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## IN BRIEF



### Death toll climbs to 3 in Rohini building collapse

**NEW DELHI**  
The death toll rose to three on Thursday after rescuers in an overnight operation pulled out two more bodies from the rubble of a four-storey under-construction building that collapsed in north-west Delhi's Rohini Sector 16 on Wednesday. » Page 2

### After arrest, Sena corporator checks into hospital

**THANE**  
Soon after he was arrested for allegedly assaulting two doctors at a civic-run hospital, Shiv Sena corporator Ramesh Mhatre was hospitalised for chest pain, officials said on Thursday. » Page 4

## India, Australia move to deepen cooperation in the Indo-Pacific

Amid geostrategic uncertainties, Prime Minister Modi, his Australian counterpart, Albanese, adopt declaration to expand maritime security ties and defence collaboration; the countries also seal pacts on civil nuclear energy and critical minerals

**Saurabh Trivedi**  
NEW DELHI

India and Australia on Thursday adopted a Joint Declaration on Defence and Security Cooperation, committing to significantly deepen military engagement, strengthen defence industrial collaboration, and expand maritime security cooperation amid growing geostrategic uncertainty in the Indo-Pacific region. The two countries also sealed pacts on civil nuclear energy and critical minerals sectors.

The declaration, adopted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Australian counterpart, Anthony Albanese, outlines an ambitious road map to elevate defence ties through closer strategic consultations, enhanced

interoperability between the armed forces, expanded military exercises, and greater collaboration in defence science, technology, and industrial supply chains.

A statement released by the office of the Australian Prime Minister mentioned that, under the declaration, the two sides agreed to hold regular consultations on defence-related developments in the Indo-Pacific affecting their shared interests, increase the complexity of bilateral and multilateral military exercises, accelerate efforts to improve interoperability and information sharing between their armed forces, and expand aircraft deployments from each other's territories.

The agreement also envisages deeper personnel



**Tactical ties:** PM Narendra Modi being greeted by his Australian counterpart, Anthony Albanese, in Melbourne on Thursday. AP

exchanges through education, training, and liaison appointments, while exploring opportunities to cooperate in recruiting skilled personnel for their respective defence workforces.

Mr. Modi emphasised the importance of a free and stable Indo-Pacific and highlighted the growing

engagement between the two countries in the defence domain. "The Indo-Pacific is not just the confluence of two oceans. It also symbolises the shared aspirations of like-minded democracies like India and Australia," he said.

The agreement on civil nuclear energy to facilitate the commercial supply of

uranium from Australia to India to fuel nuclear power projects came nearly 12 years after the two countries inked a historic civil nuclear cooperation pact.

"Today, we have signed an important agreement in the field of nuclear energy. This will open the way for uranium supplies from Australia to India and give new impetus to our clean energy objectives," Mr. Modi said.

He also announced the launch of the Australia-India Partnership on Cyber, Critical Technologies, and Supply Chains and said both sides will also work together on a critical minerals corridor.

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**CALL FOR DIALOGUE**  
» PAGE 12

## Modi hails Australia's social media ban on minors, signals curbs

**Aroon Deep**  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday praised Australia's ban on social media access for teenagers, in the clearest indication so far that the Union government is mulling similar curbs. "I have followed you closely, and the way you have legislated and worked to protect society in IT and social media is inspiring the world," Mr. Modi told Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in remarks open to the press.

Australia's Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act, 2024, requires social media platforms to detect and block access to children below the age of 16. Union Minister of Electronics and Information Technology, Ashwini Vaishnaw, had confirmed discussions for similar curbs in India dur-

### Digital control

Several countries are following Australia's footsteps to curb social media use by children

**Malaysia:** under-16s barred from owning social accounts

**Indonesia:** minors blocked from 'high-risk' platforms

**France:** Bill passed to ban social media use by under-15s

ing the AI Impact Summit earlier in February.

### 'Right way to go'

"Certainly there is a need for protecting our children, protecting our society... we are in a conversation regarding age-based restrictions with the various social media platforms... the right way to go about this," he said.

**CONTINUED ON**  
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## Four Indian nationals detained last year, pushed into Bangladesh return home

**Shrabana Chatterjee**  
KOLKATA

Four people from Birbhum in West Bengal, detained by the Delhi Police last year and pushed into Bangladesh, were brought back to India on Wednesday after a year-long legal battle. The group of returnees included Sweetie Bibi, her two minor sons, and Danish Sheikh, who were picked up by the police along with two others from the national capital in May last year over suspicion of being infiltrators and later pushed across the border into Bangladesh.

In December 2025, Sunali Khatun, wife of Mr. Sheikh, and her minor son had returned to India after the Supreme Court inter-



Sweetie Bibi, one of the four returnees, in Malda, West Bengal, on Wednesday. PTI

vened. Ms. Khatun was pregnant at that time and her father had argued that if his daughter gave birth in Bangladesh, the child would have no claim to an

Indian citizenship. After her return, Ms. Khatun gave birth to a child in a State-run hospital in West Bengal in January. Trinamool Congress MP

Samirul Islam on Thursday applauded the Indian judiciary for its help in bringing back the remaining four, who returned through the border in Malda district. He said while there is no problem with the deportation of illegal migrants, Indian nationals should not be subjected to injustice and harassment.

**'Such a long time'**  
"They stayed there [Bangladesh] for over a year. Even Bangladesh had written letters that Indians who were pushed back illegally must be taken back, but it took such a long time," Mr. Islam, former chairperson of the West Bengal Migrant Welfare Board, told *The Hindu* on Thursday.

## SC considers reference of provision to furnish reason during arrests

**Aaratrika Bhaumik**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday indicated that the Meghalaya government's appeal against the grant of bail to Sonam Raghuvanshi, accused of murdering her newwed husband Raja Raghuvanshi, may have to be referred to a larger Bench in view of conflicting decisions of coordinate Benches on whether the grounds of arrest must be furnished to an accused in writing.

### Appeal against bail

The State was appealing against a June 29 order of the Meghalaya High Court, which had upheld a trial court's decision granting bail to Ms. Raghuvanshi, saying that the police had failed to effectively communicate the grounds of her arrest. "Basically, the issue is whether written grounds of arrest are mandatory or not... We will decide whether the matter requires to be referred to a larger Bench. There is a conflict arising from different coordinate Bench judgments," the Bench comprising Justices Manoj Misra and Shree Chandrasekhar said.

The Bench directed Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the State, to file written submissions along with photocopies of the documents furnished to the accused so that it could examine the exact nature of the information communicated at the time of arrest. The matter has been posted for further hearing on July 14.

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## Monsoon has covered the entire country, a day later than normal, announces IMD

**Jacob Koshy**  
NEW DELHI

The southwest monsoon covered the entire country on Thursday, a day later than its normal date, after advancing into the remaining parts of the north Arabian Sea, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Punjab, India Meteorological Department (IMD) officials said.

The nationwide coverage came 35 days after the monsoon reached Kerala on June 5. While the advance was slower than in recent years, the July 9 date is not unusual historically.

Since 1971, the monsoon has covered the country on dates ranging from June 16 in 2013 to August 15 in



**Water traffic:** Children having fun in a waterlogged road after a heavy spell of rain in New Delhi on Thursday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

2002, according to IMD data.

The monsoon's progress has accelerated over the past week, accompanied by widespread heavy rain across several parts of the country. Delhi and the Na-

tional Capital Region received significant rainfall overnight and on Thursday, causing waterlogging and traffic disruptions in several areas.

The recent wet spell, however, does not necessari-

ly indicate how rainfall will evolve through the rest of the month.

The IMD has forecast below-normal rainfall for the country as a whole in July, defined as less than 94% of the long-period average, even as some parts of northwest and north-east India, east-central India, and the eastern peninsula may receive normal to above-normal rainfall. July receives the highest rainfall among the monsoon months and is critical for agriculture.

India's current monsoon rainfall deficit stands at 15%, a sharp improvement from 38% on June 30.

**CONTINUED ON**  
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## For some, Forum is a religion

No wonder our students (and teachers) choose to come back to us. No forced conversions. Some call it a **homecoming** we call it trust. Here is a list.

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\*Candidates marked with a star\* joined us in both attempts - the year they got first selection as well as again for rank improvement. All other candidates joined Forum's various programs including, but not limited to MGP in more than one attempt making the necessary improvements. For the full list, please visit <https://forumias.com/blog/testimonials>

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10 SEPT

## Respond to hotel plea challenging eviction notice: HC to Centre

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday sought the Centre's response to a petition filed by Sir Sobha Singh and Sons Private Limited, owner of the Ambassador Hotel, challenging a show-cause notice issued to it seeking eviction from the 7.58-acre Sujjan Singh Park premises.

Issuing a notice to the Centre, the court granted it three weeks to file a reply in the matter.

The counsel for the petitioner submitted that an eviction order could be passed on July 10, the date when the matter is listed for hearing before the Estate Officer of the Land and Development Office.

The counsel urged the court to direct the Estate Officer to decide the issue of maintainability of proceedings under the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act before proceeding further on the matter.

The court, however, refused to interfere with the manner in which the proceedings are being conducted, stating, "They are the statutory authorities.

They will take care of it themselves."

In the petition, Sir Sobha Singh and Sons Pvt. Ltd. challenged in the court the show-cause notice dated June 11 issued by the Estate Officer under the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act, 1971.

### 'No jurisdiction'

The petitioner contended that the show-cause notice must be quashed as the Estate Officer has no jurisdiction to proceed in the matter and it is not an "unauthorised occupant".

The petitioner stated that it holds a registered "government grant" dated October 8, 1945 with respect to the land. It added that the government's attempt to "re-enter" in 1960 after determination of the perpetual lease was declared "wrong and illegal" by a court in 2009.

The petitioner also stated that although the Central government's appeal against the decision was allowed by the appellate court on June 9, the petitioner's subsequent appeal is pending in the High Court. The matter will be heard next on August 17.

## Death toll climbs to 3 in Rohini building collapse

Building owner's husband, construction worker among deceased; rescue operation almost over, debris being cleared, cause of incident under probe; police; FIR lodged against unknown persons

Shrimansi Kaushik  
NEW DELHI

The death toll rose to three on Thursday after rescuers in an overnight operation pulled out two more bodies from the rubble of a four-storey under-construction building that collapsed in north-west Delhi's Rohini Sector 16 on Wednesday.

According to the police, the deceased have been identified as Ram Dua, 62, husband of building owner Manju Dua; and Kafe Mohammad alias Nurul, 24, a worker at the site. On Wednesday, Ram Kishan, 42, a biker who was passing through the area when the building collapsed, died after coming under debris.

The police have registered an FIR in connection with the incident against unknown persons under Section 105 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. "The rescue operation is almost over. Removal of debris is still going on. The cause of the collapse is under investigation," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (Rohini) Shashank Jaiswal.



Remains of the day: Residents and security personnel at the site of the building collapse in Rohini's Sector 16 on Thursday. PTI

the past 50 years. Over a year ago, they decided to raze the house and rebuild it from scratch. Ram Dua was supervising the construction," the official said.

During the day, family members of the deceased waited outside the Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital's mortuary for the bodies to be handed over to them after the post-mortem.

Kafe's family came all the way from Uttar Pradesh's Bahraich. Safiya Begum said her son was the eldest of five siblings. "We learned about the incident

at 1.30 a.m. when the police called. We rushed to Delhi," she said. Her husband, Shaan Mohammad, is a daily wage worker.

The family said Kafe had joined work at the site only two days ago. His cousin, Saddam alias Ravi, 32, was rescued on Wednesday. "At the time of the collapse, Saddam and Kafe were working on the second floor," a relative said.

Kishan's wife Renu held back tears as she recollected the events of the previous day. "He had lunch and left, only to never come back again," she said.

Ms. Renu said her brother-in-law did not know how to break the news to her and lied that her mother-in-law was injured in the incident. "When I reached the spot, I realised it was my husband," she said.

Relatives and friends recalled Ram Dua as a lively individual who was fond of making reels. They said in the last reel he posted on Instagram, he said: "Ameer hun, amar nahi, mujhe bhi marna hoga (I am rich, not immortal. I will also die)."

## BJP, AAP spar over waterlogging after rain lashes Capital

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The BJP and the Opposition Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) clashed over waterlogging after heavy rain lashed the city on Thursday.

Public Works Department Minister Parvash Sahib Singh highlighted that Minto Bridge, Zakhira, Dhaura Kuan, and Moolchand — areas known for severe waterlogging — witnessed smooth traffic. "This has been possible because of months of preparation and tireless efforts of our engineers and emergency teams," he said.

He added that the department deployed 754 permanent pumps at 167 locations and 305 temporary pumps at 273 locations to prevent waterlogging.

CM Rekha Gupta also inspected drainage arrangements at Shalimar village in Shalimar Bagh, her Assembly constituency.

According to the India Meteorological Department, Delhi received 72.6 mm of rainfall in the 24 hours ending at 8.30 a.m., and 32.4 mm between 8.30 a.m. and 5.30 p.m.

AAP Chief Arvind Kejri-



Minister Parvash Sahib Singh at the PWD control room at ITO on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

wal, however, said his government had addressed waterlogging at Minto Bridge and alleged that the BJP was now taking credit for it. He alleged that the city is getting flooded even after short spells of rain.

"This time, even Sadar Bazar has been submerged," AAP Delhi chief Saurabh Bhardwaj said.

### 'Visible changes'

In response, Mr. Singh said waterlogging earlier led to blocked roads, stranded vehicles, and hours of inconvenience, but the BJP assured the people that this would change.

"Today's rainfall has shown that when preparation meets commitment, results are visible on the ground," he said.

## SRDC renamed Indraprastha Virasat Punarvikas Nigam

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Thursday renamed the Shahjahanabad Redevelopment Corporation

(SRDC) as the Indraprastha Virasat Punarvikas Nigam (IPVN), with a renewed focus on heritage conservation alongside urban development.

The decision was taken

at the corporation's annual general meeting chaired by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta. She said redevelopment of Chandni Chowk and other heritage sites in the 370-year-old walled city

would be prioritised with improved infrastructure.

Plans include better parking, public facilities, a tourist assistance centre, and upgraded civic infrastructure. Officials said de-

tailed redevelopment plans would be prepared for key areas, including Jama Masjid and Yamuna Bazar, while ensuring the preservation of Old Delhi's historical character.

## DDA removes over 57,000 MT of silt from stormwater drains

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has removed over 57,000 metric tons (MT) of silt from stormwater drains across the city as part of its pre-monsoon desilting drive — over 70% higher than last year's 33,380 MT, the authority said on Thursday.

Desilting has been completed in the East, South and North zones while work in the Narela, Rohini, and Dwarka zones is in its final stages, it said.

According to officials, the city was divided into six operational zones to facilitate planning, supervision, and execution.

The DDA has set up a Central Flood Control Room, along with flood control rooms in all engineering zones, and deployed mobile pumping



Vehicles navigating a waterlogged stretch following a heavy spell of rain on GT Karnal Road on Thursday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

units at vulnerable locations to ensure quick removal of accumulated rainwater, officials said.

The authority added that preventive measures have been undertaken at waterlogging-prone locations, including cleaning of drains, strengthening drainage infrastructure, and coordinating with

other agencies.

Desilted material is being promptly disposed of and vulnerable stretches are under regular monitoring, officials said. The exercise is being carried out under the supervision of Lieutenant-Governor Tarunjit Singh Sandhu as part of the city's monsoon preparedness plan.

**TRIPURA RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**  
(Department of Power Government of Tripura)

PN/TE No.F. 6(569)/TREDA/NCS/2025-26/2771 Date 08/07/2026

**NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER**

On Behalf of Tripura Renewable Energy Development Agency (TREDA), Joint Director, TREDA invites e-tender for the work of Solarization of grid connected Small Bore Deep Tube Well (SBTDW) based 1-3 HP capacity AC Water Supply Pumps under Jal Jeevan Mission including 5 (five) years Warranty / Guarantee and Annual Maintenance Contract including insurance coverage on turn-key basis in Tripura vide DNE-T No. F. 6(569)/TREDA/NCS/2025-26/2770, dated 08/07/2026.

The tender papers may be downloaded from e-procurement portal <https://tripuratenders.gov.in> and the deadline for submission of online e-bid is 29/07/2026 up to 3:00 PM.

(D S DAS)  
Joint Director

**ODISHA UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY**  
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**OUAT-CT-PURCH - No.10789 / OUAT, Date: 09<sup>th</sup> July, 2026**

**TENDER NOTICE**

Sealed tenders are invited from reputed stockist/dealers in single bid system for empanment of suppliers for supply of gases / gases with cylinder-regulator to different offices at Bhubaneswar and other locations of OUAT throughout Odisha. Firms having valid GST, PAN and supply network in India, preferably in Odisha may download the tender document from our official website [www.ouat.ac.in](http://www.ouat.ac.in) and submit their offer along with all required documents through speed post or courier so as to reach the Registrar, Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology, Bhubaneswar by dt. **31.07.2026 (up to 5.00 PM)**. For details of important information, terms and conditions, requirements, opening of bids, etc, please refer to the tender document available at [www.ouat.ac.in](http://www.ouat.ac.in).

Registrar,  
O.U.A.T., Bhubaneswar-751003  
1001932627  
OUPR-1001/1533/126-27/0008

**JAMMU AND KASHMIR POLICE**  
**DISTRICT POLICE HEADQUARTERS JAMMU**  
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email: [asjammu@kpjpolice.gov.in](mailto:asjammu@kpjpolice.gov.in)

**Hue and Cry Notice Rule No. 712/191**

SHO P/S Nagrota, Jammu has intimated that accused person namely Mohan Lal S/O Shambu Mal R/O Pujari Mandir A/P Jagti Nagrota is evading his arrest/wanted in case FIR No. 183/2011 U/S 325 RPC of P/S Nagrota, since the commission of crime. Despite repeated raids/efforts the accused could not be traced/still absconded.

It is therefore requested that Hue and Cry Notice of above mentioned accused is being published for the information of Police establishments / Public in general having any clue related to the whereabouts / present location of above named accused, kindly communicate the same on the below mentioned contact / Telephone numbers.

**Description Roll :-**

|            |                                   |
|------------|-----------------------------------|
| Name       | : Mohan Lal                       |
| S/O        | : Shambu Mal                      |
| Address    | : Pujari Mandir A/P Jagti Nagrota |
| Age        | : 30 years                        |
| Height     | : 5' 6"                           |
| Complexion | : Wheatish                        |
| Eyes       | : Black                           |

**Contacts/Telephone Numbers:-**

|                      |                                                                          |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. DPO, Jammu        | : 0191-2547807, 0191-2561578                                             |
| 2. SSP Jammu Mail ID | : <a href="mailto:ssjammu@kpjpolice.gov.in">ssjammu@kpjpolice.gov.in</a> |
| 3. PCR Jammu         | : 0191-2605949                                                           |
| 4. SP Rural Jammu    | : 0191-2605949                                                           |
| 5. SDPO Nagrota      | : 0191-2673666                                                           |
| 6. SHO P/S Nagrota   | : 0191-2673025                                                           |

**DIPJ- 5293/26, Jul 8 2026**

For Sr, Superintendent of Police Jammu

**KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD**  
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)  
No.2, 2/1 & 2/3, Kalidasa Marg, 1st Main Road, Gandhinagar,  
Bengaluru - 560009, Phone No. 080-22265383 website: [www.kiadb.in](http://www.kiadb.in)

No. IADB/ENG/ETND-EP-22/2015/2026-27 Date: 09-07-2026

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(Through GOK KPP Portal Only)

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(ACTOR)

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Akkarai, ECR, Sholinganallur  
Chennai - 600119  
Deeply mourned by  
Son:- **UPPU KARUNASESH & FAMILY**



## States

## INBRIEF



### Bengali superstar meets W.B. CM, dismisses BJP entry buzz

Bengali superstar Prosenjit Chatterjee on Thursday met West Bengal Chief Minister Suvedu Adhikari at the State Secretariat for nearly two hours and maintained that politics did not figure in their discussions, amid speculation over his possible entry into the BJP. The high-profile meeting assumed political significance as it came barely three days after Union Home Minister Amit Shah visited the actor's south Kolkata residence. "We had coffee and chatted for a while. There was no discussion on politics. A lot of speculation is doing the rounds outside, but most of it is not true," the actor told reporters.

### Ex-COVID health workers protest, seek reinstatement

Former COVID healthcare assistants recruited during the coronavirus pandemic staged a protest in Jaipur on Thursday to demand reinstatement. The protesters said around 28,000 contractual COVID health workers, engaged during the Congress government to meet pandemic-related healthcare requirements, were later removed from service in 2022. They accused the BJP government of failing to fulfil its poll promise despite being in power for over two years. Rajasthan Akhil COVID Swasth Sangh president Veer Singh demanded that the government should fulfil its promise and restore the services of the dismissed contractual employees.

## Sena corporator checks into hospital; 'assaulted' doctors tender resignation

Staff members at civil hospital where Ramesh Mhatre was admitted after arrest stage protest, seek his immediate disqualification; court in Kalyan directs police to produce him upon discharge

Press Trust of India  
THANE

Soon after he was arrested for allegedly assaulting two doctors at a civic-run hospital in the district, Shiv Sena corporator Ramesh Mhatre was hospitalised for chest pain, officials said on Thursday.

Amid widespread condemnation of Monday evening's incident at the Shastri Nagar hospital of the Kalyan Dombivli Municipal Corporation (KDMC), the two doctors Mr. Mhatre is accused of assaulting have tendered their resignations, their colleagues said.

Healthcare services in civic and private hospitals in Kalyan-Dombivli belt resumed on Thursday following a strike called to protest the alleged assault.

Staff members at the Thane District Civil Hospital, where Mr. Mhatre was admitted after his arrest on Wednesday night, staged a protest against him outside the hospital and sought his



Thane District Civil Hospital nurses holding black ribbons as they protest against the alleged assault on doctors, on Thursday.

immediate disqualification as a corporator.

While Mr. Mhatre was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), medical officers, nurses and administrative personnel gathered outside the premises and shouted slogans demanding that attacks on doctors must stop and healthcare workers should be provided security.

Dr. Dheeraj S. Mahangade, Additional District Civil Surgeon, condemned the assault, but said the hospital would fulfil its medical duty [of treating the corporator]. "Mhatre

has only one kidney and suffers from high blood pressure," Dr. Mahangade said, adding that he was expected to be discharged by Thursday evening or Friday morning. "As doctors, providing treatment is our duty, but under no circumstances can an attack on medical professionals be justified," he added.

A viral video showed Mr. Mhatre slapping and punching Dr. Vaibhav Salunkhe and hitting resident medical officer Dr. Srishri Baviskar on her hand at the Shastri Nagar Hospital on Monday evening. The doc-

tors had advised the relatives of a newborn to shift the baby to another facility due to lack of space in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Angered by this, the relatives contacted the corporator, who arrived with his aides and assaulted the doctors.

#### 'Deeply shaken'

KDMC Medical Health Officer Dr. Deepa Shukla said that Dr. Salunkhe and Dr. Baviskar have submitted their resignations to the private agency through which they had been appointed. While the two doctors could not be contacted, one of their colleagues confirmed the development. Both were deeply shaken following the incident, the colleague said.

A court in Kalyan has directed the police to produce Mr. Mhatre before it immediately upon his discharge, a senior police official said. The directive came after the Kalyan police apprised the magistrate of the corporator's current medical condition.

## CM to hand over govt. job orders to kin of T.N. stampede victims

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay will visit Karur on Friday and meet the family members of the victims who died in the tragic stampede that occurred during a TVK rally on September 27 last year. He will hand over appointment orders on compassionate grounds to the family members of 32 victims.

They will be appointed to various government departments based on their educational qualifications, official sources said.

Mr. Vijay will also lay the foundation stone for Evervan Kothari Footwear Private Limited, which will come up at Manavasi near Krishnarayapuram with an investment of ₹1,700 crore.

The non-leather footwear manufacturing unit is expected to generate employment for about 13,500 people.

Mr. Vijay will travel to Tiruchirappalli by flight on Friday morning and reach Karur by road around 11 a.m. This will be Mr. Vijay's first visit to Karur after assuming office as Chief Minister on May 10. Later, Mr. Vijay will address a public meeting planned by the party on the outskirts of the city.

Left parties' opposition



Tamil Nadu CM C. Vijay

The CPI and the CPI(M), which are extending outside support to the TVK-led government, have strongly opposed the latter's decision to offer government jobs to the family members of those killed in the Karur stampede.

#### 'Can weaken case'

CPI(M) State secretary P. Shanmugam said that with an inquiry into the stampede under way and the matter pending before court, the decision to offer government jobs could weaken the legal process.

Mr. Shanmugam and CPI State secretary M. Veerapandian said the State government must frame a comprehensive policy for employment of family members of those who died under various circumstances, and must not provide jobs to the kin of the stampede victims until then.

## Gujarat launches data centre policy, targets ₹6-lakh-crore investments, 7.5 GW capacity

Abhinav Deshpande  
AHMEDABAD

Seeking to position itself as India's preferred destination for hyperscale data centres, cloud computing and artificial intelligence (AI)-driven digital infrastructure, the Gujarat government on Thursday unveiled its first-ever Data Centre Policy (2026-29), targeting investments of ₹6 lakh crore and the creation of 7.5 gigawatts (GW) of data centre capacity over the policy period.

The policy, launched by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel in Gandhinagar, offers a wide range of fiscal and non-fiscal incentives, including capital subsidy, interest subsidy, power tariff support, reimbursement of State GST (SGST), exemption from stamp duty and registration charges, and financial assistance for cap-



CM Bhupendra Patel during the launch of Gujarat Data Centre Policy 2026-29 in Gandhinagar on Thursday.

itive desalinisation plants to meet the sector's high water requirements.

#### 'Preferred destination'

The new policy aims to make Gujarat a preferred destination for data centre investments and help it compete with established hubs such as Telangana, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. "Gujarat is the first State to bring this policy. We are confident it will attract investments of ₹6 lakh

crore, create 7.5 GW of data centre capacity and generate significant employment," Chief Secretary M.K. Das said.

The government said the policy has been designed to capitalise on the rapid growth of AI, cloud computing, digital payments, e-commerce, electronics manufacturing and other data-intensive sectors, while strengthening Gujarat's position in India's digital economy.

## Leaders voicing their opinion unique to Congress, says party's Punjab in-charge

The Hindu Bureau  
CHANDIGARH

A day after he ruled out the possibility of leadership change in the Punjab State unit amid the ongoing power tussle, the Congress's State in-charge Bhupesh Baghel on Thursday said leaders voicing their opinion were unique to the Congress as the party encourages debates and discussions.

"Unlike in other parties, it is not a one-way communication and command in the Congress. The Congress values and respects the seniority and contribution of each and every leader, which is acknowledged and rewarded at the right time," he told mediapersons.

Mr. Baghel, who has been convening meetings here with party leaders and workers around preparations for the Punjab Assembly election in 2027, expressed confidence about the party's prospects of



Congress's Punjab in-charge Bhupesh Baghel at a meeting with State party leaders in Chandigarh.

forming the next government in the State.

He said the Congress was on its way towards a comfortable victory in the coming election. "The Aam Aadmi Party government has completely failed and people want to get rid of it as soon as possible," he added.

He said the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) presence on the ground remains marginal. "Even the BJP leadership knows it well and it is only making hoax claims

so that their cadres and leaders don't desert it ahead of the election," he said.

#### 'Completely united'

Asked about which leaders he will be meeting, Mr. Baghel said that he will be meeting each and every leader as that is part of his brief. "The Congress is completely united in Punjab in its mission and purpose," he said. The disgruntled party leaders including former Chief Minister Channe

ranjit Singh Channi are likely to meet Mr. Baghel on Friday.

Meanwhile, Senior Congress leader Pargat Singh said he and other party leaders would meet Mr. Baghel to present their views. Mr. Pargat acknowledged that some "difference of opinion" existed and said these would be conveyed to Mr. Baghel.

Earlier in the day, senior Congress leader and MLA Rana Gurjit Singh dismissed reports of factionalism, asserting that no one was above the party high command.

On Thursday, Mr. Channi, MP Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, Mr. Pargat and Gurkirat Singh met at Mr. Rana's residence here. However, Mr. Rana said they had all come to meet him on a civic poll-related issue in Kapurthala. Later, Mr. Pargat, Mr. Randhawa, and Mr. Rana briefly interacted with the media.

