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Iran attacks West Asian nations after U.S. strikes

Tehran targets Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan, and Oman, says Strait of Hormuz is closed; U.S. says strikes will weaken Iran's ability to threaten shipping, insists traffic flowing through vital waterway

Associated Press
DUBAI

The U.S. attacked Iran early on Sunday over an Iranian strike on a container ship in the Strait of Hormuz that left one Indian sailor missing. Iran responded with attacks on several countries in West Asia, including Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan, and Oman.

The U.S. struck again later on Sunday. Iran's state-run IRNA news agency cited the Governor of Qeshm island near the strait as saying projectiles had been fired at military targets, with no casualties. It said explosions were heard in the coastal city of Bandar Abbas and Hajiabad city to the north.

The U.S. military's Central Command (CENTCOM)



The U.S. says it hit 140 targets, including missile and drone launch sites and communication equipment, in Iran. REUTERS

said it hit 140 targets, including missile and drone launch sites, ammunition dumps, communication equipment, and other sites. It said the attacks, heavier than in recent days, would weaken Iran's ability to threaten shipping. "We bombed the hell out of them last night," President Donald Trump said.

Iranian state media later reported U.S. strikes across the country, including military sites in a province near Tehran. Semi-official news agencies said that a Navy officer was killed. Iran retaliated by attacking nations in the region hosting U.S. military forces,

Govt. slams ship attack off Oman; seafarer missing

CHENNAI

The government has condemned the attack on a Cyprus-flagged commercial vessel off the coast of Oman that left one of its 11 Indian crew members missing. "We condemn the attack on the commercial vessel GFS Galaxy...", it said. » PAGE 12

es, while insisting it alone must control the strait.

The U.S. military and Mr. Trump asserted that the strait remained open on Sunday. Iran said the strait would be closed until calm is restored.

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IN BRIEF

First two phases of DU admission process end

NEW DELHI

B.Com (Honours) emerged as the most-sought-after undergraduate programme at Delhi University as Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the admission process concluded on Sunday, with 2,06,835 candidates completing their applications on the admission portal, officials said. » Page 3

Security stepped up in J&K ahead of 'Martyrs Day'

SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir authorities barricaded the roads leading to Srinagar's Naqshband Sahib shrine on Sunday, the eve of the 1931 revolt anniversary. » Page 12

EDUCATIONPLUS » PAGE 2 & 5

PM must restore J&K Statehood, says Omar

Peerzada Ashiq
JAMMU

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's repeated promise to restore Statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Sunday said a commitment made by the country's highest elected leader should carry weight.

"In [Jammu's] Katra, the Prime Minister talked about the restoration of J&K Statehood, with these words that 'it isn't an ordinary promise but Modi's promise'. If the Prime Minister makes a promise, it should carry some weight, and there should be some action on it," Mr. Abdullah said at a public meeting after a rally here.

This was the second major public rally by the ruling



Omar Abdullah

ing National Conference (NC) ahead of its proposed July 20 protest at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi to demand restoration of Statehood and constitutional guarantees.

"Whenever the people of J&K seek fulfilment of the promise, we are told it will happen 'at the appropriate time'," he said.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12

Police arrest 3 publishers for 'pro-separatist' books in J&K

The Hindu Bureau
JAMMU

The counter-intelligence unit of the Jammu and Kashmir Police on Sunday arrested three publishers for allegedly bringing out "pro-separatist" books under the Samagra Shiksha scheme.

Officials identified the arrested persons as Inderpal, a publisher from Jammu, and Amardeep Singh and Girish Arora, both from Delhi. The police have lodged a case under Sections 49, 61 (2), 152, 196, and 353 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Section 13 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12

Taliban seek deeper farm ties with India

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

The Taliban administration of Afghanistan has expressed desire to enhance agricultural cooperation with India, covering areas such as agricultural trade, infrastructure development, and irrigation, the External Affairs Ministry said on Sunday.

In a statement, the Ministry said the discussions took place during the six-day visit of Attaullah Omari, the Minister for Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock of the Taliban administration. Among the issues discussed were cooperation in food processing through value addition, capacity building, and the promotion of bilateral



Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan with his Afghan counterpart Attaullah Omari in New Delhi. PTI

eral trade in agricultural and food products.

