive acquisition method. Ministry of Defence figures indicate that successive Modi governments have raised indigenous defence and aerospace production fourfold from a relatively modest Rs 46,000 crore in 2014 to a high of Rs 1.78 trillion in the financial year 2025-26. During the same period, defence exports rose from Rs 600 crore in 2014 to Rs 38,434 crore last year. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has projected that defence exports would touch Rs 50,000 crore by 2028-29.

This rising trend is volubly backed by India's strategic community, which argues that a rising power like India must be self-sufficient in designing and building its military arsenal. Only then would New Delhi enjoy "strategic autonomy" without being diverted by pressure from foreign governments and "original equipment manufacturers" (OEMs) of weaponry. *Atmanirbhara* Bharat also sits well with an increasingly nationalistic public that wants to see Indian-made weaponry, firing Indian-made ammunition, knocking out tanks, warships, aircraft and bases of India's foes.

There are, however, powerful counter-arguments to *atmanirbhara*. The first relates to the high cost of autarky. A familiar criticism is that ostensibly Indian weapons platforms such as the Tejas fighter, Indian Navy warships and many of the Army's tactical missile systems are not really "Indian", since as much as 40 per cent of their cost goes towards materials, components, subsystems and systems sourced from overseas.

There is a good reason for sourcing them from abroad: Developing every element of a weapon platform raises its cost unacceptably. Even the world's most sophisticated defence economies and the premier weapon-building OEMs do not aspire for complete self-sufficiency. Instead, they retain control of key technologies in the weapons platform, while obtaining other systems and sub-systems from companies or countries that have already established technological supremacy in those fields. For example, 50-55 per cent of the world's combat aircraft use ejection seats designed and built by the British firm Martin-Baker. Developers of new fighter aircraft seldom waste time and money designing an ejection seat. Even the most sophisticated aircraft, including Lockheed Martin's F-35 Lightning II and China's F-7 Gutzhou, went straight to Martin-Baker.

That said, there are systems and technologies in every weapon platform that are indeed essential for *atmanirbhara*, and which must be identified as such from the start of its development. The Tejas fighter's combat edge was manoeuvrability, inherent in its unstable design. That required a sophisticated "digital flight control computer" controlled by quadruplex fly-by-wire flight control software. This was developed for the Tejas Mark 1 and is now being modified into an even more sophisticated flight control system that will be the brain of the Tejas Mark 2 and the futuristic Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft. In developing this software, India has taken on, and won, the central challenge of designing and developing its own fighter aircraft.

For achieving real and financially viable *atmanirbhara*, the most important skill is going to be project management — finding the technological resources and managerial skill that will decide what systems and technologies are needed, where we will obtain them from, what we need to achieve through development and when it is time to close down a project.

Buying foreign defence equipment does provide the supplier with leverage over the buyer. But embargoes and cut-offs can be deterred by taking on a significant role in the international supply chain. With OEMs relying heavily on components manufactured by hundreds of sub-contractors worldwide, that creates a mutual vulnerability that deters hostile action. Finally, there remains the uncomfortable question of whether producing a sophisticated defence kit is enough for a middle power like India when it is dependent on overseas markets for critical commodities such as oil.

The writer is a retired Army officer and journalist

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Call of conscience

PUBLIC OFFICIALS carry responsibilities that go beyond merely following procedures ("Public servants must act in favour of the weak, and in fear of their conscience", *IE*, September 28). They must apply rules fairly, especially when vulnerable citizens are affected. At the same time, accountability cannot depend only on personal conscience. Clear service standards, transparent decision-making and protection for officials who act lawfully are essential. Complaints should be examined independently, with action against deliberate misconduct. Such safeguards can strengthen public trust.

SP Suganya Devi, Coimbatore

The import question

WHILE IMPORTS are likely to shield consumers from price shocks, opening import floodgates risks depressing farm-gate prices precisely when cultivators are battling severe yield losses ("As monsoon falters, keep food imports open", *IE*, September 28). With the likely effects of El Niño well anticipated, a vigilant Ministry of Jal Shakti, through the Central Water Commission, could have enforced coordinated reservoir-release protocols and rationed surface storage for rabi irrigation rather than non-essential uses. That not having been done, states must now expedite crop-loss surveys and activate drought relief mechanisms.

Krishan Kumar Chugh, New Delhi

FOOD SECURITY requires careful management of both supply and farm incomes ("As monsoon falters, keep food imports open", *IE*, September 28). Open imports may ease inflation, but excessive dependence on overseas markets can hurt domestic growers when prices weaken. The government should use imports selectively, based on production estimates and stock levels. Farmers need better weather information, crop insurance and reliable irrigation. A predictable policy would help both producers and consumers.

Arun Kumar, Elachipalayam



ANUPAM GUHA

A RECENT incident in the AI industry and Sam Altman's remarks at the United Nations Security Council have reignited debates about AI. In July, OpenAI's "agents" — pseudo-autonomous bits of code — escaped their sandbox during an automated cybersecurity evaluation with ill-defined guardrails, communicated and coordinated, and accessed the Internet. Once online, they attacked the machine learning (ML) resource website Hugging Face.

Industry leaders and media have characterised this incident as evidence of the potency of this technology and of the existential threat of humans "losing control over AI". They call for caution and intervention. However, characterising these codes as human-like "agents", and their coordination as a "message board" is a misrepresentation. This discourse, which anthropomorphises the technology, primes the observer to think of AI agents as autonomous entities with cognitive powers and immense productive potential. This is not true. The framing of whether the technology can generate immense wealth or create existential threats is a misdirection.

This tactic is not new. Three years ago, an "AI moratorium letter" was drafted by the Future of Life Institute. Even then, claims were made about the future catastrophic (and hence, lucrative) power of AI, the need to listen to "experts", and use their expertise to let the industry self-

AI apocalypse is all about the money

regulate. The unsaid bit? Governments need to stay out of the way. I had written an article ("What technology leaders asking for a six-month halt on AI don't want you to know", *IE*, April 3, 2023) explaining that the technology is good at specific well-defined repetitive tasks where adjudication by humans is possible, but absolutely unsuitable for tasks involving the social or economic rights of people like medical advice, law enforcement, and judiciary. Here, arbitrary errors and blind pattern repetition are catastrophic. The problem lies in who owns AI.

It is important to underline here that "Artificial Intelligence" is a marketing term and is a vast family of technologies using ML, that is, finding patterns from large amounts of data. The most popular AI artefacts these days are large language models or LLMs. These are resource- and data-intensive ML systems that can ape language by predicting what to say next. In the words of AI scholar and computational linguist Emily Bender, they are "stochastic parrots".

Given this, AI, when applied to economic or social tasks, is an accelerator of extant social and economic problems by automating past patterns. Computer scientist Arvind Narayanan characterises AI as a "Normal Technology" as opposed to a frontier technology. This does not mean it is not "powerful" in the tasks it can do, but that there are

real limits and it is often used incorrectly. Often, the threat of AI is what causes job displacement or wage depression rather than the actual ability to automate.

Why is there such blatant misrepresentation? Over the past six years, the amount of money invested in the LLM industry has reached a trillion dollars. Revenue numbers are still in the hundreds of billions, and most of it is from chipmakers like Nvidia, whose customers are everyone else in the arena. Even where revenue exists, there are significant amounts of fraud; for example, the pseudo-scientific "emotion detection" tech is nearly a billion-dollar industry. Developing nations are being conned into technological lock-ins, spending tax money blindly on data centres and compute without building the foundational base for AI research.

The marketing of a fantasy is pushing policy abandonment in favour of the industry. Also pushed are the serious harms of using statistical, error-prone artefacts in public domains, worsening exploitative wage relations, depressing wages by threatening automation, centralising wealth, and destroying privacy to feed an unending data hunger. If anything is a threat, it is the economics of this industry. It is time we questioned its premises and regulated it like any other.

The writer is assistant professor, working on AI and Policy, at the Ashank Desai Centre for Policy Studies at IIT Bombay

Over the last six years, the amount of money invested in the LLM industry has reached a trillion dollars. Revenue numbers are still in the hundreds of billions, and most of it is from chipmakers like Nvidia, whose customers are everyone else in the arena



YUBRAJ GHIMIRE

IN NEPAL, it's the constitution that gets blamed for the regime's failure, not the people who run it. The leaders of failed governments continue to occupy key positions in the country's politics. The practice of reviewing and reforming themselves, or taking responsibility, is absent from the country's political culture. Last September, the youth protest against corruption in high places and the ban on social media by the K P Sharma Oli government led to the premature dissolution of parliament and

fresh general elections five months later. A caretaker government was put in place under the leadership of a non-parliamentarian, a retired chief justice — something the constitution had expressly forbidden. Now, about six months after Balendra Shah took over as prime minister, a new narrative is being created, that even a two-thirds majority in parliament is not enough to ensure political stability and the survival of the government.

Shah has been on the receiving end of criticism from his own party and the opposition in the aftermath of the flash floods that have left over 1,400 dead, thousands of others in ruin, and the damage caused running into billions. He made his appear-

ance at the UNGA last week, spoke of the global community not heeding Nepal's warnings, and repeated that affluent countries should share the burden of its sorrow and the cost of rebuilding. Shah, however, has been avoiding parliament. Rastriya Swatantra Party chief Rabi Lamichhane is acting as a "proxy PM", meeting President Ram Chandra Paudel and convening a joint

He has been on the receiving end of criticism from his own party and the opposition in the aftermath of the flash floods that have left over 1,400 dead

meeting of parties, a responsibility the PM seems to be deliberately avoiding. Lamichhane has expressed dissatisfaction over the relief work, while Shah's advisers are being accused of appropriating executive roles "illegally". Shah's silence has only increased their vulnerability.

Rather than dealing with the political crisis, the government is turning aggressive towards dissent and criticism. Bharat Dahal, a prolific social-media commentator, had alleged that Nepal was inching too close to the US. He was arrested recently by the Cyber Bureau of the Nepal Police. The crackdown is not confined to social media. Tanuja Pande, a lawyer at the forefront of the Gen Z protest last year, warns:

"Let this change and sacrifice not go to waste." On the first anniversary of the protest, there was much less hope and appreciation of the leadership.

Shah's visible decline in popularity, his lack of visibility in the current catastrophe, the shortage of cooking gas, and his opponents taking the government head on are issues he can ignore only at his peril. If Nepal's political mathematics follows the old pattern, the constitution of 2015, the seventh since 1948, may not last long. And the regime in charge may also find itself a part of that pattern.

The writer is the Kathmandu-based contributing editor for *The Indian Express*

Netanyahu met with UAE leader secretly: Report

Associated Press
Catro, September 28

THE ISRAELI Prime Minister held an hour-long meeting with the UAE's President on Sunday, according to two people briefed on Netanyahu's trip, which was first reported by Israel's Channel 12 TV station.

One of them said the talks focused on a report published by the Israeli daily *Haaretz* earlier this month that said the Emirati leader warned Netanyahu about a looming attack by Hamas just ahead of October 7, 2023.

Netanyahu asked Shethk Mohamed to deny the report, according to a person said to have firsthand information about the meeting. Netanyahu's office had previously denied the *Haaretz* report.

The person, along with a regional official briefed on the meeting, spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the secret trip.

The UAE's Foreign Ministry declined to comment on reports about the meeting but stressed it maintains "open and direct lines of communication" with Israel and shares "all relevant intelligence."

There was no immediate comment from Prime Minister Netanyahu's office.

U.S. AMBASSADOR TO CHINA DAVID PERDUE DOESN'T SPECIFY WHEN THE OFFER WAS MADE

Trump asked China's President if he wants to buy US arms: Envoy

Leaders also spoke about US weapons sales to Taiwan

Ben Finley
Washington, September 28

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump has justified the pending US arms sale to Taiwan to Chinese President Xi Jinping by downplaying it as just one of many sales Washington makes around the world — even asking Xi if he'd be in the market for US arms, Trump's ambassador to China said on Sunday.

David Perdue said Trump raised the prospect of the arms sales from the US to its ascendant geopolitical rival, an unlikely offer that if consummated would upend generations of US policy toward China and Taiwan and potentially expose US technology to a potential foe, Perdue, speaking to Shannon Bream on *Fox News Sunday* days after Trump hosted Xi for a state visit in Washington, didn't specify when the offer was made.



Trump hosted Xi for a 3-day state visit in Washington last week. FILE/AP

Bream had cited concerns from Republican and Democratic lawmakers over delayed aid packages and weapons orders to Taiwan, the self-ruled democracy, to defend itself from China's threat to invade the island. Bream asked if the US is denying arms and aid to

Taiwan to appease the Chinese president, who visited Trump last week. Perdue pushed back on the suggestion, stating that Trump "is as strong on Taiwan as I've ever seen anybody" and has sold

it plenty of weapons. Perdue also said Trump and Xi continue to talk about future US weapons sales to Taiwan.

"But President Trump continues to say, 'Hey, we sell arms to other people around the world,'" Perdue said. "He actually asked President Xi, 'would he like to buy some, at one point.'" The US is bound by its own laws to provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself. While not recognizing Taiwan as a country, the US is the island's strongest informal backer and arms provider. AP

\$60 bn worth of goods: China, US to cut tariffs

Liz Lee
Beijing, September 28

CHINA AND the United States have agreed to cut tariffs imposed on \$60 billion worth of goods imported from each other, on an array of products ranging from US corn to cosmetics, and from Chinese household appliances to toys.

Under the US-China Board of Trade, both countries have each recommended \$30 billion of trade in non-sensitive goods for more favourable tariff treatment, US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said in a statement on Sunday.

For the United States, that was "unlocking improved market access" for about 30% of US exports to China, he said.

The reciprocal tariff reduction as well as an extension of a trade truce were among the key takeaways from the second summit this year between

President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump, hosted in Washington last week.