(With PTI inputs)

## Maharashtra shouldn't back activities that cause conflict: Priyank Kharge

Press Trust of India  
BENGALURU

Karnataka Home Minister Priyank Kharge on Thursday said Maharashtra is free to extend legal assistance to organisations linked to that State, such as the Maharashtra Eklakar Samiti (MES), but cautioned that it should not back any activity that could lead to conflict.

Asserting that Karnataka will not allow pro-Maharashtra organisations like MES, which is active in the border district of Belagavi, to indulge in mischief or agitations that may lead to conflict, Mr. Priyank said the neighbouring State could take it as a "warning or advice".

#### 'Maturity and wisdom'

He hoped its government has enough "maturity and wisdom". The Minister was responding to a question about Maharashtra reportedly announcing it would provide legal assistance to Marathi-speaking people and organisations facing court cases in Karnataka.

"If they want to support their organisations, let them — we have no locus standi in it. But when it comes to our land, water, State and language, we will not back out. Let them do whatever they want, let them back MES or anyone else. But whether it is Maharashtra, Goa, Kerala, Tamil Nadu or Andhra Pradesh, if there are any border issues, ultimately the matter has to be fought legally," Mr. Priyank said.

#### 'Can't draw lines'

Speaking to reporters, he said, "Just because some organisations or some Chief Minister or Minister says so, something, we cannot draw lines however we want. The borders have been drawn by the States Reorganisation Commission on linguistic grounds."

## Half in jest, Surjewala tells Hooda 'it's my turn now' at Haryana Cong. function

Ashok Kumar  
GURUGRAM

A light-hearted but politically charged exchange between former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda and party's Rajya Sabha MP Randeep Surjewala at the welcome programme for the newly appointed All India Congress Committee in-charge for Haryana, Sanjay Dutt, has sparked off discussions regarding emerging power dynamics within the State Congress.

In the viral 30-second video, Mr. Hooda leaned in and told Mr. Surjewala: "Tu mera saath de, phir dekh dhamaaka (Support me, then see the impact)". Mr. Surjewala took the mike from State party president Rao Narendra Singh and shot back: "Mujhe apka saath dete hue 20 saal

ho gaye. Ab apki bari hai mera saath dena ki (It's been 20 years I've supported you. Now it's your turn)."

#### Bares aspirations

With these remarks, Mr. Surjewala lay bare his aspirations for a greater role in the State's politics in the future. He did not stop there. "Since 2005 [when Mr. Hooda was first became the CM], we have not won a single election on our own," he said. "We formed governments with support, but that's different," he added, referring to the government led by Mr. Hooda in 2009 after five Haryana Janhit Congress MLAs defected and merged with Congress.

Congress has won only three Assembly elections with a simple majority since Haryana's formation



Former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda with Rajya Sabha MP Randeep Surjewala.

- 1972, 1991, and 2005.

Mr. Surjewala also pointed to the 2024 results where despite a high vote share, "the number of MLAs got stuck at 37, but you need 46 [the majority mark]". He went on: "You cannot implement programmes without being in power. You can't bring social change without being

in power. That is the harsh reality."

#### Clamour for change

The exchange reflects a renewed internal demand for change since the Congress's narrow loss in the 2024 Assembly poll. A section of workers blame the Hoodas — son and Rohtak MP Depender included —

Since 2005 [when Bhupinder Singh Hooda first became the CM], we have not won a single election on our own

RANDEEP SURJEVALA  
Congress Rajya Sabha MP

for the repeated setbacks. The central leadership's own hesitation was visible in the year-long delay in naming Mr. Hooda as the Leader of Opposition (LoP) after the poll loss — widely read as a pushback against his dominance.

The Gandhihs have sent mixed signals. LoP in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra attending the Hoodas' annual lunch earlier this year was seen as an endorsement that

briefly saluted critics. That calm did not last. Mr. Gandhi's participation in the *padayatra* of former MP and Mr. Hooda's rival Brijendra Singh was viewed as a setback for the Hooda camp, which stayed away from it, calling it "not an official party programme".

Mr. Hooda, 78, has been at the helm of affairs in the party's State unit for around three decades. Besides being the two-time Chief Minister from 2005-2014 and the Haryana Pradesh Congress president from 1996 to 2021, he has also been LoP in the State thrice. Mr. Depender Hooda has been a five-time MP, including a term in Rajya Sabha.

#### Ambiguous relationship

Mr. Surjewala's position in this churn is complicated.

## States

## Telangana HC grants bail to Minister's son in POCSO case

**The Hindu Bureau**  
HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Thursday granted conditional bail to Bandi Sai Bageerath, son of Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar, in connection with a case registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

He was granted bail after 51 days in judicial custody at Cherlapally Central Prison following his arrest by the Cyberabad police on May 16. The High Court directed him to execute a personal bond of ₹1 lakh with two sureties.

It also ordered him to cooperate with the ongoing investigation and not leave Telangana without the court's permission.

The case was registered on May 8 after the mother of a minor girl lodged a complaint alleging that her daughter had been sexually assaulted by the accused.

## Three more dead in Wayanad debris slip; Pinarayi defends tunnel project

Two of the three victims identified, one from Himachal Pradesh and another from Bihar; search intensified for two people still missing, say authorities; Opposition leader claims clearance for tunnel project was secured through legitimate channels

**The Hindu Bureau**  
KOZHIKODE

The intensive search and rescue operations at Kalladi in Wayanad's Meppadi panchayat entered its final phase on Thursday evening, following the recovery of three more bodies. Despite torrential rain and a heavy influx of debris, rescue teams pushed through, on the third day of the challenging mission, bringing the confirmed death toll from Tuesday's disaster to six.

According to officials supervising the operations under the State government and the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority, the mission is nearing completion, with only two people still reported missing. Fire and Rescue Services personnel said they would intensify searches in the Meenakshi river to trace them.



Rescue operations under way at Kalladi in Wayanad, where a debris slip on July 7 claimed the lives of six persons. K. RAGESH

Two of the three victims recovered on Thursday had been identified as Rahul Sharma, an engineer from Himachal Pradesh, and Mohammad Imran, an excavator operator from Bihar.

Meanwhile, seven injured workers remain hospitalised, with several under observation in the intensive care unit.

The disaster unfolded

near the Meenakshi Bridge at Kalladi on July 7, where continuous rainfall reportedly triggered a subterranean erosion creating hollow underground cavities.

After visiting the site to review rescue efforts, Minister for Public Works (PWD) P.K. Basheer said the rescue squads encountered a challenging situation as the continuous rains hindered the debris

clearance. Experts had already warned of secondary landslips if large-scale removal was carried out fast, he said, adding that only the safest measures would be adopted.

Additionally, Mr. Basheer announced the Centre's assurance on possible financial assistance for the construction of the Bairakappa bridge, with the foundation stone expected to be laid this November.

**Pinarayi blames DDMA** Agriculture Minister T. Siddique who camped at the spot to coordinate the rescue efforts clarified that the residents of the nearby Chooramalla region would not face transit or connectivity issues. Wayanad District Collector has been directed to list local families to streamline the distribution of special food rations and uninterrupted medical care.

Meanwhile, Leader of the Opposition Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday launched a scathing attack on the State government, terming the disaster "a result of grave administrative negligence." He made strong remarks against Chief Minister V.D. Satheesan and the Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) after visiting the affected areas.

Accusing the disaster management authorities of failing to respond to extreme weather warnings, Mr. Vijayan defended the environmental clearances obtained for the proposed ₹2,243-crore twin-tube tunnel road project, asserting that they had been secured strictly through proper and legitimate institutional channels.

"The propagation that environmental clearance was secured through external pressure is an insult to the judiciary," he asserted.

## Oppn. on mission to criticise Sanatana dharma: Adityanath

**Mayank Kumar**  
LUCKNOW

U.P. CM Yogi Adityanath

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday in Banda hit out at Opposition parties Samajwadi Party (SP) and Congress, saying they have made it their life's mission to criticise Hindu traditions and Sanatana dharma and do not want to see a Viksit Bharat.

He said the money the current Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government spends on the development of temples and beautification of Dhams was earlier spent during the SP's tenure on "constructing boundary walls for graveyards".

**Foundation stone laid**

"Certain individuals disrespect the nation's heritage. They have dedicated their lives to criticising Hindu traditions and Sanatana. Their vision does not encompass a prosperous and developed Bharat. They have a preference for graveyards, which explains their opposition to the development of the Ram Mandir, Kashi Vishwanath, Maa Vindhyavasini Dham, Chitrakot, and Naimisharanya Dham. Leaders from the SP and Congress find it difficult to accept the developmental initiatives undertaken by BJP representatives," said Mr. Adityanath while inaugurating and laying the foundation stone for 229 development projects valued at over ₹710 crore in Banda.

The U.P. CM urged the citizens of the State to reject

those with negative mindsets that oppose progress. He also reflected on the time when Bundelkhand faced significant challenges.

"Upon assuming the role of Chief Minister, the Prime Minister advised me that my initial visit should be to Bundelkhand, emphasising the need for action in the region. When I arrived here nearly nine and a half years ago, I observed that backwardness had become synonymous with the area. Migration and water scarcity had emerged as defining characteristics of Bundelkhand. The mining mafia, land mafia, sand mafia, forest mafia, and dacoits instilled such fear that even farmers were hesitant to enter their fields," he said.

He added in Bundelkhand there was no connectivity, irrigation, drinking water, security, or employment. "Even FIRs were not registered at police stations. Bundelkhand was struggling for its very existence, but today it brings immense satisfaction to see its progress. Everyone can clearly see the transformation in Banda compared to nine years ago," said the U.P. CM.

## Native village in the dark on Keralite's death in Sri Lanka

**The Hindu Bureau**  
ALAPPUZZHA

The news of Sarathchandran Unnithan's death in the prison riots in Sri Lanka has barely reached his native village of Keezhcherimel, near Chengannur, in Alappuzha of Kerala, where many remain unaware of the tragedy.

Even the local police and authorities have little information about the 73-year-old or the circumstances surrounding his death. According to local residents, it has been more than four decades since Unnithan and his family moved to Chennai and severed most of their ties with their ancestral village.

**Unnithan arrived in Sri Lanka on March 2, 2025, and was arrested for allegedly possessing ganja**

"We have had no connection with him or his family for decades. The only address we know is Fousi-

ya Lodge, Stringer's Street, Broadway, Chennai," said one of his relatives in Chengannur.

**Whereabouts unknown**

The elderly relative, who declined to elaborate further, said she could barely remember details about the family or their present whereabouts.

According to available information, Unnithan arrived in Sri Lanka on March 2, 2025, and was arrested for allegedly possessing ganja. He was later lodged in the Negombo prison, where he died during the riots.

According to relatives, Unnithan moved permanently to Chennai after

marrying a woman from Andhra Pradesh. He last visited his native village in 2018. One of his siblings continues to live in the village, though local residents said he rarely maintained contact with the family. They, however, said that Unnithan was believed to have some connections in Thiruvananthapuram.

## INBRIEF



## A.P. Minister Lokesh calls for deeper ties with South Korea

Andhra Pradesh's Minister for Human Resource Development, IT and Electronics Nara Lokesh on Thursday concluded the fifth day of his South Korea tour with meetings aimed at attracting investments in electric vehicles, semiconductors, electronics, renewable energy and digital infrastructure, while proposing measures to strengthen economic ties between Andhra Pradesh and South Korea. He projected Andhra Pradesh as a preferred destination for Korean investments.

## TTD halts special darshan ahead of Brahmotsavams

With Tirumala set to host two Brahmotsavams this year owing to the occurrence of 'adhika masam', the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has unveiled an extensive crowd management plan, suspending almost all special darshan categories during the annual festival and directing all the departments to complete preparations well ahead of schedule. The decision was taken at a high-level review meeting chaired by TTD Additional Executive Officer Ch. Venkaiah Chowdary on Thursday.

## HC tells TDB to aid appraisal of Sabarimala valuables

The Kerala High Court has directed the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) to extend all necessary assistance to former Judge of Kerala High Court K.T. Sanakaran to carry out the appraisal of valuables, including gold offerings made at the Sabarimala temple that were kept in 80 sacks labelled "Kaniponn" in the Arannam strong room. The court also directed the board's standing counsel to apprise it of the procedure proposed for the safe custody of valuable offerings received from devotees so that they can be appraised periodically and a comprehensive inventory maintained in digital form.

## Heavy rain brings down 150-year-old clock tower at Kozhikode railway station

**The Hindu Bureau**  
KOZHIKODE

Heavy rain triggered the partial collapse of the 150-year-old heritage clock tower onto Platform No. 2 at the Kozhikode railway station in Kerala on Thursday morning. No casualties or injuries were reported, as timely precautions taken by security personnel ensured the area had been cordoned off before the incident. However, train operations on the route remained disrupted.

The iconic clock tower, an architectural landmark of the old station building, gave way, sending debris and roofing sheets crash-



Heavy rain triggered the partial collapse of the 150-year-old heritage clock tower onto Platform No. 2 of the station. K. RAGESH

ing onto Platform No. 2 and the overhead traction wires.

According to railway sources, minor cracks were detected on Wednesday itself on the vintage structure, which is now

under an extensive redevelopment. Acting promptly, RPF personnel moved passengers away from the premises. RPF officers said the building section was scheduled for controlled demolition later on Thursday.

## Suresh Gopi faces flak as top SRFTI official accused of abuse walks scot-free

**The Hindu Bureau**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Suresh Gopi, BJP MP and Chairperson of the Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute (SRFTI), is facing criticism from the survivor and the SRFTI Students' Union for delay in taking action against a top official of the institution who had been found guilty of sexual harassment and multiple serious misconducts under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH) by an internal committee back in May 2026.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, the survivor, who was

**Delay raised serious concerns about the institute's accountability, students' union says**

linked to the institute, said the authorities had not taken any action or communicated with her after the internal committee's report found him guilty.

**Termination sought**

"I want the immediate termination of this person as per the rules. I have not yet talked openly about the serious findings in the report. Mr. Gopi or no one else from the institute has

answered my questions on why no action has been taken even after two months..." she said.

She also expressed concern that the accused was appointed as a non-official member of the Organising Committee (South Zone) of the recently concluded Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF), 2026, with his name being published on the MIFF website.

Both the SRFTI and the MIFF function under the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

The students' union said in a statement that the continued delay raised serious concerns about the institute's accountability.

## AIDS prevention society launches drive to improve HIV diagnosis in Karnataka

**Afshan Yasmeen**  
BENGALURU

More than 56,000 people in Karnataka are estimated to be living with HIV without knowing their status, the highest such number among States in the country. This is posing a major challenge to the State's HIV control programme despite free testing and treatment services being widely available, with the changing nature of sexual networks adding to the complexity.

As per estimates from the Karnataka State AIDS Prevention Society (KSAPS), 56,406 people are unaware of their HIV-positive status, making ear-



Over 56,000 in Karnataka are estimated to be unaware of their HIV status.

ly diagnosis and linkage to treatment a key public health priority. While over two lakh people are already receiving treatment, officials said, the focus is now on identifying those

who remain outside the healthcare system.

KSAPS Project Director Padma Basavanthappa told *The Hindu* that one of the biggest hurdles is the changing nature of sexual networks, with increasing numbers of people meeting partners through dating apps.

**No voluntary testing**

Ms. Basavanthappa said the problem was compounded by the reluctance of people to voluntarily undergo HIV testing. "People still do not walk into testing centres on their own. Many believe they are not at risk, while others avoid testing because they fear stigma and discrimina-

tion," she said, pointing out that awareness about HIV transmission also remained inadequate.

To address the gap, KSAPS has launched the Mobilisation for AIDS Suraksha campaign. As part of the campaign, initiated by the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO), KSAPS has introduced a BreakFree QR code that links users to a confidential self-risk assessment, near-by HIV testing centres and counsellors.

The self-assessment tool asks users a series of questions to determine whether they may be at risk and guides them to appropriate services while protecting their identity.

## Karnataka to revive digital initiative to combat fake news

**K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj**  
BENGALURU

The Karnataka government is all set to revive the Information Disorder Tackling Unit (IDTU) to curb the spread of fake news.

The unit, championed by Minister Priyanka Kharge, had a trial run in 2024 but was later put on the back burner. Now, with Mr. Kharge taking charge as Home Minister, the unit is all set to become a full-fledged wing under the State's Cyber Command Unit.

Speaking in Belagavi on Thursday, Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar said fake

news was causing several problems in society, including law and order disturbances.

The IDTU initiative had earlier raised concerns over whether the government should label news reports as 'fake' and conduct fact checks, prompting it to onboard independent fact-checking websites for the task. Despite this, the initiative was discontinued after the pilot phase.

These units will monitor social media and news articles daily, identify potential threats, and have them fact-checked before publication on IDTU's flagship portal.

## SPOTLIGHT



**Home truths:** Sari Juang (left) and her sisters, Sasmita and Ratni, sitting outside their modest hut at Kodipasa village in Odisha's Keonjhar district.  
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## Gone girls

The death of 14 girls from the Juang community, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group, from Odisha at a seafood processing plant in Tamil Nadu's Tiruvallur has brought to the fore the socio-economic realities of marginalised tribal populations despite decades of targeted interventions. **Satyasundar Barik** visits the Juang villagers who lost their daughters to understand what went wrong in the development journey

**W**hen the MGR Chennai Central-Bhubaneswar Superfast Express pulled into the Bhubaneswar railway station on the morning of June 27, Sari Juang, along with her two younger sisters, had just cheated death by a mile. The over 1,500-km journey back to their home State followed a deadly ammonia gas leak at their workplace - a seafood processing plant in Tamil Nadu's Tiruvallur - on June 21.

Sari and her sisters Sasmita and Ratni were witnesses to the death and destruction caused by the gas leak that tore through the seafood plant, killing their co-workers, mostly women and minor girls from Odisha. Of the 17 migrant workers who died, 14 were from Odisha - all in their teens and from the Juang community - two from Assam, and one from Jharkhand. Some of the workers are still undergoing treatment in hospitals in Tamil Nadu.

According to survivor accounts, the gas leak occurred outside the workers' residential quarters during night, exposing them to toxic fumes while they were asleep. Following initial investigations, officials said labour contractors specifically hired women and even minor girls from the Juang tribal community - a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) from Odisha - after luring them with the hope of steady income and advance payments to their families.

By the time Sari reached her village, Kodipasa in Banspal block of Keonjhar district, two of her closest friends had already been cremated.

The Juang community lives in scattered hamlets across the hill districts of Keonjhar, Angul and Dhenkanal, and survive on shifting cultivation and forest produce. The women and girls of Kodipasa leaving their home and travelling the length of the country wasn't usual until recently. "Because of low literacy and non-exposure to the outside world, Juangs are not familiar with migration," said an official of the Tribal Welfare Department. And yet at least 20 girls - three more girls from the village are on ventilator support in Tamil Nadu hospitals - from one village made the journey to the southern State drawn by the promise of a good income, ₹15,000 per month, for each worker.

#### 'No other option'

"What choice did we have?" Sari retorted. "We are four sisters and two brothers. Our father died years ago. Whatever little our mother earns is not enough to feed all of us. Beyond subsidised rice (provided under the public distribution system), we have nothing," she said. The sisters, aged 18 and below, had set out to Tamil Nadu to earn enough money to build a liveable house in Kodipasa.

Keonjhar is also the home district of Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Mahi, whose government has announced an ex gratia of ₹10 lakh for the families of the deceased. A little away from Sari's home, Basang Juang, 50, pointed to a newly laid tin roof funded by ₹9,000 sent home by her daughter, Phulamani, 18, who was among the first five Juang girls who died in the gas leak incident.

"My daughter used to travel 10 km every day to Keonjhar town to work as a construction labourer. Even that work was irregular. So, she chose to travel to Tamil Nadu," said Basang.

Two huts away lived Sujani Juang, in her mid-teens. Her family includes an alcoholic brother, an intellectually challenged sister, and another sister who returned home after marriage. Their mother earns a living working odd jobs. Before she succumbed to the ammonia leak, Sujani had managed to send home ₹4,000 in two instalments.

The poverty and distinct cultural practices of the Juangs led to their identification as a PVTG. To address their development needs, the Juang Development Agency (JDA) was established at Goniska in Keonjhar in 1978, with a mandate to serve 5,490 people across 32 habitations. Sari's village, Kodipasa, is one of these hamlets.

Nearly five decades on, the presence of a dedicated agency, however, seems to have brought lit-



My daughter used to travel 10 km every day to Keonjhar town to work as a construction labourer. Even that work was irregular. So, she chose to travel to Tamil Nadu

**BASANG JUANG,**  
mother of a victim

tle change to the lives of the people. While infrastructure has improved with blacktopped roads reaching Kodipasa over the past decade, the socio-economic conditions of the villagers remain largely unchanged.

The Odisha SC and ST Development Department highlights the establishment of the Kodipasa Ashram School, a residential institution, as early as 1955. Decades later, its impact appears limited. Most boys and girls leave the village soon after appearing for their Class 10 examinations, migrating to other States in search of work.

"The primary source of livelihood for all Juang families in Kodipasa is daily wage labour," said Saibani Juanga, a village elder. "Only one boy had enrolled in college, only to drop out later. We have no alternative means of livelihood except construction work. It is physically demanding, wages are low and irregular, and migration to other States remains the most practical option for our children," said Saibani.

According to the latest report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India on 'Functioning of Micro Project Agencies for development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in the State', the literacy rate among villagers covered under JDA was 38.18%, decades after focused intervention efforts began.

Fifteen kilometres away, in Rimulighat hamlet of Banspal block in the district, grief hangs heavy at Sudhar Juang's home. The ammonia leak claimed the life of his 19-year-old daughter Champabati, the first earning member of her family to travel beyond Odisha. Their one-room mud house shelters six members. Champabati had migrated with the hope of improving her family's condition and completing the half-constructed concrete house sanctioned under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Rural). Her story echoes that of many Juang girls who died, and those who returned.

Sula Juang, 21, a friend of Champabati, said, "There are 35 Juang families in Rimulighat, and their financial and social conditions have been worsening. Once we cross 16, we are expected to take care of ourselves. Where will the money come from for clothes, shoes, or even basic necessities? Families are unable to bear the cost. Leaving home is the only option for us even if the workplaces are unsafe."

Champabati's parents said they want to work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), which has now been replaced with a new scheme. But there isn't any work, they said, adding that this is why their daughter was forced to go to Tamil Nadu.

Odisha is home to 64 different tribes, constituting 22% of the State's population and 9.17% of the

country's tribal population. In terms of the number of both Scheduled Tribe communities and PVTGs, Odisha has the highest number of ethnic groups among all States, said A.B. Ota, former Director of the State-run Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI).

#### Some fund facts

During the 5th Five-Year Plan (1974-79), the Centre decided to focus on development of vulnerable tribal groups and identified 75 such groups in India. Out of the 75 PVTGs identified in the country, 13 groups belong to Odisha with a population of 2.94 lakh. As many as 20 micro-project agencies or State-level tribal welfare bodies, including three new ones, have been functioning since 1976-77 across 14 districts of the State.

The PVTGs receive grants under Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Scheme under Article 275 (1) of the Constitution and Conservation-cum-Development Plan (development of infrastructure, education and health). Besides, regular welfare development programmes of State and Centre are also implemented for the PVTGs.

The Odisha PVTG Empowerment and Livelihood Improvement Programme (OPELIP), an externally aided project with the objective to enhance living conditions and reduced poverty of PVTGs, was implemented between 2016 and 2024 with an outlay of ₹711.25 crore. Of this, ₹319.29 crore was a loan from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

Apart from this, the Central government came up with the PM-JANMAN Mission with an allocation of ₹24.04 crore for holistic development of PVTGs between 2023-24 and 2025-26. Odisha, with 13 PVTGs, has been a major beneficiary.

Additionally, the ST and SC Development Department has proposed to implement OPELIP-II with an estimated ₹2,422.13 crore from IFAD that includes a loan of ₹734.86 crore. The proposal has, however, not received a final go-ahead from the Finance Department.

According to CAG, during 2019-2024, the 17 micro-project agencies received ₹387.93 crore under different schemes and spent ₹424.62 crore from the available funds of ₹461.44 crore, including an opening balance of ₹60.31 crore and interest of ₹13.20 crore.

"Perhaps, Sari did not have any idea about the massive funds being spent on her and the villagers. Otherwise, she would have demanded her share of the funds and settled down in her village peacefully," said Pravarak Juang, secretary of Juang Samaj Sangh, Keonjhar.

The CAG observation points out that of the 64,214 households in 1,679 villages under 17 micro-project agencies in PVTG areas, there were no data about ownership of land land vis-a-vis 10,005 households (as of March 2024). Of the 54,209 households for which data existed, 40,829 (75%) had ownership over homestead or agricultural land and the remaining 13,380 (25%) did not have any ownership.

PVTGs have lagged in almost all development indicators. During 2015, their literacy rate was below 30% in four micro-project areas. In Tumba development agency, the literacy rate among women was less than 10%.

The audit agency points out that 11,493 projects with an estimated cost of ₹267.79 crore were approved by respective districts for execution by 15 micro-project agencies under MGNREGS during 2019-2024. Out of the sanctioned works, these agencies had taken up 5,223 works (45%) and incurred expenditure of ₹93.64 crore (35%) as of March 2024.

The unutilised amount of ₹174.15 crore included ₹115.02 crore towards the labour component, which could potentially have created income sources through wages for the benefit of the marginalised communities.

#### Juangs not alone

While the death of 14 Juang girls has drawn attention to the condition of the community, the situation is no better among other PVTGs.

In Andhra Pradesh village of Malkangiri district, Nanda Sisa, a young member of the Bonda community, describes how migration has become the new normal for his community youth.

"COVID-19 was a major disruption in the lives of young Bondas who aspired to pursue higher education. Now, once they cross 16 years of age or complete matriculation, Bondas begin looking for places where they can earn quick money," said Nanda.

While girls board buses to work in prawn processing plants in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, boys take up jobs such as security guards or in the apparel sector. "The impact of this regular migration is visible. At least 10 Bonda girls from Andhra have married outside the community in other districts. Traditionally, Bondas have lived within the Bonda Hills, maintaining a close-knit community," he said.

An 'Evaluation of Bonda Development Agency', conducted by the SCSTRTI, attributes the rise in migration to the lack of livelihood opportunities. "Many have not received the Record of Rights for land ownership. There has been little monitoring by the Bonda Development Agency officials and no sustained handholding support at the village level," the report noted. According to the study, 221 Bondas migrated from seven sample villages during 2019-20. Dambaru Sisa, a former MLA from the Chitradurga Assembly constituency and a member of the Bonda community, said migration has risen in recent years.

"Bondas have broken barriers in education, with some even becoming doctors and engineers. However, their numbers are minuscule. The majority of Bonda children drop out of school and migrate to other States for work," said Dambaru. Similar accounts of migration reverberate in Niyamgiri Hills, spread across Rayagada and Kalahandi districts, where Dongria Kandh, a PVTG, resides.

Umi Daniel, an expert on migration, said, "Migration is not bad. However, girls aged below 18 working in hazardous sites and unsafe environments is certainly a cause for concern. The Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979, which mandates registration of workers, is hardly implemented in the State."

In the aftermath of the Tiruvallur tragedy, Odisha's Labour Department has filed complaints with eight police stations across Keonjhar seeking a thorough probe into circumstances under which the 14 girls died and demanded action against labour agents, who mediated to take girls and boys to other States. In the police complaints, the department said it has facilitated the safe return of 58 migrant workers. Of the 24 migrant workers from Telkoi block of Keonjhar working at the seafood facility, 11 were minors. According to the FIRs lodged in the case, the minor girls had been hired in the names of adult women whose identification documents were used without their knowledge.

As Sari tries to make sense of the changed circumstances, she is unable to decide whether she will travel to Tamil Nadu for work again. For now, she is in her village. Life, as she knew, has changed but the reasons to leave home have not.

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**Homes left behind:** Parents of Champabati Juang; (right) Basang Juang pointing towards the new tin roof of her home laid with the help of ₹9,000 sent by her daughter, Phulamani. Both Champabati and Phulamani died in the gas leak incident in Tamil Nadu. BISWARANJAN ROUT





## Waqar Habib

Today, a silence hangs in Mool, a basement used for film screenings and discussions. Arnab from Camera Commune, paces by its white walls, helming the proceeds of the evening. *The Young Karl Marx* (2017), chosen to mark the birthday of the father of communism, is being screened. Once the film is over, a discussion will follow.