"The two sides reviewed ongoing cooperation and explored new avenues for collaboration in agriculture, irrigation, livestock, agricultural research, education, capacity building and agri-trade. Food security, seed systems and enhancement of

crop productivity featured prominently in the discussions. India reiterated its commitment to supporting Afghanistan's agricultural sector through cooperation in climate-resilient and bio-fortified crop varieties," the MEA said.

During the visit, Mr. Omari met Minister of Agriculture and Farmers

Welfare and Minister of Rural Development Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Minister of Food Processing Industries Chirag Paswan. Mr. Omari also met Minister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita.

The Afghan delegation, led by Mr. Omari, also held meetings with the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12

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DDA frames
SOP to tackle
encroachments**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on Sunday said it has framed a standard operating procedure (SOP) to remove encroachments and unauthorised constructions within 72 hours of detection. The SOP, finalised under the directions of L-G Taranjit Singh Sandhu, mandates flying squads, quick response teams, geo-tagged monitoring, and strict timelines to ensure enforcement and prevent re-encroachment.

Timings
DELHI

MONDAY, JUL. 13

RISE 05:33 SET 19:22

RISE 03:50 SET 18:40

TUESDAY, JUL. 14

RISE 05:33 SET 19:21

RISE 05:02 SET 19:36

WEDNESDAY, JUL. 15

RISE 05:34 SET 19:21

RISE 06:15 SET 20:23

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	36	27
Safdarjung	36	27
Palam	36	24

Delhi Palam Today
34°C Morning will be comfortable. Day will be warm. Night also will be comfortable. Dry weather to occur.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
35°C Temperature to rise. The weather will be warm and windy. Night also will be comfortable. Chances of light rain and thundershower.

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DU sees 2.06 lakh
applications for
71,600 UG seats

B.Com (Honours) top choice of candidates as Phases 1 and 2 of admission process conclude, say officials; first allocation list to be declared on July 16

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

B.Com (Honours) emerged as the most-sought-after undergraduate (UG) programme at Delhi University (DU) as Phases 1 and 2 of the admission process concluded on Sunday.

A total of 2,06,835 candidates completed their applications on the admission portal, officials said. They will now compete for around 71,600 UG seats.

B.Com (Honours) retained its position as the top choice among candidates for the second consecutive year. Last year, B.Com (Honours) was followed by BA (Honours) Political Science, and B.Sc. (Honours) Zoology.

A university official said B.Com (Honours) was followed by B.Com, BA (Honours) English, and BA (Honours) Political Science this year. Other programmes in the top 10 included BA Programme (History + Political Science), BA (Honours) History, B.Sc. (Honours) Zoology, B.Sc. (Honours) Mathematics, B.Sc. Programme (Life Sciences), and BA (Honours) Economics.

A total of 2,73,751 candidates signed up on DU's Common Seat Allocation System portal, of whom 2,18,284 completed their registration. This comprised 1,20,509 female stu-



Several Delhi University colleges organised open house sessions for undergraduate seat aspirants to address their queries. FILE PHOTO

dents and 97,775 male students. However, not all of them completed the entire process, the official added.

The number of registrations declined this year compared with the previous admission cycle, when 3,05,000 candidates had signed up. Similarly, completed applications fell from 2,39,000 last year.

Simulated ranks out

Based on the data collected so far, the portal declared simulated ranks for candidates on Sunday. For instance, if 10,000 students apply for a particular programme, a candidate will know where they stand, from one to 10,000, through the simulated rank. Another official said simulated ranks are provisional and may change once candidates modify their preferences.

A student aspiring to pursue either B.Com (Ho-

nours) or B.Com said the process was smooth and that a simulated rank was displayed for each of his selected preferences. "My rank was around 730 in one of my preferred courses, and I am hoping to secure a seat in a North Campus college," he said.

Candidates who wish to change their preferences based on the simulated ranks can do so till 4.59 p.m. on Monday. The first allocation list will be declared on July 16, the official said. Candidates will be able to accept seats between July 16 and 18. Following verification and approvals, they will be required to pay the fees by July 21. After accepting a seat, candidates may opt for either the "freeze" or the "upgrade" option.

The second list will be declared on July 25, and the academic session will commence on July 28.