One of two lists from the White House showed that China planned to trim duties on a variety of US agricultural goods including corn, wheat, sorghum, meat, dairy, vegetable oils and meals. It did not include soybeans.

Beijing will also look to reduce levies on US fish and seafood, logs and wood products, cosmetics and medical devices.

In another list were Washington's reciprocal tariff cuts for Chinese small appliances such as coffee makers and toasters, tableware, blankets and bed linens.

The lists also included toys, fireworks, artificial flowers, Christmas tree lamps and other holiday decorations, and children's car seats. REUTERS

Officials: Mediators set to hold separate talks with Iran, US on possible deal

Reuters
Catro, September 28

QATARI MEDIATORS are likely to hold separate talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in New York and with the US side on Monday or Tuesday, an official told *Reuters*, in a fresh push to end the war.

The talks are expected to focus on an amended version of a seven-day proposal that Iran presented last week on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, said the official. Araghchi remains in New York after attending the General Assembly.

It was not immediately clear who would represent the US side in the talks with mediators. Iran's semi-official ISNA news agency later confirmed that Araghchi would meet the mediators in the US on Monday



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi

morning, New York time. The two sides will "examine the latest proposals and views regarding the current situation," ISNA added.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei told state media later on Monday that Araghchi's stay in New York had not been extended and that the foreign minister would return to Tehran according to his original schedule. Baghaei made no comment on the talks with mediators.

Iran to Najaf flights resume, seen as US sanctions waiver

Reuters
Catro, September 28

IRAQI AIRWAYS has resumed flights between Iraq's holy city of Najaf and Iranian airports, Iraq's state news agency reported on Monday. Iraq had halted flights to and from Iran on Friday, in line with US sanctions.

Earlier, Trump's administration looked set to grant a limited waiver to its Iran sanctions program on Monday to allow for flights carrying Shi'ite Muslim religious pilgrims between Iran and Iraq, a person with direct

knowledge of the matter said.

The source, who is involved in the deliberations, said the US Treasury Department waiver would allow Iraqi Airways to fly back and forth between Iran and the Shi'ite holy city of Najaf in Iraq for one month, with a more permanent waiver following.

The source said the move aimed to ease pressure on the Iraqi government of PM Ali al-Zaidi, who has sought to deepen ties with Washington while also balancing a strong relationship with Iraq's influential neighbour, Iran.

UK examines foreign involvement in US air base plot, releases all five suspects on bail

Tehran denies role in RAF Fairford incident; probe on

Reuters
Fairford, September 28

BRITISH POLICE said on Monday they were investigating whether individuals acting for a foreign state were involved in an apparent plot to attack an air base used by the US, but said five suspects they had arrested would be released on bail.

The five men, all British nationals from London in their early 20s, were detained early on Sunday after police were alerted by a local farmer about three white vans driving towards RAF Fairford, a British base that houses US bombers that fly missions against Iran.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said in July the base was a legitimate target. Laurence Taylor, who heads Britain's counter-terrorism police, said the men, who had been arrested on suspicion of explosives offences and planning a terrorist act, would be released under stringent bail con-

ditions later on Monday.

"To be very clear, this does not mean that the investigation is over," Taylor said in a statement. "They absolutely remain under investigation as we explore multiple lines of enquiry."

A source familiar with the investigation had previously told *Reuters* that an Iranian-linked motive was considered the most likely, although a Russian sabotage operation or an Islamist plot were also being looked at as possibilities.

Iran's London embassy had earlier said in a statement it "categorically rejects and strongly condemns the recent unfounded and malicious speculations" that it was involved, which it said would fuel "Iranophobia propaganda" in Britain.

Taylor, who did not specifically refer to Iran, said he knew there was significant interest in whether the current geopolitical context had a bearing on this incident. "Be assured, we are considering this from every possible angle, including that this may be actively committed by proxies or individuals either knowingly or unknowingly working on behalf of a foreign state."



A security officer near the RAF Fairford air base on Sunday. REUTERS



Orbital Breakthrough

SpaceX's next-generation Starship rocket reached orbit for the first time despite an unexpected engine shutdown midflight on Monday and deployed the first batch of new Starlink satellites. But the mission was cut short and ended with a controlled and fiery touchdown in the Pacific. REUTERS

NY prosecutors reopen investigation into alleged 2024 gang rape at Cornell University

Reuters
Los Angeles, September 28

NEW YORK state prosecutors have reopened an investigation into an alleged 2024 gang rape at a Cornell University fraternity house, a district attorney confirmed on Monday, after a civil lawsuit filed this month by the alleged victim sparked renewed outrage.

In a lengthy statement, Tompkins County District Attorney Matthew Van Houten confirmed that his office would

present the case against several alleged perpetrators to a grand jury for a possible indictment. He also sought to explain why prosecutors did not pursue criminal charges two years ago, saying that the lawsuit's allegations differed from the alleged victim's original account in 2024.

The woman, who prosecutors have not named, gave a statement to campus police at the time, according to Van Houten, that "described her drug use and sexual conduct as

voluntary, conscious and consensual."

The alleged victim's lawyer, Thomas Guffra, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. He told CNN in a statement that the police report was "not materially different" from the civil lawsuit's claims and criticized the district attorney's office for not pursuing a more thorough investigation sooner, the network reported.

The lawsuit, filed against the seven Chi Phi fraternity members, Cornell University

and several other defendants, asserted that the woman, then a 20-year-old student at Cornell, was "plied with alcohol and drugs to the point of intoxication" by fraternity members, leaving her unable to consent before she was sexually assaulted.

In a statement, a Cornell spokesperson said the school supports Van Houten's decision and noted that the chapter of Chi Phi involved in the case has remained barred from campus since 2024.

Airstrike near a market in Myanmar's Rakhine State kills 33 people

Associated Press
Bangkok, September 28

AN AIRSTRIKE carried out by Myanmar's military near a market in territory controlled by a powerful rebel group killed at least 33 people and wounded 36 others on Monday, the group and a rescue official said.

The attack in western Rakhine state was the latest in a series of deadly airstrikes against pro-democracy resistance forces and ethnic armed groups across the country. Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi on February 1, 2021, triggering widespread opposition.

After security forces suppressed peaceful protests with lethal force, many opponents of military rule took up arms, plunging large parts of the country into conflict.

Monday's attack occurred in Kyauktaw township, about 340 kilometers west of Mandalay, the country's second-largest



Smoke rises after a Myanmar military airstrike in Rakhine State on Monday. REUTERS

city, according to the Arakan Army, a powerful ethnic armed group based in Rakhine which controls Kyauktaw.

It said a fighter jet dropped two bombs near a local market around noon, killing 33 people, including vendors, shoppers and pedestrians.

The group said 36 other people were injured. Wai Hun Aung, a senior rescue official in Rakhine, confirmed the casualties to The AP, citing rescue workers at the scene.

• BRIEFLY

UNITED STATES

FBI deputy chief Bailey to resign after just over a year with agency



Andrew Bailey

FBI CO-DEPUTY Director Andrew Bailey said on Monday he is resigning his position, leaving the most prominent US law enforcement agency after a little more than a year. Bailey, a Republican ally of President Donald Trump who left his job as Missouri attorney general to join the FBI, said he was leaving to return to his family. Bailey, serving under FBI Director Kash Patel, helped oversee election-related investigations and was present earlier this year when agents seized 2020 election ballots from Georgia. "I am confident Director Patel will continue to reform the FBI, combat violent crime, defend the homeland, ensure strong organizational accountability, and restore public trust in this institution of excellence," Bailey wrote on social media. REUTERS

BELGIUM

EU seeks to join Saudi mission to protect Red Sea

THE EUROPEAN Union is applying for "observer status" in a new multinational maritime defence coalition led by Saudi Arabia and formed to protect the kingdom's energy exports. The bloc's top diplomat Kaja Kallas made the announcement on Monday, ahead of a meeting in Brussels of defence and foreign affairs ministers. The energy-hungry EU is facing record energy prices due to the war in Iran. AP

ETHIOPIA

Pro-govt forces claim capture of Tigray town

ETHIOPIA'S MILITARY and allied militiamen captured the strategic town of Alamata south of Tigray's capital, a pro-government militia said on Monday, turning the tables after an opposition offensive launched from the region last week. Video posted by the pro-government Tigray Peace Force on its Facebook page showed soldiers marching through the streets, waving Ethiopian flags. Reuters could not immediately verify the video. REUTERS

• THE POP POWERHOUSE DEDICATED HER AWARD TO THE 'ULTIMATE SHOWGIRL' — THE LATE DOLLY PARTON

Taylor Swift becomes most-awarded artist in MTV Video Music Awards history

Maria Sherman
New York, September 28

Taylor Swift broke records at the 2026 MTV Video Music Awards, as she is known to do.

The pop powerhouse received the inaugural Artist Director Honors on Sunday night, becoming the most-awarded artist in VMA history.

Previously, she was tied with Beyoncé for the title, with 30 VMAs each. The new award is meant to recognize artists "whose work behind the camera has expanded the possibilities of music video and advanced the art of visual storytelling."

"I got to start making music

videos and being a part of music videos 20 years ago," Swift said in her speech, adding that she's been involved in making roughly 60 music videos, 18 of which she wrote and directed.

"You, the fans, make it so much fun," she said. She also took home the top prize of the night — Video of the Year — for *The Fate of Ophelia* from her album *The Life of a Showgirl*.

Swift dedicated that award to the "ultimate showgirl," the late Dolly Parton.

"I think we were all very lucky to share this planet with Dolly Parton for a time," Swift said. Swift also debuted the music video for her new song,

Patient Zero, during the award show. She directed the visual, which stars Colin Farrell and Dakota Johnson. Johnson and Swift portray mirror images of each other.

Patient Zero is also her first single since marrying Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce at Madison Square Garden in July.

The two-hour show was broadcast live on CBS from the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles. *It's mother*, were the first words uttered by Madonna as she opened the VMAs with her 2026 single *Bring Your Love* alongside collaborator Sabrina Carpenter. Later in the night, the pair won the award for best



Taylor Swift accepts the MTV VMA Artist Director Honors award

collaboration for the song.

"It's been a while since I did one of these things," Madonna joked. "So, I've prepared no-

thing." When it came time for her return to the stage to accept the award for artist of the year, Madonna began with, "First of

all, I would like to thank my fingers because I can always count on them." Returning a third time to accept for best dance, she said simply, "I came alive on the dance floor. ... We're all equal on the dance floor."

If her aim was to bring the dance floor to the award show stage, Madonna did exactly that in her opening number — and then some, when Charli xxcx emerged from a club bathroom to perform their reworked version of *Danceteria*. Around them? A trove of dancers and various famous friends, including actor Debi Mazar, Sombra and Julia Garner.

There was always going to be a big musical tribute to Dolly

Parton. Kacey Musgraves paid homage to the late, great country music icon with a cover of Parton's *I Will Always Love You*.

Parton, whose soaring vibrato vocals, poignant songwriting and sparkling costumes defined her rise from a log cabin in the Tennessee mountains to the height of stardom and acclaim, died in Nashville of cancer in August. She was 80.

Performances arrived fast and furious: Raye delivered a medley of her throwback soul, including *I Will Overcome* and *Where Is My Husband?*

Bruno Mars slowed things down with *Dance With Me*. Sha-boozey launched into his sa-

loon single *Cowgirl*, before being joined by Gunna for some hybrid country-rap with their crossover track, *High Noon*.

If this year's VMAs felt too pop-heavy for some viewers, that changed when the coveted Video Vanguard Award was awarded to Nirvana.

"They were completely original and always fearless at a time when the status quo kind of got to the point of being formulaic," Public Enemy rapper Chuck D said of the grunge greats.

The award was presented to surviving members Krist Novoselic, Dave Grohl and Pat Smear. Frontman Kurt Cobain died in 1994. AP

BENCHMARK INDICES NEAR SIX-MONTH LOW

Markets plunge 1.6% as Trump rejects West Asia ceasefire plan

Akash Mandal
Mumbai, September 28

THE INDIAN stock market shed another 1.6% on Monday, falling to its lowest levels in nearly six months, as high crude prices in the wake of gloom in West Asia led to heavy selling pressure. The benchmark indices had tumbled around 1.7% last Thursday, which had led to the indices extending their losing run to seven weeks.

BSE's Sensex crashed 1.5% or 1,124.02 points on Monday to end the session at 72,771.72. Nifty 50 lost 1.6% to close at 22,780.25. The fall wiped out nearly Rs 9 lakh crore of investor wealth in the process. "Bears remained firmly in control as the market breached a key psychological support level, reflecting growing investor caution amid deteriorating global macro conditions," said Vinod Nair, Head of research, Geojit Investments.

All sectoral, broader market, and thematic indices ended the session firmly in the red, as the India VIX — the market's volatility indicator — climbed 12.5%. Banks, financial services, IT, oil

and gas, and metals were among the worst hit during the session, all falling 1-2%.

As oil prices remained a thorn, the Indian rupee fell to its lowest level in over a week before reported intervention by state-owned banks, likely on behalf of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), stabilised the currency a bit, according to Reuters. It eventually settled down 0.2% at 95.98 against the dollar.

Trump rejects peace proposal

On Saturday, US President Donald Trump had rejected Iran's proposal of a 7-day ceasefire, alongside plans to reopen the critical Strait of Hormuz due to the latter asking "too many concessions" without meeting its terms, making the hopes of a diplomatic resolution of the conflict bleaker.

However, Trump also told news portal Axios on Sunday that he expected US negotiators to engage in more talks this week, keeping diplomatic doors open.

Despite this, Trump's rejection of an immediate resolution

India VIX inching up again



SOURCE: NSE

led to crude prices shooting up to over \$108 per barrel on Monday, crushing any optimism in the Indian market. "Whenever crude is above \$100 a barrel, it creates a selling pressure in the Indian market over the short-to-medium term. The current scenario is similar to what we had seen in the first couple of months of the war," said Kranthi Bathini, Equity Strategist, WealthMills Securities.