What led to this culture around films in the capital? Recent reports have flagged an 83% drop in the footfall of multiplexes since 2016. While management ascribes it to people skiving off to NCR cities for inexpensive tickets, what they miss is the rise in alternative modes of film-watching in the city.

Delhi's film club culture began in 1959 with the founding of the Delhi Film Society by Vijaya Mulay, Marie Seton and Muriel Wasi. Their inaugural film was *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). Since then, the film society culture of the city has seen a rise and fall. Today, consistent, if scattered, film club culture thrives in the city.

At the Delhi International Film Festival (DIFF) and International Film Festival of Delhi (IFFD) films and discussions alone are not the focus. The two festivals arrive with the complete shebang: Met Gala-esque red carpet photo points for stars, business networking

## Delhi's dream factory

As the footfall at multiplexes declines, independent clubs are creating a community-based film-watching experience in the city



sessions, masterclasses by veteran filmmakers, social-media ditz. This year, in its first edition, IFFD offered an eclectic line-up, pairing global cinema with commercial

crowd-pullers such as *Dhruvanthar 2* (2026). Film-goers also look towards the Lodhi Triviumvate: India Habitat Centre (IHC), Alliance Française de Delhi and India International Centre

**City of cinephiles** (Clockwise from left) A film being screened at the India International Centre; India Habitat Centre; a film discussion in progress. INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE, VV KRISHNAN, AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



(IIC). Aside from collaborative screenings, India Habitat Centre holds one international and one national festival that includes parallel, independent and festival-circuit hits. Alliance Française, on the other hand, lays emphasis on French language cinema, bringing one to the public every Thursday. Annually, the Francophonie Film Festival, in collaboration with various Francophone embassies, happens here. Devika AS, head, Communication, notes that Alliance also promotes independent movies which are socially relevant.

The India International Centre is home to one of the oldest film clubs of Delhi, the membership to which is subject to referral. The institution has several collaborative screenings open for the public. It hosts the IIC Experience annually, under which parallel Indian and international films by directors such as Agnes Varda, Marta Meszaros, Mira Nair and more come to Delhi.

**A proactive audience**  
For the Lodhi Triviumvate, a recent rise in footfall is a common denominator. Filmmaker Nausheen Khan, whose documentary *Land of My Dreams* (2023) was screened in IIC in 2024, described these cultural embassies as "extremely crucial" at a time when "spaces for dissent are shrinking everywhere". Recalling the screening, she speaks of a full hall followed by a long post-film discussion with an "extremely engaged" audience, adding that such conversations remain vital for non-fiction cinema dealing with contemporary political realities.

There are other cultural embassies such as Goethe-Institut (Max Mueller Bhavan), British Council, Japan Foundation and more where you can catch film screenings on and off. Delhi also has a constellation of film clubs of varying ideologies and approaches. Camera Commune, for instance, set up by Arnab and his friends three years ago, emerged out of what he described as the absence of enough "film collectives" in the city at the time. Commune's programming largely revolves around "political and non-fiction cinema dealing with labour, minority experiences and regional histories".

At World Cinema Club, founded and curated by Ekta Gulyani, screenings are a philosophical inquiry. Gulyani curates on the basis of seasons and emotional states where winter may call for "something heartwarming", while summers demand "something wild and thrilling". "Nobody leaves after the film ends", that's the single rule of World Cinema Club, Gulyani says. Abhishek Sharma, one of the core members of Films From Underground, says the club was built around the ideas of a "community experience". Alongside founder Rohit Gupta and Vasundhara Thakkar, he helped expand it into a wider cultural circuit.

Delhi's alternative film culture is also sustained by Kirti Film Club, The Big Hoom Club and Toto Circle, and semi-underground venues including NIV Art Centre and Mool. Apan Singh's Illum.in, which lists all the non-theatrical screenings across Delhi has been a major catalyst in this transformation.

## STEPOUT



## Still horizons

For Nidhi Sharma, the Himalayas are less a physical landscape than a space for memory and introspection. In *Echoes of Silence*, the artist brings together 20 landscape works inspired by her memories of the mountains, transforming forests, skies and mountain ranges into meditative spaces shaped by colour and stillness. With Uma Nair as curatorial advisor, the exhibition explores the relationship between Nature and emotional landscapes. *Echoes of Silence* will be on view from July 11 to 15, at the Convention Centre Foyer, India Habitat Centre.



## Remembered lives

Poetry becomes a space for memory, and identity in *All That's Left Behind*, the 2026 collection by Indian poet and broadcaster Aditya Tiwari. Moving through themes of queerness, displacement, love and loss, the poems turn everyday objects into markers of personal history. At the book launch, he will be in conversation with writer and politician Arish Gaudwade, discussing the ideas and experiences that shape the collection. On July 10 at 6.30pm at Kunzum GK2. Registration details are available on Simon & Schuster India's Instagram page.

## Behind closed doors

The new menu at The Bar Behind the Sandwich Shop proves it is more than a speakeasy gimmick

## Deepali Dhingra

New Delhi's The Bar Behind the Sandwich Shop (TBSTSS), has managed to remain a well-kept secret. With no signboards to guide you and no digital breadcrumbs to follow, finding it still relies on good 'ol word of mouth.

The answer resides in its name. The spot indeed, lies behind a sandwich shop in Basant Lok Market. If you find it, you will emerge in a space dimly lit with flickering candles. A bar in front, a community table in the middle and scattered seating in one corner completes the set up.

Strangely enough, says Rishi Pratim Mukherjee, co-founder, they never called TBSTSS a speakeasy. "We wanted to create a hidden, intimate bar which once discovered would foster a sense of community. Speakeasy is a name which the market has bestowed upon us," he says. What makes it stand out amidst the clutter of other cocktail bars in the city, he believes, is the sense of discovery. "The cocktail and food programme is finally the fulcrum which makes this whole experience worth it," he says.

The proof, as they say, is in the pudding, or in this case, the cocktails. The menu, designed like a bartender's personal diary with notes on cocktail equations and flavour profiles, is an invitation to experiment. The brief for the bar programme, says Rishi, was to have "cocktails that are clean,

crisp, deliciously designed; harking back to the classics with modern craftsmanship".

We begin with The Katsu, a bold concoction of chicken fat-washed scotch whiskey, sweet vermouth, kimchi jam, and hot sauce. Sipping it feels like eating a rich katsu sandwich. Next up, the tequila-based Jalisco Fizz offers a mild saltiness, though the Tequila Blonde featuring beer, cape gooseberry, and balsamic vinegar, misses the mark, feeling overly muddled. A standout is Sakaya, a balanced sake-based creation with shiso leaf, apple cider vinegar, and oolong tea. Enhanced with malic acid and olive brine, it emerges as the absolute favourite of the night. And if you are in the mood for a grown up dessert, try Old Boy, an intriguing blend of bourbon clarified with pistachio ice cream.

We pair our drinks with plump, spiced prawns wrapped in crunchy kataifi. The TBB Fried Chicken is a crowd favourite, as is the Belgian pork belly glazed with gochujang and tonkatsu. We also order a satisfyingly filling Chicken Katsu sandwich from the sandwich shop next door – yes, you can then get delivered to your table.

TBSTSS succeeds because it does not hide behind the gimmick of its entrance. While it still requires word-of-mouth to find, once you are past the curtain, the cocktails speak for themselves.

TBSTSS is at Basant Lok, Vasant Vihar. A meal for two costs ₹3,000. Call 8130664202.



## Upcycle the future

The fourth edition of Weave The Future explores how upcycling, repair, and circular design can transform the way we consume fashion

Nidhi Adhikari  
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In today's world fuelled by mass consumption, upcycling is an important skill we must possess to create a sustainable society. Bringing this vision to life are over 100 textile practitioners at the upcoming Weave The Future, a national platform initiated by the Development Commissioner for Handlooms, Ministry of Textiles, in 2025.

The fourth edition of the event, themed on upcycling, aims at exploring sustainable, circular, and craft-led approaches to everyday living. A spokesperson from Weave The Future explains how visitors will experience repair, thrift, upcycling, recycling, regenerative materials, community-led textile recovery, and circular design practices.

"The event also expands the conversation beyond garments to include footwear, accessories, production waste, and other overlooked material streams," she says. Through workshops, exhibitions, and public engagement, the team hopes to shift the perception of textile waste from something to be discarded to something that still holds value and possibility.

**Something meaningful**  
One of the event's highlights is the Repair Fest (July 12-17) which will bring together some of India's most skilled repair artisans and master darning who will undertake repairs of textile items brought in by visitors. "This is our largest edition so far and the first to occupy the entire Dilli Haat, INA," says the spokesperson, who adds that planning for the event has been underway for several months.

Re-Stitch India brings together individuals, communities, and organisations to express their solutions. Every day, textile waste is generated and forgotten. What if we stitched it back into something meaningful? The team invited interested candidates across India to create a 1 metre x 1 metre textile panel using discarded garments or reclaimed textiles. "So far, we have received approximately 35 entries. Each panel will become part of a larger installation at Weave The Future, demonstrating how materials, stories, skills, and communities can be brought together through the simple act of stitching," says the spokesperson. Workshops

**The Repair Fest will bring together master darning who will undertake repairs of textile items brought in by visitors**

include Mann ki Marammat (July 13 and 17), a collaboration with New Delhi's Rafooghar that will use fabric as a medium to explore ideas of 'rupture, repair, and resilience'; Fibre to Paper (July 15) with the Elephant Poo team, wherein participants will create tree-free paper from discarded textile fibres, among others. Installations include Seen Unseen that invites 'visitors to interact with a series of mirrors overlaid with imagery representing the growing volumes of textile waste generated now'. Infinity, a piece created from recovered textiles that highlights a material's lifecycle; and Re Button India, which spotlights a garment's hidden components such as zippers and buckles.

Silent Auction will feature garments contributed by prominent personalities, each carrying its own story and encouraging visitors to rethink clothing beyond its first life. "We hope to demonstrate that garments can continue to hold emotional, cultural, and material value long after their first use."

Weave The Future is on from July 12 to 17 at Dilli Haat, INA



## A perfect storm

A combination of natural calamity and human failure laid Wayanad low

The fragile hills of Kerala's Wayanad district turned into the theatre of yet another weather-induced disaster when a heavy downpour, on July 7, triggered what looked like a debris slide at the entrance to the under-construction twin tunnel at Kalladi in Meppadi panchayat, in the vicinity of Chooralmala, which was wrecked by massive landslides two years ago. Six workers were confirmed dead. The Kerala government has suspended construction work until the completion of a comprehensive probe into the causes and whether the work complied with the conditions set by the Expert Appraisal Committee under the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) while granting environmental clearance for the project. Ever since the great floods of 2018, Meppadi panchayat, which is over 7,000 ft above sea level, has witnessed severe climate-induced catastrophes. Landslides hit the Puthumala area in 2019, within hours of an equally lethal landslide across the hills in Kavalappara in Malappuram district. Environmentalists, therefore, made an impassioned plea against the ₹2,100 crore (approximately) 8.73-km-long twin-tube tunnel road, linking Anakampoyil in Kozhikode to Meppadi, flagging it as a recipe for disaster. It was instead fast-tracked, citing the need for accelerated mobility for the people of Wayanad, which does not have tertiary care facilities. In April this year, the Supreme Court cited the project's 'national importance' and rejected the Wayanad Prarthithi Samrakshana Samithi's plea to halt it. The group is planning to seek a review of the order.

As with all major disasters, this, too, appears to have stemmed from a heady mix of failures. Kerala Public Works Minister hurriedly pointed to the company executing the construction on behalf of the contractor, Konkani Railways, alleging that it ignored the department's June 20 deadline to remove excavation debris from the area. The company fell back on the rainfall data and the region's landslide susceptibility. Security camera visuals suggest an avalanche-like flow of debris down the slope of the hill that was being bored. Whether a mudslide in the upper reaches caused the debris to cascade down will only be known after a geomorphological probe. On the face of it, the State's disaster management machinery was not up to the job. The synoptic conditions in the area on the eve of the present disaster were eerily similar to those on the eve of the 2024 calamity. Wayanad has a fragile ecology, and any infrastructure project must involve meticulous ecological and climate-resilience planning and uncompromising execution. As it investigates the lapses, the State should review the project's social and environmental costs and ensure that climate-induced catastrophe in Wayanad is prevented, not just responded to.

## Far from over

Iran and the U.S. must address the trust deficit for their talks to progress

It took only 20 days for the U.S.-Iran memorandum of understanding (MoU), which promised to extend the ceasefire by 60 days and launch talks about outstanding issues, including Iran's nuclear programme, to start unravelling. On Tuesday night, the U.S. carried out sweeping air strikes in Iran after three tankers were attacked in the Strait of Hormuz. Iran struck American bases in Kuwait and Bahrain after which Mr. Trump declared that the ceasefire was over. While he is known for making exaggerated claims, the current crisis poses the biggest challenge to the peace process since the June 17 MoU. The crisis did not emerge overnight. From the outset, the agreement had three major sticking points – Israel's war in Lebanon; Iran's access to its frozen funds and the status of the Strait of Hormuz. Tehran sees Israel's refusal to withdraw from southern Lebanon, along with Washington's push for a parallel trilateral framework involving the U.S., Lebanon and Israel, as violations of the spirit of the MoU. And, despite talks, Iran has yet to get access to its frozen funds. Finally, Iran appears determined to assert control over the Strait. It has opened a "safe passage route" along its coast, while the U.S. is backing an alternative route along Oman's coast.

Iran fears that the U.S. is trying to strip away the leverage it established over the Strait during the war by promoting an alternative route. The U.S. does not want Iran to emerge as the sole custodian of a strategic waterway. These conflicting positions trigger skirmishes, further undermining the MoU. What Mr. Trump, who senses strategic defeat, is trying to do is to mount economic and military pressure on Tehran to change its position on the Strait. He can continue his air campaign, but his years-long maximum pressure and 40 days of bombing have done little to alter Iran's negotiating positions. If he returns to war over Hormuz, Iran's stance on its nuclear programme – still unaddressed – would only get hardened. If war resumes, it would be bad news for the whole West Asia region and the entire global economy. Mr. Trump is at a strategic dead end, and instead of digging deeper, should stick to his way-out road map – the MoU. An obstacle in the peace process is the complete absence of trust. Mr. Trump's public tirades and abuses against Iran's leadership and hyperbolic threats, which are detached from ground realities, are not helping his cause. Equally, if Iran continues targeting commercial vessels, it risks being seen as an aggressor rather than a victim. Both sides should address the trust deficit, resolve the sticking points in the MoU and begin serious talks about the outstanding issues for a final settlement.

Manipur is one of the States covered under Phase III of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls being implemented by the Election Commission of India (ECI) currently. The SIR has already drawn adverse criticism from civil society organisations and the Opposition, particularly after the recent Bihar and West Bengal elections, due to its hasty, disproportionate and summary deletion of voters from voters' lists, resulting in the disenfranchisement of large sections of politically "undesirable" communities and voters. Concerns have been expressed by informed citizens about the lack of transparency and often blatant bias of the State and the ruling party in relation to the SIR, and its relationship with the planned delimitation, the 2029 elections and perhaps even an oddly timed Census. These concerns apply to Manipur as well. In addition, there are features of the situation in Manipur that are little known outside – and even within – the State, making the implementation of the SIR in Manipur even more egregious.

### Fractured social fabric

First, Manipur has been in the throes of an intense ethnic conflict involving the majority Meiteis (54% of the population, inhabiting the dense Imphal Valley), the Kuki-Zo peoples (15%, inhabiting the surrounding hills) and, more recently, the Manipuri Nagas (26%, mainly in the northern part of Manipur). It has resulted in over 260 deaths in pogroms, attacks, and retaliatory violence; displaced some 60,000 people within and outside Manipur; led to the burning of hundreds of villages and places of worship; and witnessed unimaginable atrocities, including beatings, dismemberment, and rapes as forms of collective punishment, disproportionately inflicted on the Kuki-Zo.

It has led to a demand by the Kuki-Zo for a 'Separate Administration' for themselves – and an equally stout opposition by the Meiteis to it – while many Manipuri Nagas led by the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah), or NSCN-IM, remain committed to their decades old demand for integration of Nagas-inhabited areas in a sovereign 'Nagaland'. Many are backed by political, militant and proscribed insurgent groups of diverse persuasions.

Three years after the start of the conflict, not a single case of violence has been brought to book through the courts. An Inquiry Commission



Gautam Mukhopadhyaya

Former Ambassador of India to Myanmar, Afghanistan and Syria, and engaged in issues facing the northeast of India

Manipur's Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls risks deepening exclusion amid ethnic conflict, displacement, and identity challenges

formed by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has yet to present its report. Thousands of internally displaced persons languish in camps with little relief. Ethnic divisions have worsened and spread. Long-standing Naga-Kuki hostilities have been added to the three-year-old Meitei-Kuki conflict marked by the burning of villages (mostly Kuki), ambushes, and recently in May, the killing of three Thadou-Kuki pastors, and, in retaliation, tit-for-tat hostage-taking and the horrific killing of six Nagas in Kuki custody that has in turn set off a full economic blockade of Kangpokpi district. In response, State and central security forces have appeared passive, paralysed and at times, biased.

The conduct of the State government has been widely viewed as partisan, but the role of the Centre and even courts cannot be said to be above board. Conducting the SIR under these conditions, under a pretence of normalcy, is inexplicable.

### Narratives driving electoral exclusion

Second, unlike the rest of the country, where the SIR is being driven by the central government through the ECI with the partisan support of the ruling party, in Manipur the demand to "cleanse" the State of alleged "illegal migrants" – a code word for Kukis – is in line with perceptions of politically radicalised Meiteis and Manipuri Nagas, who together constitute about 80% of the population. These allegations have no basis in Census figures for over a century, and are based on recent distortions of history, fake narratives and loud propaganda that feed directly into the SIR exercise. They create a very negative environment for a fair SIR, particularly in mixed areas, that is itself, *ipso facto*, biased against certain communities.

Third, there are several features peculiar to the Kukis themselves that lend themselves to their victimisation by the SIR. The first reason is that close to 50,000 Kuki-Zo remain displaced and scattered in Manipur and outside. There does not seem to be any provision in place for their fair enumeration.

The second reason is that together with their displacement, many are known to have lost many of their identity, residence, election, education and other documents that could have helped establish their voter credentials. There are visual records of Kuki-Zo educational certificates, Aadhaar cards, and driving licences in Imphal being destroyed after the violence of May 2023.

The third reason is that customary naming systems – where names are derived from the last syllable of complex parental names, nicknames often substitute formal names, and names are converted from tribal names to English orthography – create vast scope "logical discrepancies", making people far more vulnerable to exclusion than in States such as West Bengal. Possibly, more than 90% of Kuki-Zo people are unlikely to be able to produce a single, consistent spelling of their own names, let alone maintain consistency across generations.

The fourth reason is that by some historical anomaly, Manipuri tribals, both Kuki-Zo and Naga, do not enjoy Sixth Schedule status, although they enjoy some measure of autonomy under Article 371C and very weak Autonomous Councils.

This served them well during periodic bouts of violence and displacement, most recently during the Naga-Kuki violence of the 1990s, which again disproportionately affected the Kukis. Village chiefs and local authorities were then able to certify the identities of villagers under their jurisdiction. Such arrangements are unlikely to be recognised in the present exercise and prevailing atmosphere.

Finally, the Kuki-Zo leadership appears, for some reason, unaware of the nature, motivations, and implications of the SIR exercise. They seem to believe, perhaps naively, that as Indian citizens who have lived here all their lives and in possession of necessary documents, including voter ID cards, they have nothing to fear, and that opposing the exercise would amount to an admission of guilt. The dangers of the SIR now appear to be dawning on them, with some Kuki-Zo civil society organisations issuing statements highlighting its shortcomings, although opposition has yet to take a political form.

### Safeguarding belonging

A nation-wide SIR is now a *fait accompli* following the ruling by the Supreme Court of India in its favour. However, the process can still be made fairer and more sensitive to the risks of exclusion. Unless measures are adopted to limit its potential harm, by 2029 we may see a pathway to statelessness not only for the Kuki-Zo but also for other tribal communities in the Northeast, with their plight obscured amid the broader exclusion and disenfranchisement of Muslims labelled as "illegal migrants".

# Building a durable India-Australia partnership



Shruti Pandalai

Inaugural India Chair at The Lowy Institute, Sydney, Australia

Indian Coast Guard and adopts an India-Australia Maritime Security Collaboration Roadmap to address shared threat perceptions. These are practical mechanisms that deepen interoperability without altering the basic character of the relationship: India remains a trusted security partner, not an ally. On energy security, Australian uranium has been legally available to India since the bilateral 2014 civil nuclear agreement, but it never actually moved commercially, largely because India's own nuclear liability law made foreign suppliers nervous about exposure.

That changed with the SHANTI Act last December, which reformed that liability regime. The agreement on uranium has operationalised a deal lying dormant for a decade. The summit also launched the Australia-India Partnership on Cyber, Critical Technologies and Supply Chains (PACTS), while reaffirming the complementarity to the Australia-Canada-India Technology and Innovation Partnership as focusing on building resilient technology partnerships through flexible multilateral arrangements. These are examples of alignment beginning to take institutional form.

### There are focus areas, there are problems

But for alignment to be durable, convergence must translate into operational overlap. This is most consequential in the Indian Ocean, a region where Australian and Indian interests overlap most naturally. Both are Indian Ocean states with real stakes in the region's sea lanes. India's Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region has emerged as a key hub for maritime domain awareness, even as Australia pays closer attention to its western seaboard and Indian Ocean approaches. The two navies have converged on similar risk assessments of shadow fleets, threats to undersea cables and coercive activity below the threshold of conflict.

The new Coast Guard MoU and Maritime Security Collaboration Roadmap narrow the gap between strategic intent and operational cooperation. Yet, Australia's most consequential force-structure decisions, from AUKUS (trilateral security partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the U.S.) to its broader defence posture, remain oriented towards the Western Pacific, while India's strategic planners continue to divide attention between continental threats and maritime challenges. The shared ground is real; it is simply narrower than the political convergence sometimes suggests.

Economically, the pattern is similar. Trade has

grown sharply since the Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement came into force, but industry voices behind closed doors argue that growth sits disproportionately with large firms. Smaller exporters on both sides remain unaware of how to use it. Track 1.5 dialogues have flagged this as an operationalisation gap.

The knowledge deficit is more obvious when one looks at Australian public consciousness on India. This year's Lowy Poll found only 5% of Australians expect India to be the world's most important power a decade from now, against 54% for China, even as trust in India remains comparatively high. Convergence at the top has not yet trickled down into wider awareness of India's strategic heft.

### The diaspora opportunity

The diaspora remains the biggest opportunity to change this, but with a caveat. Indian-origin Australians are now the country's largest immigrant-born community, ahead of the U.K.-born population for the first time. Political leadership has celebrated the diaspora's contribution, and a Centre for Australia-India Relations study finds that Australians broadly recognise it as skilled migrants, students and workers. But recognising the diaspora as a cultural asset, or an electoral constituency, is not alignment. Alignment would require translating that diaspora leverage into a public case for why India matters economically to the average Australian. It would require institutionalising the diaspora's comparative advantage in helping Australia's Small and Medium-sized Enterprises navigate Indian regulatory and business culture, and vice versa, rather than leaving that work to individual champions. It would also mean untangling the mobility of Indian professionals from Australia's increasingly fraught migration politics.

Mr. Modi's visit has provided fresh ballast for these conversations about the future of the India-Australia partnership. His message on Australian Pension funds investing in India particularly resonated in the room when he said India would not just treat them as capital but as a marker of strategic trust imposed by Australian families in India. These statements matter because they build the broader public consciousness of India as a trusted partner for the future. Convergence got India and Australia to the table; it is these steps that institutionalise engagement incrementally that build alignment that endures.

Beyond warm optics and deepening convergence, India-Australia ties face the challenge of converting trust into alignment

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Trump's truce flips

It is deplorable that the much-hyped ceasefire agreement between Iran and the U.S. is already fizzling out, signalling prolonged military hostilities in the war-ravaged region. It is

equally baffling that the United Nations has remained a silent spectator to the cascading effects of the conflict in West Asia. This only goes to show that peace accords brokered by regional non-state actors are unlikely to foster a

durable ceasefire. **G. Ramasubramanyam,** Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh

### Students' personal data

The reported sale of CUET and NEET candidates' databases by websites is a serious violation of

students' privacy and a blatant breach of the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act. Personal information collected for examinations must never be commercialised without explicit consent. This illegal trade exposes students to

spam, fraud, identity theft, and exploitation by coaching institutes and admission agents. The authorities must investigate these websites and impose stringent penalties. The National Testing Agency and the Government must

strengthen data security measures to restore confidence in the examination system. **Bhushan Manchanda,** New Delhi

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

# Should India restart dialogue with Pakistan?



**Mani Shankar Aiyar**

Former Member of Parliament



**Tara Kartha**

Former Director at the National Security Council Secretariat

## PARLEY

India and Pakistan have not engaged in dialogue since 2016 when talks broke down after the terror attacks at Pathankot and subsequently at Uri. The last 12 years have witnessed major attacks at Pahalgam (2025) and Pulwama (2019) and that apart, there were several smaller terror attacks. Earlier this month, a group of eminent citizens led by Gandhian O.P. Shah drafted a joint appeal to the leaders of India and Pakistan urging them to engage in dialogue. This has led to a public debate on whether India should restart dialogue with Pakistan. Mani Shankar Aiyar, who was a signatory to the letter, and Tara Kartha discuss the question in a conversation moderated by Kallol Bhattacharjee. Edited excerpts:

**Should India and Pakistan restart dialogue at this moment, especially since they haven't spoken to each other at the government level for a decade now?**

**Mani Shankar Aiyar:** It is precisely for that very reason, because we haven't spoken to each other for the best part of the last 12 years, that it is absolutely necessary that we resume the dialogue as soon as possible. And as regards the time, my own view is that any time is as good as any other time. And all times when we don't talk are bad for both of us. So I would urge the governments to talk to each other. And until they do, I think people of goodwill on either side of our border should be in touch with each other. I speak as somebody with nearly 40 years of experience of Pakistan and Pakistanis. I have been through several different Pakistani regimes, and it does not seem to me that it matters who is in power in Pakistan. When we engage with them, we engage with Pakistan, and not with a particular individual.

**Tara Kartha:** Ideally both countries should talk to each other because they are nuclear powers. These are dangerous times, especially since there was an active phase of hostility last year. But my problem is that the present leadership is basically Field Marshal Asim Munir. Let us forget about Shehbaz Sharif [the Prime Minister of Pakistan], for as much as I regard him, I'm sure he is a fine and good politician in his own right, Mr. Munir is in power and he's even more powerful than General Pervez Musharraf was before him. He holds absolute power; him and a couple of core commanders, such as his ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) chief. It is very important to understand that the rise of Field Marshal Munir began in a very systematic fashion once they carried out the terror strike in Pahalgam. I won't say after Operation Sindoor;



**Tense ties:** Army soldiers patrol along the Line of Control between Pakistan and India in the Uri Sector, Jammu and Kashmir in January. IMRAN NISSAR

I'll say after the Pahalgam attack.

I agree with Mr. Aiyar that it doesn't matter who you talk to, provided that person is interested in peace. But the question is, what stake does Field Marshal Munir have in peace? In that case, he'll have to step down for a civilian prime minister. The moment things get peaceful, they'll tell the Pakistan military to go back to the barracks and that the civilians will take over. So why should he [be interested in peace]? It is a systemic issue. I'm not saying the army can never be talked to. This particular man will not. He is very dangerous.

**Is it the correct time to go ahead with the dialogue with Pakistan?**

**MSA:** If we don't go ahead, we'll be stuck in the rut in which we are today. There was a mention of one man, Asim Munir, who's been in power for approximately one year. But we haven't talked to Pakistan for 12 years. So I don't see how Asim Munir being there is the biggest obstacle. We could have talked to Nawaz Sharif. We could have talked to Imran Khan. We could have talked to several others.

And if you look at the past, we have had extremely fruitful talks with Pakistani generals but rarely with Pakistani civilians. Let me first



We are currently talking to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu who has been indicted by the ICC for war crimes. If we can talk to every dictator around the world, what's the problem in talking to the people next door who have the misfortune of being led by an army commander?