Gupta seeks aid of ₹100 crore from
Centre for revised PM-UDAY scheme**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta has written to Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal seeking ₹100 crore in the first phase of financial assistance from the Centre for the implementation of the revised PM-UDAY (Pradhan Mantri Unauthorised Colonies in Delhi Awas Adhikar Yojana) scheme, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) stated in an official release on Sunday.

According to the release, Ms. Gupta sought funds to set up the DRISH-TI-based modern land survey and mapping system,



Delhi CM Rekha Gupta

establish PM-UDAY cells at the district level, and conduct a comprehensive public awareness campaign.

'New framework'

"The revised regulations, notified on April 6, 2026, have provided a new legal framework for granting property rights to resi-

dents of unauthorised colonies. A large-scale exercise covering physical verification of properties, digital mapping using modern technology, and updating land records across 1,511 unauthorised colonies will be undertaken. An allocation of ₹100 crore has been proposed for the first phase," the CMO statement read.

Ms. Gupta said the Revenue Department has been designated as the nodal agency for implementing the PM-UDAY scheme and will establish PM-UDAY cells in all 13 districts, each headed by an Additional District Magistrate.

Of the total amount, ₹65

crore has been earmarked for developing the modern land survey and mapping system under the DRISH-TI initiative, she said. Another ₹25 crore was proposed for setting up PM-UDAY cells across Delhi's 13 districts and at the headquarters. The proposal also set aside ₹10 crore for public awareness and outreach activities, she said.

Last month, the Centre and the Delhi government had announced a major push to regularise unauthorised colonies, with 1,511 of 1,731 such colonies to be regularised on an "as-is, where-is" basis, without the requirement of approved layout plans.

Centre clears funding
for 28 city projects**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Sunday said the Central government has approved all 28 major projects proposed by the Delhi government under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) scheme.

In a statement, Ms. Gupta said, "The total cost of these projects is ₹1,647 crore. In addition, recognising the Delhi government's efforts to enhance expenditure through its own resources, the Central government has also approved an additional incentive of ₹756 crore."

The Chief Minister said the funds would be used to

accelerate development works and improve public facilities. The projects approved under the SASCI scheme include metro projects, Barapullah elevated corridor, Karawal Nagar flyover, EV charging stations at DTC depots and other road infrastructure works. The scheme also offers financial incentives to encourage strategic reforms and increased capital investment by States.

'Benefit at the earliest'

"The Finance Department has been entrusted with coordinating with all departments concerned so that construction progresses swiftly and the people of Delhi can benefit at the earliest," Ms. Gupta said.

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States

IN BRIEF



Bihar CM unveils development projects worth ₹1,047 crore

Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for 982 development projects worth ₹1,047.09 crore in Muzaffarpur district on Sunday. They included 669 projects worth ₹375.04 crore were unveiled under the Mukhyamantri Samagra Shakti Vikas Yojana, 3 projects worth ₹233.77 crore under the Storm Water Drainage Scheme, and the Muzaffarpur Smart City project worth ₹213.25 crore. The CM also inaugurated the Sikandarpur Lake Front, developed at a cost of ₹213.25 crore under the Muzaffarpur Smart City project.

Abhishek booked after woman loses leg, blames health camp

Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee has been booked after a woman complained that she lost a leg following treatment for knee pain at a Sebaashray camp, a healthcare outreach initiative launched by the Opposition leader in West Bengal a few months ago, officials said on Sunday. Intervening in the controversy, State Health Minister Sharadwat Mukhopadhyay spoke to the complainant and asked her family members to visit Swasthya Bhawan, the Health Department headquarters in Salt Lake, on Monday for a review of the case, sources said. PH

AAP launches nationwide signature drive over Ram Temple donation 'theft'

Kejriwal appeals to people to sign letters addressed to PM seeking strict action against offenders in the case; BJP terms drive 'political gimmick' aimed at reviving the AAP chief's political fortunes

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday launched a nationwide signature campaign demanding strict punishment for those involved in alleged 'chanda-chori' (donation theft) at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

The party kicked off the campaign with the recitation of 'Sundarkand', a chapter of the *Ramcharit-manas* dedicated to Lord Hanuman, at the Japanese Park in Rohini Sector 10.