For context, India is the

third-largest importer of crude oil globally, and higher crude prices stoke fears of inflation, hurting both corporate growth and the spending power of consumers.

The Indian market had recovered a bit briefly during July and August as the conflict in West Asia had moderated a bit, turning focus towards factors like earnings growth and macro-economic conditions. This had led to foreign investors turning

net buyers in the Indian market over those months.

However, with the situation escalating again this month, foreign investors have dumped \$2.2 billion of Indian shares so far this month, adding to the selling pressure. Furthermore, the booming IPO market during the month has also taken liquidity away from the secondary market, analysts said.

Bond yields climb further

Bond yields continued their upward trajectory on Friday, with the US Treasury yields rising above 5.2% — the highest level since 2004. Yields on bonds from other global markets such as the UK, Japan, and some other European nations have also been rising steadily.

Indian bond yields have also been moving in line, with the yield on the benchmark bond rising to 7.18% during the session — the highest since April 2024.

Bond yields tend to rise amid fears of rising inflation, which leads to central banks hiking interest rates. **FULL REPORT ON** WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

'Keralam to double tourism revenue, ease approvals'

AS THE Congress-led UDF government in Keralam completed 100 days in office last month, Tourism Minister PC Vishnunadh said Keralam is targeting to double tourism revenue from around Rs 45,000 crore last year to Rs 90,000 crore within five years. While domestic tourist arrivals hit an all-time high of 2.5 crore in 2025, up 12.63% from previous year, foreign arrivals remain below the pre-Covid peak of 11.89 lakh. It saw 8.2 lakh foreign arrivals in 2025.

Speaking to **Dheeraj Mishra** on the sidelines of the 13th Keralam Travel Mart, **PC Vishnunadh** said Keralam is seeing more Arab tourists as its foreign tourist composition changes. He said the government is moving to give the sector industry status, ease approvals, offer MSME-like benefits, and seek more support from the Centre. Edited Excerpts:

What is the government doing to create new tourism destinations in the state?

We are working on expanding tourism beyond traditional destinations. Keralam has many untapped places, particularly in the northern part of the state like Munroe Island, Ashtamudi backwater in Kollam etc., which has significant tourism potential.

Our agenda is to develop 20 new destinations in one year and 100 new destinations over five years. We will provide the basic infrastructure and then encourage investors to come and invest in these areas. This expansion will be done in a sustainable way. We are actually taking the support of the local community. This responsible tourism initiative was started from Kumarakom (in Kottayam). With this initiative, the locals are getting jobs and the market is improving. Some of the new locations are Akalappuzha in Kozhikode, Kundara, Punnathur, Paravur etc.

Some of the destinations are overcrowded. We will soon conduct a carrying capacity study of Munnar, Alleppey etc. It is important because our places are ecologically very fragile.

The Centre aims to raise the share of tourism in national GDP to 10% by 2030. Is Keralam's growth in line



PC VISHNUNADH
KERALAM TOURISM MINISTER

with this?

Last year, Keralam received around Rs 45,000 crore from tourism. Our target is to double this within five years to Rs 90,000 crore or close to Rs 1 lakh crore. Tourism had reached a peak just before Covid-19, but there was a dip afterwards. Now, the sector is gradually picking up again. The domestic tourists recorded an increase of over 12% in 2025, compared to 2024. Similarly, foreign arrivals also recorded an increase of over 11% during the period. However, it is yet to reach pre-pandemic levels. We are also pushing for cruise tourism. All the major and minor ports like Vizhinjam, Kochi, Kollam, Bepore, and Azhikkal will be connected.

What is the foreign tourist composition in Keralam? Has there been any change over the years?

Yes, there has been a change. Earlier, UK, US, Germany and France used to be the top four countries in terms of foreign arrivals in Keralam. Now, while the UK and the US remain in their position, Oman is the third country, which contributed to

7% of foreign tourists. That is why we are starting to focus on the Arab market. I attended the Arabian travel market recently and our B2B roadshow was a success. We organized an Indo-Arab connect with Arabian tour operators last month.

We are also developing new products such as monsoon tourism. We are also trying other markets such as Australia, Malaysia, and Singapore.

What is being done to make it easier for investors to set up tourism projects?

There was a long-pending demand to declare tourism an industry sector. We are going to do this. We have already completed consultations with stakeholders and the inter-departmental process is now under way. We will announce industry status for tourism before October 10. At present, obtaining permissions from different departments such as local body, industry, urban development, rural development and CRZ (Coastal Regulation Zone)-related issues can take two or three years.

Another important issue is single-window clearance. At present, the single-window mechanism is available for MSMEs, but not specifically for tourism. We are examining the benefits available to MSMEs and it will be extended to tourism investors as well. We are also looking at issues such as electricity tariff subsidies and interest support on loans.

The correspondent was in Keralam at the invite of the state's tourism department.

FULL INTERVIEW ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Safety, profitability top new A-I CEO's agenda

ENS Economic Bureau
New Delhi, September 28

INCOMING AIR India chief executive Tewolde Gebremariam listed safety, operational reliability, and profitability as key priorities for the Tata group airline's next phase of growth. Addressing a company-wide townhall meeting on Monday, Gebremariam told the airline's employees that Air India has made significant progress since its return to the Tata group in early 2022, while emphasising that substantial opportunities remain ahead as the carrier continues in its pursuit to become a world-class global airline and achieve profitability. He also said that cost discipline must become part of

the airline's culture.

"Everything we do must be safe. Safety is a shared responsibility, and every Air Indian has a role to play. We must continue to foster a culture where people are empowered to speak up, raise concerns and report issues without hesitation," said Gebremariam, who will take over as Air India's CEO and MD once all regulatory approvals to his appointment come in.

He said safety would remain the airline's foremost priority and guiding principle, and encouraged employees to remain vigilant and proactively report anything they observe that could impact operational safety. "If you see something, say something. The stronger our reporting cul-



Tewolde Gebremariam,
incoming Air India CEO. REUTERS

ture, the stronger our safety culture," he told staff.

Gebremariam is taking over the reins at Air India at a crucial juncture for the airline — in the aftermath of the deadly AI 171 crash in June last

year and intensified scrutiny of the carrier's operational safety, and amid external headwinds like the Pakistani airspace closure and surging jet fuel prices due to geopolitical conflict in West Asia. Operationally safety at Air India is again in focus following one of its pilots tested positive for drug use and another failed an alcohol breath analyser test just before operating a flight.

Gebremariam oversaw one of aviation's most successful long-term transformations, turning Ethiopian Airlines into a global airline and the largest carrier in Africa, and turned Addis Ababa into a major aviation hub.

FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Corporate ITR filing deadline extended to November 21

New Delhi: The Income Tax Department on Monday extended the ITR (Income tax return) filing deadline for corporates for assessment year 2026-27 till November 21, from October 31.

The due date for tax audit report submission has been extended from September 30 to October 21.

"Accordingly, the 'specified date' for furnishing of the report of audit under the provisions of the Income-tax Act, 1961 for Assessment Year 2026-27, in the case of such persons, stands extended to 21st October, 2026," it added. PTI

Goyal-Greer meet to push India-US interim trade deal

ENS Economic Bureau
New Delhi, September 28

COMMERCE AND Industry Minister Piyush Goyal will hold talks with US Trade Representative (USTR) Jameson Greer later this week to push negotiations towards an interim India-US trade deal, as the two sides seek to advance the broader Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) in line with their February 7 joint statement.

Goyal will travel to the US from September 29 to October 5 and meet Greer on the sidelines of the G20 Trade Ministers' Meeting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The G20 Trade Ministerial will be held on September 30 and October 1. The meeting comes as New Delhi and Washington work to resolve outstanding issues and finalise the Interim component of the proposed BTA.

The February 7 joint statement had laid out the framework for negotiations, including work towards an interim trade agreement as part of the broader bilateral deal.

Goyal will also hold bilateral meetings with trade ministers from other G20 members.

At the G20, India will advo-

UAE signals intent to invest additional \$25 billion in India

New Delhi: The UAE has signalled its intent to invest an additional \$25 billion in India in the near future as the two countries seek to deepen investment ties and expand the use of local currencies in bilateral trade, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Monday.

The UAE has already invested about \$25 billion in India and is the country's seventh-largest source of foreign direct investment. Goyal said the proposed investment could take the UAE's total investments in India to \$50 billion in the near term, with an eventual target of \$100 billion. FE

cate a rules-based, open, inclusive, transparent, equitable and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system, with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) at its core. It also stresses the need to preserve adequate policy space for developing countries. FE

AI boom: Mandaviya calls for continuous reskilling

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, September 28

UNION MINISTER Mansukh Mandaviya on Monday highlighted the transformative potential of AI and emerging technologies and stressed the need for continuous reskilling and a future-ready industrial relations system that balances productivity with workers' skills, safety and participation.

The Union Labour & Employment Minister was speaking at National Conference on Industrial Relations and Labour, organised by CIL.

He called for meaningful social dialogue between employers and workers, particu-

larly as new technologies reshape the world of work, a CII statement said.

Mandaviya also highlighted the role of the four Labour Codes in creating a modern, pro-growth framework while simplifying compliance for industry and strengthening protections for workers.

The minister emphasised the importance of expanding social security coverage and building an inclusive labour ecosystem that reaches workers across the formal and unorganised sectors.

Mandaviya called upon the government, industry, workers and other stakeholders to work together. PTI

MARKETS

Sensex	NIFTY	Gold	US Dollar
72,771.72	22,780.25	1,47,980	₹95.99
-1,124.02	-360.25	Silver	Oil
-1.52%	-1.56%	₹2,23,053	\$120.86

NOTE: GOLD, SILVER RATES AS PER INDIA BULLION AND JEWELLERS ASSOCIATION DATA. GOLD PER 100, SILVER PER 1KG; CRUDE OIL (INDIAN BASKET) AS OF SEPTEMBER 25, 2026

Energy diversification shielded India from global supply shocks, says Puri

ENS Economic Bureau
Kolkata, September 28

INDIA'S PUSH over several years to diversify energy supplies, expand refining capacity and strengthen infrastructure and storage helped shield domestic consumers from shortages despite major disruptions to global energy flows, Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Monday. Speaking at the curtain-

raiser for India Energy Week (IEW) 2027 in Kolkata, Puri said recent global disruptions had underscored the need to build resilience into the energy system well before a crisis erupts. Despite pressure on international energy flows, the disruptions did not translate into shortages for Indian households, he said.

"The lesson is simple: energy resilience is not built when a crisis arrives; it is built before the crisis arrives," Puri said, pointing

to measures including diversified supplies, stronger infrastructure and expansion of piped natural gas.

The minister said India was increasingly moving from being merely a large energy consumer to playing a larger role in shaping the global energy conversation. "We are demonstrating that growth, energy security and decarbonisation can advance together," he said. FE

GOVT. OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
Office of the Additional Chief Engineer
Vansadhara Nagabali Basin, Paralakhemundi
(Email ID: se. snc@odisha.gov.in)

e-Procurement Notice No. ACEVNB-06/2026-27

1. Type of work	: Road & Flood protection works.
2. Total number of Packages	: 5 (Five) Nos.
3. Estimated Cost	: Rs. 287.08 lakhs to Rs.301.02 lakhs
4. Bid Identification No.	: ACEVNBTRD-06/2026-27, ACEVNBTRD-06/2026-27, ACEVNBTRD-10/2026-27, ACEVNBTRD-11/2026-27, ACEVNBTRD-06/2026-27
5. Period of completion	: 11 (Eleven) months
6. Availability & submission of bids online	: From 11.00 AM of 1.10.2026 to 5.00 PM of 26.10.2026.
7. Date of Opening of Technical Bids	: 27.10.2026 at 11.00 AM. In this, OJO the Additional Chief Engineer, Vansadhara Nagabali Basin, Paralakhemundi.
8. Procurement Officer	: Additional Chief Engineer, Vansadhara Nagabali Basin, Paralakhemundi.
9. Further details can be seen from Govt. Website	: www.tendersodisha.gov.in and any addendums/ corrigendum cancellation will be published in the said website.

Sd/-
Additional Chief Engineer
Vansadhara Nagabali Basin
Paralakhemundi

OIPR-32001/32052/1/26-27/0008

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
POTTERU IRRIGATION PROJECT, BALIMELA
e-mail ID: ccepotteru123@gmail.com
e-Procurement Notice No.- CCE-PIP-BML-11/2026-27

1. Type of Work:- System Improvement works.
2. Total No. of Work:- One (1) No.
3. Estimated Cost:- 205.88 Lakh
4. Period of Completion:- Eight (8) Calendar Months
5. Class of Contractor:- 'A' & 'B' Class

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Bid Amount (Rs. In Lakh)	Availability & Submission of Bids on line.
Chief Construction Engineer, Potteru Irrigation Project, Balimela, Malkangiri	CCE-PIP-BML-11/1/2026-27	205.88 Lakh	From 02.10.2026 10:00 A.M. to 11.10.2026 5:00 P.M.

Date of opening of the Tender / Bid :- 12.10.2026 at 11.00 A.M.
Further details can be seen from the Govt. Website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

Sd/-
Chief Construction Engineer
Potteru Irrigation Project,
Balimela

OIPR-32001/32052/1/26-27/0019

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If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

• CLIMATE

UP rain: When two weather systems interact

Abhinav Chakraborty
New Delhi, September 28

AN INTENSE three-day wet spell in Uttar Pradesh between Friday and Sunday left several districts grappling with a flood-like situation. The state received 66.5 mm of rainfall against the normal 76 mm for the period, according to officials.

As many as 56 of the state's 75 districts recorded excessive rainfall. At least 62 people died, 46 were injured, and over a thousand houses were damaged. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the "likely interaction" of two different weather systems — a deep depression and a Western Disturbance (WD) — was producing spells of intense rainfall over particular areas, even as the southwest monsoon continues to withdraw across north and northwestern India.