**MANI SHANKAR AIYAR**

run through the Pakistani army men with whom we have had successful interlocations. Ayub Khan was the one who broke the deadlock on the Indus Waters Treaty. It was Zia-ul-Haq who broke the deadlock on Siachen. It was Musharraf, who broke the deadlock on what till then was being projected as the single biggest obstacle in India-Pakistan relations, namely the Kashmir question; they arrived at a four-point solution. However, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto signed on the dotted line in Simla and then turned his back on it.

This is a false argument – that just because the Pakistani army is in power we can't talk to them. We are currently talking to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu who has been indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for war crimes. If we can talk to every dictator around the world, including army dictators, what's the problem in talking to the people next door who have the misfortune of being led by an army commander?

**So, the argument is that if the Government of India is in dialogue with several military dictators, then why should it not consider talking to Pakistan led by a military general?**

**TK:** As someone who has been in the security establishment, my problem is how do I deal with terrorism? If a democratically elected government opens the door for dialogue and then gets hit by a terror attack – then the question is how to deal with terror attacks that disrupt dialogue? As a democratically elected government, can you justify dialogue? This is a point that was asked by even Nawaz Sharif who said that a terror attack takes place each time dialogue is attempted.

However, I will agree that a few military generals have shown remarkable good sense. In the recent past, when a BrahMos missile was accidentally fired at Pakistan, the Pakistan army handled it well. While the civilians protested, the Pakistan army took it in their stride and kept quiet. At the moment I am concerned with the timing of this proposal as Mr. Munir is in power. The other issue is that Pakistan is in chaos as

there are daily incidents that are being reported in various parts of the country. It's in chaos. So right now he wants to talk. He may have every incentive to talk. Why should I talk? If there is even one indication from Pakistan that they are going to close down terrorist camps, I'm sure tomorrow the government will be ready to talk.

But if at all we are to go forward, I would like to see, for example, a talk on climate change. We are both countries that are equally in bad shape when it comes to climate vulnerabilities. I would like a talk on air pollution, as during a particular season of the year, both sides start burning crop residues triggering an environmental crisis. That kind of a functional dialogue, which does not involve any territorial issue, no vested or political interests is purely functional and people-centric.

I find the kind of wishful thinking which one sees in the letter as a little idealistic. It's a bit over the top.

**Does the current Indian government have the political bandwidth to talk to the Pakistani establishment?**

**MSA:** Talking to them doesn't mean bending our knees before them. If you have the courage to undertake surgical strikes against them, why don't you have the courage to sit across a table and talk to them? That's my simple point. And if you won't do so, as I'm talking to the Government of India, then we will. We've got Zoom. But I am going to talk to my numerous friends in Pakistan. The number of my friends in Pakistan is larger than the number of enemies I have in India. And that's a rather large number.

**TK:** Before Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we had someone like Atal Bihari Vajpayee who put his career on the line and went to Lahore. Prime Minister Modi tried in 2015 and went to meet Nawaz Sharif and extended an olive branch. But all these have a political cost.

The question is what will we ask of them. If we have a dialogue tomorrow, we will ask them to stop exporting terrorism and they, in turn, will accuse us of doing things in Balochistan etc. whereas the Baloch people have been harassed since 1947. The question is what can India do in terms of the protests happening in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). We should talk to Pakistan if General Munir shows some evidence that he is cutting down on terrorism.



To listen to the full interview  
Scan the code or go to the link  
[www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com)

## NOTEBOOK

## How a city's working class is driven to the margins and made invisible

The workers who collect garbage and keep our cities clean, and the workers who commute via cycles deserve recognition and respect

**Suruchi Kumari**

Before a story is to take shape through conversations with a part of the city's population, which the city itself only passively interacts with, it is discussed in a Monday pitch meeting where reporters and editors sit. Once approved, a familiar question follows – “Where will we find these people?”

I encountered this question before working on two separate stories on informal waste workers, and workers who commute by cycle. In both cases, the question did not hold for long. What first sounded like an inquiry about access, over the course of the reporting, began to feel like an assumption that these people are difficult to locate, almost external to the city.

For ‘finding’ people who cycle to work in Delhi, I reached out to Professor Rahul Goel from IIT Delhi, whose work over the years has focused on commuting patterns and mobility. When I asked him, “Where will I find them?”, he directed me to the city's busiest intersections, where roads from the peripheries meet industrial areas and affluent localities, where many of them work as daily wage labourers, security guards, and helpers.

I met Sandeep at one of those busy intersections on a humid April evening, when he was returning home from his sales job. Aged 23, he had been working for eight years. The break from school to contribute to his household became permanent after COVID-19 hit. Before getting back on his bicycle to ride 8 kilometres more, he said, “*Humlog dikhte nahi hain* (We are invisible).” He said that a cycling network sounds like a fantasy in a city that still doesn't have footpaths everywhere. The draft Master Plan of Delhi 2041 notes that this “unequal distribution of roads” makes it non-conducive for cycling.

By the time I filed the story, curiosity had begun to feel like ignorance. I started seeing cyclists everywhere – at every intersection, at every signal. They kept to the kerb, and when traffic swelled, even that space was taken over as motorists pushed

forward to gain ground. A car owner I spoke to said, “They slow the traffic down, such a nuisance.” Cyclists are registered only when their presence creates friction.

Similarly, a waste picker becomes visible only when their access to gated colonies is debated. Most residents encounter them every day. They collect garbage from homes and do the work that reduces the burden on municipal systems without formal recognition or integration into the waste economy. They continue to speak of restricted access, allegations of theft, and the absence of dedicated workspaces.

To write about the workforce that sorts much of the city's waste in March, I first travelled to a *jhuggi* cluster in Bhalswa, in northwest Delhi, a few kilometres from the towering landfill. Days later, while walking to a Metro station in south Delhi, I noticed a large sack of waste stacked beside a road, similar to the one I had seen in Bhalswa. It led me to a corner of my own neighbourhood that I realised I had never seen before. There, too, people were sorting waste sharing similar stories of migration and precarious work. By the time I finished the story, I had met waste workers across the city. Sameer Ali, whom I had never seen before January, moved in the same lanes around 9 pm with his bicycle cart carrying a stack of cardboard. People that our stories set out to look for, unlike responses from government authorities, are not hard to find. They are everywhere, for all to see.

It is tempting to think invisibility is simply a failure to notice. But invisibility is rarely accidental. When a city invests heavily in roads for cars while cycling infrastructure remains largely absent, cyclists do not disappear. A worker rehabilitated to the margins of Delhi, 40-50 kilometres away from the place where she works, is moved away from the corridors of visibility so that her problems with transport or healthcare become easier to overlook.

These workers state that recognition in government policies would give them a life of dignity and respect.

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## PICTURE OF THE WEEK

### Pilgrims' progress



**Stormy route:** The first batch of pilgrims on the annual Amarnath Yatra cross mountain trails amid rainfall during their journey to the Amarnath cave on the Baltal route, northeast of Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir on July 3. The yatra was almost cancelled due to unpredictable mountain weather, but it resumed again. THE HINDU

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 10, 1976

### Eminent scientists' club suggested

New Delhi, July 9: A proposal to establish a club of eminent scientists from the non-aligned developing countries for making futuristic studies of the development pattern of the Third World is being mooted by some top scientists here.

According to informed sources, the idea is to set up an institution like the “Club of Rome” where eminent scientists from the developing non-aligned countries could continuously

## The Hindu

study problems concerning the Third World and projections of growth in various fields such as economic development, population, agriculture and technology.

There is a feeling among scientists in developing countries that projections made by prestigious groups like the “Club of Rome” often tend to ignore realities in the developing countries as they, being supported by the developed countries, look at the problems of developing countries from the perspectives of the developed countries. Some of the projections made by the “Club of Rome” set up with financial support from the developed countries on the pattern of growth and development in the world, are being hotly contested by scientists of the Third World.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 10, 1926

### The mission of poets

Calcutta, July 9: “The Mission of Poets” was the subject of an interesting lecture, delivered by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, to-day, at the instance of the Poetry Society. Mrs. Naidu delivered an inspiring address in the course of which she said she would like to destroy all printing presses that printed poetry and to leave it at the mercy of all learned professors to teach the young how to paraphrase, analyse, interpret, and scan poetry. A poet knows that he is not more than a mirror of these intimate secrets of the human heart of which the heart itself is so often unaware.

THE  HINDU

**428** in metric tonnes. The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel recovered more than 428 metric tonnes of coal during a five-day special operation to check the pilferage and theft of the fossil fuel from mines in Jharkhand and West Bengal, officials said on Thursday. PTI

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FULL CONTEXT

Marathi and the long politics behind the language question

The Hindi language controversy in Maharashtra is rooted in a long history of Marathi linguistic assertion, from Shivaji's reforms to the Samyukta Maharashtra movement; it revives debates on mother-tongue education, linguistic identity and federalism

Prathmesh Kher

In April and June of 2025, the government of Maharashtra, led by the Mahayuti coalition, issued two resolutions mandating Hindi as the compulsory third language for students from Class 1 onwards in Marathi- and English-medium State board schools, citing alignment with the National Education Policy of 2020. The announcement was, by any administrative measure, modest in scope, though its political consequences were anything but.

Within weeks, the streets of Mumbai and Pune were filled with protesters. Two figures who had not shared a platform in years, Uddhav Thackeray of Shiv Sena (UBT) and Raj Thackeray of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena, found themselves, improbably, on the same side. By the end of June, the government had withdrawn the orders. The grammar of this linguistic confrontation is centuries old.

I. The first language war

By the early 17th century, Persian was the language of power across the Deccan. The Mughal court, the Adil Shahi sultans of Bijapur, and the Nizam Shahi of Ahmednagar all conducted their affairs in Persian. Marathi-speaking people were governed, taxed, and adjudicated in a language foreign to them.

Shivaji did not accept this. In 1630, approximately 86 per cent of the vocabulary in Marathi administrative documents was Persian. By 1677, it had fallen to 37 per cent. The instrument of this transformation was the *Rajyavyavaharakosha*, the *Thesaurus of State Usage*, commissioned and completed in that same year. Every Persian and Arabic administrative term was given a Marathi or Sanskrit equivalent. Forts received Sanskrit names: Sindhudurg, Suvarnadrurg, Prachandgarh, Pratapgargh, etc. The royal seal was inscribed in Sanskrit.

Every subsequent episode of Marathi linguistic resistance is a repetition of this founding act.

II. The colonial period

Jyotirao Phule's deposition to the Hunter Commission on Education in 1882 is among the most important documents in the history of Indian educational policy. Phule argues that colonial educational expenditure overwhelmingly benefits the upper-caste elite, using revenue extracted from Shudra labour to subsidise the very class that oppresses them. He demands compulsory primary education for all, teachers drawn from the cultivating classes, and instruction in Modi and Balbodhi, the two Marathi scripts. His writing in the spoken tongue of working people was itself the argument made visible: this language is adequate for the highest moral and political purposes.

The founding of *Kesari* (Marathi) and *Mahratta* (English) in January 1881 by Chiplunkar, Agarkar, and Tilak transformed Marathi into an instrument of mass political mobilisation: Marathi for the people, English for the world.

Tilak's Home Rule speech at Ahmednagar on June 1, 1916, put the question of vernacular education in his characteristic direct manner.

"Is the question whether education should be given through vernaculars such as a big one? Our voice is nowhere. Do the English educate their people through the



In one voice: Shiv Sena (UBT) workers protesting over the inclusion of Hindi in the school curriculum on June 29, 2025; by the end of June, the government had withdrawn the orders. PTI

French language? Do Germans do it through the English language? Because we have no authority. You have not got the authority."

Yet, Tilak was also the first Congress leader to advocate Hindi in Devanagari as India's national language at the Nagari Pracharini Sabha in Banaras in December 1905.

III. The paradox of purity and pluralism

Vinayak Savarkar's *Bhāshā Shuddhikaran*, first published in 1926, was political surgery: a comprehensive project to replace Arabic and Persian borrowings in Marathi with Sanskrit-rooted coinages. The results are now embedded in daily speech across India. Savarkar coined or revived *doordarshan* (television), *akashvani* (radio), *sansad* (parliament), and *hutatma* (martyr, one who has sacrificed their soul). *Doordarshan* became India's national television network. *Sansad* is in the Constitution. *Hutatma* names the traffic circle in central Mumbai where the martyrs of the Samyukta Maharashtra movement are commemorated. Savarkar's linguistic project is present in the names of the country's own institutions.

And yet it was also Savarkar who telegraphed the Constituent Assembly in August 1949 with the request: "I beseech the Constituent Assembly to adopt Bharat as the name of our nation, Hindi as the national language, and Nagari as the national script." He saw a purified, Sanskrit-rooted Hindi as the proper national language of a Hindu civilisation in the throes of revival. He was a fierce champion of Marathi within Maharashtra but an advocate for Hindi outside it. Savarkar never resolved this contradiction; perhaps he did not see it as such.

On the day Hindi was formally adopted as the official language of the Union, the Maharashtra Congress leader Shankarrao Deo spoke not against Hindi but for a different conception of India entirely:

"It is not uniformity but unity in diversity. It is *Vividhata* (diversity) that India stands for. That is our richness; that is the contribution that India can make to the world-culture and world progress... I admit India is a nation and I am an Indian, but if you will ask me what is your language, Sir, you will excuse me if I say 'My language is Marathi'... If you mean by national language one language for the whole country, then I am against it."

And on Marathi's sufficiency: "I do not want to belittle the culture or the richness of Hindi, but as far as culture goes, I can

receive it from my own language, Marathi and Sanskrit, the grandmother of all languages. They are rich enough to do that."

B.R. Ambedkar's position in the same debate was, characteristically, more layered. As Chairman of the Drafting Committee, he ultimately presided over the adoption of Hindi as the official language, a constitutional outcome he accepted as the will of the majority. But he warned, on September 14, 1949, that Hindi speakers, while a significant group, remained "a minority of the population," and that privileging one language risked fracturing the federal spirit. His earlier pamphlet *Maharashtra as a Linguistic Province* (1948), submitted to the Dar Commission, had already argued formally for a unified Marathi-speaking State - the position eventually vindicated by the creation of Maharashtra in 1960. And his *Thoughts on Linguistic States* (1955), written in the last year of his life, articulates with characteristic rigour his conviction that the stability of Indian democracy depends on the recognition of linguistic identity at the level of the state: "One State, one language" is a universal democratic principle, not a nationalist claim.

Ambedkar's great argument in the Assembly, for mother-tongue primary education as a precondition of democratic participation, is perhaps his most durable contribution to the language question. Speaking on September 2, 1949, he argued that a child educated in a language foreign to their home is disadvantaged from the start in the race for knowledge and civic life. For communities already disadvantaged by centuries of caste exclusion, that additional burden is not merely unfair. It is politically disabling.

IV. Blood at flora fountain

The constitutional settlement did not resolve Maharashtra's boundaries. On January 15, 1956, Nehru declared Bombay a Union Territory. The streets filled immediately.

The Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti, formed on 6 February 1956 with Prabodhankar Thackeray, poet and father of Bal Thackeray, among its key members, organised a sustained campaign of strikes and mass demonstrations. Morarji Desai, Chief Minister of Bombay State, ordered police to fire. On November 21, 1955, police opened fire on demonstrators at Flora Fountain, killing fifteen. In the months that followed, as Morarji Desai continued ordering police action, the death toll climbed. It reached 106 before the movement was over. The square was later renamed Hutatma Chowk, using a

word coined by Savarkar.

Maharashtra was formed on May 1, 1960. The memory of those 106 is not ceremonial. It connects every subsequent confrontation over the language to the knowledge that recognition required blood, and that the State did not hesitate.

Bal Thackeray, son of Prabodhankar, launched *Marmik* in 1960 and the Shiv Sena on June 19, 1966, to protect the cultural and economic standing of Marathi workers in a city filled with migrants. The Sena began by targeting South Indians, then pivoted as the demographics of migration shifted northward.

By the 1990s, the name of Bombay itself became a political question. The city's name derived from the Portuguese *Bom Bahia* (Good Bay), overlaid on the older name Mumbai, which itself derived from *Mumba Aai*, the name of the tutelary goddess Mumbadevi whose temple has stood on the site since before the Portuguese arrived. The Shiv Sena campaign to restore the name Mumbai, the name by which the city's original Koli fishing community and most Marathi speakers had always known it, succeeded in 1995 when the Sena-BJP government made the change official. The renaming was simultaneously a de-anglicisation and a re-Marathisation: the city was being given back, in name, to the community that believed it most deeply belonged to them.

V. Indians first, Indians last

The 2025 government orders were resisted not out of hostility to Hindi but because state power was being used to privilege one language with material consequences for children. Children are required from age six to study a language their family does not speak, at additional expense, conferring benefit primarily on those seeking employment in the Hindi belt. Ambedkar said it in 1949: Education in a foreign language is not a gift. It is a burden. The coalition that formed, Uddhav and Raj Thackeray on the same platform, joined by literary organisations and citizens across party lines, reflects not party politics but civilisational memory.

Marathi is not threatened by other languages in the abstract. It is threatened by specific institutional arrangements that advantage one language over another in daily life. And Marathi itself has never been pure: its vocabulary retains Persian-derived words that centuries of use have made its own; its great literary tradition was radically inclusive. What it asks, what every living language asks, is not immunity from change but reciprocity: time to absorb change on its own terms rather than by institutional imposition.

B.R. Ambedkar, who had the foresight to see where competitive loyalties would lead, expressed his view of these fissiparous tendencies that would likely plague the future of India's body politic in his 1949 Constituent Assembly speech.

"We are all Indians. I do not like what some people say, that we are Indians first and Hindus afterwards or Muslim afterwards. I am not satisfied with that. I frankly say that I am not satisfied with that. I do not want our loyalty as Indians should in the slightest way affected by any competitive loyalty whether that loyalty arises out of our religion, out of our culture or out of our language. I want all people to be Indian first, Indians last and nothing else but Indians."



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

"What's the matter with you today? You look worried."

"Everyone in the company is worried. Atul is coming tomorrow. And everyone knows that he is the boss' hatchet man." "Hatchet man?"

"Do you know what a hatchet is?" "Of course I do. It's an axe. So is a 'hatchet man' someone who goes around killing people with an axe?"

"That was the original meaning. I believe. A 'hatchet man' was a hired assassin."

"What does the word mean now?"

"Nowadays the term is usually used to refer to someone who does all the dirty work for his boss. One of the meanings of 'hatchet man' is someone who is hired by a company to bring about changes which the employees may not like."

"Like getting rid of people?"

"Yes, downsizing is one of the things that a hatchet man does."

"Do you mean to say that all big companies have a hatchet man on their payroll?"

"That's right. Let me tell you, being a hatchet man is not an easy job."

"I don't want to be a hatchet man. Tell me, why do you bring back those silly paintings from the office every weekend? Why don't you just leave them there?"

"...we have been told never to leave anything in our office over the weekend. I understand there are several people who have sticky fingers."

"Sticky fingers? Then why don't you get them to wash their hands?"

"Ha! Ha! That's a good one. When you say that someone has sticky fingers, it implies he/she steals things. It's an expression used in informal contexts."

"I see. There is a rumour going around that Govinda has sticky fingers."

"Whenever Sunder visits our place several things go missing. There is no doubt about it. He has sticky fingers."

"My mother got rid of our maid because she had sticky fingers."

"Oh, by the way, there is an article about your favourite actor in today's newspaper. Have you read it?"

"No, what does it say?"

"According to the writer, your hero doesn't have horse sense."

"Do you mean to say that he doesn't know anything about horse racing?"

"No, no! When you say that someone has no horse sense, it implies that he has no common sense."

"Horse sense means common sense, eh? Our school Principal is not a great scholar, but he has enough horse sense to tackle everyday problems."

"Ramesh is of the opinion that women in general don't have horse sense."

"If Sujatha comes to know about this she will tear him to pieces. Do you know that Sujatha's father has bought Mr. Sinha's old car?"

"Good grief! Why has he bought that dreadful thing! He's really scraped the bottom of the barrel to get that old car."

"...scraped the bottom of the barrel! I can probably guess the meaning of the expression. Usually when you scrape the bottom of the barrel, you get a lot of things that you don't need."

"...excellent. It means that he/she is choosing from the worst."

"He is choosing from what is left over."

"Exactly! When Sujatha asked Rakesh whether he would be interested in going to the concert with her, she knew she was scraping the bottom of the barrel."

"When the company hired you, I knew they were scraping the bottom of the barrel. Ha! Ha!"

Published in The Hindu on March 27, 2001

Word of the day

Divagate:

lose clarity or turn aside, especially from the main subject of attention or course of argument in writing, thinking, or speaking

Synonyms: deviate, diverge, differ, drift

Usage: She began to divagate during the meeting.

Pronunciation: newsth.live/divagate

International Phonetic Alphabet:

/davagett/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to letters@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Text & Context'

THE DAILY QUIZ

Christopher Nolan's *The Odyssey* officially made its premiere this week, with critics giving it rave reviews. A quiz on ancient Greek literature

Joan Sony Cherian

QUESTION 1

An easy one. A translation of the *Odyssey* by this scholar has been subject to controversy ever since Mr. Nolan mentioned it in an interview. Name the scholar.

QUESTION 2

Ancient Greek plays were categorised into two forms: comedies and tragedies. Aristotle considered this the important element of a play. Name it.

QUESTION 3

This Greek tragic character gouges his eyes out after learning a terrible truth. Name

the character, the play, and the tragedian who wrote the play. The name of the character is also associated with a famous psychoanalytical theory.

QUESTION 4

The *Odyssey* is an epic poem written by Homer, considered to be a foundational work of classical literature. However, this ancient Greek philosopher was of the opinion that poetry and theatre were morally corrupt, and that poets should be banished. Name him.

QUESTION 5

The *Iliad* is also an epic poem by Homer. What is its famous opening line?



Visual Question:

This rap artist stars in Nolan's *Odyssey*. Name him and the role he plays in the film. AP

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. Name the four distinct guarantees contained in Section 1 of the Fourteenth Amendment. Ans: Citizenship Clause, Privileges or Immunities Clause, Due Process Clause, and Equal Protection Clause

2. The Citizenship Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment overturned which infamous 1857 U.S. Supreme Court judgment? Ans: The Dred Scott v. Sandford decision

3. Which phrase in the opening sentence of Section 1 begins the Citizenship Clause? Ans: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof..."

4. Under Section 3, what vote of Congress is required to remove the disqualification from office? Ans: A two-thirds vote of each House of Congress

5. Section 3 of the Fourteenth Amendment originally targeted former officeholders who had supported which conflict? Ans: The American Civil War, specifically those who joined the Confederacy after swearing to support the U.S. Constitution

Visual: Identify this U.S. Supreme Court Justice who, as a lawyer, served as chief counsel for the plaintiffs in the landmark Brown v. Board of Education (1954) case. Ans: U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall  
Early Birds: Tamal Biswas | Sunil Madhavan | Suchit Narottam | Sitaram Saharay | Pankaj Gharde

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in



## From Page One

## India, Australia move to deepen cooperation

Under the provisions of the energy security framework, India and Australia vowed to strengthen energy security by maintaining a stable, secure and reliable supply of coal, diesel, other liquid fuels and natural gas.

The two countries will implement an India-Australia Maritime Security Collaboration Road Map to strengthen coordination across the Indian Ocean and the wider Indo-Pacific.

Both sides committed to encouraging greater integration between their defence industries, building resilient supply chains and expanding collaboration in defence innovation, advanced science and technology.

The leaders noted that the new declaration builds upon the India-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation signed in 2009 and complements existing institutional mechanisms, including the Foreign Ministers' Framework Dialogue, the 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Dialogue, and the Defence Ministers' Dialogue. They also reiterated support for regional institutions, including the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), ASEAN-led regional architecture and the Pacific Islands Forum, describing them as key platforms for addressing regional challenges. (With inputs from PTI)

## Modi hails Australia's social media curbs

In conversations and public remarks, officials at the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) have said that India is exploring a "graded" set of restrictions that would allow some social media access while blocking some categories of content depending on the age cohort of a minor.

It is not yet clear if the government is planning to bring this into action with a law in Parliament or with amendments to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, which have been the main legal way for the government to introduce rules for requirements like labelling AI-generated images.

In April, State governments moved to announce their own respective social media bans. Andhra Pradesh announced that it would pursue a law regulating children's social media use, as did Karnataka. "Officials have been tasked with studying best practices from countries such as Singapore, Australia, and Denmark to build a robust legal and technological framework (to enforce the law) tailored to India's needs," the A.P. government said in a statement.

## Monsoon has covered the entire country: IMD

Historical data show no simple relationship between the date of nationwide monsoon coverage and the eventual June-September rainfall. However, some prominent El Niño years associated with deficient monsoons also saw delayed coverage. In 2002, one of India's most severe monsoon drought years, the monsoon covered the country only on August 15, the latest date in the 1971-2025 record. In 2009, another major drought year, coverage was completed on July 3, while in 2015 it occurred relatively early, on June 26.

The contrasting dates underline that the speed of the monsoon's geographical advance is not, by itself, a reliable indicator of seasonal rainfall. El Niño can weaken monsoon circulation and affect the amount and distribution of rainfall even after the monsoon has formally covered the entire country.

## SC considers reference on grounds of arrest

Appearing for the Meghalaya government, the Solicitor-General submitted that the constitutional requirement had been complied with in the current case, as the written grounds of arrest had been furnished to Ms. Raghuvanshi. According to him, the only defect was a "typographical error" in the arrest memo, which mistakenly referred to Section 403 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) instead of Section 103, which deals with murder. "This is a very serious offence... I will be able to satisfy Your Lordships that there is no question of any conflict because, in the present case, the written grounds of arrest were supplied. There was only one typographical error," Mr. Mehta submitted.

Counsel appearing for Ms. Raghuvanshi, however, argued that what had been furnished to the accused was merely a *pro forma* and did not amount to a meaningful fulfilment of the constitutional mandate. This prompted the Bench to enquire whether the arrest memo contained any factual particulars of the case apart from merely referring to the statutory provisions.

"We will consider the matter in detail... Just indicate what exactly was communicated to the accused so that we are in a position to understand what was supplied." Earlier, the Bench had declined to stay the High Court's order granting bail to Ms. Raghuvanshi after being informed that she had already been released from judicial custody.

## Bishnoi ran decentralised syndicate, wanted 'S.K.' killed to instil fear: U.S.

The Department of Justice says Bishnoi's group 'enticed impoverished minors in India to join the enterprise' and members were sent abroad to work for the network; details submitted by the DoJ match threats to actor Salman Khan in Mumbai

Vijaita Singh  
NEW DELHI

The United States Department of Justice (DoJ) said that between 2022 and 2026, jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi announced his intention "to murder S.K., a well-known Indian actor and television personality" to promote his "enterprise" and instil fear in the public.

Though the name is not expanded in the DoJ's court records, the initials and details match with the threats against actor Salman Khan in Mumbai during the period. Bishnoi is lodged in a high-security prison in Ahmedabad since 2023.

On Wednesday, the DoJ announced the indictment against three Punjab-linked transnational organised crime syndicates operating across India, Canada,



Behind bars: Lawrence Bishnoi has been lodged in a high-security prison in Ahmedabad since 2023. REUTERS

the U.S., and Europe, including the Bishnoi syndicate. The DoJ said that 37 people have been charged so far. The indictment said that recruitment coordinators for the Bishnoi gang enticed impoverished minors in India to join the enterprise by promising, among other things, money, fame, and protection. It said that upon being

recruited into the Bishnoi gang in India, new members received minimal compensation for criminal acts committed on behalf of the enterprise. The gang sent loyal members abroad, including to the U.S. and Canada, on student visas and foreign worker visas to assist the enterprise's criminal operations in those countries,

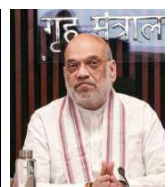
the DoJ said. It added that membership in the Bishnoi organised crime group (OCG) was decentralised. "With the exception of its leaders, Bishnoi OCG members and associates often had limited information on the identities or backgrounds of other Bishnoi OCG members and associates..." the DoJ said.

**Senior gang member**  
According to the indictment, Sukhraj Singh Kang, a senior India-based member of the gang who coordinated acts of violence in the U.S., Canada and elsewhere, provided key evidence. On January 25, 2025, Mr. Kang spoke to a person he believed was an individual who was owed a debt of between \$100,000 to \$200,000. But the person was a confidential informant working with law enforcement (CI-1). Mr. Kang agreed to assist CI-1

with extorting the debtor in exchange for a fee of \$16,000. Investigators then provided a staged video purporting to show a shooting at the debtor's residence. Members of the alleged conspiracy believed the video was real and used it to intimidate the intended victim.