The "theft" of donations has turned into a major political row between the BJP and Opposition parties. An FIR was registered in the matter on June 25 after the SIT constituted by the Uttar Pradesh government filed a preliminary report. Eight persons associated with the temple's donation and counting process have been arrested in the case so far and investigation is under way.



AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal and party leader Manish Sisodia at the launch of the drive at the Japanese Park in Delhi on Sunday. ANI

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal appealed to people to participate in the drive by signing letters addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking strict action against the offenders. As part of the campaign, Mr. Kejriwal urged devotees across the country to organise Hanuman Chalisa recitations in their localities and collect signatures on letters addressed to Mr. Modi.

"The movement should

continue until the accused are hanged. This is Lord Ram's command and our sacred duty," he said.

The AAP chief added that the "dacoity" deeply hurt devotees of Lord Ram across the world. "Within 40 days, about 70 incidents of theft were captured on CCTV cameras. Eight months of CCTV recordings were deleted. We all kept demanding action. We believed that those at the top would do some-

ing. But now it has become clear that they will do nothing because people from their own party and affiliated organisations are involved," he said.

The former Delhi CM alleged that those who carried out this theft do not believe "Ram is Bhagwan (God)". "They only want votes in Ram's name. They loot the country in Ram's name," he said.

'Bid to sway voters'

The BJP criticised AAP's move, with Delhi party chief Harsh Malhotra alleging that organising 'Sundarkand' recitations was a "political gimmick" aimed at reviving Mr. Kejriwal's political fortunes. "Whenever Kejriwal finds himself politically cornered, he attempts to improve his political standing by organising Sundarkand recitations in Delhi. The political rebellion to influence Hindu voters of Punjab and other States where elections are due."

Veteran TMC leader Rabindranath Ghosh joins Ritabrata camp

Press Trust of India
COOCH BEHAR

Veteran Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader and former North Bengal Development Minister Rabindranath Ghosh on Sunday claimed that most dissident leaders who joined the Ritabrata Banerjee-led rebel faction would return to Mamata Banerjee if she succeeded in sidelining her nephew, Abhishek Banerjee, from active politics.

Mr. Ghosh emerged as the latest entrant to the rebel faction led by the Leader of the Opposition and severities with the Mamata-led camp, marking a significant political shift in Cooch Behar and deepening the rift in the party.

The development comes less than 24 hours of the rebel camp stepping up its bid for control of the party and unveiling its parallel State and district committees, drawing several of Mamata's long-time loyalists - including former Birbhum strongman Anubrata Mondal - into its fold in a decisive shift from political rebellion to institution-building.

Mr. Ghosh, who is likely to be named the party's



Rabindranath Ghosh

Cooch Behar district president by the rebel camp, expressed strong criticism of Mr. Abhishek.

"There's no denying that Abhishek's whims and fancies... over 80 sitting MLAs and Ministers were denied poll tickets and many others removed from their organisational positions, had a severe impact on the party," he said.

'I-PAC ruined party'

Mr. Ghosh also alleged that the TMC's setback in the Assembly poll was largely the result of the influence of political consultancy firm Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC).

"There was no I-PAC in 2011 or 2016. Suddenly they became indispensable. In the end, they destroyed the party and walked away," he said.

Rise in maternal deaths reflects deepening crisis in Rajasthan's public health system, says Gehlot

Press Trust of India
JAIPUR

Amid mounting concerns over maternal deaths in Rajasthan, former Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Sunday said the rising number of fatalities were "frightening and shocking" and reflect a "deepening crisis" in the State's public health system.

Mr. Gehlot's remarks came after eight women and a minor, who underwent surgery in the obstetrics and gynaecology department at two government hospitals of Bhilwara and Banswara districts of Rajasthan, died over the past week.

"Now, after four deaths in Banswara, reports of 18 deaths in two months have

emerged. The lack of accountability from the government is making the situation even more serious," the Congress leader said.

'Administrative failure' Alleging administrative failure, he said the government has been unable to handle the crisis. "Handling this crisis, saving the lives of pregnant women

and restoring trust in the health system is beyond the capacity of this government. Its insensitivity and lack of accountability are worsening the situation."

Mr. Gehlot said urgent steps are needed to prevent further deaths. "The Centre must take this seriously and take corrective measures, otherwise more lives may be lost," he said.