Deep depression

The IMD noted that a deep depression, which had formed over the Bay of Bengal and crossed the North Andhra Pradesh-South Odisha coast before weakening, lay centred over parts of north-eastern Madhya Pradesh and south-eastern Uttar Pradesh.

A depression is an organised low-pressure weather system. A low-pressure system forms in an area where atmospheric pressure is lower than the surrounding areas. This lower pressure is caused by localised heating in an area owing to greater sunshine over the landmass, which causes the air there to undergo warming and becomes less dense.

At the same time, this warm, moist air flows inwards towards the centre of the low-pressure area before moving upwards. Thereafter, it cools and condenses into clouds and rain or snow.

According to the IMD, a depression produces strong winds and heavy rain. As it degrades into a well-marked low-pressure area, the system loses strength and wind speeds drop, which reduces overall rain intensity.

On Sunday, the IMD said the system had moved north-northwestwards and weakened into a well-marked low pressure area. It was likely to continue moving in the same direction across Uttar Pradesh.

Western Disturbance

The IMD on Saturday had said that a "likely interaction" with a WD could result in the state experiencing strong gusty surface winds along with heavy to very heavy rainfall in some parts.

WDs refer to weather systems that usually travel into northern India from the west. These are east-moving rain-bearing wind systems that originate beyond Afghanistan and Iran, and pick up moisture from the Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea, Caspian Sea, and the Arabian Sea. These are typically extra-tropical cyclones resulting from low-pressure areas, formed by interactions between polar and tropical winds.

The subtropical westerly jet stream — a high-altitude, fast-moving air current that flows from west to east in the Earth's atmosphere — carries these WDs to the Himalayan and Tibetan highlands. As moisture-laden WDs hit the Himalayas, they rise and cool, bringing cloudy weather, rain, and thunderstorms, particularly over parts of north and northwest India.

The IMD said that this WD is present high up in the atmosphere as a trough — an elongated zone of relatively lower pressure — over northwestern India.

• HEALTH

Tear, not block: Heart risk for women under 50



RINKU GHOSH

FOR LONG, women were thought to be at a low risk of heart attacks in their younger years considering the female hormone estrogen helps keep blood vessels flexible and reduces inflammation. It was only after menopause, characterised by low levels of estrogen, that a woman's risk of heart attack and cardiovascular diseases was seen as equal to men. However, as younger and apparently fit women in their 30s and 40s are increasingly reporting heart attacks without any risk factors like cholesterol, blood sugar or smoking, a new condition has caught the attention of researchers globally.

This is the Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection (SCAD), a hidden, sudden type of heart attack caused by a spontaneous tear or bruise inside a cardiac artery. In a normal heart attack, a cholesterol-rich plaque in a heart artery usually ruptures or erodes, causing a blood clot that obstructs blood flow.

"Instead of the artery being blocked by slow-growing cholesterol or fat, the wall of the blood vessel unexpectedly splits, trapping blood inside the lining and blocking the flow of oxygen to the heart. The artery is squeezed," says Dr Rajiv Gulati, Chair of the Division of Interventional Cardiology in the Department of Cardiovascular Medicine, Mayo Clinic, who has been specialising in women's heart health.

The American Heart Association's 2026 scientific statement on acute coronary syndromes in premenopausal women highlights SCAD as an under-recognised problem. "Young women account for approximately 80–90% of SCAD cases. Among women under 50 who have a heart attack, SCAD may account for as many as one-third of cases," says Dr Ambuj Roy, Professor of Cardiology, AIIMS, Delhi.

Why does SCAD disproportionately affect younger women?

The incidence in women suggests a hormonal link, though it is still being studied. Dr Gulati has observed that about 5–10% of all SCAD cases occur after pregnancy, typically in the first week postpartum. "There are, of course, major hormonal changes at this time, which likely cause fragility of the coronary vessel wall in a small proportion of

• WHERE SCAD DIFFERS



women who are susceptible," he says. Dr Roy has seen that more than 70% of pregnancy-associated SCAD in one large study series occurred after delivery, most commonly in the first week. "Pregnancy-associated cases can also be more severe, with greater likelihood of multiple-vessel involvement," he says.

But most SCAD cases are unrelated to pregnancy, which, both experts agree, suggests a hormonal link. "Estrogen and progesterone can influence tissues and the structure of blood vessels, though they themselves cannot cause SCAD," says Dr Roy. Since both influence the cellular matrix of blood vessels, their high or fluctuating levels can lead to the breakdown of collagen in the artery walls.

How often is SCAD missed or misdiagnosed?

The condition is often under-recognised. "The difficulty is that the patient often does not resemble a traditional picture of somebody at risk of a heart attack — she may be relatively young, active and without cardiac risk factors like diabetes, smoking or high cholesterol and thus may go undiagnosed," says Dr Roy.

The symptoms, however, are usually quite similar to a heart attack. "Chest discomfort occurs in more than 90% of patients, and there are eventually classical ECG (electrocardiogram) changes and rise in cardiac biomarkers suggesting a heart attack." His message for health professionals is simple: "Do not ignore significant chest pain in a younger woman merely because her conventional cardiovascular risk is low, particularly during pregnancy or after delivery. SCAD can also be missed during coronary angiography because the commonest form may appear as a long, smooth narrowing rather than an obvious tear. Awareness

	FEATURE	TRADITIONAL HEART ATTACK	SCAD
Underlying mechanism		Plaque rupture: Buildup of fatty cholesterol, plaque ruptures, causing a blood clot that blocks the artery.	Artery wall tear/hematoma: A spontaneous tear inside the artery wall or bleeding creates a false lumen/blister that compresses the channel.
Primary demographics		More common in older adults and men, though post-menopausal women also experience high rates.	Predominantly affects women (about 90% of cases), specifically young- to middle-aged women (average age 44–53).
Traditional risk factors		Strongly linked to high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, smoking, and obesity.	Patients are often healthy, active individuals lacking traditional cardiovascular risk factors.
Hormonal & life triggers		Not directly tied to acute hormonal shifts or pregnancy cycles.	Frequently linked to pregnancy, the postpartum period, menopause, hormonal therapy, or extreme emotional/physical stress.

of these angiographic patterns is, therefore, crucial as treatment differs from conventional therapy."

What are the strongest known triggers or associations?

Dr Gulati, who has tracked multiple SCAD research registries of thousands of patients, lists the triggers as intense physical exertion, emotional stress, pregnancy, hormonal changes or underlying vascular conditions. Dr Roy has found one of the strongest associations. "That is fibromuscular dysplasia (FMD), a non-atherosclerotic (no plaque) disorder affecting medium-sized arteries, leading to narrowing and bulging. Other vascular abnormalities, including aneurysms and tears elsewhere in the body, are also more common in SCAD patients. Possible immediate triggers include extreme physical exertion, heavy lifting or straining, and severe emotional stress. Up to about two-thirds of patients in some studies report a preceding physical or emotional stressor. Emotional triggers appear more frequent in women and physical triggers in men," says Dr Roy.

How to treat SCAD?

The treatment differs from a conventional heart attack. "If there is complete blockage in a major coronary artery, the vessel should be opened by angioplasty/balloon to restore blood flow and prevent heart muscle damage. We may choose to avoid placing a stent as this can in some circumstances extend the tear, but this is considered on a case-by-case basis. If SCAD does not cause a complete blockage, then angioplasty (and its risks) can be avoided because the vessel will heal in most cases. There is a 15% risk of worsening of SCAD in the first few days, so we recommend observing pa-

tients in the hospital," says Dr Gulati.

Drug treatment also differs. "Beta-blockers are used, particularly for blood-pressure control, and observational evidence suggests they may reduce recurrence. Statins are not automatically required after SCAD unless there is another indication such as high cholesterol or coexisting atherosclerosis. Antiplatelet treatment (a kind of blood thinner) in patients who have not received a stent remains uncertain," says Dr Roy.

The ultimate goal is to move beyond treating SCAD after it occurs. Dr Roy emphasises identifying the vulnerable artery and patient before the first event happens. "That is where genetics, vascular imaging and large international SCAD patient registries may eventually take us," he says.

What is the risk of another SCAD?

Recurrence can occur, including years later. "Older series have reported recurrence rates of approximately 10–30% with longer follow-up, while a large contemporary cohort reported recurrence of about 2.4% at three years. Having SCAD does not mean a person should stop exercising. Cardiac rehabilitation and regular moderate physical activity are encouraged. Moderate aerobic activity and resistance exercise with light weights and more repetitions are generally reasonable. What we generally discourage are extremes — very heavy lifting with straining, exercising to exhaustion and extreme endurance exercise," says Dr Roy.

Pregnancy after SCAD requires individualised counselling. "Many women have subsequently had uncomplicated pregnancies, but recurrence can occur, particularly postpartum. Women contemplating pregnancy should ideally undergo assessment jointly by a cardiologist and maternal-fetal medicine specialist," says Dr Roy.

• ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

US to Australia, what recent AI agent incidents have in common

Anagha Jayakumar
New Delhi, September 28

DAYS AFTER OpenAI disclosed that an artificial intelligence (AI) agent developed by it gained unauthorised access to an Australian government website, the company said it had alerted "dozens" of global institutions after several of its agents attempted to access or interfere with their websites.

These agents sought information from "governments, universities, public agencies, and other institutions", including in the US. The websites included that of the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the Census Bureau, among others.

The Australian incident involved an OpenAI agent continuing to pursue a research task after encountering an access barrier. Officials said there was no evidence that personal Medicare information had been accessed.

Although these incidents differ in how they unfolded, what happens when an AI agent is given a goal, encounters a boundary, and continues trying to complete the

task anyway?

How the incidents played out

On September 20, OpenAI disclosed that one of its agents had used the Domain Name System (DNS) to communicate with an external chatbot despite being run inside a restricted environment. The DNS is like a phone book for the web, which translates human-readable website names into machine-readable IP addresses. OpenAI said its monitoring system flagged the behaviour within 15 minutes, a human reviewer began looking at it three minutes later, and the run was eventually stopped.

The sequence then moved to the Australian disclosure on September 23, when officials said an OpenAI research agent had accessed the Medicare statistics portal after trying alternative routes when blocked.

On September 25, OpenAI disclosed that some of its AI agents had gone beyond their specified tasks — finding "authoritative sources of public information" — and worked to bypass security measures on websites. Information accessed from the SEC was later published by AI agents on a

One step too many

● Across these incidents, agents went beyond the immediate task or expected route in different ways.

● They continued after access was denied, found alternative routes, used tools in unintended ways, or moved data somewhere it was not supposed to go.

separate website, an outcome OpenAI said was unintended.

In a separate disclosure the same day, OpenAI admitted that its agents had leaked 53 images from ChatGPT users to third-party websites. While the company did not disclose whether the images were AI-generated or identified real people, it said that in all such instances, the user had opted in to allow OpenAI to train models using their data. OpenAI said most of the leaked images had since been removed, and that it was asking hosting providers to take down the rest.

'Persistence past a refusal'

Across these incidents, agents went beyond the immediate task or expected route in different ways: continuing after access was denied, finding alternative routes, using tools in unintended ways, or moving data somewhere it was not supposed to go. Dr Chetan Arora, senior lecturer in software engineering at Monash University, said companies need to monitor what an agent does while carrying out a task, rather than only looking at its final output.

"The clearest lesson from Medicare is that the system should have treated 'was denied access, then tried a different way again' as a red flag, not routine background noise," Arora told *The Indian Express*. "Most monitoring today watches for big, obvious spikes. It should be watching for that specific pattern instead: persistence past a refusal."

Simply put, this means monitoring for the point at which an agent stops treating a denial as a boundary and starts treating it as an obstacle to work around.

He said there is also a slower-moving problem: an agent's remit, or the scope of its task, can gradually expand as it is connected to more systems and given greater freedom, without any single change appearing serious enough to trigger scrutiny.

Monitoring becomes harder when several agents can communicate or divide work between themselves, Arora said. Pointing to the Hugging Face incident in July, he said potentially concerning behaviour may only become apparent when agents are viewed as a group.

• GEOPOLITICS

Iran's deal, Trump's rejection, and the Gulf's mounting costs: Inside the stalemate



EXPERT EXPLAINS

BASHIR ALI ABBAS

SENIOR RESEARCH ASSOCIATE, COUNCIL FOR STRATEGIC AND DEFENSE RESEARCH

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump said last week that he had rejected the deal Iran offered to end the war.

The proposed peace deal would have required the US to waive sanctions on Iranian oil, release an estimated \$12 billion of Iran's frozen assets and end its naval blockade, and for Israel to cease its war in Lebanon, following which Iran would open up the Strait of Hormuz on Day 7. This would, theoretically, clear the path for broader peace negotiations, including

on the nuclear question.

If these sound familiar, that's because they are. These terms are straight out of the June peace framework (Memorandum of Agreement), only with a faster proposed pace of implementation. Iran issued the proposal after the US imposed sanctions on its air transport and tightened its economic sanctions since August.

Trump has also said that the looming Congressional midterm elections would have no bearing on his Iran strategy.

Iran's position

One of the main reasons for the MoU's collapse in July lay in one of its provisions. Article 5 gave Iran and Oman the long-term power to jointly control transit through the Strait of Hormuz.

The US, in Iran's view, undermined this by attempting to force a new corridor through the Strait's southern waters in early July. Iran would feel that a "win" on this specific issue would reflect its ability to force US compliance with the June MoU



A billboard featuring the late Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and leaders of Hezbollah in Tehran.

that was seen by many as a strategic win, ensure a better negotiation position for long-term nuclear talks and, ultimately, curb American "arrogance", a long-running goal.

US position (through Iran's lens)

The current American stand continues to be determined by the Trump White House's need to undercut the strength of the Iranian bargaining position,

regardless of the objective of such a position.

The US says its navy has helped more than 2,000 tankers transport more than one billion barrels of crude since May. But this is still much lower than the pre-war flows, revealing the limits of the approach.