In reality, the supposed debtor was an undercover law-enforcement agent (UC-1).

The indictment alleges that, over the following weeks, several accused communicated directly with UC-1, demanding money and issuing threats. Prosecutors say these conversations, in Punjabi and Hindi and sent via WhatsApp and Signal, allowed investigators to document alleged extortion demands, threats against family members and the mechanisms through which money would be collected.



Amit Shah

## Report rapid population changes along border areas, Shah tells SPs

Vijaita Singh  
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said that information on demographic changes in border areas caused by abnormal factors such as illegal migration should be communicated from the grassroots to the highest levels at the earliest.

"We are creating a robust system to make the country completely infiltration-free and to ensure that infiltration does not happen at all," he said.

Mr. Shah made the remarks at the first-ever Land Border Districts' Superintendents of Police Conference-2026. The meeting was attended by SPs of 119 border districts. Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, Director-Intelligence Bureau Mahesh Dixit, and Directors General of Police of States were also present at the conference.

Mr. Shah said that the government was "moving from an isolated border outpost system towards the creation of an integrated security grid".

He said that the conference has given an institutional shape to the comprehensive approach towards border security, adding that in the coming days, government will move forward to ensure coastal border security.

He stated that the government is building a strong quadrangular security grid by bringing together concerned border-guarding forces, State and district administrations, relevant stakeholders of Government of India, and local citizens. He further said that India's border security system, based on the vision of a Smart Border, will become most modern in the world in the coming years.

## CID takes over probe into death of rape-murder accused in Baruipur case

Shiv Sahay Singh  
KOLKATA

The last rites of Prabhas Mondal, one of the accused in the sexual assault and murder of a 12-year-old girl in West Bengal's Baruipur, was performed on Thursday by the local administration after his family refused to accept the body. Mondal was killed in a police encounter on Wednesday.

The investigation of the encounter was handed over to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the West Bengal police. According to police, Mondal had allegedly snatched the service weapon of a police officer, fired one round at the team, and attempted to flee during reconstruction of the crime scene in the early hours of Wednesday. Preliminary investigation suggested that Mondal had abducted the girl and

**West Bengal administration performs last rites after family refuses to accept body**

sexually assaulted her before throwing her into a pond. CCTV footage showing him with the victim has also surfaced. Four persons had been arrested in connection with the crime. The others are Anand Sardar, Dibakar Sardar, and Kabir Mohan.

The girl had gone missing on July 4 following which the family filed a missing person complaint. After the body was recovered, violence erupted in the area. A mob attacked police personnel, vandalised police vehicles, and blocked roads and railway tracks.

Many Opposition leaders slammed the encounter

saying the Bharatiya Janata Party government led by Suwendu Adhikari was trying to imitate the Yogi Adityanath model of governance in Uttar Pradesh.

BJP Minister Dilip Ghosh, while justifying the police action, criticised people who questioned the encounter. "People should throw eggs at the intellectuals who are trying to defend the criminals... Police will have the same freedom as in U.P., Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, and Assam. There will be zero tolerance for crime and criminals," he said. Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharyya alleged it was a "planned encounter". "It was clearly designed to divert public attention from systemic governance failures and communal undertones of the grisly crime and its aftermath," he said.

## Modi, Albanese call for dialogue to end West Asia conflict

Kallol Bhattacharjee  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese on Thursday made a joint call for a de-escalation of tension and hostilities in West Asia.

"The Prime Ministers expressed concern over renewed escalation of tensions in the Middle East and called upon all parties to exercise restraint, de-escalate tensions, and ensure protection of civilians as well as the uninterrupted flow of energy supplies and commerce. They reiterated the importance of dialogue and diplomacy, and adherence to international law to achieve a peaceful and lasting solution," a joint statement said. The two leaders also emphasised the importance of the Quadrilateral grouping, comprising the U.S., India, Japan, and Aus-

tralia, as a unit that will deliver "practical and concrete" outcomes in the Indo-Pacific region.

## Cultural connect

Mr. Albanese welcomed the repatriation of artefacts of cultural significance to India. "Australia and India share a deep history, and we are building strong people to people links between our two countries," he said.

Attending an Indian diaspora event with PM Modi, the Australian PM said, "Our Indian community has contributed so much to the story of modern Australia. And it's made our country a better place... Together, we can be a force for peace and prosperity in our region."

The two leaders expressed concern about the conflict in Ukraine, and said that they "remained concerned" about the conflict in Myanmar as well.

## CBI files first chargesheet against four in RHFL case

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation has filed the first chargesheet against four accused in the Reliance Home Finance Limited (RHFL) case.

Among those named are, two former senior executives of RHFL, Ravindra Sudhalkar as the then executive director and chief executive officer; and Krishnan Gopalakrishnan Iyer as the then chief risk officer; and former senior executive of Reliance Capital Limited, Dhananjay Bhagwanprasad Tiwari, who had chief credit and risk officer. The CBI alleged that funds borrowed by RHFL were diverted through intermediary and conduit entities to various Reliance ADA Group companies causing wrongful loss to the lending banks and corresponding wrongful gain to the accused persons and related entities.

## SC asks civic bodies to act on unauthorised buildings

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday said "slackness" by the civic authorities to take effective action against unauthorised constructions in the national capital and its neighbouring regions would not be tolerated.

The Bench linked the clusters of unauthorised buildings in cramped areas of Delhi, Gurugram and in Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh to the recent fatal fire incidents in Delhi's Malviya Nagar on June 3 and on June 22 at Lucknow.

Senior advocate Ajit Sinha, whom the court had appointed *amicus curiae*, said the fire had blazed through a narrow, multi-storey building in the congested Hauz Rani urban village of south Delhi's Malviya Nagar which operated as a bed and breakfast with a restaurant on the ground floor.

"The final death toll



Firefighters and rescue personnel carry out operations after a fire at a coaching centre in Alliganj, Lucknow. FILE PHOTO

reached 23 and more than 50 people were rescued," he pointed out.

Mr. Sinha said the fire in a multi-storeyed building in Lucknow's Alliganj resulted in the death of 15 persons, many of them students.

"We are particularly concerned with the conduct of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) with regard to non-compliance of directions issued by the court in 2024 and specific directions of May 20," the Bench addressed

Additional Solicitor General S.D. Sanjay, appearing for the MCD.

The law officer agreed to file a detailed report before August 4, the next date of hearing.

The court referred to media reports that 93% buildings in Gurugram failed in complying with fire safety norms and asked the executive head of the civic body of the city to be present on the next date of hearing with a report detailing the action taken.

## Manipur CM invokes religious teachings in appeal for peace

The Hindu Bureau  
GUWAHATI

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh invoked the Bible and the teachings of Gautama Buddha to appeal for peace during his visit to Kuki-dominated Kangpokpi and Naga-majority Senapati district on Wednesday.

He interacted with villagers, including those abducted after the killing of three church leaders on

May 13 and released later, in Kangpokpi and Senapati district, which borders Nagaland.

"You are Christians; the Nagas are also Christians. When you open the Bible, it sends the message of forgive and forget. I am a Hindu and a believer in Gautama Buddha, who preached peace," the Chief Minister told church leaders said at Kangpokpi Bazaar.

"We should all work for the return of peace in Manipur," he added.



## APPEAL

MASTER SYED HASNAIN, CHRISTIAN, MEDICAL COLLEGE HOSPITAL NO. 76/28E HAS BEEN DIAGNOSED TO HAVE THALASSEMIA MAJOR. THIS IS A TYPE OF LIFE-THREATENING BLOOD DISORDER. THE BEST OPTION FOR HIM WOULD BE TO UNDERGO ALLOGENEIC PERIPHERAL BLOOD STEM CELL TRANSPLANT (PBSCT). THE ESTIMATED COST OF PBSCT AT THIS HOSPITAL IS APPROXIMATELY ₹5.16 LAKH.

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# NDA-ruled States, universities object to centralisation provisions in VBSA

Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya among States to raise concerns over the Centre's powers; universities seek safeguards, parliamentary monitoring; BHU warns that Bill could turn an independent regulator into arm of the Union govt.

**Sobhana K. Nair**  
**Abhinav Lakshman**  
NEW DELHI



The Bill proposes an overhaul of higher education by repealing the statutory Acts governing the UGC, the AICTE, and the NCTE and replacing them with a single apex body. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

AICTE, and NCTE.

## Bypassing States

Some of the strongest objections came from Andhra Pradesh, which is ruled by the Telugu Desam Party, a BJP ally. The State argued that several provisions of the Bill could render its legislative authority over higher education "a dead letter" and sought mandatory consultation before decisions affecting State universities are taken. The State also cautioned against Clause 11 that allows the Regulatory Council to bypass State universities in granting degrees, saying it could lead to "constitutional friction".

The State government further suggested a clause explicitly preventing the Centre from taking action prejudicial to the autonomy, functioning, and governance of State institutes and universities.

BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh has also raised concerns over what it described as limited State representation in the proposed regulatory council. The Meghalaya government — led by the National People's Party, which is a BJP ally — recommended an explicit provision defining the respective powers of the Centre and the States. It proposed that the Centre be responsible for coordination, standards, accreditation, and quality assurance, while States retain authority over the establishment, governance, administration, staffing, financing, and overall functioning of State universities.

Key vulnerability

Central universities and institutes such as the Banaras Hindu University (BHU), the Central University of Rajasthan and the Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), Chittoor, as well as State universities in Assam, Maharashtra, and Jammu and Kashmir, have objected to

provisions that they say could increase centralisation.

Several institutions told the panel that clauses requiring the new regulatory structure to follow directions from the Centre represented the Bill's "most critical vulnerability".

While some universities cautioned that dismantling the UGC, AICTE, and NCTE simultaneously could cause "significant institutional disruption", others argued that the Bill concentrated regulatory powers and created the possibility of "arbitrary interventions". Institutions called for phased implementation, parliamentary oversight of powers exercised by the Centre under the Bill, and mandatory notice and consultation with States before such powers are invoked.

BHU noted that Clause 45 gives finality to the Centre's policy directions and binds the VBSA to them, "effectively subordinating the regulator to the executive", while Clause 47 empowers the Centre to supersede the VBSA and dissolve it. The university told the panel that these provisions risked turning an independent regulator into "an arm of the government of the day".

Clause 45 empowers the Centre to issue binding policy directions to the Commission, gives it the final say on what constitutes a policy matter, and allows it to assign additional functions. Clause 47 allows the Centre to suspend or supersede the Commission or its councils for up to a

year. IIT Chittoor said a possible implication of Clause 45 was the expansion of Centre's influence across the three councils proposed under the structure, which could end up shaping institutional academic operations. SNDT Women's University, Pune, said that without checks and balances, consultation and parliamentary oversight, the provisions could lead to "excessive centralisation".

## Fee escalation

Congress-ruled Telangana said the Bill's structure does not adequately recognise the role of State governments. It sought the deletion of Clause 11, which empowers the Union government-backed Regulatory Council to authorise independent accredited colleges to grant degrees directly, bypassing the State governments. It also argued that the Bill neither empowers the Regulatory Council to regulate fees nor preserves the existing framework, potentially allowing fee escalation.

Telangana's Higher Education Department described Clause 45 as the "single most centralising clause" in the Bill, calling it a "self-judging clause" that gives the Centre the final authority in disputes with councils under the VBSA framework.

The department argued that the provision expanded Central authority over the structure without granting States corresponding powers over matters relating to their own universities.

# Cong. alleges forged gram sabha consent for Singrauli mining

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Alleging that gram sabha consent for coal mining in Madhya Pradesh's Singrauli district had been obtained through forged resolutions carrying the thumb impressions of deceased persons, the Congress on Thursday demanded a CBI inquiry into what it called *angootha chori* (stealing thumb impressions). The party said the alleged fraud in tribal areas was part of a wider pattern of subversion of environmental and forest safeguards.

At a press conference in New Delhi, All India Congress Committee national coordinator for SC, OBC, Minority and Adivasi Departments K. Raju and Advani Congress chief Vikrant Bhuria alleged that fake gram sabha approvals had been used to facilitate mining in the Dhirauli coal block in Singrauli, where, they claimed, an Adani group-linked company was operating. There was no immediate response from the company or the administration.

## Cites RTI documents

Mr. Bhuria cited RTI documents and death certificates to claim that the names and thumb impressions of persons who had died years earlier appeared in gram sabha resolutions shown as having been passed in 2021.

He referred to the cases of Brij Bhan Singh, who died in 2014 but was allegedly shown as having given consent in 2021; Phoolveswari Singh, who died in 2018 but whose consent



Vikrant Bhuria

was allegedly recorded three years later; and Jag Bandhan Singh Gond, who died in 2015 but whose thumb impression was allegedly used in 2021.

Mr. Bhuria also alleged that some living residents who were literate and ordinarily sign documents had their thumb impressions affixed instead. Such practices violated the Forest Rights Act and the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, under which gram sabha consent was mandatory in Scheduled Areas before land could be acquired or forest land diverted, he said.

The Congress demanded a CBI probe into the alleged fraud, action against officials and companies involved, and a halt to mining activity in the area until the claims were independently verified.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh amplified the charge on social media, saying that after "vote chori, seat chori and chanda chori", the country was now witnessing "angootha chori". In a separate post, he widened the attack on the Narendra Modi government and Minister Bhupendra Yadav over the abrupt removal of four of his close aides.

# UGC-NET leak claims spark Congress call to scrap NTA

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday intensified its attack on the Union government over alleged irregularities in the UGC-NET, demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and the disbanding of the National Testing Agency (NTA).

The Opposition party's attack came after allegations surfaced that the Sociology paper in the UGC-NET held on June 30 had been leaked.

Congress communications chief Jairam Ramesh, sharing a media report on social media platform X, said the alleged leak had exposed the hollowness of the government's claim that shifting examinations to a computer-based test (CBT) format would curb malpractice.

"Days after the NEET-UG exam was leaked in May 2026, 'Mantri Pradhan' announced that NEET would be conducted in CBT mode from next year, implicitly suggesting that a computer-based examination could not be leaked," Mr. Ramesh said. "Now there are reports that the UGC-NET Sociology examination appears to have been leaked despite being a CBT," he added.

He also referred to earlier complaints regarding the UGC-NET English examination, in which questions were allegedly lifted from past papers without change, and charged that the problem lay not in the mode of examination but in a "compromised" Education Ministry and a "deliberately incompetent and incapacitated" NTA.

# 'Champat Rai not upset about his resignation'

**Press Trust of India**  
AYODHYA

Ram temple treasurer Govind Dev Giri on Thursday said Champat Rai is not upset after resigning as its general secretary in the wake of the alleged donation theft and is fully supportive of the new temple management system being put in place.

"I met Champat Rai ji yesterday mainly to check on his health. He is healthy, solution-oriented and has no misgivings about his resignation," Mr. Giri said. "He (Champat Rai) is an old veteran who has devoted his life to the country. He is fully supportive of the new (temple management) system being put in place and he isn't upset or angry," he said.

# Examine call records of Ram Temple employees: Akhilesh

**Press Trust of India**  
LUCKNOW

Upping the ante on the Ram Temple donations issue, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Thursday demanded that the call detail records of all those employed in the temple be examined, claiming that 99.9% of them would have links with the BJP.

Talking to reporters here, Mr. Yadav also accused the BJP of placing electoral considerations above religious values.

"All the call detail records (CDR) of those who were working in the temple complex should be examined. The moment the CDRs are scrutinised, 99.9% of them will turn out to be BJP people. You cannot imagine the turmoil that will break out within the BJP then. The exodus



Akhilesh Yadav

has already begun and many people have already started contacting us," he claimed.

Raising queries over the functioning of the SIT, the former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister said: "What SIT is this? It is merely an attempt to cover up the matter. Who constituted this SIT? We are also hearing that questions have been raised about the SIT itself. One of its members is fac-

ing a cheating case. Tell me, will such a person continue to be part of the SIT?"

The SIT comprising Divisional Commissioner of Lucknow Vijay Vishwas Pant, Inspector-General of Police S. Kiran and Special Secretary (Finance) Neel Ratan was constituted on June 13 to probe the donation theft allegations.

He also alleged that the BJP changes its ideology according to electoral convenience. Later in the day, he said in a post on X: "Only resignation will not do. The entire Trust should be dissolved." He also demanded a judicial probe into "all land deals and other wrongs carried out under the signatures of those who have resigned", asserting that "resignation should not become a route to escape scrutiny".

# BJP nominates 3 ex-Trinamool MPs to RS hours after joining the party

**Shiv Sahay Singh**  
KOLKATA

The Bharatiya Janata Party on Thursday nominated three former Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha MPs Sushmita Dev, Sukhendu Sekhar Ray and Prakash Chik Baraik to the Upper House of Parliament.

The development came hours after the three leaders joined the BJP in Kolkata. BJP State president Samik Bhatlacharya welcomed the three former MPs by handing over a BJP flag to them at the party office.

Incidentally, Ms. Dev, Mr. Ray and Mr. Baraik joined the party days ahead of the July 24 bypolls to three Rajya Sabha seats in the State.

After the defeat of the Trinamool Congress in the



Former Trinamool Congress MPs Sushmita Dev, Sukhendu Sekhar Ray and Prakash Chik Baraik upon joining the BJP on Thursday. ANI

West Bengal Assembly polls, the three Rajya Sabha MPs who were nominated by party chairperson Mamata Banerjee had quit as members of the Upper House.

## 'Accept wholeheartedly'

"The three former MPs have taken a stand and resigned from Rajya Sabha. It is a moment of happiness

for us. We accept the three of them wholeheartedly," Mr. Bhatlacharya said in the presence of the three leaders joining the BJP.

As the BJP has 208 legislators in the 254-member West Bengal Assembly, and the Trinamool Congress legislators are divided into two camps, their election is just a matter of time.

Earlier in the day, Ms. Dev, a prominent leader from Assam, who left the Congress to join the Trinamool Congress in 2021, said that the BJP was a national party and the party's high command would take a call on her nomination to the Rajya Sabha.

Mr. Ray, a three-term Rajya Sabha member and former party chief whip who was one of Mamata Banerjee's key parliamentary faces, resigned from the Rajya Sabha and as a member of the party after Trinamool lost power in West Bengal.

Mr. Ray had met Home Minister Amit Shah during the latter's recent visit to Kolkata.

Mr. Baraik, who hails from Alipurduar, was nominated by Trinamool Congress to the Rajya Sabha in 2023.

# Prashant Kishor has task cut out in Bankipur bypoll

**Amarnath Tewary**  
PATNA

Ahead of the byelection in the Bankipur Assembly constituency in Patna, residents say the contest this time will be between the Bharatiya Janata Party candidate and Jan Suraj Party founder Prashant Kishor. Mr. Kishor has been busy in the constituency, addressing *nukad* (corner) meetings and going door to door to meet people.

The byelection will be held on July 30 and the result will be out on August 3. The seat fell vacant after sitting BJP MLA Nitin Nabin was elected to the Rajya Sabha after being

named as the party's national president. Mr. Nabin had won five consecutive times from Bankipur, which has been a BJP stronghold. The party has gained a young leader, Abhishek Kumar Sinha 'Bunty', while the Opposition Rashtriya Janata Dal has repeated its candidate, Rekha Gupta. In the 2025 Assembly election, Mr. Nabin had received 98,299 votes (62.66%) to defeat Ms. Gupta, who got 46,363 votes (29.55%). The JSP's Vandana Kumari had secured 7,717 votes (4.92%).

Both Mr. Abhishek and Mr. Gupta filed their nomination papers on Thursday and Mr. Kishor is expected to file his

**BJP chief Nabin has won five consecutive times from Bankipur, which has been a BJP stronghold**

nomination on July 11.

"For the past several Assembly elections, I've been voting for the BJP, but now it [the party] has become depressing. I will not vote for the BJP this time but the battle appears to be between Mr. Kishor and Mr. Abhishek," said Suman Dhari Sinha, a septuagenarian resident of Kidwaiपुर locality in Bankipur. A few yards away from

his home, provision store owner Jyoti Kumar Verma, 50, asserted: "Only the BJP candidate will win. For the past nine Assembly elections five terms for Mr. Nabin and four terms for his father Nabin Kishore Prasad Sinha, people of the constituency have reposed faith in the party's candidate... this time too, the candidate is local and personally knows everyone in the constituency... there is no match for the BJP".

## Battling for change

However, a young voter of the Dakshin Mandir locality near Kathpul, Sumit Kumar, 29, asked, "We need change... for

how long will we keep voting for a single party?" He is unequivocal about who he thinks are the main contestants.

"The battle will be between Mr. Kishor and the Mr. Abhishek," he said.

Bankipur is largely an urban constituency in central Patna with about a lakh voters and is dominated by Kayastha and Vaishya (trader) voters, besides a mixed population of other castes.

The BJP candidate is from the Kayastha community while the RJD candidate comes from the Vaishya community. Mr. Kishor belongs to the Brahmin community.

# CJP urges students to join Parliament march on July 20

**Press Trust of India**  
NEW DELHI

The Cockroach Janta Party announced a peaceful march to Parliament on July 20, the first day of the Monsoon Session, on Thursday.

The CJP said the march would begin from Jantar Mantar. It called upon students, parents and citizens from across the country to join the march to seek justice for students and press for Mr. Pradhan's resignation.

**TAMIL NADU AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY**  
COMBATORE - 641 003  
**RATE CONTRACT NOTIFICATION - 2026-27**  
On behalf of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, sealed tenders are invited for the supply of Chemicals, Laboratory apparatus, Scientific Equipments, Consumables, Glasswares, Fragile and Non-Fragile items etc., for the constituent Colleges, Departments, Research Stations, KVKs and other Centres of the University during the financial year 2026-27. The tenders should have three years of experience as on 01.01.2026 as "MANUFACTURER" of the said items, they intend to supply and hold a valid "Manufacturer's License" for each of these materials which must stand under their own authorised or patented brand name or trademarks. The term "Manufacturer" also includes manufacturers or their sole agents or their dealer who they authorize to participate in the tender. The Manufacturer should authorize only one dealer/distributor for participating in the tender. The tender documents can be obtained from the office of the Comptroller, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Combatores - 641 003 on payment of cost of Rs. 1500/- + GST (18%) through a demand draft drawn in favour of the COMPTROLLER, TAMIL NADU AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, COMBATORE payable at State Bank of India, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Branch, Combatores. The tender documents are available at State Bank of India, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Branch, Combatores from 10.00 am to 11.00 am on 27.07.2026. The last date for receipt of sealed tenders is up to 4.00 pm on 27.07.2026. The tenders will be opened at 10.00 am on 28.07.2026. If the tender opening date happens to be a holiday, the tenders will be opened on the next working day.  
DIPR/2256/Tender/2026  
COMPTROLLER

## IN BRIEF



## 3,000 gas cylinders swept away amid floods in Raigad

Continuous rainfall in Raigad, Maharashtra, over the past few days has caused rivers to swell, with floodwaters entering the HPCL LPG bottling plant in Panvel taluka. The strong current swept away both filled and empty LPG cylinders, with around 3,000 reportedly being carried into the Patalganga river. Raigad District Collector Kishan Jawale urged people not to retrieve or handle any LPG cylinders found in the river or along its banks. He said the amount of gas remaining in the cylinders and their internal condition were unknown, making them potentially hazardous.

## NDRF recovers body from collapse site near Pune

An NDRF team on Thursday recovered a body from the debris of a building that collapsed at a waste management plant in Pimpri Chinchwad near Pune, officials said. Nine persons have been rescued so far in a multi-agency operation at the site, they said. A three-storey building located over a waste-to-energy plant at Moshi in the area collapsed after a huge mound of garbage crashed onto it on Wednesday afternoon, trapping around 18 individuals under the rubble. "We suspect that 7 to 8 people are still trapped under the debris," a senior NDRF official said.

## Mahadev betting case kingpin traced to Oman, says ED

Shubhomoy Sikdar  
RAIPUR

Amid reports that Saurabh Chandrakar - the kingpin in the alleged Mahadev on-line book betting app scam pegged at ₹6,000 crore - has been traced to Oman, investigating agencies have written to the authorities concerned for his extradition.



The Enforcement Directorate said that Saurabh Chandrakar had fled Dubai.

was issued, we submitted all the extradition papers to the Indian Consul General to submit them to the Oman Embassy for further action," said Mr. Pande.

In a related development, the Central Bureau of Investigation that is probing the Mahadev app-related corruption case, said on Thursday that it has filed a chargesheet against six accused and also filed additional evidence against "the main kingpins Saurabh Chandrakar and Ravi Uppal and others".

"It was in mid-June that we learnt Chandrakar had escaped to Oman from Dubai and we approached a court to get a warrant issued. Once the warrant

## IPS trainee moves SC on postpartum hiatus rule

Krishnadass Rajagopal  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court of India is scheduled to hear on July 10 the appeal of a woman Indian Police Service (IPS) probationer who has questioned a 36-year-old policy of the Home Ministry which requires new mothers like her to take a year's postpartum break from training.

On July 8, a Bench headed by Justice Manoj Misra had sought the government's response to a petition filed by Urvasi Sengar. The court's order, published on July 9, highlighted Ms. Sengar's query on whether the policy aims to disentitle new parents like her rather than protecting them.

Ms. Sengar, who gave birth on September 29 last year, submitted that she had volunteered for the requisite training, which was to commence on June 22 this year. However, the department concerned had refused her permission, citing the Ministry's Office Memorandum of August 23, 1993, which provided for "a year's hiatus in training post delivery".

## CISF seizes over 428 tonnes of illegal coal in Jharkhand, Bengal

In intensified crackdown, authorities take control of vehicles, equipment being used for illegal mining; 4 FIRs registered, legal action to be initiated

Vijaita Singh  
NEW DELHI

Intensifying its operations against illegal coal mining, the Central Industrial Security Force has in the past four days recovered over 428 metric tonne of coal being transported illegally in Jharkhand and West Bengal, a CISF official said on Thursday.

In line with the government's "zero coal leakage" initiative, the CISF has stepped up enforcement against illegal coal mining, theft, unauthorised storage and transportation under the provisions of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDR Act), the official added.

## Boosting transparency

The CISF has launched intelligence-driven operations in coordination with Coal India subsidiaries, local police and district ad-



District authorities, the police and Coal India subsidiaries will coordinate to safeguard mineral resources. REUTERS

ministration to safeguard mineral resources and strengthen transparency in the coal sector.

"Between July 4 and 8, 2026, CISF conducted coordinated operations across the coalfields of Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCL), Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL) and Central Coalfields Limited (CCL) in Jharkhand and West Bengal. The operations resulted in the recovery of 428.34 metric tonne of illegally mined, stored

or transported coal, registration of four First Information Reports (FIR), seizure of one Hyva truck and more than 13 motorcycles and other equipment used in illegal mining and transportation, besides apprehension of offenders and initiation of legal proceedings under the MMDR Act," the official added.

The enforcement drive covered several vulnerable mining belts and coal transportation corridors in both States.

## No tax exemption for same-sex couple, says IT Department

Chinmay Gaikwad  
MUMBAI

The Income Tax Department has filed an affidavit before the Bombay High Court opposing a plea by a same-sex couple challenging Section 56(2)(x) of the Income Tax Act, which grants exemption from tax on gifts between spouses, and seeking to extend the benefit to their relationship.

The affidavit, dated October 14, 2025, was filed before a Division Bench of Justices Burgess Colabawalla and Firdosh Poonwalla by Sandeep Dahiya, Principal Commissioner of Income Tax (Judicial). The department has urged the Bench to dismiss the petition as "misconceived". According to the department, the petitioners are attempting to use the Income Tax Act to alter the meaning of "spouse" under the Act, a term that is not recognised for same-sex relationships under any marriage law in India.

The department stated that the petitioners have not cited any law recognising their relationship as a

## The department says petitioners are trying to use the Income Tax Act to alter the meaning of 'spouse'

marriage or recognising them as spouses and are instead asking the Income Tax Act to provide a definition of marriage or spouse that is contrary to the definitions under various marriage laws.

The department has contended that the writ petition constitutes an abuse of the legal process, as the relief sought does not pertain to the provisions of the Income Tax Act. The affidavit further stated that since marriage or spousal relationships between same-sex couples are not recognised under any marriage law in India, the exemption under Section 56(2)(x) cannot be extended to them. The department has maintained that the Income Tax Act cannot define the term contrary to those laws.

The court is yet to pronounce its order on the matter.