Death toll touches 8 in Wayanad debris slip as body of project manager from H.P. recovered

The Hindu Bureau
KOZHIKODE

Emergency workers on Sunday recovered the body of the lone missing person following a devastating debris slip at a tunnel construction site at Wayanad in Kerala on July 7, taking the death toll to eight.

The deceased was identified as Bikram Singh Ra-

na, a project manager from Himachal Pradesh. His body was recovered on the sixth day of the search from Zone II. Officials said with the recovery of his body, all missing people had now been accounted for.

After his relatives identified the body, it was shifted to the Vythiri Taluk Hospital for post-mortem examination. Following the pro-

cedure, the body will be shifted to the Kozhikode Government Medical College Hospital for embalming before being repatriated to his native place.

As search operations in the area concluded, Dilip Buildcon Limited, the company entrusted with the construction of the tunnel road project, has been directed to remove the de-

bris accumulated following the debris slip at the site within three days.

Speaking after a review meeting at the Wayanad Collectorate, Agriculture Minister T. Siddique said the firm has been asked to clear the soil that had collapsed onto both sides of the road as well as the excavated earth dumped near the accident site.

SPOTLIGHT

Senjuti Sengupta
Shiv Sahay Singh

A blue and white metal pole, about 2.5 metres tall, with a freshly painted green coloured signboard stands at the edge of the street leading eastward from Park Circus 7 Point Crossing in Kolkata.

Not more than a dozen houses stand on the left side of the street. On the right side is the Park Circus Maidan, which was the epicentre of the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act, protests a few years ago.

A lush growth of the green grass now covers the protest site while the hurriedly erected signboard

reads 'Gopal Mukherjee Road', in Bengali and English. Before June 20, this road was called Suhrawardy Avenue. However, within six weeks of coming to power, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in West Bengal named it after Gopal Mukherjee, who ran a goat meat shop in north Kolkata and is considered to have "saved Hindu during the Great Calcutta Killings in 1946".

This is not the first instance where a government of the day has renamed a street. Then why is renaming of Suhrawardy Avenue a crucial moment in West Bengal politics? That's because even 78 years after the country's Independence and the Partition of Bengal, the role of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy and Gopal Mukherjee, intertwined with each other, continue to dominate the political discourse

of the State.

In the years leading to the 2026 West Bengal Assembly poll, the State witnessed a massive campaign mounted by the BJP and its allies glorifying Gopal Mukherjee. At the same time, they also invoked the legacy of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy - a prominent Bengali politician who served as the last Prime Minister of undivided Bengal and later as the Prime Minister of Pakistan - and blamed him for the "massacre of innocent citizens".

However, the road in question was not named after Huseyn Suhrawardy. Instead, it was named after his uncle Sir Hassan Suhrawardy.

Mistaken identity?

"Kolkata Municipal Corporation has decided that the road known as Suhrawardy Avenue in KMC area will be named and henceforth be known as Gopal Mukherjee Road," read a single-line notification published by the civic body on June 20.

Calling the decision historic, Chief Minister Suven- drit Minister said, "Finally restoration of historical justice will be achieved by honouring a true guardian and saviour." Adhikari, the first BJP Chief Minister of West Bengal, also added in a social media message that "for decades a major artery of our city bore the name of someone who willfully misused state power as a weapon, orchestrating the massacre of innocent citizens for sheer political gain".

The Chief Minister was referring to Huseyn Suhrawardy whom the BJP and

Road rage in Bengal

Soon after the BJP govt. renamed Kolkata's Suhrawardy Avenue as Gopal Mukherjee Road, public outcry and historical evidence started pouring out that the street was not named after the man whom it blames for killings, but the first Muslim V-C of Calcutta University. Here's why the renaming of the street marks a crucial moment in Bengal politics



An elderly resident near a signboard pointing towards the Gopal Mukherjee Road. SENJUTI SENGUPTA

its allies blame for the communal riots of 1946. But then the road wasn't named after him.

P.T. Nair, known as the 'Barefoot Historian of Calcutta', in his book, *A History of Calcutta's Streets*, explains how the street got its name. According to the book, "The new road constructed by the Calcutta Improvement Trust from Park Circus Junction of Kasai Para Lane on which stands the house of Sir Hassan Suhrawardy, Vice-

Chancellor of the University of Calcutta, will be known as Suhrawardy Avenue." The name was notified on April 20, 1933.