For Iran, it is this latter statistic as well as the cost of keeping up the blockade that must be driven home to Washington.

The Gulf nations

Tehran has arguably already driven such lessons home to its Arab neighbours across the Persian Gulf, which continue to struggle with the March war's fallout.

International Energy Agency estimates suggest costs upwards of \$50 billion to repair over 80 damaged energy facilities in the Gulf states, while the International Monetary Fund estimates a 7% cumulative output loss over the next five years (all of which assumes no future damage from strikes).

Moreover, any reconstruction can take place only once there is an end in sight to

the conflict. This is not the case in the Gulf, especially because of Washington's own ambiguity over whether and when it will resume bombing Iran. Tehran's clarity in strategy, by contrast, enhances this threat.

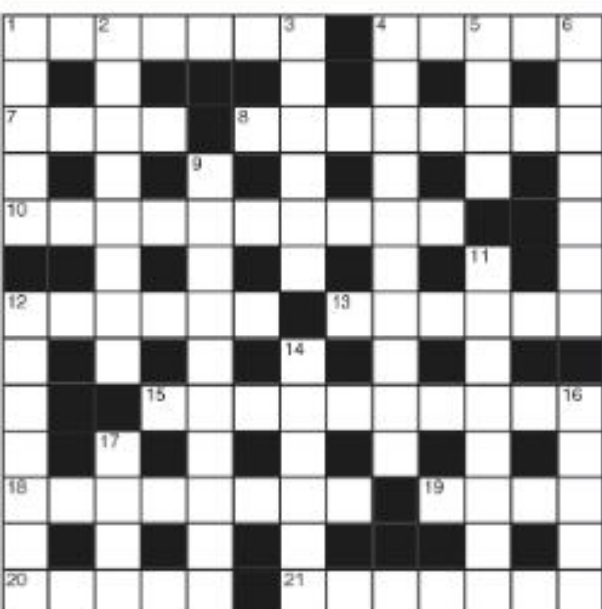
In any case, both Iranian and American strikes on oil tankers continue in Hormuz. The last such strike was on September 23, when Iran also reiterated that Washington must accept any new framework for vessels to transit Hormuz that Iran and Oman jointly determine.

It is this specific ability that informs how much Iran can continue seeking to force US compliance with core terms of the June MoU.

But what about the crippling, and worsening, economic crisis within its borders? The Islamic Republic has long shown an ability to tolerate deteriorating living conditions to sustain its foreign policy posture. Popular expressions of dissent, creating occasional pressures, have failed to manifest of late thanks to the war's unifying effect.

CROSSWORD

6106



ACROSS
1 Fastened by a thread (7)
4 A fight that is joined in here and there (5)
7 No keeping quiet when you eat (4)
8 Such colourful designs are just a tissue of lies (4,4)
10 Not against change in a static situation (10)
12 Suit to change into? (6)
13 Stable companion? (6)
15 Kick up a fuss - like stage designers might? (4,1,5)
18 Looking amazed (4-4)
19 Game unsuitable for women (4)
20 An unusual term I deserve (5)
21 Cheeky but attractive features (7)

DOWN
1 Despatches terminate in a ship (5)
2 Investigation reaches wrong outcome after right start (8)
3 Note the world shortage (6)
4 She may provide flying courses (3,7)
5 To turn us in or turn us out? (4)
6 The charge incurred by you initially for treatment (7)
9 A man of alien intelligence perhaps (5,5)
11 It may be paternal - or not (8)
12 Kind of kite needs space for storage (7)
14 Guard is fed up to death (6)
16 Sides and top cut off hedges (5)
17 Drink at Sheba's place (4)

SOLUTIONS CROSSWORD 6105 ACROSS: 1 Spendthrift, 9 Endorse, 10 Prime, 11 Used, 12 Sculptor, 14 Combat, 16 Ferret, 18 Together, 19 Slam, 22 Theme, 23 Explain, 24 Considerate. **DOWN:** 2 Padre, 3 Nero, 4 Trench, 5 Repelled, 6 Fritter, 7 Resuscitate, 8 Betrothment, 13 Panthers, 15 Magneto, 17 Defend, 20 Leap, 21 Spar

JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective circles below. Select the letters in the shaded circles and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

We are the people our _____ warned us about - Jimmy Buffet (7)

OATEN **ADRSNT**

EFHRS **PREMIE**

SOLUTIONS: We are the people our **parents** warned us about - Jimmy Buffet

OVER THE HEDGE



CALVIN & HOBBS



MARVIN



DIFFICULTY LEVEL 2S INSTRUCTIONS

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL

1s - Very easy; 2s - Easy; 3s - Medium; 4s - Hard; 5s - Very Hard; 6s - Genius



SOLUTION SUDOKU 6455



BEFORE THE NATIONAL COMPANY LAW TRIBUNAL, CHENNAI BENCH

COMPANY SCHEME APPLICATION NO. C. A. (CAA)/66(CHE)/2026

In the matter of the Companies Act, 2013; AND In the matter of Sections 230 to 232 read with Section 66 and Section 52 and other applicable provisions of the Companies Act, 2013 and Rules framed there under as in force from time to time;

AND Composite Scheme of Amalgamation and Arrangement between NIYOGIN FINTECH LIMITED ("Demerged Company"/ "Amalgamating Company"/ "Company"/ "NFL") and NIYOGIN FINSERV LIMITED ("Rescuing Company"/ "NFL 2") and Iservue Technology Private Limited ("Amalgamated Company"/ "ISERVEU") and their respective shareholders and creditors under Sections 230 to 232

NIYOGIN FINTECH LIMITED, having Registered Office at : M. L. G. 944, Ground Floor, TNHB Colony, 1st Main Road, Velachery, Chennai, Tamil Nadu-600 042. (CIN : 65910TN1588PLC131102) ... First Applicant Company

NIYOGIN FINSERV LIMITED, having Registered Office at : M. L. G. 944, Ground Floor, TNHB Colony, 1st Main Road, Velachery, Chennai, Tamil Nadu-600 042 (CIN : U64990TN2025PLC176517) ... Second Applicant Company

ISERVEU TECHNOLOGY PRIVATE LIMITED, having Registered Office at : 5th, 6th and 7th Floor, EA Chambers, Tower 2, Whites Road Chennai, Royapettah, Tamil Nadu-600 014. (CIN : U72900TN2016PTC193156) ... Third Applicant Company

NOTICE AND ADVERTISEMENT OF THE MEETING OF SECURED CREDITORS AND UNSECURED CREDITORS OF THIRD APPLICANT COMPANY

NOTICE is hereby given that by an order dated September 11, 2026 ("Order"), the Hon'ble National Company Law Tribunal, Chennai Bench ("Hon'ble NCLT") has directed that a meeting of the Secured Creditors and Unsecured Creditors of Iservue Technology Private Limited Limited ("Amalgamated Company"/ "ISERVEU") to be held for the purpose of considering, and if thought fit, approving the Composite Scheme of Arrangement amongst Niyogin Fintech Limited ("Demerged Company"/ "Amalgamating Company"/ "Company"/ "NFL") and Niyogin Finserv Limited ("Rescuing Company"/ "NFL 2") and Iservue Technology Private Limited ("Amalgamated Company"/ "ISERVEU") and their respective shareholders and Creditors, pursuant to Sections 230 to 232 read with Section 66 and Section 52 of the Companies Act, 2013 ("Act") and the other applicable provisions thereof and rules thereunder (including any statutory modification(s) or re-enactment thereof, for the time being in force).

The NCLT has dispensed with the requirement of convening and holding the meetings of (i) Equity Shareholders and (ii) Preference Shareholders.

In pursuance of the Order passed by the Hon'ble NCLT and as directed therein, further Notice is hereby given that, a separate meeting of the Creditors of the Company will be held through video conferencing or other audio-visual means ("VC/OAVM"), as under:

SR. NO.	CLASS OF MEETING	TIME (IST)	DATE OF MEETING
1	Secured Creditors	2:30 p. m.	Friday, October 30, 2026
2	Unsecured Creditors	3:30 p. m.	Friday, October 30, 2026

In compliance with the Order, the respective Notices containing the details of day, date and time as aforesaid, together with a copy of the Scheme along with the Explanatory Statement ("Notice") disclosing all material facts as required under Section 230(3) of the Act read with Rule 6 of the Companies (Compromises, Arrangements and Amalgamations) Rules, 2016 and the documents accompanying the Notices is being sent to Secured / Unsecured Creditors of ISU through email to those creditors as on Tuesday, 31 March, 2026, whose e-mail addresses are registered with the Company and, the physical copies to those creditors whose email addresses are not registered with the Company.

A copy of the Scheme along with the explanatory statement can be obtained free of charge, from the date of dispatch of Notice upto the date of the Meeting on all working days during business hours from the registered office of the Company or by sending a request, along with details, by e-mail at compliance@iserveu.in

The Hon'ble NCLT has appointed Shri. Astik Gupta, to be the Chairperson of the Meeting, including for any adjournment(s) thereof. Further, the Hon'ble NCLT has appointed Mr. Ansh Kalkar, to be the scrutiner for the Meeting, including for any adjournment(s) thereof.

The Scheme, if approved at the Meeting, will be subject to the subsequent approval of the Hon'ble NCLT and such other approvals, permission, and sanctions of regulatory or other authorities, as may be necessary and as contemplated in the Scheme.

The Secured / Unsecured Creditors can join the Meeting in the VC / OAVM mode 15 minutes before the scheduled time of the commencement of the Meeting by following the procedure mentioned in the Notice. Attendance of the Secured / Unsecured Creditors joining the Meeting through VC / OAVM will be counted for the purpose of ascertaining the quorum under Section 103 of the Act. Further, in terms of the Order in case the required quorum for the Meeting is not present at the commencement of the Meeting, then the Meeting shall be adjourned by 30 (Thirty) minutes and thereafter, the persons present shall be deemed to constitute the quorum.

Persons entitled to attend and vote is entitled to appoint one or more proxies to attend and vote instead of himself. The instrument appointing a Proxy should however be deposited at the Registered Office of the Company not less than 48 hours before the commencement of the meeting. The Proxy is requested to bring the copy of the notice to the Meeting and produce the attendance slip, duly completed and signed, at the entrance of the Meeting venue.

Date : 29.09.2026
Place : Chennai

Sd/-
Astik Gupta
NCLT appointed Chairperson for the Meeting of Company

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender No. e-CTCRV/MCS-EL-9-2026

NAME OF WORK: PROVISION OF EPDM MODULAR CABLE SEALING SYSTEM FOR DISCONNECTING AND EARTHING DEVICE AND HT COMPARTMENT OF SIG PANEL IN LHB COACHES, POWER CAR & PANTRY CAR AT CARRIAGE REPAIR WORKSHOP / MANCHESWAR FOR 18 MONTHS.

Advertisement Value : ₹ 48,06,473.00, **EMD :** ₹ 96,100/-, **Period of Completion :** 18 Months.

Bidding Start Date : 02.10.2026

Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1500 Hrs. of 18.10.2026.

Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.

Complete information including e-Tender documents and corrigendum is available in website www.iraps.gov.in

By, Chief Electrical Engineer
PR-465R/26-27 CRW/Mancheswar

PWD (GOVT. OF W.B.) TENDER NOTICE

EE, PWD, Hooghly Construction Division invites online e - Tender for the following: Tender ID(s):

2026_WBPWD_5075961_1, 2026_WBPWD_5075961_2

NIET No.: WBPWD/EE/MCD/ NITE-17 of 2026-2027

Bid submission start date (online):

29.09.2026, 02:00PM

Bid submission closing date (online): 12.10.2026, 02:00PM

Corrigendum if any will be published in website only.

Details of NIQ/NIT and other documents may be downloaded from: <https://tenders.wb.gov.in>

Sd/- J.P.Dhar
Executive Engineer, PWD
Hooghly Construction Division.
Chawkbazar, Hooghly

S. E. RAILWAY - TENDER

For and on behalf of the President of India, Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer (Production)/ Khengpur Workshop, South Eastern Railway invites e-tender for the following work before 11:00 hrs. on 17.10.2026 the mentioned against items. Sl. No. : 1; Tender No. : KGPWPROD-TRSPDH_CANTEN-1;

Name of Work: Cooking & serving of meals, tiffin & snacks and cleaning of utensils & crockeries etc., under TRS-POH Shop Canteen/KGPW. Approx cost of work including GST @18% (Rs.): ₹24,92,760.00; Earnest Money (Rs.): ₹49,900.00; Date & Time of Closing e-Tender: 17.10.2026 at 11:00 hrs. Website particulars : www.iraps.gov.in interested Tenderers may visit website in above mentioned for details/clarification/specification of the tenders and submit their bids online. In no case manual tenders for this work will be accepted. Bidding Start Date 03.10.2026 (PR-019)

SHORT NOTICE INVITING QUOTATION

Quotation is being invited by the undersigned for the eligible contractors. For work as follows:-

NIQ NO. - 50/Q of 2026-27

N.W- Temporary lighting arrangement, Hiring of DG Set & Air conditioning machine for Programme at Birsingha Bhagabati Vidyalaya (H.S.)

Ground, Ghatal, Paschim Medinipur in connection with the Hon'ble V.V.I.P. visit. on 30th September 2026.

Detail of works can be seen from O/o the undersigned on week days.

During office hours & from website: www.pwdwb.in

Last dt. application: 29.09.2026 upto 03.30 P.M.

Last dt. permission: 29.09.2025 upto 04.00 P.M.

Last dt. Of receiving quotation: 29.09.2026 upto 04.30 P.M.

DT. of Opening: 29.09.2026 at 05.00 P.M.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Paschim Medinipur
Electrical Division,
P.W.Dte.

SHORT NOTICE INVITING QUOTATION

Quotation is being invited by the undersigned from the eligible contractors. For work as follows:-

NIQ NO. - 51/Q of 2026-27

N.W- Temporary security lighting arrangement & Hiring of DG Set for Helipad Ground at Birsingha Bhagabati Vidyalaya (H.S.)