## Navy orders probe into crash of unmanned aerial vehicle near Porbandar

Saurabh Trivedi  
NEW DELHI

A Board of Inquiry (BoI) has been ordered after an Indian Navy Drishti-10 Starliner unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) crashed near Dharampur village in Gujarat's Porbandar district during a routine training sortie on Wednesday.

In a statement posted on X, the Navy said the UAV crashed during a training flight near the Porbandar airfield and there were no reports of injuries or casualties on the ground.

Security agencies recovered the wreckage from the crash site and have begun a technical examination.

Defence sources indicated that the UAV may have suffered a technical malfunction, though the exact cause will be established only after the inquiry.

The Drishti-10 is the In-



The Navy's unmanned aerial vehicle Drishti-10 after crashing into an open field near Porbandar, Gujarat, on Wednesday. PTI

dian version of Israel's battle-proven Hermes-900 Medium Altitude Long Endurance UAV. It is licence-manufactured by Adani Defence and Aerospace at its Hyderabad facility in partnership with Israel's Elbit Systems.

## Second mishap

The mishap is the second involving the Hermes-900-based platform acquired under the emergency procurement route.

In January last year, a

Drishti-10 being flown by the manufacturer during pre-acceptance trials ditched into the Arabian Sea after reportedly losing its communication link before formal induction into naval service. The aircraft was subsequently replaced by the manufacturer.

The Army and the Navy contracted two Drishti-10 drones each under the fourth tranche of emergency procurements in 2023 at a cost of around ₹140 crore per aircraft.

## PIL plea in Delhi HC against functioning of Wildlife Board

Jacob Koshy  
NEW DELHI

A group of retired forest and wildlife officials and conservationists on Wednesday moved the Delhi High Court with a public interest litigation (PIL) petition challenging the functioning of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) and its Standing Committee, alleging that the two bodies have become a "clearing house" that routinely diverts protected areas to roads, mining, industry and other non-conservation projects.

The 10 petitioners - led by retired Indian Forest Service officer Prakriti Srivastava, and including M.K. Ranjitsinh, the 88-year-old former civil servant widely regarded as the principal drafter of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, are seeking binding guidelines on how the two bodies take decisions.

They claim that the

## The petitioners claim it approved over 97% of proposals between 2014 and 2026

Standing Committee approved more than 97% of proposals for diverting, reducing or de-notifying protected land between 2014 and 2026, often considering over 100 proposals in a single day. The petition says the full NBWL, meant to meet annually, convened in 2025 after a 13-year gap, leaving the Standing Committee as its de facto operational arm.

The NBWL is the apex statutory authority on wildlife under the 1972 Act, chaired by the Prime Minister with the Environment Minister as vice-chairperson.

The government is expected to file its reply in court by August 18, with the next hearing scheduled on September 18.

## Activist flags mislabelling of Sikkim's capital on X

The Hindu Bureau  
GUWAHATI

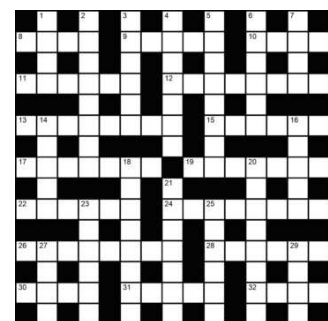
A Sikkim-based social activist has asked the State's Home Department to make X, a micro-blogging site, undo an anomaly that indicates Gangtok is in China.

In a statement on July 8, Muk Hang Limboo pointed out that the capital of Sikkim is displayed as "Gangtok, Xinjiang" instead of "Gangtok, Sikkim, India" on X due to an apparent geolocation anomaly. Xinjiang is an Uyghur-dominated province in China.

The anomaly appears while selecting a location for posts, he said.

"As the most searched and internationally recognised location in the State, any incorrect digital representation on a globally used platform has the potential to mislead users, and create unnecessary confusion regarding India's territorial integrity," Mr. Limboo said.

## THE CROSSWORD 14842



## Across

- 8 Stake wanted to some extent (4)
- 9 Odds of 1 to 1? Not odds... (5)
- 10 Temperature in the attic (4)
- 11 Now, after last month, starting to exercise in 10 years (6)
- 12 Burnt cream thrown by Edward (8)
- 13 When flying sea egret gets cheap passage (8)

- 15 Small rest for golfers at New Scotland Yard for starters (6)
- 17 Look, covering a short length... An antelope! (7)
- 19 Sumatra tour results in sufferings (7)
- 22 Questioning, like royalty (6)
- 24 One moving in tummy gets protection (8)
- 26 Drug made from carotin processed with carbon (8)
- 28 Male with pointer gets food item that may be vegetarian or non-vegetarian (6)
- 30 Fish only (4)
- 31 Capital city is average in the beginning (5)
- 32 Bird seen in femery (4)

## Down

- 1 Keen to fracture joint (4)
- 14 Devices to catch animals and rats running around top of pit (5)
- 16 clever sting (5)
- 18 Graphic symbol from herpetology transliterated in her absence (8)
- 20 Frightened animal leaves Inland Revenue confused (8)
- 21 Sid rejected means of payment for shed (7)
- 23 "It's with Chinese editor" needed to be scratched (6)
- 25 Cocktail samosa Sam left after meeting Indian man at first (6)
- 27 Outer covering removed from samosa for prophet (4)
- 29 Has title to a portion of town square (4)

## SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

## Solution to previous puzzle



## Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



## FAITH

## Saranaagathi, easiest way

Bhakti Yoga is referred to as Ashtanga Yoga (eight parts), whereas prapatti (complete surrender) is known as Shadanga Yoga (six parts), described as Saranaagathi. This practice comprises six parts. Sri Srinivasa Desika Tathachariar in a discourse said Swami Vedanta Desika elaborates on the greatness of Saranaagathi and its inner divisions in the 26 and 27 verses of the Saranaagathi Deepika, explaining that Saranaagathi is the complete offering or surrender of oneself to the Supreme Lord.

Anyone, regardless of their capacity to follow other paths, is eligible to perform Saranaagathi to achieve desired results. He emphasises that this path is open to all, including animals, birds and humans, as demonstrated by the Lord granting salvation to figures such as Jatayu (bird), cows (animal), cowherds, Nambadurai, Brahmaraakshasa and dadhibandan (curd pot), among others. Unlike Bhakti Yoga, which is complicated and demands strict adherence to other methods, Saranaagathi is described as an easily practised, glorious method that requires no such prerequisites, other than deep and unshaken faith (Mahaa Vismasaam). The six parts of this path are explained as: Anukoolya Sankalpam (the resolve to be favourable to the Lord), Praathikoolya Varjanam (the avoidance of actions displeasing to the Lord), Rakshithyathi iti vismasaam (absolute faith that the Lord will protect), Gophruthva Varanam (appealing to the Lord as the sole protector), Kaarpanyam (the humility of admitting one's utter helplessness); and finally, the sixth, which is offering one's soul, the responsibility of its protection, and the resulting fruits to the divine feet of the Lord.

## Business

## INBRIEF



## Govt. waives levy on key inputs for electronics manufacturing

The Centre has waived basic customs duty on goods used in manufacture of display assemblies, lithium ion cell and inductor coil module as it looks to promote domestic production of electronic devices like smartphones, laptops, wearables and smart TVs. The finance ministry issued three separate notifications giving effect to the basic customs duty (BCD) waiver on the goods used in manufacture of the three key components used in electronic devices. **PII**

## Adani to file sworn affidavit in U.S. court this week

Gautam Adani will file this week a sworn affidavit in a U.S. federal court stating whether he is aware of any promise, agreement or benefit linked to the U.S. government's decision to dismiss a criminal indictment against him. District Judge Nicholas Garaufis directed Mr. Adani to file the affidavit by July 15 before ruling on the Justice Department's motion to dismiss the indictment with prejudice. The Adani group did not offer any comment on the issue. **PII**

## Google appeals Indian ruling over its ads platform

Google has challenged an Indian court ruling that it infringed on a company's trademark rights by allowing rivals to use its name as an advertising keyword, arguing the decision will hurt consumers, documents reviewed by Reuters show. The May decision could reshape the online ads market in a country where Google last year earned \$4.1 billion in gross advertising revenue but where it is also facing a raft of antitrust cases and court battles. Google India's appeal will be heard in the coming days. **REUTERS**

## Life insurers new business premium rises over 13% in June

**The Hindu Bureau**  
HYDERABAD

Life insurance companies in India reported new business premium rose 13% year-on-year in June to ₹46,490.53 crore.

Market leader, State-owned Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) posted muted NBP growth at ₹27,724.62 crore (₹27,395 crore). Private life insurers clocked ₹18,765.90 crore (₹13,722.29 crore). The number of policies/schemes sold by all the life insurers for June stood at 21,51,880 (20,06,322).

For the quarter ended June, life insurers new business rose 16.60% to

₹1,09,071.75 crore. LIC logged new business of ₹65,548.88 crore, a 10.33% rise. Number of policies/schemes sold during Q1 was a tad over 2% more at 31,05,635. The private players, on a 12.68% rise in policies/schemes sold at 20,07,797, reported new business for Q1 climbed 27.51% to ₹43,522.87 crore.

On June numbers, Emkay Research said while the protection segment saw continued growth momentum aided by GST rate exemption, the savings business was hit by geopolitical tensions stemming from the West Asia conflict and the overall macroeconomic situation.

## Dr. Reddy's halts semaglutide supply on quality, shares slide, Torrent recalls product

**N. Ravi Kumar**  
HYDERABAD

Dr. Reddy's Laboratories said it halted commercial supplies of generic semaglutide after an issue with the active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) used in the drug and fresh despatches were likely only to wards late October or early November.

"Certain batches of semaglutide were found to be out of specification due to an issue associated with the API. Until the issue is resolved, commercial supplies of the product will be delayed for a certain pe-

riod of time," DRL said. There is no impact on patient safety or on the product's global regulatory filings, the company said.

## Shares plunge

The decision saw the firm's shares plunge almost 6% on the BSE. Meanwhile Torrent Pharmaceuticals announced a voluntary recall of select batches of Semaglutin injection disposable pens made by Dr. Reddy's on instructions from the latter. Semaglutide is the active ingredient in Novo Nordisk's blockbuster diabetes and weight loss drugs Wegovy and Ozem-

## AI poses a relatively lower risk to India's GCC jobs: CEA

Nageswaran says most of India's Global Capability Centres are engaged in cutting-edge work rather than providing low-cost support, which is what AI can easily and cheaply replace

**T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan**  
NEW DELHI

India's Global Capability Centres (GCCs) are not just low-cost support in a new form, but are areas where cutting edge work is taking place, Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) V. Anantha Nageswaran said on Thursday. As such, these GCC jobs are also at a relatively lower risk of being replaced by Artificial Intelligence (AI), he added.

However, the CEA did warn against the dangers of complacency, saying that other countries are already copying India's model.

"It is cutting edge and increasingly so," Mr. Nageswaran said while speaking at a session during the Confederation of Indian Industry's (CII) GCC Business Summit. "Global banks run their risk systems and trading platforms in Mumbai and Bangalore and elsewhere as well, car makers design their vehicles' embedded systems from Chennai and Pune, semiconductor firms carry out chip design, pharmaceutical companies run clinical analytics here, and consumer firms build and own entire digital products here in India," he added.

Mr. Nageswaran said that the intellectual property created in these centers is real, with the patents being filed here, the products shipped from India and global roles increasingly held by people

working in India. The CEA also sought to answer whether these GCCs would be under threat from the rise of AI and would these GCC jobs be automated soon.

"Part of the model is indeed exposed," Mr. Nageswaran conceded. "The work that is routine, repetitive and rule bound is exactly the work that AI does most easily and most cheaply as well. If a center's value rests only on doing simple tasks at low cost, then the value is under real threat. We should not pretend otherwise."

However, he also said that this is not where most Indian centers are today, and that this was not the direction in which they are headed.

"Artificial intelligence does not build, deploy or govern itself," Mr. Nageswaran explained. "Someone has to design these systems, train them, test them, correct them and



CEA V. Anantha Nageswaran speaks at the inaugural session of the CII GCC Business Summit 2026 on Thursday. BY ARRANGEMENT

sitting in India.

Someone has to decide where they should be used and where they must not be used."

"Someone has to carry the responsibility when they fail," he added. "And that work is expanding and not shrinking. And a large and growing share of this kind of work is being done in India."

**Complacency matters**  
The CEA, however, cautioned against complacency, saying that standing still meant allowing others to catch up. "Other countries are watching us and copying us," he asserted. "Our costs are rising. In some skills, our talent is already scarce, so indispensability is not a title that India can hold on to forever."

He added that the move from cost centres to capability centres, and from execution to innovation has to be made by firms and by people, with the govern-

ment acting as a support. "Skilling is the clearest case," Mr. Nageswaran said. "We produce a very large number of graduates each year. We do not yet produce enough of those who are ready on day one. By some estimates, fewer than half of them are ready for the job on the day they arrive."

"Closing that gap means universities, industry and the government working together, not one after the other, but at the same time," he said. He further said that the position India currently holds in the global capability centre market was one that it has to keep earning, own and overtake.

"The moment we believe we have arrived is the moment others begin to catch up," he said. "So let us not celebrate too early. Let us treat this success not as a finishing line, but as a foundation or a milestone."

He added that the move from cost centres to capability centres, and from execution to innovation has to be made by firms and by people, with the govern-

## TCS Q1 net rises 4.6% to ₹14,349 crore, board okays interim dividend of ₹12 per share

**Lalendu Mishra**  
MUMBAI

Tata Consultancy Services Ltd. (TCS) reported a 4.6% growth in consolidated net profit for the first quarter ended June 30, 2026 to ₹13,349 crore as compared with ₹12,760 crore in the year-earlier period.

Consolidated revenue grew 14% YoY to ₹72,275 crore. Annualised AI revenue grew 13.6% quarter on quarter to \$2.6 billion in Q1 FY27. Operating margin was at 24%, while net margin stood at 19.2%. During the first quarter, the company had a Total Contract Value (TCV) of \$9.5 billion.

Workforce strength at the end of the quarter was 5,93,798 as compared with 5,93,069 in the same period last year.

Last Twelve Months (LTM) attrition (IT Services) was 13.6%, the company said in a filing. During the quarter, the company had added 9,279 employees. The board has approved an interim dividend of ₹12 per share. Record date is July 15, 2026 and the payment date is July 31, 2026.

"Q1 FY27 reflects continued growth momentum and the strength of our strategic positioning, despite geopolitical and macro-economic headwinds. We delivered a strong order book of \$9.5 billion, including a marquee AI-led transformation deal with SKF, while continuing to add clients across key revenue bands and scaling our



Workforce strength at the end of the quarter was 5,93,798

AI business to a \$2.6 billion annualised revenue run rate," said Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director K. Krithivasan.

"Q1 was characterised by strong growth across several services. We won multiple AI-led transformation deals with our dual commitment to AI-led optimisation as well as innovation-led outcomes," said Aarthi Subramanian, Executive Director, President and COO.

Samir Sekaria, Chief Financial Officer, said, "In Q1, we rolled out annual wage hikes, strengthened our partnership ecosystem, and targeted investments to enhance long-term competitiveness."

Commenting on the results Shubham Rathore, Principal Analyst at JPMorgan Chase & Co., said, "TCS's resilient first-quarter performance, featuring an 8.5% year-over-year growth in net income to ₹13,849 crore, showcases the firm's capacity to maintain profitability through disciplined execution."

## Life insurers new business premium rises over 13% in June

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HYDERABAD

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On June numbers, Emkay Research said while the protection segment saw continued growth momentum aided by GST rate exemption, the savings business was hit by geopolitical tensions stemming from the West Asia conflict and the overall macroeconomic situation.

## British insurer Aviva to get full ownership of Life JV in India

**The Hindu Bureau**  
HYDERABAD

Aviva is on course to becoming the first foreign insurer to hold 100% stake in an insurance joint venture in India with the British insurer announcing plans to acquire the remaining 26% stake in Aviva Life Insurance Company India from its joint venture partner.

It has signed an agreement to purchase the 26% in Aviva India from its local joint venture partner Dabur Invest Corp. This will take Aviva's ownership of Aviva India to 100% and will give Aviva full control over the strategic direction of the business, the insurer



India now allows 100% FDI in insurance.

said on Thursday.

The decision comes in the backdrop of India notifying the government's decision to permit 100% foreign direct investment (FDI) in insurance from the earlier limit of 74%.

**TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS - TIRUPATI**  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER  
TENDER NOTICE  
AD No. 17/03/CE/TP/2026-27 & NT No. 27/SEH/TP/2026-27  
Name of work: Construction of S.V. Temple and Prakarum with 3 storied Rajagopuram at S.V. Divyakshetram at Parvatipuram, Parvatipuram Manjara District, Andhra Pradesh. Amount: ₹40.00 Lakhs; Time for Completion: 18 months.  
NOTE: For full details, log on to the Website https://www.tirumala.org.  
TIR-40021213/1/2026-PRO SEC(An-107) Dated: 09-07-2026  
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

**KERALA WATER AUTHORITY**  
BE - TENDER NOTICE  
Re-Tender No. 04/2026-27/SE/PP/08/01  
AMRI-12-Kochi Corporation-Providing underground sewerage networks and allied works in the extendable Division 54 of Kochi Corporation for the newly proposed SMD STP at Bannalambam  
Cost of tender form - Rs. 21,025/- (Indivisible of GST)  
EMD - Rs. 500,000/-  
Date and time of Opening Tender - 04/08/2026 3.30 pm  
Last date of receipt of tender - 03/08/2026 3.00 pm  
Phone: 8547638592 E-mail: seppregion@kwa.gov.in

**KMML The Kerala Minerals and Metals Ltd**  
TENDER NOTICE  
For more details, please visit E-Tendering Portal, https://www.kmml.com or www.kmml.com  
S/N Tender ID Items  
1 2026\_KMML\_859547 Fabrication & supply of Condensing Column cooler  
2 2026\_KMML\_859548 Supply, Erection and Commissioning of Vertical Steam Turbine  
3 2026\_KMML\_859767 Supply of Computer server  
4 2026\_KMML\_859705 Global tender for the Supply of High Purity Magnesium Metal  
Chevra 08.07.2026 Sd/- Managing Director for The Kerala Minerals and Metals Ltd

**TNPJ TAMIL NADU NEWSPAPER AND PAPERS LIMITED**  
Unit-1, Kapilapuram - 639 135, Karur District, Tamil Nadu  
Unit-2, Mondipatti - 621 306, Trichy District, Tamil Nadu  
NOTICE INVITING TENDERS  
Tender No. Description Due Date  
262713 002358 Procurement of Segmented Bow Spreader Roll Assembly for Winder #3 at TNPJ Unit-1. 24.07.2026  
262723 001443 Procurement of CATIONIC ROSIN for Board Machine (CCK) at TNPJ Unit-1. 24.07.2026  
Corrigendum if any will be issued in TNPJ Website and NC Portal only.  
Detailed Terms & Conditions are available in tender document at our websites: www.tnpj.com or www.tenders.tn.gov.in or www.intenders.gov.in/ncgepp/app  
DIPRJ 2246 /TENDER/2026

**भारतीय वानिकी अनुसंधान एवं शिक्षा परिषद**  
INDIAN COUNCIL OF FORESTRY RESEARCH AND EDUCATION  
(An Autonomous Body of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Govt. of India)  
प.०. नया दहली, देहरादून - 248006 (उत्तराखण्ड)  
P.O. New Forest, Dehra Dun - 248006 (Uttarakhand)  
विज्ञापन संख्या ०३/निरेख, वनअनुसंधान, जोरहाट, असम/2026-मावनादेशावली  
Advt. No. 03/Director, RFRI, Jorhat, Assam/2026-ICFRE  
भारतीय वानिकी अनुसंधान एवं शिक्षा परिषद (ICFRE) के अन्तर्गत 7वें वेतन आयोग के वेतन स्तर 15 के वेतनमान में निरेख, वनों में अनुसंधान संस्थान, जोरहाट, असम का पद प्रतिष्ठानिक के आधार पर मरने वाले अनुसंधान आगंतिक रिक्त जाते हैं।  
Applications are invited for filling up the post of Director, Rain Forest Research Institute, Jorhat, Assam in the pay scale at Level-15 of 7th CPC Pay Matrix on deputation basis at Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education, Dehradun  
उपरोक्त पद हेतु इच्छुक अभ्यर्थी मावनादेशावली की वेबसाइट <http://www.icfre.org> में दिने विज्ञापन के अनुसार आवेदन कर सकते हैं। आवेदन प्राप्त करने की अंतिम तिथि 24.08.2026 है।  
The interested candidates may apply for the above said post as per detailed advertisement available at ICFRE website <http://www.icfre.org>. The last date of receipt of applications is 24.08.2026  
सचिव, मावनादेशावली  
Secretary, ICFRE

**Rajasthan Medical Services Corporation Ltd.**  
Health Block, Swasthya Bhawan, Tika Marg, C-5 Scheme, Jaipur-302005 (Raj)  
Phone No: 0141-2220006, 2220004, Website: <http://www.rmsc.health.rajasthan.gov.in>  
Email: [seppregion@rmsc.health.rajasthan.gov.in](mailto:seppregion@rmsc.health.rajasthan.gov.in)  
Ref. No. > F02 (443)/RMSCL/PROCUREMENT/DRUG/NB-07/2026-27/4606 Dated: 06/07/2026  
Corrigendum - II in NIB - 07/2026-27  
In Reference to NIB No. F02 (443)/RMSCL/PROCUREMENT/DRUG/NB-07/2026-27/4606 Dated: 02.06.2026 UBN No. MSC2627GLRC00025  
Corrigendum II is issued for date extension in bid. All details may be seen on <https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> in <https://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in>  
Raj.Samudh/26/6437 Director (Proc.) RMSCL

**VISAKHAPATNAM PORT AUTHORITY**  
VISAKHAPATNAM  
E-Tender Call Notice: 2026\_VPT\_281806\_1, Dt. 23.06.2026.  
On behalf of the Members of Board of VPA, E-Tender is invited in Single Stage two steps system from the experienced bidders meeting the pre-qualifying criteria for the work mentioned below through online bidding on the Website <http://www.tenders.gov.in>  
SUB: UP GRADATION OF THE EXISTING 80 BEDDED GOLDEN JUBILEE HOSPITAL TO A 300 BEDDED MULTI-SPECIALITY HAVY SUPER SPECIALITY HOSPITAL AT VISAKHAPATNAM PORT ON DESIGN, BUILD, FINANCE, OPERATE AND TRANSFER (DBFO) BASIS - Due Date of Opening: 06.08.2026  
SECRETARY

**RAJASTHAN RAIJAY VIDIUT UTPADAN NIGAM LTD.**  
Online Tender Notice No. 4109 (RVU2627GLOB080737)  
Online tenders are invited for "Supply of spares for BOMABA Make LPBP Stop and Control Valves". Tender details are available on websites <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> (for e-tender).  
[www.energy.rajasthan.gov.in/vunl](http://www.energy.rajasthan.gov.in/vunl) & [www.sppp.rajasthan.gov.in](http://www.sppp.rajasthan.gov.in)  
Raj.Samudh/26/6570 RVUN/PR-4424 Add. Chief Engineer (DSM)

**Rajasthan Medical Services Corporation Ltd.**  
Health Block, Swasthya Bhawan, Tika Marg, C-5 Scheme, Jaipur-302005 (Raj)  
Phone No: 0141-2220006, 2220004, Website: <http://www.rmsc.health.rajasthan.gov.in>  
Email: [seppregion@rmsc.health.rajasthan.gov.in](mailto:seppregion@rmsc.health.rajasthan.gov.in)  
Ref. No. > F02 (441)/RMSCL/PROCUREMENT/DRUG/NB-03/2026-27/309829 Dated: 30/06/2026  
Corrigendum - I in NIB - 03/2026-27  
In Reference to NIB No. F02 (441)/RMSCL/PROCUREMENT/DRUG/NB-03/2026-27/4494 Dated: 24.06.2026 UBN No. MSC2627GLRC00028  
Corrigendum I is issued for date extension in bid. All details may be seen on <https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> in <https://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in> & <https://www.rmsc.health.rajasthan.gov.in>  
Raj.Samudh/26/6438 Director (Proc.) RMSCL

**JAIPUR VIDYUT VITRAN NIGAM LIMITED**  
Regd. Office: Jan Path, Vidut Bhawan, Jyoti Nagar Jaipur  
Office of the Superintending Engineer (PM Surya Ghar)  
P.O. Power House Premises, Near Ramdevi, Jan Path, Jaipur  
Email: [seppregion@jvnvl.org](mailto:seppregion@jvnvl.org) / [seppregion@pvta.co.in](mailto:seppregion@pvta.co.in)  
E-bids in two parts (Techno-commercial Bid and Price bid) are invited from eligible bidders for the work for Design, Engineering, Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning Of 1,00,000 Nos. Of Consumers Through Net Metering And O&M for 5 Years With Additional 5 Years By Competitive Bidding For Grid Connected Rooftop Solar Plants Through Utility Led Aggregation (Cape) Mode In Jaipur District Under PM Surya Ghar Multi Bui Vijaya Participating bidders can download complete set of bidding documents from e-procurement portal <http://www.tnpj.com> from 08.07.2026 onwards. Last Date/Time for receipt of online bids through e-procurement portal is 29.07.2026 upto 05.00 PM For further details regarding Work, Tender Notifications & Specifications please visit website <http://www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> & <http://www.sppp.rajasthan.gov.in> & <http://www.energy.rajasthan.gov.in/vunl> UBN/VVN2627GLOB080213  
SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (PM SURYA GHAR)  
Raj.Samudh/26/6528 PR-3186 (2026)  
For Security Compliances Ref No. 1909 180 6057

## WASHINGTON

## Trump says 11 jets downed during India-Pakistan hostilities last year



U.S. President Donald Trump has repeated his claim of settling the conflict between India and Pakistan, adding that 11 jets were shot down during the four-day hostilities in May last year. India has consistently denied any third-party intervention. India launched Operation Sindoor in response to the Pahalgam terror attack. PTI

## DHAKA

## Landslide kills 7 children, teacher at Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh



At least seven children and a teacher were killed in a landslide caused by monsoon rains at a Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh's southeastern Cox's Bazar. Four of the children were killed at the scene of the landslide, while others died at the local hospital after they were rescued, officials said. PTI

## LONDON

## Total Eclipse singer Bonnie Tyler, queen of the 80s power ballad, dies



Welsh singer Bonnie Tyler, best known for her powerful, haunting love song *Total Eclipse of the Heart*, has died aged 75 in hospital in Portugal, her family announced on Thursday. With her distinctive husky voice, tousled mane of blonde hair and black eyeliner, Tyler was instantly recognisable as the queen of 1980s power ballad. AFP

## SAN FRANCISCO

## OpenAI launches ChatGPT Work, delving into workplace automation



OpenAI on Thursday unveiled ChatGPT Work, an agent in its popular chatbot designed to execute tasks across different applications and files, marking the startup's latest push into workplace automation. The launch reflects intensifying competition to build and sell AI tools for professional use. REUTERS

# U.S., Iran exchange more attacks across West Asia, threatening deal

Iran reports U.S. strikes around the perimeter of Bushehr nuclear plant as U.S. officials say they hit about 90 Iranian military targets; new fighting erupted hours before the burial of Khamenei; Tehran officials report that U.S. attacks killed 17 people

Agence France-Presse  
MASHHAD

New fighting erupted between the United States and Iran hours ahead of the burial of long-time Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei on Thursday, with Tehran targeting U.S. allies in the region and American strikes hitting the perimeter of an Iranian nuclear power plant.

The renewed hostilities, triggered by tensions over the Strait of Hormuz, sparked concerns of a return to full-scale war after an April ceasefire and a June U.S.-Iran accord ended five weeks of conflict.



Mourners carry a banner against Donald Trump as they gather on the day of Khamenei's burial in Mashhad on Thursday. REUTERS

This was the second day in a row that the decades-old foes exchanged attacks, with Iranian officials reporting the U.S. attacks had killed 17 people.

The Islamic republic said it had resumed its attacks targeting U.S. assets in Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar, while sirens blared in Jordan — another U.S. ally

— where the military said it had intercepted eight missiles launched from Iran.

The fighting came with Iran preparing to bury Khamenei, who was killed alongside close family members on the first day of the U.S.-Israeli war against Iran on February 28, in his hometown of Mashhad.