The real account

Nair gave a detailed account of the accomplishments of Hassan Suhrawardy, describing him as two-time Vice-Chancellor of University of Calcutta, distinguished Muslim medico from the point of academic attainments, a prominent member of the

Bengal Legislative Council and its first Muslim to be elected Deputy President.

The historian also gave a description as to how Hassan got his knighthood: "It was during the days of his vice-chancellorship that Sir Stanley Jackson, the Chancellor of the Calcutta University and the Governor of Bengal, was attacked by a girl student during the convocation and it was Dr. Hassan Suhrawardy's courageous and timely action that saved

the Governor's life. His Knighthood was a reward for this and was granted by a special communique by the King and not during the usual New Year and Birthday Honours' Lists".

The student referred to here was freedom fighter Bina Das, who made an assassination attempt at the Bengal Governor on February 6, 1932.

When it became clear in the political circles that the BJP leadership had renamed the street linking it to the wrong Suhrawardy, leaders from the Opposition parties criticised the name change. The Congress's media and publicity department chairman Pawan Khera cited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's message in the book, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee: *The Great Educationist*, to argue that the Hindutva ideologue and Jana Sangh founder had been a supporter of Hassan Suhrawardy, after whom the road was named.

"Typical of the BJP's abysmal ignorance to remove the name of Dr. Hassan Suhrawardy, first Muslim Vice-chancellor of Calcutta [University] when they targeted his nephew Huseyn Suhrawardy. Why don't they read history sometimes?" retired bureaucrat and former Rajya Sabha MP Jawhar Sircar said in a post on X.

After the criticism, BJP's IT Cell in-charge Amit Malviya said West Bengal had nothing to do with the Suhrawardys. Malviya criticised both the Suhrawardys, calling the uncle closely associated with the British and his nephew as one of the most controver-

sial political figures of the pre-Partition era.

Almost 11 years ago, the West Bengal government declassified secret Cabinet papers relating to Subhas Chandra Bose. In the papers that were declassified, the role of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy also became more pronounced. The papers revealed that Huseyn Suhrawardy claimed it was the withdrawal of the police during the riots that led the situation to acquire such grim proportions. However, he also claimed that there was no delay in calling the military.

The house of Gopal Mukherjee is located less than 5 km away in Kolkata's Bowbazar area, where his descendants live. The family members said the film *Bengal Files* released in 2025 has added to his popularity but they are not very happy that he was shown as a butcher or meat shop owner. Despite the opposition from the then Trinamool Congress government, film director Vivek Ranjan Anghoi and a few BJP leaders, including current Finance Minister Swapan Dasgupta, held a private screening of the film in Kolkata.

The family members said while the film focussed on the role of Mukherjee, neither the director nor anyone from his team spoke to them. They said they were not invited for the private screening. However, they are now happy that now a road is named after their forefather.

"Despite his contribution to save the Hindu community during the Great Calcutta Killings in 1946, the previous governments

were silent about Gopal Mukherjee. We are happy that they took the initiative to name the road after him instead of Hassan Suhrawardy," his grandson Shantanu Mukherjee said.

While there is much enthusiasm among the family members about the renaming of the road, the people who have lived on the avenue for almost nine decades do not think much of the development. "Will this change of name make our lives any better? I have been living here for over 55 years," said Sheikh Ismail, who runs a street laundry shop on the avenue.

In their defence

Defending the decision to rename the avenue to Gopal Mukherjee Road, Adhikari said, "In Kolkata the names of Mughal, Pathans and oppressive foreign rulers will not remain." He said Sister Nivedita, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, remains the only exception in this regard. Adhikari on June 23 announced setting up of a panel that will evaluate re-naming proposals related to roads and streets.

Former Vice-Chancellor of North Bengal University Professor Om Prakash Mishra said politics of name or nomenclature change has been practised everywhere and by varieties of political regimes.

The re-christening of Suhrawardy Avenue, he added, may just be the beginning of a renaming exercise in Bengal.

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States

W.B. govt. seeks group's help in vaccinating sex workers

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

West Bengal Health Minister Sharadwat Mukherjee sought the support of Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC), a collective working on the rights and recognition of sex workers, to provide cervical cancer vaccination to sex workers in Sonagachi, as the outfit celebrated its 31st anniversary on Sunday.