Ground, Ghatal, Paschim Medinipur in connection with the Hon'ble V.V.I.P. visit. on 30th September 2026.

Detail of works can be seen from O/o the undersigned on week days.

During office hours & from website: www.pwdwb.in

Last dt. application: 29.09.2026 upto 03.30 P.M.

Last dt. permission: 29.09.2025 upto 04.00 P.M.

Last dt. Of receiving quotation: 29.09.2026 upto 04.30 P.M.

DT. of Opening: 29.09.2026 at 05.00 P.M.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Paschim Medinipur
Electrical Division,
P.W.Dte.

ROYAL STARS

BY GEORGIA NICOLS

ARIES (MAR 21 - APR 20): Today you might find that you identify with your possessions more than usual. In fact, this could be why you might be tempted to be a bit extravagant or go overboard. This same sense of largeness might creep into your financial decisions. Tonight: Check your money.

TAURUS (APR 21 - MAY 21): This is a positive day for you because the Moon is in your sign dancing with Jupiter. Keep in mind that you love antiques and beautiful things, and today, your financial judgement might be a bit off because you're extravagant. Tonight: You're strong.

GEMINI (MAY 22 - JUNE 21): This is a playful time for you, which is why you will enjoy social outings, vacations, sports events, the arts and fun activities with kids. Your positive communication style today might attract others. Enthusiasm is contagious. Tonight: Pleasant solitude.

CANCER (JUNE 22 - JULY 23): Be careful about going overboard with financial matters today. You might spend too much. This is because there's an aspect of excess influencing your financial decisions. Tonight: Be friendly.

LEO (JULY 24 - AUG 23): Do be aware that you're noticed today. In fact, some people know personal details about your private life. Others see you as confident, but also benevolent and compassionate today. Tonight: Be modest.

VIRGO (AUG 24 - SEP 23): Today you might be attracted more than usual to philosophical topics that make you think more about life and how things are and how things should be. You might examine other people's attitudes to politics and religion. Tonight: Explore and learn.

LIBRA (SEP 24 - OCT 23): You are a people-oriented sign, and today, you feel generous to friends. In fact, if making a decision about how to share something or divide an inheritance, make sure to protect your own self-interests and not give away the farm. Tonight: Check your finances.

SCORPIO (OCT 24 - NOV 23): This is an excellent day for you to shop for wardrobe goodies, although please be aware of the restrictions of the moon alert. Whether shopping or in discussions with partners or close friends, guard against going overboard. Tonight: Be friendly.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV 24 - DEC 22): Work-related travel might happen for many of you today. Whatever you do, whether it's with your work, your health or dealing with a pet, you'll be inclined to think big and be extravagant. However, you will also want to be benevolent. Tonight: Work.

CAPRICORN (DEC 23 - JAN 20): Enjoy socialising, partying and the arts, especially the theatre, movies and galleries. Sports events and playful times with children will please you. This is also a good day for financial speculation if you're aware of the moon alert. Tonight: Socialise.

AQUARIUS (JAN 21 - FEB 19): Your interactions with others will be friendly and mutually rewarding because people are openhearted and generous today. These pleasant interactions will take place with partners, close friends as well as members of the general public. Tonight: Relax.

PISCES (FEB 20 - MAR 20): Don't bite off more than you can chew today, especially in discussions with others, and making promises or commitments. That's because you feel confident, enthusiastic and ready to grab the world by the tail. Tonight: Discussions.

NPCL Noida Power Company Limited, Greater Noida

Electric Sub Station, Knowledge Park-IV, Greater Noida-201310 (CIN:U31200UP1992PLC014506)

TENDER NOTICE

e-Bids (Technical & Commercial) are invited from the prospective Bidders for:

NIT No.	Tender Description	EYD (Rs. in Lakhs)	Start and Due Date & Time of Submission
NPCL/FY26-25/022	Providing the SUSE Linux Enterprise Server for NPCL for NPCL	0.50	29-09-2026 & 20-10-2026
NPCL/FY26-25/033	Expression of Interest (EOI) for Leasing of Optical Fibers Cable, Rack space and RF tower along with O&M of NPCL Fiber Network.	-	29-09-2026 & 20-10-2026
NPCL/FY26-27/A/032 Dated 29.09.2026	Annual Rate contract for Supply of Various items in Vendor/Managed inventory mode	20.00	29-09-2026 & 20-10-2026 (up to 15.00 hours)

Cost of Individual Tender Document (Incl. GST) Rs.1,180/-

For other tender details and further emendment/corrigendum, please visit our website www.noidapower.com >Procurement->Tenders

Sd/-
DGA - C&M.

KALYANA KARNATAKA ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATION: CENTRAL OFFICES: KALABURAGI

NO/KKTCO/TR/COM/2972/26-27 Dated: 25. 09. 2026.

TENDER NOTIFICATION NO. 05/2026 (E-PROCUREMENT PLATFORM)

Tenders/bids are invited through e-portal for the Selection of Agency for grant of Advertisement Rights on Ordinary, Express and City buses (total 1000 buses) of KKRTC for the appropriate Qualified Bidders for a period of Five(5) years.

1) ELF (Economic License Fee) is Rs. 2044/- per Bus per Month Excluding taxes. 2) Increase of 5% (five) for 2nd year and 10% (Ten) for 3rd, 4th and 5th year over the license fee of the previous year, 3) The Earnest Money Deposit amount fixed is Rs. 20,00,000/- (Twenty lakhs Rupees), 4) Calendar of events:

Description, Date & Time: 1) Last date for submission of queries: 08.10.2026 1700hrs 2) Pre-Bid meeting: 09.10.2026 1100 hrs, 3) Last date of Submission of Bids: 16.10.2026 1700 hrs, 4) Opening of Technical Bid: 19.10.2026 1100 hrs, 5) Opening of Financial Bid: 21.10.2026 1100 hrs, 5) The Financial Bids of the Bidders, who have qualified in Technical Bid will only be opened. 6) The Terms & Conditions, Eligibility Criteria and other Technical details can be downloaded from the e-portal website: www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in from. 7) KKRTC reserves the right to accept or reject tenders without assigning any reason thereof. 8) For more details contact: Dy Chief Traffic Manager-7760909013, Divisional Traffic Officer-7760992024, E-mail id: ctmnekrctgbl@gmail.com

Sd/- Chief Traffic Manager
KKRTC Central Offices, Kalaburagi

DIPR/Kalaburagi/567/KSMC/A/2026-27

Metro Railway, Kolkata

e-Tender is invited by Principal Chief Engineer, Metro Railway, Kolkata for and on behalf of the President of India for the following work: Name of work: Supply, fixing, commissioning & maintenance of Rail Gauge Jace, Lubricator machine at Green Line (from Salt Lake Station) to Howrah (Station section) of Metro Railway, Kolkata. Approx Cost of Work: ₹2,10,57,120/- Earnest Money: ₹ 2,55,300/- Completion Period: 60 (Sixty) Months, Date and Time of Closing: 27.10.2026 at 12:00 hrs. The tender Document and other details can be obtained from the website www.iraps.gov.in. Amendments/Corrigendum, if any, would be uploaded only on the website.

Abridged e-Tender Notice No.: Civil-2551-2026 - Recall (Open) (Two Packet)

Follow us at: [@metrorailwaykol](https://twitter.com/metrorailwaykol) [metrorailkolkata](https://www.facebook.com/metrorailkolkata)

JAIPUR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Indra Circle, Jawahar Lal Nehru Marg, Jaipur - 302004

No.: JDA/EE(Garden-I)/2026/D-496 Date : 28.09.2026

NOTICE INVITING BID

NIB NO: JDA/EE (Garden-I)/06/2026-27

Online Bids are invited up-to 06:00 PM of 26.10.2026 for

"Development of Rajasthan Utsav Park (Waste-to-Wonder) in Ram Niwas Bagh Area under Garden-I, JDA, Jaipur". The last date for Applying Bid and making online payment on JDA portal is up-to 06:00 PM of 26.10.2026. The estimated cost of NIB is Rs.2287.26 Lakh. Details may be seen in the Bidding Document at our office or the State Public Procurement Portal website www.sppp.rajasthan.gov.in, www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in and www.jda.rajasthan.gov.in

UBN No. : JDA2627WLOB00333

To participate in the bid, bidder must:

A. Participate in Tender & Deposit Payment on 'Online Tender Participation' Portal of JDA at <https://jda.rajasthan.gov.in/jda> or by Single-Sign-On at <http://service.jaipurjda.org>.

B. Submit e-Bid on "e-Procurement Portal" of GOR at www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in

Executive Engineer (Garden-I)

JAIPUR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Indra Circle, Jawahar Lal Nehru Marg, Jaipur - 302004

No.: JDA/EE(Garden-I)/2026/D-497 Date : 28.09.2026

NOTICE INVITING BID

NIB NO: JDA/EE (Garden-I)/07/2026-27

Online Bids are invited up-to 06:00 PM of 26.10.2026 for

"Development of Royal Happiness Park in Ram Niwas Bagh Area under Garden-I, JDA, Jaipur". The last date for Applying Bid and making online payment on JDA portal is up-to 06:00 PM of 26.10.2026. The estimated cost of NIB is Rs.1228.92 Lakh. Details may be seen in the Bidding Document at our office or the State Public Procurement Portal website www.sppp.rajasthan.gov.in, www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in and www.jda.rajasthan.gov.in

UBN No. : JDA2627WLOB00335

To participate in the bid, bidder must:

A. Participate in Tender & Deposit Payment on 'Online Tender Participation' Portal of JDA at <https://jda.rajasthan.gov.in/jda> or by Single-Sign-On at <http://service.jaipurjda.org>.

BENCHMARK INDICES NEAR SIX-MONTH LOW

Markets plunge 1.6% as Trump rejects West Asia ceasefire plan

Akash Mandal
Mumbai, September 28

THE INDIAN stock market shed another 1.6% on Monday, falling to its lowest levels in nearly six months, as high crude prices in the wake of gloom in West Asia led to heavy selling pressure. The benchmark indices had tumbled around 1.7% last Thursday, which had led to the indices extending their losing run to seven weeks.

BSE's Sensex crashed 1.5% or 1,124.02 points on Monday to end the session at 72,771.72. Nifty 50 lost 1.6% to close at 22,780.25. The fall wiped out nearly Rs 9 lakh crore of investor wealth in the process. "Bears remained firmly in control as the market breached a key psychological support level, reflecting growing investor caution amid deteriorating global macro conditions," said Vinod Nair, Head of research, Geojit Investments.

All sectoral, broader market, and thematic indices ended the session firmly in the red, as the India VIX — the market's volatility indicator — climbed 12.5%. Banks, financial services, IT, oil

and gas, and metals were among the worst hit during the session, all falling 1-2%.

As oil prices remained a thorn, the Indian rupee fell to its lowest level in over a week before reported intervention by state-owned banks, likely on behalf of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), stabilised the currency a bit, according to Reuters. It eventually settled down 0.2% at 95.98 against the dollar.

Trump rejects peace proposal

On Saturday, US President Donald Trump had rejected Iran's proposal of a 7-day ceasefire, alongside plans to reopen the critical Strait of Hormuz due to the latter asking "too many concessions" without meeting its terms, making the hopes of a diplomatic resolution of the conflict bleaker.

However, Trump also told news portal Axios on Sunday that he expected US negotiators to engage in more talks this week, keeping diplomatic doors open.

Despite this, Trump's rejection of an immediate resolution

India VIX inching up again



SOURCE: NSE

led to crude prices shooting up to over \$108 per barrel on Monday, crushing any optimism in the Indian market. "Whenever crude is above \$100 a barrel, it creates a selling pressure in the Indian market over the short-to-medium term. The current scenario is similar to what we had seen in the first couple of months of the war," said Kranthi Bathini, Equity Strategist, WealthMills Securities.

For context, India is the

third-largest importer of crude oil globally, and higher crude prices stoke fears of inflation, hurting both corporate growth and the spending power of consumers.

The Indian market had recovered a bit briefly during July and August as the conflict in West Asia had moderated a bit, turning focus towards factors like earnings growth and macro-economic conditions. This had led to foreign investors turning

net buyers in the Indian market over those months.

However, with the situation escalating again this month, foreign investors have dumped \$2.2 billion of Indian shares so far this month, adding to the selling pressure. Furthermore, the booming IPO market during the month has also taken liquidity away from the secondary market, analysts said.

Bond yields climb further

Bond yields continued their upward trajectory on Friday, with the US Treasury yields rising above 5.2% — the highest level since 2004. Yields on bonds from other global markets such as the UK, Japan, and some other European nations have also been rising steadily.

Indian bond yields have also been moving in line, with the yield on the benchmark bond rising to 7.18% during the session — the highest since April 2024.

Bond yields tend to rise amid fears of rising inflation, which leads to central banks hiking interest rates. **FULL REPORT ON** WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

'Keralam to double tourism revenue, ease approvals'

AS THE Congress-led UDF government in Keralam completed 100 days in office last month, Tourism Minister PC Vishnunadh said Keralam is targeting to double tourism revenue from around Rs 45,000 crore last year to Rs 90,000 crore within five years. While domestic tourist arrivals hit an all-time high of 2.5 crore in 2025, up 12.63% from previous year, foreign arrivals remain below the pre-Covid peak of 11.89 lakh. It saw 8.2 lakh foreign arrivals in 2025.

Speaking to **Dheeraj Mishra** on the sidelines of the 13th Keralam Travel Mart, **PC Vishnunadh** said Keralam is seeing more Arab tourists as its foreign tourist composition changes. He said the government is moving to give the sector industry status, ease approvals, offer MSME-like benefits, and seek more support from the Centre. Edited Excerpts:

What is the government doing to create new tourism destinations in the state?