**'Effort to overshadow'**  
The United States targeted the perimeter of Iran's only civilian nuclear plant with a strike on Thursday, Iranian state media reported, citing the deputy governor of Bushehr province.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry said the U.S. attacks

targeted civilian infrastructure, including railway bridges, and described the strikes as a "gross war crime".

U.S. military officials said Thursday's strikes hit approximately 90 Iranian military targets, including air defence systems, missile and drone storage sites.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards accused the United States of an "effort to overshadow" Khamenei's funeral with its attacks.

In a sign of the security tensions, at least one fighter jet escorted the plane carrying Khamenei's coffin to its final burial in Mashhad.

# Ukrainian drones strike Russian oil depots, tankers

Associated Press  
KYIV

Ukrainian drones hit more Russian oil facilities and set two oil tankers ablaze in the Sea of Azov on Thursday, a day after U.S. President Donald Trump pledged to grant Kyiv a licence to manufacture the Patriot air defence systems to protect its cities.

A top Ukrainian official, meanwhile, cautioned that it could take a year or more for the country to produce Patriot interceptors.

A Ukrainian drone strike triggered a fire at an oil depot in the western Russian city of Tver, according to acting Governor Vitaly Korolyov.

Oil reservoirs also were set ablaze by drones in Vyazniki, in the southern



People queue to refuel their cars at a petrol station in Moscow as Ukrainian strikes on its facilities crimp domestic supply. AFP

Stavropol region, said Governor Vladimir Vladimirov, forcing the evacuation of several apartment buildings near the facility.

In the Sea of Azov, Ukrainian drones set two oil tankers on fire, according to Rostov Governor Yuri Shusar, who said one of the ships was still burning and its crew evacuated.

The attack was the latest in a series of strikes on oil tankers in the area in recent days, part of Ukraine efforts to cut fuel supplies to the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia illegally annexed in 2014.

Russia's Defence Ministry said its defences downed 73 Ukrainian drones during the past day.

# Ebola death toll in Congo reaches 600, as new cases surge

Associated Press  
KINSHASA

New suspected cases of Ebola have been reported in parts of Congo that were previously unaffected, the government said on Thursday, as the death toll in the country's latest Ebola outbreak reached 600.

According to the Congolese Health Ministry, suspected cases have now been recorded in the provinces of Tshopo and Haut-Uele, signalling the continued spread of the disease beyond the epicentre in Ituri.

A Congolese government report, published late Wednesday, said two new cases were suspected

in Kisangani, in Tshopo province. The Minister did not say how many cases were suspected in Haut-Uele. The total number of confirmed cases across the country has now reached 1,759.

According to the report, one of the two suspected cases in Tshopo was linked to the Nia-Nia health zone in Ituri province, where the first cases were reported, while the other case "has no apparent geographical connection to known outbreaks."

Last week, clinical trials for treatment began after researchers launched a highly anticipated study in the hope of fighting the deadly virus.

## Civic protest



Protesters chant slogans during a demonstration by the 'March and March' movement, calling upon the government to enforce tougher measures against illegal immigration and to deport undocumented foreign nationals, in Mtwalume, South Africa on Thursday. AFP

# Syria welcomes U.S. announcement of removal from blacklist

Agence France-Presse  
DAMASCUS

Damascus welcomed a U.S. announcement that it would remove Syria from its list of "state sponsors of terrorism", a move that one economist said opened the door to economic recovery and foreign investment.

"A dark page in Syria's history has been turned," Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani wrote on X.

The United States announced on Wednesday that it would remove Syria from its blacklist of countries it accuses of supporting terrorism, a designation it placed on Syria nearly five decades ago



Asaad al-Shaibani

and which had curbed investment in the country.

The Syrian Foreign Ministry called the move "an important development in the course of Syrian-American relations".

The move will be effective in 45 days unless lawmakers take the unlikely step of blocking it.

# Shoe factory fire kills at least 28 people in southeast China

Reuters  
BEIJING

At least 28 people were killed in a fire at a shoe factory in southeastern China on Thursday, state-run Xinhua news agency reported, after flames engulfed the multi-storey building, trapping workers on the rooftop.

The fire broke out at around noon local time in the city of Jinjiang in Fujian province, at footwear manufacturer Huiteng.

A total of 239 people were at the factory when the fire broke out, Xinhua said. It said 213 were evacuated, two of whom died after being taken to hospital for treatment. Another 26 people previously re-



Firefighters at the scene of a footwear factory fire in Jiangtong village in southeastern China's Fujian province on Thursday. AP

ported missing at the scene were confirmed dead. Jinjiang, in the coastal Fujian province, is a major footwear and clothing manufacturing hub and is often referred to as China's "shoe capital".

Preliminary findings indicate the fire started on the ground floor of the fac-

tory, a local official told CCTV. Shoe-making materials stored in the building were highly flammable and could cause a blaze to spread rapidly, the official said.

People in charge of the company and "other relevant personnel" have been taken into custody.

# Sri Lankan universities close and shift to online classes as dengue cases top 65,000 in the island

Meera Srinivasan  
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's University of Colombo has decided to move some lectures online amid the persisting dengue surge on the island, authorities said. The decision comes after the University of Moratuwa and the University of the Visual and Performing Arts temporarily closed their campuses, as the country confronts one of its worst outbreaks of the vector-borne disease.

The National Dengue Control Unit has reported a total of 65,034 dengue cases this year, with capital Colombo accounting for about a fifth of the cases. As many as 45 dengue-re-



Prevention push: A municipal worker fumigates a residential area during a dengue prevention campaign in Colombo. AFP

lated deaths have been recorded as of Wednesday.

Since May this year, the University of Colombo has recorded a total of 71 cases, cumulatively, among its students, according to Vice Chancellor Professor Indika Mahesh Karunathilake.

"The Faculty of Arts saw more cases of fever, some of which could even be viral or chikungunya. The students were concerned, so we decided to shift to online lessons. The decision is not entirely to do with the current spread,

**As many as 45 dengue-related deaths have been recorded in country**

but it is to allow students to rest and recover. We are giving other faculties the option of hybrid lessons," he told *The Hindu*.

As the number of dengue cases across the island rose last month, authorities appointed a military-led team to monitor the outbreak, while hospitals reported overcrowding of patients. "The tri-forces and police have helped us intensify inspection, including through drone cameras, clean up campaigns, fogging operations

and awareness," a senior official with the unit told *The Hindu*. "We need to wait for about two weeks, considering the incubation period and life cycle of the vectors for a realistic assessment. While we are doing our best, the situation is still challenging," the official said, comparing the current outbreak to the one seen in 2017, Sri Lanka's largest. That year, a total of 1,86,101 cases were reported.

Public health officials have linked the current outbreak to the debris from Cyclone Ditwah, which hit Sri Lanka in December 2025, claiming over 600 lives and leaving behind a long path of destruction.

## We are not influenced by anyone, says FIFA refereeing chief Collina



## Jorge Jesus to take over as the Portugal coach after its WC exit



I expect you to go out on a rowing trip: Haaland on Rooney's promise



## Henderson undergoes surgery after suffering freak arm injury



# Will Belgium find chinks in Spain's ironclad defence?

## Stutter-step penalty style can make the best look cool or silly

## Muchova, Noskova set up all-Czechia finale

## Brook and Salt on song as England seals series win

**The scores:** India 158/7 in 20 overs (Shreyas 80 n.o., Archer 2/20, Tongue 2/36) lost to England 159/1 in 13.5 overs (Salt 59 n.o., Brook 79 n.o.). **Toss:** India.

## INBRIEF



## Pogacar reclaims yellow jersey with stage six win

Reigning champion Tadej Pogacar stamped his authority on the Tour de France on Thursday, winning the mountainous sixth stage and reclaiming the race leader's yellow jersey. Pogacar now leads by more than two-and-a-half minutes from his main rival Jonas Vingegaard.

## India clinches five medals at Asian U-23 athletics

India clinched five medals, including the mixed 4x400m relay gold, to begin its Asian U-23 athletics championships campaign on a strong note here on Thursday. The quartet of Astik Pradhan, Sandra Mol Sabu, Sethu Mishra and Shrawani Sachin Sangle clocked 3m18.64s to take the top spot. Bhartipreet Singh opened India's account with the men's discus throw bronze with an effort of 52.91m. Indians finished 2-3 in the men's 5000m race final with Shivaji Parashuram Madappagoudra taking silver in 14:08.19 and Vinod Singh claiming bronze with 14:23.67. Prachi Devkar also won bronze, in the women's 3000m steeplechase, clocking 10:32.69s.

## LIVE TELECAST

**England Women vs India Women:** One-off Test, Day One, Sony Sports Ten 2 & Liv, 3.30 p.m.  
**Wimbledon:** Star Sports 1, 2, SS Select 1, 2 & JioHotstar, 5.30 p.m.  
**FIFA World Cup:** Unit8 Sports 1, 2 & 25 App, 12.30 a.m. (Saturday).

# 'Made in Africa' can be the continent's success mantra

## FIFA WORLD CUP

## S. Shrivathsan

Spain, France and Belgium. To the wider football community, these are the three other active teams in the World Cup bracket that Morocco finds itself in (as on Thursday). But for those associated with the 'beautiful game' in the African nation, these are lands which produced and polished some of the gems who have sparked at the global spectacle.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the 2022 WC semifinalist has hugely benefited from the strong presence of heritage players - as many as 19 members in the final 26-man squad were born outside the country.

Fascinatingly, there was a period against Brazil when the Atlas Lions fielded an XI with no Moroccan-born footballers.



**Exception:** While Morocco has benefited from the presence of heritage players like Hakimi, other African nations have struggled at the global level despite their recruitment drive. GETTY IMAGES

Morocco is not the only African nation relying on origin players. Algeria, DR Congo, Senegal, Ivory Coast and Cape Verde - some of the other sides from that continent which made it to the knockouts - have had a lot of European flavour. In a few cases, the teams pull out all stops to bring someone 'home'.

For instance, centre-

back Pico Lopes, one of Cape Verde's superheroes in its debut WC run, was roped in via a 'recruitment drive' on LinkedIn.

But in the grand scheme of things, the acquisition of heritage players has not led to spectacular success at the global level, with Morocco being an exception.

While the National federations have every right to

coax players who satisfy the FIFA eligibility criteria, they must develop their respective football structures to expand the pool of home-grown talent. It should not be forgotten that the majority of the origin footballers learnt the tricks of their trade in European academies.

In areas where people's hearts beat for football, wisely investing more time, effort and money is not a strenuous task.

When a solid groundwork is laid, the African nations can call the shots in the following instances - when heritage players view them as an easier route to international football and when they choose them only after being overlooked by their country of birth.

Morocco is currently the standard-bearer for African football. For others to challenge it, 'Made in Africa' may not be a bad option.

# India assured of eight medals

## BOXING

Press Trust of India  
JAKART

Indian women boxers continued their impressive run at the Asian U-19 and U-23 boxing championships with six pugilists advancing to the semifinals to assure themselves of medals on day 5 of the tournament here on Thursday.

India is now assured of eight medals in the U-19 women's competition.

Chandrika Bhoreswar Pujari (51kg) delivered a dominant 5-0 victory over Kazakhstan's Zhadyra Kaltrya, while Joyshree Devi (54kg) registered a convincing 5-0

win against Kazakhstan's Maral Tolpebergen.

Prachi (57kg) continued her fine form with a clinical 5-0 win over Uzbekistan's Robiya Ravshanova, while Chahat (60kg) secured a comprehensive 5-0 victory against Kazakhstan's Zhasmin Abramyan.

**The results (quarterfinals):**  
**U-19: Women: 48kg:** Gunjan bt Altanzul Altangadas (Mgl) 3-2.  
**51kg:** Chandrika Bhoreswar Pujari bt Zhadyra Kaltrya (Kaz) 5-0.  
**54kg:** Joyshree Devi bt Maral Tolpebergen (Kaz) 5-0.  
**57kg:** Prachi bt Robiya Ravshanova (Uzb) 5-0.  
**60kg:** Chahat bt Zhasmin Abramyan (Kaz) 5-0.  
**65kg:** Rushanabonu Isoeva (Uzb) bt Vanshika (RSC first round).  
**70kg:** Maifuna Vangieva (Uzb) bt Lakshu 5-0.  
**75kg:** Anshika bt Altyngul Aymukhan (Kaz) 4-1.

# Mexico names Marquez as new coach

Agence France-Presse  
MEXICO CITY

Former Mexico and Barcelona defender Rafael Marquez was named the country's new head coach on Wednesday after Javier Aguirre stepped down following the co-host's elimination from the World Cup.

Marquez, who made 147 appearances for his country, will have the task of ensuring the 'continuity of the project' started by 67-year-old Aguirre, the Mexican football federation said. The 47-year-old gained coaching experience by taking charge of Barcelona's reserve team.

# Disappointing day for Indian recurve archers

## Sports Bureau

Indian recurve archers had a disappointing day as the country's men and women teams lost their respective quarterfinal matches to the USA at the Archery World Cup Stage-4 in Madrid on Thursday. The men's team suffered a 0-6 defeat, while the women's side lost 2-6.

B. Dhiraj scored his season best performance (691) to finish second in the individual qualification round on Wednesday.

**The results: Recurve:**  
**Qualification: Men:** B. Dhiraj (2nd, 691), Neeraj Chauhan (8th, 677), Atanu Das (26th, 668).  
**Women:** Kirti (4th, 668), Kumkum Mohod (14th, 654), Anikita Bhakat

## UTT

K. Keerthivasan  
PANAJI

Fired by 18-year-old P.B. Abhinandh's blazing start, Dempo Goa Challengers thumped defending champion U Mumba TT 10-5 on the opening day of the Ultimate Table Tennis at the Shyama Prasad Indoor Stadium here on Thursday.

Abhinandh, ranked 210 in the world, produced an outstanding display of aggressive table tennis, combining precision with some quick serves to dismantle Lilian Bardet 11-6, 11-2, 11-3 and hand the host a rousing start.

The teenager, ranked 11 in the junior-19 international circuit, was firing on all cylinders from the outset, attacking at every opportunity - on the receive, off his own serve and during rallies - to keep the World No.42 Frenchman



**Strong start:** Abhinandh combined precision with some quick serves to dismantle Bardet. BUTTERFLY/UTT

under constant pressure. Bardet struggled to read Abhinandh's deceptively quick serves as the Indian raced to early leads in all three games.

Whenever Bardet threatened to take the offensive route, Abhinandh responded with rock-solid defence before seamlessly switching back to attack.

The costliest pick at the

auction, Goa's Bernadette Szocs justified her price tag with a clinical 11-7, 11-9, 11-7 victory over Nithyashree Mani.

**Dictating play**  
The World No. 25 produced a near error-free display, dictating play from the start and rarely allowing her opponent a foothold into the match.

walkover; Mount Carmel (Dwarka) bt Amity IS (Saket) 2-0; G.D. Goenka (Dwarka) bt Kendriya Vidyalaya (R.K. Puram) 2(5)-2(3) on penalties; Vinay Nagar Bangali SSS bt DPS (Mathura Road) by walkover.

**Girls:** Mother's IS bt Government Co-Education SSS 2-0, Bharti PS bt Amity International (Noida) by walkover.

**Swimmer Kavyanjali shines**  
Swimmer Kavyanjali Tokas, a student of Delhi Public School (R.K. Puram), delivered a superb performance at the all-India IPSC under-14 girls' athletics championships by winning three gold medals and one bronze.

She clinched gold in the 50m butterfly, 100m butterfly and 200m butterfly events.

**Results: Boys:** Mother's International bt Government Co-Education SSS (Dwarka) 2-0; Bharti PS bt Amity IS, Noida by

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**The winners: Boys:**  
**Championship:** Rakshit Dahiy; **Category Spl. A:** Rakshit Dahiy; **A:** Anas Khan; **B:** Sakshit Purender; **C:** Shan Alvi; **D:** Lakshit Deswal.  
**Girls:**  
**Championship:** Yogya Bhalla; **Spl. A:** Iia Kataria; **A:** Yogya Bhalla; **B:** Anushika Gupta; **C:**

**Results: Boys:** Mother's International bt Government Co-Education SSS (Dwarka) 2-0; Bharti PS bt Amity IS, Noida by

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The midfielder has been as instrumental as Haaland in Norway's run to its maiden quarterfinal; next up for him is a tough test against England

Captain Martin Odegaard has been just as instrumental to Norway's first-ever quarterfinal qualification. The midfielder provided an assist in each of his first three WC appearances – against Iraq, Senegal, and Ivory Coast. He became only the third

Operating as the playmaker in Stale Solbakken's 4-3-3 set-up, the Arsenal man has become the hub

generation' can go.

Asunta, who is also currently a Hockey India se-

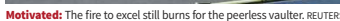
Alleging that the trigger was her complaint against coach Sudhir Golla for sexually exploiting female players, Asunta detailed her experience.

"My father had a serious accident two months ago and is unwell even now. On May 9, I got a call from Bholanath Singh. His exact words were 'Apni aukat me raho, aukat me reh ke baat karo. Warna hame aata hai aukat batana'. To be honest, I was rattled by his threats and given my family situation, I am both disturbed and scared about what might happen," the former midfielder told *The Hindu*.

"Hockey Jharkhand officials have been constantly trying to discredit and threaten me. The incident happened during HIL but the girl in question has been influenced to file a

Bholanath, however, dismissed all allegations. "Nothing of that sort has happened, I have no idea why she is saying all this. But I completely deny all of it," he said when contacted.

Since first breaking the world record in Torun six years ago, Duplantis has



"Time has already gone

really, really quickly,” Duplantis, who made his Diamond League debut in 2017, said on Thursday. “I’ve actually been jumping for a long time especially at this level. It’s pretty

While courtesy and politeness are often rolled by the 26-year-old out in answer to questions about whether he still had the desire to compete in one of

| <b>BANGALORE WEST CITY CORPORATION</b><br><small>(Kengeri Division, Raj Nagar Zone SBMP Office Building, AC No-3, 1st Main Road,<br/>             Outer Ring Road Kengeri Marginal, Bengaluru Urban, Bengaluru-560009)</small>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| No.EEKEN/ENVD/06/2026-27                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Date: 09.07.2026                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>INVITATION FOR SHORT TERM TENDER (IFT) (Tender Notification)</b><br><b>Through GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <p>The Executive Engineer, Kengeri Division, ZONE-1 invites tenders on behalf of the Commissioner, BWCC, Bengaluru from eligible Tenderers for the construction of works detailed in the table below. The Tenderers may submit tenders for works given in the table through e-procurement portal of the Government of Karnataka (<a href="http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in">viz http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in</a>). The Tenderers are advised to note the minimum qualification criteria specified in Clause 3 of the Instructions to Tenderers to qualify for award of the contract. 2.Tender documents may be downloaded from the Karnataka Public Procurement Portal of the Government of Karnataka Date: <b>10.07.2026</b> . 3.Tenders must be submitted online on Date:<b>22.07.2026</b> Karnataka Procurement Portal or on before <b>16.00 hours on Date:22.07.2026</b> . 4. Other details can be seen in the tender document.</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Sl. No.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>Name of the Work/Approximate value of work (Rs in Lakhs)/</b><br><b>EMD amount in Rs.</b>                                                                                                                      |
| <b>TWO COVER SYSTEM, CMI -1, Period of Completion : 6 Months</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Improvements of Roads and Drains Shivnagar, Akkipikkali colony and Surrounding areas in ward No.18, Kengal Hanumanthiah West. Approximate Value of work : <b>Rs. 120.09 Lakhs, EMD : Rs. 2.00,000/-</b> .         |
| 2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Improvements of Roads and Drains Gandhinagar and Surrounding areas in ward No.18, Kengal Hanumanthiah West. Approximate Value of work : <b>Rs. 119.02 Lakhs, EMD : Rs. 2.00,000/-</b> .                           |
| 3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Comprehensive Development of Roads and Drains and other Improvement works at Pattanagara and Surrounding Area in Ward No-21, Kengeri. Approximate Value of work : <b>Rs. 120.09 Lakhs, EMD : Rs. 2.00,000/-</b> . |
| <p>1) Tender Documents may be downloaded through e-portal from :<br/>                     01 Chief Engineer, Ideal Homes, Rajarajawadi Nagar Zone, Block-98. 3) Last date &amp; Time for receipt of Tenders : <b>22.07.2026 Upto 4.00PM</b>. 4) Opening of Bids : <b>23.07.2026 Upto 4.30PM</b>. 5) Validity of Tenders : <b>6 Months after the dead line date for Tender submission</b>. 6) Bid Validity : <b>90Days</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Sd/- Executive Engineer, Kengeri division, BWCC, Zone-1</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

| Tender Schedule                                                                         |                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Date and Time for Activity                                                              | Date/Time: Duration                                                                                                                 |
| Online Sale/ Download Date of Tender Documents                                          | From: 11/07/2026 (16:00 Hrs.) to 01/08/2026 (16:00 Hrs.)<br>( <a href="https://eproc2.bihargov.in">https://eproc2.bihargov.in</a> ) |
| Pre-Bid Meeting                                                                         | 17/07/2026 at 12:30 Hrs.<br>(Bihar School Examination Board, Bihar Library Road, Patna-800017)                                      |
| Last Date/ Time for Submission/ uploading of Online Bid                                 | 01/08/2026 up to 16:00 Hrs.<br>( <a href="https://eproc2.bihargov.in">https://eproc2.bihargov.in</a> )                              |
| Last Date and Time for submission of EMD in Hard Copy/Original<br>(Only in case of Bid) | 03/08/2026 at 13:00 Hrs.                                                                                                            |
| Date & Time for Opening of Technical Bid                                                | 03/08/2026 at 15:00 Hrs.<br>( <a href="https://eproc2.bihargov.in">https://eproc2.bihargov.in</a> )                                 |
| Date & Time for Opening of Financial Bid                                                | Date to be announced later by Competent Authority.                                                                                  |
| Cost of the Tender Document                                                             | <b>₹5,900/-</b> (Five Thousand Nine Hundred Rupees Only)<br>(Non-Refundable)                                                        |
| Tender Processing Fee                                                                   | <b>₹5,900/-</b> (Five Thousand Nine Hundred Rupees Only)<br>(Non-Refundable)                                                        |
| Earnest Money                                                                           | <b>₹5,00,000/-</b> (Five Lakh Rupees only) (Refundable)                                                                             |

\* Contact Details: **Nodal Officer, Eproc. Nse- 91 62999 23095.**  
**E-Mail ID: [eproc-bseb.bih.gov.in](mailto:eproc-bseb.bih.gov.in), [eproc.bseb@gmail.com](mailto:eproc.bseb@gmail.com)**

\* **Note:** Bihar School Examination Board reserves the right to accept/ cancel/ reschedule tenders without assigning any reasons. Prospective bidders are advised to regularly visit <https://eproc2.bihargov.in>, Corrigendum/ Amendments etc., if any will be notified on this portal only and no separate advertisement will be made.

**Secretary**

| BENGALURU WEST CITY CORPORATION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| Office of the Executive Engineer, Vijayanagar Division, West Zone-2, 1st Floor, Shashanka Bhavan, 3rd Main,<br>Vijayanagar, Bengaluru-560004, Mobile: 9406826822 E-mail: vijayanagardivision@gmail.com                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| No.EE(VJN)/TEND/KPPP07/2026-27                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Date: 08.07.2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>INVITATION FOR TENDER (IFT) (TWO COVER SYSTEM)</b><br>(Tender Notification) (Through GKD KPPR portal only)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| The Executive Engineer, Vijayanagar Division, BWCC invites standard tender documents KW-4 on behalf of the Commissioner, BWCC, Bengaluru from eligible Tenderers registered in GBA or equivalent registration with PWD/CPWD or any state Governmental Organization for the execution of works detailed in the table below. The tenders may submit tenders for works given in the table through KPPR portal of the Government of Karnataka ( <a href="http://www.kppr.karnataka.gov.in">viz http://www.kppr.karnataka.gov.in</a> ) |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Sl. No.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Name of the Work/Estimate Cost in Lakhs/Amount To tender<br><b>Rs. in Lakhs/ Period of Completion/EMD amount in Rs.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Additional development and Revitalisation works of Vijayanagar Corporation Boulevard & Footpath Development Works in Ward B5- Adichunchanigri, 48-Hosahalli, 83-Hampianna and 91 Gaali angana and Compound Works at KAVIKA Layout PHASE-3 (Package-VJN-01) Annexure-3 (Action Plan No. 78).<br>Est Cost : <b>Rs.1500.00 Lakhs</b> , Amount Put to Tender : <b>INR57.31 Lakhs</b> . EMD : <b>Rs.15,00,000.00/-</b><br><b>(Rs.1.00 lakh through e-procurement portal &amp; the balance Rs.14,00,000/- shall be in the form of Bank Guarantee / FD).</b> Period of Completion : <b>11 Months</b> .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Remodeling of Storm Water Drain Pipes at Vijayanagar Assembly Constituency 1.Storm Water Drain Cum Steel Bridge, Bend Bepin & Chain Link Fencing at 44 feet Road, K.P.Agrahara, 2. Guide Wall & Back Improvement at KAVIKA Layout & Under Gadi Anjanaya Bridge 3. Shamanga Garden & Manjunathnagar Linking Bridge 4. Secondary Drain works at near in Venkateshwara School Manjunathnagar 5.Storm Water Drain Jacketting Work for V102 Beside Satellite Bus Stand & RCC Box drain at Mango tree park in RPC layout (Package-VJN-04) Annexure-7 (Action Plan No. 23). Est Cost : <b>Rs.1000.00 Lakhs</b> , Amount Put to Tender : <b>788.86 Lakhs</b> . EMD : <b>Rs. 11,83,300.00</b> . <b>(Rs.1.00 lakh through e-procurement portal &amp; the balance Rs. 10,83,300/- shall be in the form of Bank Guarantee / FD).</b> Period of Completion : <b>11 Months</b> .                                   |
| 3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | New & Existing Parks Developmental Work in Vijayanagar Assembly Constituency (Package-VJN-05) Annexure-7 (Action Plan No. 28). Est Cost : <b>Rs.1500.00 Lakhs</b> , Amount Put to Tender : <b>INR57.31 Lakhs</b> . EMD : <b>Rs.15,00,000.00/-</b><br><b>(Rs.1.00 lakh through e-procurement portal &amp; the balance Rs.14,00,000/- shall be in the form of Bank Guarantee / FD).</b> Period of Completion : <b>11 Months</b> .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 4                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Additional works for Ambekdar Bhavana at Avalahalli Bazar in Vijayanagar Assembly Constituency (Package-VJN-06) Annexure-7 (Action Plan No. 30). Est Cost : <b>Rs.1000.00 Lakhs</b> , Amount Put to Tender : <b>788.86 Lakhs</b> . EMD : <b>Rs. 11,83,300.00</b> . <b>(Rs.1.00 lakh through e-procurement portal &amp; the balance Rs. 10,83,300/- shall be in the form of Bank Guarantee / FD).</b> Period of Completion : <b>11 Months</b> .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 5                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Additional development works Deepanjalinagar Lake. Phase-2 & Drilling of borewell and installation of pump & motors in Vijayanagara Assembly Constituency & Additional Works for Amar Jyawan Park development Work. Improvement of Play area at Opp Sky Line Apartment & Ornamental Poles for Street Lights to WOC Road in Vijayanagar Assembly Constituency and Ground Development Work in Vijayanagar Assembly Constituency & Additional works for Multipurpose Building opp Hyper Village Bazar in Vijayanagar Assembly Constituency (Package-VJN-07) Annexure-7 (Action Plan No. 24, 27, 29, 31, 33). Est Cost : <b>Rs.1200.00 Lakhs</b> , Amount Put to Tender : <b>947.40 Lakhs</b> . EMD : <b>Rs.14,21,100.00</b> . <b>(Rs.1.00 lakh through e-procurement portal &amp; the balance Rs.13,21,100/- shall be in the form of Bank Guarantee/ FD).</b> Period of Completion : <b>11 Months</b> . |
| 6                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Bastification Work of 3 Underpasses & Pedestrian Subway at Vijayanagar Assembly Constituency and Renovation Work of Smt Pramila Bayi Auditorium at Vijayanagar Ward in Vijayanagar Assembly Constituency and Additional work for Rangamandira, Commercial Complex, Multipurpose Building at 3rd Main Road, Basaveshwara Layout & Kanana Bhavana in Vijayanagar Assembly Constituency (Package-VJN-08) Annexure-7 (Action Plan No. 25, 26, 32). Est Cost : <b>Rs.1000.00 Lakhs</b> , Amount Put to Tender : <b>799.62 Lakhs</b> . EMD : <b>Rs.11,99,430.00</b> . <b>(Rs.1.00 lakh through e-procurement portal &amp; the balance Rs. 10,99,430/- shall be in the form of Bank Guarantee / FD).</b> Period of Completion : <b>11 Months</b> .                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Time Schedule/Calendar of events :</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 1. Tender documents may be downloaded from the e-procurement portal : <b>From 10-07-2026 .2</b> . Last date of submission queries : <b>16-07-2026 within 3:00 p.m .3</b> , Pre-Bid Meeting : <b>On 16-07-2026 at 4:00 p.m .4</b> . Last Date & Time for receipt of tender : <b>On 18-07-2026 upto 4:00 p.m .5</b> . Date & Time for Opening of technical bids : <b>On 20-07-2026 at 11:00 a.m .6</b> . Date & Time for Opening of Financial bid : <b>21-07-2026 after 16.00 hrs .7</b> .                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 7. Validity of Tender : <b>180 days</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Sd/- Executive Engineer, (Vijayanagar), Zone-2, BWCCO                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

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**Ladies of Lord's:** A montage of the India squad members ahead of the special occasion. @BCCIWOMEN

## England and India set for battle in historic Test

It will be a quick turnaround for the two outfits seeking to put the disappointment in the T20 WC behind; onus will be on the visiting team's batters to come good against a strong bowling unit

### INDIA IN ENGLAND

**P.K. Ajith Kumar**  
LONDON

Heather Knight, her hands folded, smiles from a billboard at a bus stop in St. John's Wood.