The Health Minister asked the DMSC activists to help the government to secure the details of sex workers residing in Kolkata's Sonagachi area so that the Human Papillomavirus vaccines can be made available to them in an organised way.

U.P. CM launches mega plantation drive; Oppn. alleges ₹350-cr. 'scam'

Press Trust of India
GORAKHPUR (U.P.)

Expressing concern over environmental degradation, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said people take care of their own health but often "ignore the health of mother earth" as he launched the 'Ek Pedh Maa Ke Naam' campaign to plant 35 crore saplings in the State.

According to an official statement, more than 35.2 crore saplings were planted, surpassing the government's target of 35 crore.

Mr. Adityanath said "protecting mother earth's well-being is essential for humanity's own welfare" and stressed that tree plantation is vital to sustaining all forms of life for future generations. The Chief Minister made



Green drive: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath planting a sapling in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, on Sunday. @MYOGIADITYANATH X

the remarks at the inauguration of the mega plantation campaign in Gorakhpur. Meanwhile, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav alleged that the mega tree plantation campaign was a

"corruption programme" aimed at siphoning off public funds rather than "genuinely protecting the environment".

'Secret plan'

In a statement, Mr. Yadav said the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s target of planting 35 crore saplings was part of a "secret plan" to earn at least ₹10 from each sapling, amounting to ₹350 crore. "For the BJP, the plantation drive is actually a 'corruption plantation' programme," he said.

Mr. Yadav claimed that over the past 10 years, trees had been planted only "on paper", and that real trees were not visible on the ground. Even where saplings were planted, they often dried up due to a lack of maintenance, he added.

U.P. Minister's reply sought over 'discrepancies' in income, assets

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

The Deputy Lokayukta of Uttar Pradesh has sought a response from State Minister Somendra Tomar and his wife following a complaint alleging discrepancies in their declared income and assets.

The petitioner, Ami-

tabh Thakur, a social activist based in Lucknow, said on Sunday, "Based on affidavits filed during the 2017 and 2022 U.P. Assembly elections, the couple's total declared income during that period was approximately ₹72 lakh, whereas the total increase in their movable and immovable assets appeared to

be around ₹2.13 crore. I demanded an impartial, high-level inquiry into the sources and reasons behind this alleged discrepancy."

Mr. Thakur also called for an investigation into the role of Mr. Tomar as Shanti Niketan Trust chairperson and the trust's purchase of land parcels.

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EDUCATIONPLUS

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Nimesh Ved

Recently, a board was installed at our institution to put up newspaper articles. The idea was to encourage students and teachers to read newspapers. Actually, to just read.

We began with an open mind and four dailies. We were keen to get to know of the developments in the country and the subjects we pursued.

Introducing themes

We began by reading and rereading the newspapers, short-listing articles, pondering over them, and neatly putting them up on the boards.

In the course of a few weeks, we increased the board area and made it more reader-friendly. "Shall we read?" talked of parents' and book stores' efforts to increase reading. We were doing our bit here. Next came the themes.

AI is extensively written about these days. We put up articles on how it reinforces gender and caste biases (Sociology) or even on how it discourages creativity. We also had articles on the water guzzling and carbon footprint (Education for Sustainable Development) that go into the development of AI. The details and the numbers left all of us surprised.

Civics followed. Newspapers had extensively covered the municipal elections in the state. This helped us discuss political parties, youth participation, voting practices, results, fair elections and democracy as a whole. We realised that our awareness of local bodies was not something we could be proud of.

Leopards were all over the landscape and the news, so they got dedicated space (EVs). We talked about how these sightings have a seasonal trend, possible long-term solutions at a landscape level and so on. This was of avid interest, especially as a leopard was trapped by the forest department not far from the institution.

The idea behind having History on the board was to underscore that the

A world of possibilities

How a newspaper board in an educational institution benefitted teachers and students



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

subject was alive and being discussed as it impacted our present and future. The articles talked of new galleries coming up in museums, new evidence uncovered in excavations, conserving and displaying significant relics, and even a 'Return to Harappa', which talked about toy kits around history. History was not exactly popular and some students would ask why they

needed to learn history. These discussions helped address that, to some extent.