We are working on expanding tourism beyond traditional destinations. Keralam has many untapped places, particularly in the northern part of the state like Munroe Island, Ashtamudi backwater in Kollam etc., which has significant tourism potential.

Our agenda is to develop 20 new destinations in one year and 100 new destinations over five years. We will provide the basic infrastructure and then encourage investors to come and invest in these areas. This expansion will be done in a sustainable way. We are actually taking the support of the local community. This responsible tourism initiative was started from Kumarakom (in Kottayam). With this initiative, the locals are getting jobs and the market is improving. Some of the new locations are Akalappuzha in Kozhikode, Kundara, Punnathur, Paravur etc.

Some of the destinations are overcrowded. We will soon conduct a carrying capacity study of Munnar, Alleppey etc. It is important because our places are ecologically very fragile.

The Centre aims to raise the share of tourism in national GDP to 10% by 2030. Is Keralam's growth in line



PC VISHNUNADH
KERALAM TOURISM MINISTER

with this?

Last year, Keralam received around Rs 45,000 crore from tourism. Our target is to double this within five years to Rs 90,000 crore or close to Rs 1 lakh crore. Tourism had reached a peak just before Covid-19, but there was a dip afterwards. Now, the sector is gradually picking up again. The domestic tourists recorded an increase of over 12% in 2025, compared to 2024. Similarly, foreign arrivals also recorded an increase of over 11% during the period. However, it is yet to reach pre-pandemic levels. We are also pushing for cruise tourism. All the major and minor ports like Vizhinjam, Kochi, Kollam, Bepore, and Azhikkal will be connected.

What is the foreign tourist composition in Keralam? Has there been any change over the years?

Yes, there has been a change. Earlier, UK, US, Germany and France used to be the top four countries in terms of foreign arrivals in Keralam. Now, while the UK and the US remain in their position, Oman is the third country, which contributed to

7% of foreign tourists. That is why we are starting to focus on the Arab market. I attended the Arabian travel market recently and our B2B roadshow was a success. We organized an Indo-Arab connect with Arabian tour operators last month.

We are also developing new products such as monsoon tourism. We are also trying other markets such as Australia, Malaysia, and Singapore.

What is being done to make it easier for investors to set up tourism projects?

There was a long-pending demand to declare tourism an industry sector. We are going to do this. We have already completed consultations with stakeholders and the inter-departmental process is now under way. We will announce industry status for tourism before October 10. At present, obtaining permissions from different departments such as local body, industry, urban development, rural development and CRZ (Coastal Regulation Zone)-related issues can take two or three years.

Another important issue is single-window clearance. At present, the single-window mechanism is available for MSMEs, but not specifically for tourism. We are examining the benefits available to MSMEs and it will be extended to tourism investors as well. We are also looking at issues such as electricity tariff subsidies and interest support on loans.

The correspondent was in Keralam at the invite of the state's tourism department.

FULL INTERVIEW ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Safety, profitability top new A-I CEO's agenda

ENS Economic Bureau
New Delhi, September 28

INCOMING AIR India chief executive Tewolde Gebremariam listed safety, operational reliability, and profitability as key priorities for the Tata group airline's next phase of growth. Addressing a company-wide townhall meeting on Monday, Gebremariam told the airline's employees that Air India has made significant progress since its return to the Tata group in early 2022, while emphasising that substantial opportunities remain ahead as the carrier continues in its pursuit to become a world-class global airline and achieve profitability. He also said that cost discipline must become part of

the airline's culture.

"Everything we do must be safe. Safety is a shared responsibility, and every Air Indian has a role to play. We must continue to foster a culture where people are empowered to speak up, raise concerns and report issues without hesitation," said Gebremariam, who will take over as Air India's CEO and MD once all regulatory approvals to his appointment come in.

He said safety would remain the airline's foremost priority and guiding principle, and encouraged employees to remain vigilant and proactively report anything they observe that could impact operational safety. "If you see something, say something. The stronger our reporting cul-



Tewolde Gebremariam,
incoming Air India CEO. REUTERS

ture, the stronger our safety culture," he told staff.

Gebremariam is taking over the reins at Air India at a crucial juncture for the airline — in the aftermath of the deadly AI 171 crash in June last

year and intensified scrutiny of the carrier's operational safety, and amid external headwinds like the Pakistani airspace closure and surging jet fuel prices due to geopolitical conflict in West Asia. Operationally safety at Air India is again in focus following one of its pilots tested positive for drug use and another failed an alcohol breath analyser test just before operating a flight.

Gebremariam oversaw one of aviation's most successful long-term transformations, turning Ethiopian Airlines into a global airline and the largest carrier in Africa, and turned Addis Ababa into a major aviation hub.

FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Corporate ITR filing deadline extended to November 21

New Delhi: The Income Tax Department on Monday extended the ITR (Income tax return) filing deadline for corporates for assessment year 2026-27 till November 21, from October 31.

The due date for tax audit report submission has been extended from September 30 to October 21.

"Accordingly, the 'specified date' for furnishing of the report of audit under the provisions of the Income-tax Act, 1961 for Assessment Year 2026-27, in the case of such persons, stands extended to 21st October, 2026," it added. PTI

Goyal-Greer meet to push India-US interim trade deal

ENS Economic Bureau
New Delhi, September 28

COMMERCE AND Industry Minister Piyush Goyal will hold talks with US Trade Representative (USTR) Jameson Greer later this week to push negotiations towards an interim India-US trade deal, as the two sides seek to advance the broader Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) in line with their February 7 joint statement.

Goyal will travel to the US from September 29 to October 5 and meet Greer on the sidelines of the G20 Trade Ministers' Meeting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The G20 Trade Ministerial will be held on September 30 and October 1. The meeting comes as New Delhi and Washington work to resolve outstanding issues and finalise the Interim component of the proposed BTA.

The February 7 joint statement had laid out the framework for negotiations, including work towards an interim trade agreement as part of the broader bilateral deal.

Goyal will also hold bilateral meetings with trade ministers from other G20 members.

At the G20, India will advo-

UAE signals intent to invest additional \$25 billion in India

New Delhi: The UAE has signalled its intent to invest an additional \$25 billion in India in the near future as the two countries seek to deepen investment ties and expand the use of local currencies in bilateral trade, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Monday.

The UAE has already invested about \$25 billion in India and is the country's seventh-largest source of foreign direct investment. Goyal said the proposed investment could take the UAE's total investments in India to \$50 billion in the near term, with an eventual target of \$100 billion. FE

cate a rules-based, open, inclusive, transparent, equitable and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system, with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) at its core. It also stresses the need to preserve adequate policy space for developing countries. FE

AI boom: Mandaviya calls for continuous reskilling

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, September 28

UNION MINISTER Mansukh Mandaviya on Monday highlighted the transformative potential of AI and emerging technologies and stressed the need for continuous reskilling and a future-ready industrial relations system that balances productivity with workers' skills, safety and participation.

The Union Labour & Employment Minister was speaking at National Conference on Industrial Relations and Labour, organised by CIL.

He called for meaningful social dialogue between employers and workers, particu-

larly as new technologies reshape the world of work, a CII statement said.

Mandaviya also highlighted the role of the four Labour Codes in creating a modern, pro-growth framework while simplifying compliance for industry and strengthening protections for workers.

The minister emphasised the importance of expanding social security coverage and building an inclusive labour ecosystem that reaches workers across the formal and unorganised sectors.

Mandaviya called upon the government, industry, workers and other stakeholders to work together. PTI

MARKETS

Sensex	NIFTY	Gold	US Dollar
72,771.72	22,780.25	₹1,47,980	₹95.99
-1,124.02	-360.25	Silver	Oil
-1.52%	-1.56%	₹2,23,053	\$120.86

NOTE: GOLD, SILVER RATES AS PER INDIA BULLION AND JEWELLERS ASSOCIATION DATA. GOLD PER 100, SILVER PER 1KG; CRUDE OIL (INDIAN BASKET) AS OF SEPTEMBER 25, 2026

Energy diversification shielded India from global supply shocks, says Puri

ENS Economic Bureau
Kolkata, September 28

INDIA'S PUSH over several years to diversify energy supplies, expand refining capacity and strengthen infrastructure and storage helped shield domestic consumers from shortages despite major disruptions to global energy flows, Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Monday. Speaking at the curtain-

raiser for India Energy Week (IEW) 2027 in Kolkata, Puri said recent global disruptions had underscored the need to build resilience into the energy system well before a crisis erupts. Despite pressure on international energy flows, the disruptions did not translate into shortages for Indian households, he said.

"The lesson is simple: energy resilience is not built when a crisis arrives; it is built before the crisis arrives," Puri said, pointing

to measures including diversified supplies, stronger infrastructure and expansion of piped natural gas.

The minister said India was increasingly moving from being merely a large energy consumer to playing a larger role in shaping the global energy conversation. "We are demonstrating that growth, energy security and decarbonisation can advance together," he said. FE

**GOVT. OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES**
Office of the Additional Chief Engineer
Vansadhara Nagabali Basin, Paralakhemundi
(email id: se. snc@odisha.gov.in)

e-Procurement Notice No. ACEVNB-06/2026-27

1. Type of work	: Road & Flood protection works.
2. Total number of Packages	: 5 (Five) Nos.
3. Estimated Cost	: Rs. 287.08 lakhs to Rs.301.02 lakhs
4. Bid Identification No.	: ACEVNBTRD-06/2026-27, ACEVNBTRD-06/2026-27, ACEVNBTRD-10/2026-27, ACEVNBTRD-11/2026-27, ACEVNBTRD-06/2026-27
5. Period of completion	: 11 (Eleven) months
6. Availability & submission of bids online	: From 11.00 AM of 1.10.2026 to 5.00 PM of 26.10.2026.
7. Date of Opening of Technical Bids	: 27.10.2026 at 11.00 AM. In this, OJO the Additional Chief Engineer, Vansadhara Nagabali Basin, Paralakhemundi.
8. Procurement Officer	: Additional Chief Engineer, Vansadhara Nagabali Basin, Paralakhemundi.
9. Further details can be seen from Govt. Website: www.tendersodisha.gov.in and any addendums/ corrigendum cancellation will be published in the said website.	

Sd/-
Additional Chief Engineer
Vansadhara Nagabali Basin
Paralakhemundi

OIPR-32001/32052/1/26-27/0008

**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
POTTERU IRRIGATION PROJECT, BALIMELA**
e-mail Id: ccepotteru123@gmail.com
e-Procurement Notice No.- CCE-PIP-BML-11/2026-27

1. Type of Work:- System Improvement works.
2. Total No. of Work:- One (1) No.
3. Estimated Cost:- 205.88 Lakh
4. Period of Completion:- Eight (8) Calendar Months
5. Class of Contractor:- 'A' & 'B' Class

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Bid Amount (Rs. In Lakh)	Availability & Submission of Bids-on line.
Chief Construction Engineer, Potteru Irrigation Project, Balimela, Malkangiri	CCE-PIP-BML-11/1/2026-27	205.88 Lakh	From 02.10.2026 10:00 A.M. to 11.10.2026 5:00 P.M.

Date of opening of the Tender / Bid :- 12.10.2026 at 11.00 A.M
Further details can be seen from the Govt. Website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

Sd/-
Chief Construction Engineer
Potteru Irrigation Project,
Balimela

OIPR-32001/32052/1/26-27/0019

Priya fights back; India assured of six boxing medals



Priya Chhanghas and team.

Nitin Sharma
Chandigarh, September 28

PRIYA CHHANGHAS knows the feeling of trailing after the first round as the 20-year-old Haryana boxer has had her share of bouts that began that way.

In the women's 60kg quarter-final against Tajikistan's Mitjona Samadova, it happened again, and a medal depended on how she responded. It came in the form of an unanimous 5-0 win and a semi-final berth.

Samadova is a southpaw, and in the opening minute she showed a strong right lead punch and a right hook. Priya was left catching up with her speed. Priya's jab failed to land early, so she changed her approach, throwing it in combination with a right straight and pushing Samadova towards the ropes. The round still went 2-3 to the Tajik.

The second round turned. Priya's pressure had Samadova trying to come in close and hold, and she lost a point for it. The Indian took the round. In the third, Samadova looked tired, and Priya kept working with combinations and speed. Santiago Nieva, India's women's foreign head coach, told *The Indian Express* from Japan: "We knew that the Tajik boxer would be a bit tricky being a southpaw and having a good lead punch as well as a lead hook. She neutralised Priya's jab initially but then Priya gained some momentum in the later half of the first round with the combinations."

Ghanghas, the Commonwealth Games champion, next meets China's Chengyu Yang in the semi-finals. She has beaten Yang before, in the quarter-finals of the Asian Championships on her way to the title earlier this year. Yang arrives with a fresh reputation after beating Nesthy Pecteco of the Philippines, the Tokyo Olympics silver medalist and Paris Olympics bronze medalist, 5-0. Nieva believes the Indian has the edge. "The Chinese showed a lot of improvement as compared to the way she boxed in Asian Championships," he said.

"Priya has a very good left hook as well jumping left hook and the variations can come handy in applying pressure on the Chinese. Her strength has been her belief in close bouts."

Earlier, Tokyo Olympics bronze medalist Lovlina Borgohain beat South Korea's Seohun Suyeon 5-0 in the 75kg quarter-finals, and in the evening session Kapil Pokhriya beat Korea's Kim Gi-chae by the same margin in the men's 90kg.

India are guaranteed of six boxing medals.

ASIAN GAMES

It was amazing, and I've never had an experience like this before. Definitely going into my bucket of amazing experiences.

ESHA SINGH, ON SURVIVING MULTIPLE SHOOT-OFFS IN THE FINAL

Chaos, delays, five shoot-offs: Esha's wild road to silver medal

Esha Singh turned a chaotic Asian Games 25m pistol final into a test of resilience, using unexpected stoppages to regain her composure.