You have just seen the England batter strapping her pads on another billboard during the ride on London's famously efficient underground train services, better known as the tube.

This is at Lord's, too. This billboard is much bigger.

There's nothing like this. All those advertisements say.

### Grand stage

There certainly has been nothing like this at Lord's for 239 years. A Women's Test.

Women cricketers are

indeed doing what they are good at. Breaking glass ceilings.

Only a couple of months ago, Sarah Taylor was appointed as the fielding coach of England's men's team.

One of cricket's greatest wicketkeepers, male or female, she played only 10 Tests though she figured in 126 ODIs and 90 T20Is. Women get to play so few Tests, yes.

So the players of both England and India will be excited about the historic Test starting at Lord's on Friday. It would also be an opportunity for both teams to push behind them the disappointments they had at the T20 World Cup, which had concluded last Sunday.

England had lost the final to the brilliant Australians, who, earlier, had knocked out India with their win in the last group game.

The last time the two teams met in a Test was in Navi Mumbai in 2023. India had won that game by 347 runs.

Deepthi Sharma had match figures of nine for 39 and that was after making 67 in the first innings.

She could have a key role to play here, too.

She would be hoping batters like Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodrigues and captain Harmanpreet Kaur put enough runs on the board.

It cannot be easy though, against the England bowlers, whom you could see, training, from the media centre.

At the media box, you are greeted on the glass door by several vintage photographs and drawings chronicling women's cricket.

On the top-left corner is a drawing of the first ever recorded women's match, played at Guildford, near

Surrey, between the villages of Bramley and Hambleton, in 1745.

In the picture, women, in long, full-sleeved dresses, are in all their full finery, including decorated hats. One of them is in front of the two stumps, with bat in her hands, and is waiting for the ball. Her wait is finally over.

**The teams (from):**  
**England:** Nat Sciver-Brunt (Capt.), Tammy Beaumont, Lauren Bell, Maia Bouchier, Alice Capsey, Tilly Corteen-Coleman, Sophie Ecclestone, Lauren Filer, Amy Jones, Heather Knight, Emma Lamb, Grace Potts, Ellie Thriffield, Mady Villiers, and Issy Wong.

**India:** Harmanpreet Kaur (Capt.), Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Verma, Yastika Bhatia, Jemimah Rodrigues, Deepthi Sharma, Richa Ghosh, Shree Charani, Nandini Sharma, Harleen Deol, Sneha Rana, Renuka Singh, Kanti Gaud, Sayali Satghare, and Priya Punia. The one-off Test will be held from July 10 to 13. The day's play will start at 3.30 p.m. IST.

## It is a big moment for all of us, says a grateful Harmanpreet

**P.K. Ajith Kumar**  
LONDON

Harmanpreet Kaur has made it a habit of being part of historic moments. She led the Indian women to a first-ever ODI World Cup triumph in Navi Mumbai last year.

On Friday, she will lead her team on to the field for the maiden women's Test at Lord's. "It is a very big moment for all of us," the India skipper said on the eve of the Test against England. "As a captain and as a player, I'm really looking forward to this opportunity. As kids, we always dream about playing Test matches and playing at Lord's is one of those dreams. All the girls are very excited."

She is glad that a women's Test is finally being played at Lord's. "Maybe it is late, but not too late," she said. "I am still playing cricket and therefore getting this opportunity to be part of a historic match."



Smriti... ready for the test.  
@BCCIWOMEN

Harmanpreet is confident of a good show from her team. "Our last two Tests have been very good for us and we have always played good cricket against

England," she said. "We may not be that used to playing Tests, but we enjoy them so much. Even during the photoshoot on Wednesday, everybody was so excited wearing the white kit."

She would love to have more Tests for women. Since the last time the Indian women toured England for a Test, in 2021, they have played only five more. And a country like New Zealand, one of the strongest in women's cricket, doesn't even play Tests any longer.

"As cricketers, we definitely want to be part of many Test matches," Har-

manpreet said. "But I think that is totally the authorities' call. I have seen women's cricket growing all these years. I think we are in the right hands, and they are the ones to take a call."

England skipper Nat Sciver-Brunt said it was a privilege to play the Test at Lord's. "It is a huge honour and a privilege that we will be walking out there. It is something we have hoped for. It could have happened in the last three or four years. I think we are pretty deserving of being here and we will relish the opportunity."



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### STORES IN DELHI NCR

**North Delhi:** Kamla Nagar - Bhamra Shah Marg, Model Town - Gujranwala Town Part 1, Pitampura - Kohat Enclave & Unity One Elegante Mall, Rohini - Maharaja Agrasen Marg | **South Delhi:** DLF Promenade - Vasant Kunj, Lalpat Nagar - Market Road, Pacific Mall Jasola, Select City Walk - Saket, South Extension 1 | **East Delhi:** Preet Vihar - Vikas Marg, Shahdara - Kabir Nagar | **West Delhi:** Janakpuri - Najafgarh Road, Pacific Mall Tagore Garden - Tilak Nagar, Paschim Vihar - Police Colony, Rajouri Garden - Najafgarh Road, Dwarka - Tirupati Plaza Sector 11 & Vegas Mall Sector 14 | **Central Delhi:** Karol Bagh - Pusa Road, Omxale Mall Chandni Chowk - H.C. Sen Marg | **Faridabad:** Mall of Faridabad - NIT, Mathura Main Road - Neelam Alronda Metro Station, Omxale World Street - Sector 79 | **Ghaziabad:** Aditya City Centre - Indrapuram, Ambedkar Road - New Gandhi Nagar, Shipra Mall - Indrapuram | **Gurgaon:** AIPAL Joystreet - Badshahpur, Ambience Mall - DLF Phase 3, Felix Plaza Mall - Sector 82A, Gold Souk Mall - Sector 43, Good Earth Sixty9 - Sector 69, MG Road - Sector 28, Sector 14 - Old Delhi Gurugram Road, Sector 29 - Near Leisure Valley Road | **Noida:** Central 50 - Sector 50, DLF Mall of India - Sector 18, Spectrum Metro Mall - Sector 75, Wave One Courtyard - Sector 18 | **Greater Noida:** Galaxy Blue Sapphire Plaza - West Link Road, Gaur City Mall - Gaur Chowk, Knowledge Park II - India Expo Plaza

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Of all the failures that have liberally dotted the coach's brief tenure, the most chastening will be the 2-0 rout in Ireland, followed closely by 76 all out against England in Nottingham. Several of India's methods in the last couple of years have been steeped in madness that is all too visible

R. Kaushik

It's been a while since India had a disastrous overseas cricketing sojourn. A long, long while, come to think of it.

There was a time even the most invested and committed supporter of the Indian team would take the worst for granted when their heroes embarked on an away Test tour, especially of Australia or England or New Zealand (from 2006, the voodoo of South Africa went away, though it is the only land where India haven't won a series yet). A draw was viewed as a moral victory, inasmuch as something like that exists, while a defeat of any kind was accepted philosophically and with equanimity.

All that has changed in the last decade or so. Adding belief and self-confidence to their kitbag to go with historically unquestioned immense skills, India have become a gathering force in overseas conditions too. They haven't lost a Test series in Sri Lanka since 2008, stacked up consecutive triumphs in Australia (2019 and 2020), held England to a creditable 2-2 draw last summer despite embracing the exciting and nervy phase of transition, and have tamed the West Indian lion in its own den every time since the three-match series in 2006 when they came away on the right side of a 1-0 score line.

Apart from establishing themselves as a formidable Test entity everywhere in the world, except perhaps in New Zealand where their only series victory in the last 55 or so years came in 2009, India are a gun white-ball force. They have been there and thereabouts in all significant competitions, are the simultaneous holders of the 50-over Champions Trophy and T20 World Cup crowns, and have lost a mere twice in the last four ICC limited-overs events between and including the 2023 50-over World Cup and the 2026 T20 World Cup.

The excellent run is testament to the strong systems in place in the country to identify and nurture talent. While India may not be as open as Pakistan in bloodedly delicately young talent or as Sri Lanka in placing faith in the unorthodox, they are slowly shaking off the conventional straitjacket to which they often restricted themselves. That's why they didn't think twice about unleashing Jasprit Bumrah, the extraordinary bowler with the extraordinary release – among other things – more than a decade back, or the supremely gifted and precocious 15-year-old from Bihar's Samastipur, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, less than a week back.

Sooryavanshi's international debut was eagerly awaited from the time he proved in the summer during IPL 2026 that his exploits to that point weren't just a flash in the pan. A tournament-high 776 runs that earned him the Orange Cap ahead of such established names as Virat Kohli and current Test and ODI skipper Shubman Gill, as well as last edition's leading run-getter B. Sai Sudharsan, meant his tender age could no longer work against him. Sooryavanshi didn't do a great deal in his first two T20Is in England, scoring 14 in his maiden appearance and backing it up with 13 in the second, but 24 of those runs have come through a brace of sixes in each of the two outings, most certainly the teasing appetiser before what ought to be a sumptuous main course.

The clamour for Sooryavanshi's inclusion had reached a crescendo immediately after Ajit Agarkar's selection panel picked him for the seven-match T20I odyssey in Ireland (two games) and England. Almost as if because they felt they had to keep the growing voices at bay, India delayed his introduction by three games. But once they were stunned by the Irish in both games and once Sanju Samson courted a third successive failure by following up scores of 5 and 0 against Ireland with 1 in the first T20I against the English in Chester-le-Street, the think-tank was almost compelled to unshackle the devastating left-handed opener.

That Sooryavanshi's induction came at the expense of Samson has divided opinion. The frustratingly inconsistent Samson – he averages 27.01 in 65 T20Is despite posting three centuries and six half-tones in 57 innings – appeared to have

turned the corner with a hat-trick of match-winning knocks at the business-end of the home T20 World Cup in February-March. The Player of the Tournament at the World Cup is still very much in the scheme of things; he figures in the Asian Games squad even though he has been left out of the team to play three matches in Zimbabwe later this month. But as India scrambled to accommodate Sooryavanshi, Samson is who had to be sacrificed.

Head coach Gautam Gambhir, in the crosshairs after this latest UK misadventure, said at a press conference on Monday that he had had a conversation with the Kerala wicketkeeper-opener, insisting that Samson knew the score but adding that whatever was spoken would remain between the coach and the dropped player. Gambhir is fiercely passionate and an extremely proud professional, wonderful but hardly unexpected qualities; he might not believe so, but he is under pressure to deliver results after a mixed bag.

Depending on which side of the fence one is on, Gambhir is slightly in the red or moderately in the blue in his two years in charge of a successful, settled squad he inherited from Rahul Dravid in July 2024. His very first tour at the helm was a precursor of things to come. India swept the T20I series 3-0 in Sri Lanka, fashioning victories from impossible situations including in the Super Over in the final game in Pallekele. But they were also humbled 2-0 in the ODIs – the first ended in a tie and the umpires seemed to forget that the ICC mandated a Super Over to break the deadlock – as the first

indications that India's fallibility against spin would come back to haunt them lay exposed.

Subsequently, Gambhir has overseen stunning title runs in the Champions Trophy, the T20 Asia Cup and the T20 World Cup, but he has also presided over some of the darkest phases in Indian cricket. A singularly humiliating 46 all out against New Zealand in the Bengaluru Test in October 2024. A record 408-run hammering at the hands of South Africa in November last year. A 3-0 surrender to New Zealand in November 2024 followed by a 2-0 annihilation by South Africa 12 months later meant Gambhir's CV was already replete with diametrically opposite results. Now, India's longest winless streak in T20I history has added to the feisty former opener's discomfiture because while he might hold the view that results alone don't dictate progress, there is no other tangible, measurable yardstick, is there?

Will/should Gambhir count the Test retirements in that order, within five months of each other, of R. Ashwin, Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli between December 2024 and May 2025, as a success of sorts? The loss of this bulk of experience and quality inevitably plunged India to the throes of transition – at one stage, he didn't like that word, choosing instead to go with inexperience before transition returned to his lexicon after the Protean rout. With challenging away tours of Sri Lanka and New Zealand in wait ahead of the five-Test home showdown against Australia early next year, Gambhir will know in his heart of hearts that anything less than a third entry into the final of the World Test Championship in

four editions will be perceived as a huge comedown.

Of all the failures that have liberally dotted his brief tenure, the most chastening will be the 2-0 rout in Ireland, followed closely by 76 all out against England in Nottingham earlier this week, which consigned Shreyas Iyer's men to their heaviest defeat in 20-over internationals. Gambhir harped on the 'high risk, high reward' theme to almost wish away the disaster, falling back on the absence of key figures (Bumrah, Hardik Pandya) as an oblique excuse of sorts. Had he not been party to the dumping and omission from the squad of World Cup-winning skipper Suryakumar Yadav, he could have invoked that eventuality too, one suspects. The fact of the matter is that India have been slow to react and adapt, both against the spunky Irish and a fired-up England, themselves looking for minor crumbs of consolation after their outstanding chase of India's 253 in the semifinal of the World Cup ended just seven agonising runs short.

India have parted ways with coaches with much better results – Anil Kumble walked away in a huff in 2017, acknowledging that his partnership with skipper Kohli was no longer 'tenable' despite overseeing Test series wins in the Caribbean, and at home against England and Australia, as well as taking the team to the final of the Champions Trophy in England where we might have had a different tale to tell had Kohli adamantly not chosen to chase on a superb batting surface. If Gambhir seems immune to the slew of defeats that would almost certainly have consumed anyone else, it is because he knows that he continues to enjoy the confidence and the backing of those who make the influential calls in Indian cricket, whether they are a part of the Indian board or not.

Several of India's methods in the last couple of years have been steeped in madness that is all too visible, not least the ill-advised recall to the T20 setup as vice-captain, no less, of Gill and his subsequent omission with the World Cup imminent, all in the space of five months. Gambhir is open to accountability just as much as the next individual is, and it's time he helps the side turn the corner and stack up the consistency that has made India so feared across formats for so many years.

The predicament of the coach and their support group of any team at any level anywhere in the world is unenviable. For all the strategising and analysing and the backroom work that goes in before a match or a tournament, there is nothing they can do in realistic terms once the action begins beyond hoping that their charges remember the plans and are up to scratch when it comes to execution on a given day. But the buck will stop with the coach, of that there can be no arguments. Gambhir often speaks of wanting to fulfil the aspirations of India's 140 crore people. This would be as good a time as any to translate words into deeds.

THE GIST

▼ Apart from establishing themselves as a formidable Test entity everywhere in the world, except perhaps in New Zealand where their only series victory in the last 55 or so years came in 2009, India are a gun white-ball force

▼ The clamour for Sooryavanshi's inclusion had reached a crescendo immediately after Ajit Agarkar's selection panel picked him for the seven-match T20I odyssey in Ireland (two games) and England. Almost as if because they felt they had to keep the growing voices at bay, India delayed his introduction by three games

▼ Gambhir is fiercely passionate and an extremely proud professional, wonderful but hardly unexpected qualities; he might not believe so, but he is under pressure to deliver results after a mixed bag



R.A. MOORTHY



PTI

## HEALTH

# Why more Indian couples are being diagnosed with secondary infertility

Analyses of India's National Family Health Survey data show secondary infertility rose from roughly 19.5% in the early 1990s to about 28.6% by 2015-2016 — close to a doubling in a single generation; there are multiple factors that are contributing to this including age-related issues and changes in the body between the first and the second child

Richika Sahay Shukla

A few weeks ago, a couple sat in my consulting room looking almost apologetic. They already had a bright six-year-old waiting at home. "We feel silly taking your time, doctor," the mother said. "We have one child. Everyone keeps telling us to just be grateful." And then, quietly, she started to cry.

I have heard that phrase — "at least you have one" — more times than I can count. It is almost always meant kindly. It almost always lands like a door being shut. And it is one of the reasons the couples I see struggling to conceive a second time carry their grief so silently.

## Understanding the condition

The condition has a name: secondary infertility — the difficulty conceiving or carrying a pregnancy after you have already had a baby. For years it was brushed aside as a non-problem. The numbers say otherwise.

Analyses of India's National Family Health Survey data show secondary infertility rose from roughly 19.5% in the early 1990s to about 28.6% by 2015-2016 — close to a doubling in a single generation. It is now one of the most common reasons a "previously fertile" couple walks in, bewildered. "We didn't even try the first time," they say. "Why is it so hard now?"

Part of the answer is the calendar. A generation ago, most couples finished their families in their twenties. Today a first baby often arrives at the age of 31 or 32 — after the degree, the

job, the EMI, the move to a rented flat in a city.

By the time life finally feels "ready" for a second child, the mother may be aged 36 or 38, and fertility, unfairly, does not wait for our life plans. Egg numbers and quality fall with every passing year; clinics in cities including Delhi/NCR, Bengaluru, Mumbai and others, have reported a sharp rise in women seeking help only after the age of 35.

But age is just one thread. In the years between the first and second child, bodies change. Weight creeps up. The thyroid quietly slips. As many as one in five Indian women now lives with Polycystic Metabolic Ovarian Syndrome (PMOS), which tends to worsen with time. A Caesarean section may have left adhesions; an old, untreated infection may have scarred a fallopian tube. And — this matters — the problem is very often on the man's side. Sperm counts fall with weight, stress, smoking and even the polluted air so many of us breathe. Yet in my experience, Indian men will wait years longer than their wives before agreeing to a simple semen test, convinced that "we already have a child, so it can't be me."

Layered over all of this is something



**Growing concern:** Secondary infertility is the difficulty conceiving or carrying a pregnancy after you have already had a baby. GETTY IMAGES

newer: our phones. Social media has, in many ways, been a gift for fertility awareness. Couples now arrive far better informed than a decade ago; the taboo is finally cracking; brave women share IVF journeys that once would have been whispered about. But scroll through any feed and you also meet the other side — an unending stream of "Baby No. 2!" announcements, and picture-perfect siblings.

For a woman in her fourth month of trying, or recovering from a second miscarriage,

that scroll is a slow bruise. The comparison is relentless — and so is the family WhatsApp group where an aunt asks, yet again, when the "good news" is coming. I have also watched social media do harm the other way: glossy reels promising IVF "success in one cycle," or home remedies that persuade a couple to delay proper testing by a year they cannot afford to lose.

## Telling the truth

So why do I tell the couple crying in my room? First, that their pain is real and they are allowed to feel it. Wanting a sibling for the child you adore is not ingratitude; it is love asking

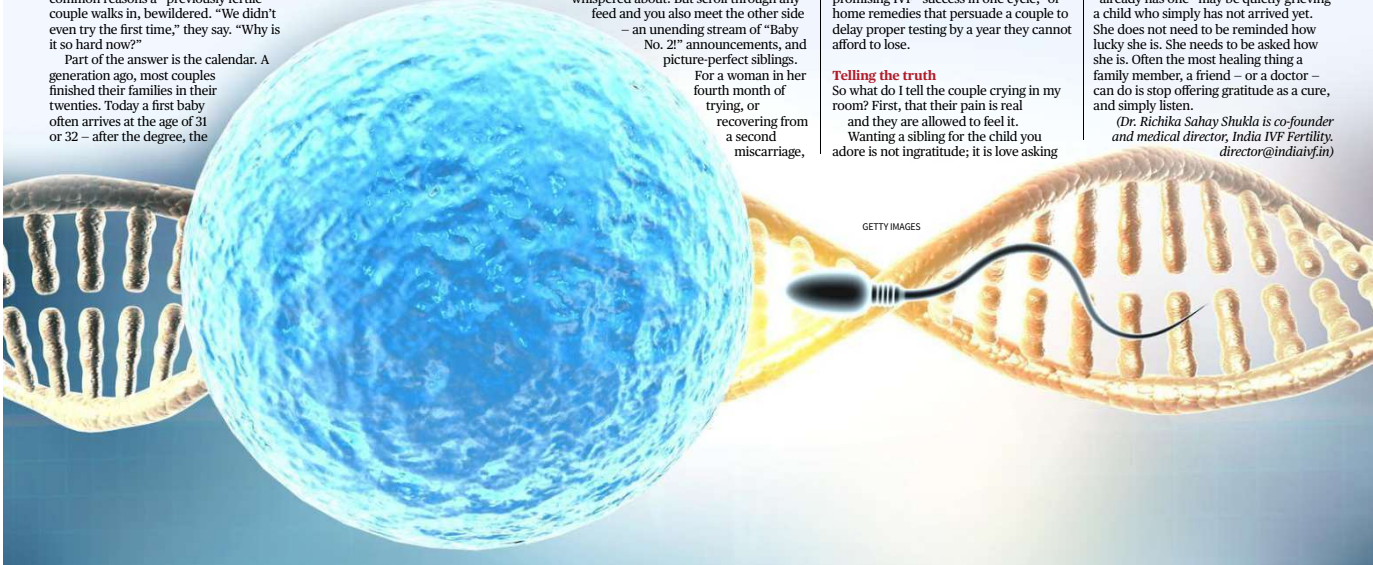
**Egg numbers and quality fall with every passing year; clinics in cities including Delhi/National Capital Region, Bengaluru, Mumbai and others, have reported a sharp rise in women seeking help only after the age of 35**

for a little more room. Second, that this is a medical condition, not a moral verdict — not a punishment, not *nazar*, not something they did wrong. Third, that timing matters. If a woman is under the age of 35 and has tried for a year, or over the age of 35 and has tried for six months, both partners — together — should be evaluated. Do not let the calendar run, out of politeness.

And I tell them the truth about hope, honestly. Modern fertility care helps a great many couples in exactly this situation, and IVF succeeds for many even in their late thirties and forties. But I will never promise a guaranteed outcome, and I would gently warn anyone against a clinic that does. What I can promise is a clear answer and a plan.

If there is one thing I wish more of us understood, it is this: the woman who "already has one" may be quietly grieving a child who simply has not arrived yet. She does not need to be reminded how lucky she is. She needs to be asked how she is. Often the most healing thing a family member, a friend — or a doctor — can do is stop offering gratitude as a cure, and simply listen.

(Dr. Richika Sahay Shukla is co-founder and medical director, India IVF Fertility, director@indiaivf.in)



## Study to contain antimicrobial resistant neonatal sepsis begins in India

Ramya Kannan  
CHENNAI

Striking at the heart of antimicrobial resistance, the international NeoSep trial to evaluate life-saving antibiotic combinations for newborns with sepsis has expanded to India, with the first baby being recruited at the Jawaharlal Postgraduate Education Institute of Medical and Research (JIPMER) in Puducherry.

This was followed by recruiting an infant for the study in Pt. B.D. Sharma PGIMS in Rohtak. The next on the list is Lokmanya Tilak Municipal College and General Hospital, Mumbai. Globally, the study, sponsored by the GARDP Foundation in collaboration with the UCL Innovative Clinical Trials Unit; City St George's, University of London (SGUL), and Penta Foundation, is also underway in Vietnam and Pakistan, and will soon start in Malaysia, Bangladesh and Uganda.

According to a GARDP statement, NeoSep aims to enrol 3,000 newborns across Asia and Africa by the end of 2028. Earlier, newborns were enrolled in Ghana, Kenya and South Africa.

## Life-threatening infection

Neonatal sepsis is a life-threatening bloodstream infection that occurs in babies under 90 days old, often affecting premature or low-birth-weight infants. It is categorised into early-onset (occurring within the first 72 hours of life) and late-onset (occurring up to 28-90 days), according to a book on neonatal sepsis, authored by Meenakshi Singh.

"With underdeveloped immune systems, newborns are especially prone to life-threatening sepsis," Sally Ellis, Children's Antibiotics Project Leader for



**Addressing a big issue:** Neonatal sepsis is a life-threatening bloodstream infection that occurs in babies under 90 days old, often affecting premature or low-birth-weight infants. AP

GARDP, told *The Hindu*, explaining the significance the NeoSep trial has in the context of growing antimicrobial resistance.

"Today, we stand at a tipping point. The antibiotics for newborns that we have relied on for decades are failing against resistant infections, in many hospital settings. This trial, led by GARDP and partners, is about giving neonatologists new tools, and giving babies with sepsis a fighting chance at life," she adds.

Sepsis is the second most common cause of neonatal mortality, globally responsible for over one million deaths annually. In

India, neonatal sepsis remains a leading cause of neonatal mortality, contributing to approximately 30%-40% of all neonatal deaths despite advances in neonatal care, argues a recent paper 'Neonatal Sepsis in India: Epidemiology, Risk Factors and Preventive Strategies from a Public Health Perspective' in the *Journal of Clinical Neonatology*.

The author Ahmed Abdulaziz Almohammadi, writes "In India, neonatal sepsis accounts for an estimated 30%-40% of all neonatal deaths, translating to approximately 2,00,000-2,50,000



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**SALLY ELLIS**  
Children's Antibiotics Project Leader for GARDP

preventable deaths annually. Despite substantial reductions in under-five mortality over the past two decades, progress in reducing neonatal mortality has lagged, with sepsis representing a persistent and largely preventable cause of death."

## Divergence from global trends

It turns out that causative agents in India show a divergence from global trends. Dr. Almohammadi notes that the microbiological profile of neonatal sepsis in India differs substantially from that of high-income countries, with gram-negative organisms predominating in most Indian studies. *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, *Escherichia coli*, *Acinetobacter* species and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* constitute the majority of bacterial isolates, often demonstrating multidrug resistance. Group B Streptococcus (GBS), which is the leading cause of neonatal sepsis in developed countries, accounts for only 2%-5% of cases in India.

This makes the NeoSep trial — to evaluate and produce a profile that is India

specific, addressing the circumstances that can contribute to, or ameliorate the condition in India. It is pioneering the use of a Personalised Randomised Controlled Trial (PRACTICAL) design, which will evaluate and rank multiple antibiotic regimens for newborns with sepsis. This approach will help clinicians choose effective treatments best suited to their local context, GARDP spokespersons say.

The goal of the trial is to identify one or more safe, effective, and affordable treatments that can reduce the high number of newborn deaths caused by drug-resistant sepsis, especially in low- and middle-income countries. Part I of the NeoSep trial, conducted in South Africa and Kenya in 2023, assessed and validated the appropriate dose for fosfomycin and flomoxef for use in newborns, in combination with other antibiotics.

Nishad Plakkal, Principal Investigator of the NeoSep trial in India and Head of the Department of Neonatology at JIPMER, explains: "the study is a pragmatic trial and allows clinicians to make the diagnosis of sepsis as they normally would. However, to ensure the inclusion of infants with a high probability of infection, we use a sepsis severity score that we derived from an earlier global observational study (NeoOBS). Our microbiology team cultures the baby's blood (and sometimes spinal fluid) to help identify the organism causing sepsis, typically within a day or two. They also identify antibiotic-resistant infections."

Dr. Plakkal explains that the primary outcome, or the main question the study is designed to answer, is death within 28 days; while secondary outcomes will include death within 90 days, need for additional antibiotics, length of hospital stay, and re-admission.

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