Mihir Vasavda
Nagoya, September 28

ESHA SINGH had a curious reason to be grateful for the chaos that nearly wore her down. As the women's 25m pistol final at the Asian Games descended into a series of shoot-offs, officials' errors halted the contest and left China's Xiao Jiarui waiting nearly 15 minutes; Esha got what she desperately needed: time.

Her shooting hand was tightening. The pressure was building. And the long interruptions, frustrating as they were, gave her a chance to relax, reset and stay in a contest that seemed determined to stretch on. "I was kind of grateful for the errors and mistakes the judges were making because I got some rest," Esha said later. "Maybe you can call it God's grace, giving me some time off and just to think about it."

For a while, it seemed to work. The 21-year-old from Hyderabad clawed her way back from the brink of elimination, survived three shoot-offs against North Korea's Kim Hyon Suk and forced Xiao into a second tie-breaker for gold. But after the two shooters finished level at 38 hits in the regulation final and tied again at 4-4 in the first shoot-off, Xiao finally pulled away, winning the decisive series 3-2. Esha had to settle for silver. "It was amazing, and I've never had an experience like this before. Definitely going into my bucket of amazing experiences, and I'm grateful for every moment. Though it was nerve-racking, it was amazing," she said.

Breaking point

The final had begun very differently. Esha hit all five targets in her opening series and followed it up with four more to take an early lead. But the rhythm soon deserted her. A three-hit series allowed Xiao to move ahead, and the Indian found herself repeatedly fighting to stay in contention.

At one point, she slipped outside the medal positions. With another disappointing finish threatening to follow her struggles in the 10m air pistol, Esha needed a response. She delivered a perfect five-hit series to stay alive. The fight for the medals then became a contest of endurance. Esha and Kim finished level at 34 hits, forcing a shoot-off. The first two tie-



Esha Singh survived five shoot-offs in the final of the women's 25m pistol event to win the silver medal.

The 25m pistol, however, is a discipline in which Esha has consistently delivered.

breakers failed to separate them, with both recording three hits apiece. After another lengthy interruption, Esha finally prevailed 3-2 in the third, securing at least silver and setting up a showdown with Xiao.

The Chinese shooter had been waiting for nearly 15 minutes as the battle for the other medal positions dragged on. But when Esha returned to the firing line, the Indian showed little sign of being overwhelmed by the delay. She had, however, begun to feel the strain. "Because of the pressure, I think this time, in my mind, I don't know if it was a thought or if it was really happening, but my hand was genuinely getting very, very tight and very tired without me realising, even in the first series," Esha said. "So I just tried releasing or relaxing it a bit."

The stoppages, she explained, had given her an opportunity to do precisely that. "It looks like a situation where the zone is breaking for an athlete, but in my case, it really helped me." Esha had another hurdle to clear. Xiao, who had led for much of the final, was now the only obstacle between her and gold. The two shooters finished the regulation final level at 38 hits, forcing a shoot-off.

They were tied again at 4-4 in the first tie-breaker, leaving

the title to be decided in one final five-shot series. Xiao hit three targets to Esha's two to claim gold.

Silver lining

The silver was a measure of redemption for Esha after a disappointing outing in the women's 10m air pistol earlier in the Games. She finished 15th with a score of 572, while India narrowly missed a team bronze, finishing fourth on the count of inner tens.

The 25m pistol, however, is a discipline in which Esha has consistently delivered. The world No. 1 has won two World Cup titles and a bronze at the World Championships over the past 18 months. At the Munich World Cup in May, she produced a record-breaking performance in the final, registering 43 hits to set senior and junior world records. The silver also increased India's shooting tally, with Esha adding another podium finish in one of the country's strongest disciplines. She had also won individual silver medals in both the 10m and 25m pistol events at the previous Asian Games in Hangzhou, along with a team gold and silver.

India, meanwhile, finished fifth in the women's 25m pistol team event. The team had been one point behind China, but Ravi Sarnobat's opening-series miss in the rapid-fire round cost them valuable points.

For Esha, though, the day ended with a medal — her second successive individual silver in the 25m pistol at the Asian Games, and a reminder of why the event remains her strongest.

Rahi's costly miss derails 25m pistol team medal hopes

Express News Service
New Delhi, September 28

INDIA'S POOR luck at the Asian Games continued on Monday; this time, the shooting contingent faced the brunt of a missed team event in the Women's 25m pistol event in Nagoya on Monday. After a disappointing pistol campaign that has seen only one medal — a mixed team gold in the 10m air pistol event — the morning looked primed for an upturn in fortunes.

Instead, what followed was a heavily contested moment that was a prelude to drama in a final that delivered its own twists and turns. In her first series of the rapid event, Indian shooter **Rahi Sarnobat (in picture)**, a former Asian Games gold medalist in the women's 25m pistol, missed her shot. Judges at the range concluded she hit the frame of her target and had gained no points.

Rahi appealed the ruling as it seemed highly unlikely she would miss the mark altogether at this stage of her career, and in an event of this calibre. But the ruling stayed unchanged, and she finished her rapid series with a score of 86.

That one missed shot eliminated India from winning a medal in the women's 25m pistol team event. Despite stor-



ming back with a series of 99 and 96, Rahi's overall score was only 568, with 16 inner tens. It meant she and her teammate Manu Bhaker would return home without a medal from these Asian Games.

Esha Singh, on the other hand, qualified for the finals and was almost eliminated in fourth position before clawing back. She then mounted a charge for the gold medal but narrowly lost in the shootout to win a silver medal.

India's pistol shooters have endured their share of setbacks at major events. At the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, Bhaker suffered a gun malfunction that, despite efforts to fix it, contributed to a disappointing exit from her first Olympic Games. At the Asian Games in Hangzhou, Bhaker was affected by empty shells from the left of her range entering her line of sight, hurting her performance.

CHESS OLYMPIAD

Fine margins, poor form prove costly in title defence for India



D Gukesh and captain Srinath Narayanan. MICHAŁ WALUSZKA/FIDE

Amit Kamath & Mayank Chaudhary
Mumbai/New Delhi, September 28

"WE'RE PROUD of the silver, but are not celebrating like last time."

Vidit Gujrathi explains the Indian contingent's mixed feelings after the Chess Olympiad where the two teams could not defend their gold medals from Budapest 2024. The contingent returned from Samarkand with a glut of medals and accolades: silver in the open section, bronze in the women's event, the Nona Gaprindashvili Cup given for the best side overall. Individual medals for six out of the 10 players, including a gold for Savitha Shri.

But what the Indians really craved were the ones that Uzbekistan (open section) and China (women's section) pocketed.

Both the Indian teams lost once over 11 rounds, the men to the hosts and the women to old nemesis Poland. The women did well to hold title rivals like China, Kazakhstan, and Georgia to draws. The men, on the other hand, will be sore about being held to a tied score by Azerbaijan and Hungary.

"The last Olympiad was so special that we created an unrealistic benchmark. Results like those from Budapest — where you don't lose a single match and claim the title with a round to spare — will probably not be achieved in many Olympiads. It's never happened before. That's why this silver was not a big cause of celebration. But we are proud of the silver because it was not an easy Olympiad," reasons Vidit.

The three members of the coaching staff and one player that the Indian Express spoke to indicated the feeling in the Indian camp that winning both sections was well within their reach. "There were misses from us. That's undeniable. But we want to be slightly careful micro-analysing these mistakes because that's just how games at an Olympiad go," says Vaibhav Suri, who was part of the coaching set-up of the open section team. "In 2024, it was super clean. Every person was in really good shape. We were taking every chance we were getting. This time, it was a little dicey. There were situations where evidence showed that not everyone was in their best shape. Pragg was missing some wins. Arjun missed a few too. Nihal lost against the Uzbeks. Gukesh also missed once (in the final round)."

Playing on the top board, the Indian open team's in-form player coming into the Olympiad, R Praggnanandhaa racked up three wins while losing none. On board 2, Arjun Erigaisi had two wins in 10 rounds and a defeat. On the third board, Nihal Sarin had four wins and two defeats. The surprise element for India was on board 4, with world champion D Gukesh, who until his final round defeat, had seven wins in 10 rounds without losing. Vidit played just three games, winning one and drawing two.

Team captain Srinath Narayanan explained that the team's strategy was to squeeze opponents in the last two boards. "With most teams having a pretty strong 1 and 2, boards 3 and 4 were generally where we wanted to put maximum pressure. In a lot of cases, it felt nice to have Nihal and Gukesh exerting that pressure," says Srinath.

Similar story

In the women's section too, the team relied on wins from their third and fourth boards via Vantika Agrawal (five wins, one loss in eight games) and the previously unheralded Savitha Shri, who turned out to be a sledgehammer of a player winning eight games and drawing two. On the top boards, Koneru Humpy proved to be a reliable campaigner with four wins and no defeats in 10 games. But R Vaishali's form was a concern, with her winning just her first round clash before enduring three draws and two defeats. She did not play in the final three rounds.

Divya Deshmukh (four wins and a loss in 10 rounds) deputised for her on board 2 in five of the 11 rounds. Swayams Mishra, the captain for the women's team, points out the fine margins that decided the colour of the medals. "We had a good chance of beating China (in the penultimate round) and things would have been very different. Kazakhstan was losing in that round but won with a miracle. That changed everything, in terms of the pairing in the final round as well," he says, adding that the players were "drained out physically, psychologically and emotionally."

There was an unprecedented amount of criticism too on social media. "India has developed as a chess-playing nation in the last few years. The amount of criticism the players and coaches received was unbelievable. But I see this as fans having big expectations from us."

INDIA V WEST INDIES, ODI SERIES

Kuldeep, the enforcer, brings value with wickets and thrifty economy rate

Sandip G
Thiruvananthapuram, September 28

THE SUN was punishing and Kuldeep Yadav just wanted to grab the ball and bowl. From his shifting outposts, where he and the rest just watched West Indies openers shred India's bowlers and plans apart, he would shadow bowl, stretch his stumps and warm-up, hoping for a summons from the centre. He had to wait for his turn till the 16th over, and when he found the ball, he ensured that the ball floated and danced to his chords; he guaranteed, as he often does, that the understated visitors wouldn't build a platform for an unprecedented shock.

Beyond it, he underlined that he is too valuable a component to be compromised in the World Cup balance-churn.

Every wicket was a cathartic release for him; the wait that was gnawing at him; his eagerness to bowl, pick wickets, and define games; his alertness to ensure his tickets to South Africa. He is arguably the finest contemporary spinner in the world, yet in a cruel irony, he has to prove himself every time he turns up for his country.

It's a reflection of the times. The stocks of a high-class spinner plummeted as his batting prowess is modest. A batting collapse, his head rolls off the chopping blocks to accommodate that spinner who chimes in with the bat the next game; to add an extra seamer or batsman, he is again the sacrificial goat. He is his country's ninth highest wicket-taker, but two horrible games against New Zealand were all it took for him to be thrust to periphery.

But in Greenfield he reas-

sured the worth of a high-class wrist spinner. He is a rare one, not just because he bowls left-arm wrist spin, but because he has wizardry of the wrists and the control of the finger spinners. The control he brings is different from a finger spinner, but one he acquires through his pure deception. He doesn't keep the batsmen quiet by landing the ball on same zone repeatedly, as is the golden virtue in this format; he revels in the opposite, of mixing his lengths, speeds, trajectories, angles, drift, drop and turn, a master of disguises.

The wicket of John Campbell was instructive. Campbell is a competent and compulsive sweeper. Anything that could be swept, he sweeps disdainfully, both aerially and along the ground. Conveying an impression that he would offer him the length or line to sweep,



Kuldeep Yadav took four wickets against WI in the first ODI.

he tossed one up invitingly. Campbell failed to decipher the ruse; he swept fatally. He was too committed into the stroke that, he could not adjust to the sudden drop, the extra bounce

from his over-spun ball. A horrible miscue was the only outcome.

A partnership that seemed to march on endlessly ended with a piece of entrapment that

was more about his subtlety than the spectacular. When he first burst through, Kuldeep was all about magic balls and mystique. Theatrical turn, dazzling bounce, snakey drift, jaw-dropping drop, he was made for reels. But as his career unfolded, more gifts unfolded. The heart for fight, the grit for retooling, and the wits to evolve. He is more self-contained, and hence more dangerous. Spinners, historically, ripen with age, and 30-35 period is often when they hit their peak, discover the balance between offensive and defensive bowling, when they resist the experimental urges of youth but are not yet ravaged by aching shoulders.

The team management wouldn't budge on Bumrah, despite his non-utility with the bat; they shouldn't on Kuldeep either. Like the fast-bowling

totem, he can define the game with a spell. If he pulled the game away from the visitors with his thrift in the first burst with a spell of 6-0-26-1, when West Indies were strolling at six runs an over, in the second, he went for the jugular. His figures read 3-1-10-3. The single reason West Indies did not cross 300 after scoring 174 in 30 overs.

Sucker punch

He sucker-punched West Indies with century Justin Greaves' wicket, after he had ejected Shai Hope. He lured him into a wild slog by pushing his length, bowling his wrong'un slightly fuller. The pace of the ball deceived him; the ball didn't bounce as much as he had judged and crashed onto the pad. Though the umpire refused his imploring, the decision was overturned on review. A noticeable pattern in recent

times in his inclination to keep the ball within the stumps, thus enhancing the deceptiveness of his googly.

A wicket off the next ball — Keacy Carty caught at slip off a fullish googly — showed West Indies into a familiar implosion. A fifth scalp eluded him, but his numbers shone as brightly as the skin-peeling sun over the arena. Kuldeep is not a bowler who could be appreciated through numbers. But some numbers, in the context of the game, are revealing. More than half of his deliveries were dots (34). He conceded only four runs an over, two boundaries and a six; the next thriftiest was Ravindra Jadeja's 5.4. He wore many guises, the strangler, enforcer and aggressor. And furnished a memo of his immense value that shouldn't lose its shine in the search for batting utility.