The ongoing debates in the country during the period were extensively covered in the newspapers: the Vande Mataram controversy, UGC regulations, Keezhadi excavations, the changes to the NCERT textbooks, what was going on with the Aravallis, and

even the Preamble to the Constitution. These presented an opportunity for the classroom to engage with topics being discussed elsewhere, to read views and opinions of others, and agree/ disagree with them. More importantly, to learn to agree and disagree.

Then there were articles on books: reviews, author interviews, reports on literature festivals and reading. Among authors who got space were Salman Rushdie, Kiran Desai, and Satoshi Yagisawa, who had new books and Hindi writer Vinod Kumar Shukla, who passed away.

To our surprise, the most popular article was the one on the Japanese automobile company Suzuki making and selling Indian curries in Japan. Initially, we were unsure whether this was for real, but the article led to discussions about innovation and collaboration.

Benefits

At one level, the entire exercise was about skimming through newspapers, reading shortlisted articles, pondering over them, putting them up neatly on the boards, and learning about the country.

At another level, however, it was about realising that newspapers talk about and mirror the world, which is doing what it has always done: change and evolve. It was up to us to decide what we took from the newspaper. To me, personally, reading newspapers benefited my students and me.

We had taken the initial steps. We could connect the articles with our experiences (travel, reading, conversations), or read further on topics of interest, or learn the language (including how to write better), or take cognisance of the changes around us (new writers aka fresh voices emerging, cultural spaces coming up in cities), and be aware of the worlds beyond the small world we inhabit in a society that is increasing getting more insular.

The writer has been an educator and administrator in education institutions.

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States



Farewell moment: Mortal remains of S. Janaki kept at Maharaja's college grounds in Mysuru for public viewing, M.A. SRIRAM

Music legend Janaki cremated with state honours in Mysuru

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

Legendary singer S. Janaki was cremated with state honours at a farmhouse in Kaniyanahundi near Mysuru on Sunday evening.

Janaki's granddaughter Apsara Vydyula performed the last rites as per Telugu Brahmin traditions in the presence of her close relatives, people's representatives, friends, and a large number of admirers and the general public.

Earlier, Janaki's mortal remains were brought in a vehicle with police escort to the farmhouse in H.D. Kote taluk of Mysuru district from Maharaja's College grounds, where it was kept for the public to pay homage. The last rites were held at the farmhouse belonging to Janaki's admirer and caretaker Naveen as per the singer's wishes. Janaki's late husband Ramprasad was from Mysuru and the singer had chosen to make Mysuru her home in the past few

years. Janaki's husband and their only son Murali Krishna had predeceased her.

'Unique soul'

Ms. Apsara thanked the government for the state honours and public homage. On Janaki, Ms. Apsara said her grandmother was one of a kind with remarkable talent. "I will remember her more as a grandmother. She was full of love and laughter with a child-like spirit. She was a unique soul," Ms. Apsara said.

Several personalities from the Kannada film industry, including chairperson of the Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce S. Jaimala, veteran actor Bharathi Vishnuvardhan, and noted music composer Hamsalekha, attended the cremation.

Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled the passing of the veteran singer and said her songs gave voice to every emotion with unparalleled grace as well as versatility.

Minister slams 'interference' by Kerala HC in temple affairs

No freedom for Devaswom Board to take decisions on Sabarimala as HC is giving instructions even on ritual matters, says K. Muraliedharan; he expresses concern over SIT probe into gold theft case

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Devaswom Minister K. Muraliedharan on Sunday slammed the Kerala High Court for "excessive interference" in the affairs of the Sabarimala Ayyappa temple and other temples in the State.

Speaking at a public event, he said the time had come to rethink whether the court should interfere in all such matters, thus limiting the role of the Devaswom Boards and devotees.

Many of the interventions undermined the autonomy of the temples and



K. Muraliedharan expressed concern that the SIT report on the Sabarimala gold theft is yet to be made public. FILE PHOTO

the rights of the believers, he said.

"There is no freedom for the Devaswom Board or the government to take decisions on Sabarimala. The High Court is directly

giving instructions even on ritual matters like which flower to use in temples. It is time for a serious discussion on the extent of the court's intervention in the ritual and administrative

matters of temples," the Minister said.

Mr. Muraliedharan said he had raised the issue in the Assembly. When such opinions were expressed outside the Assembly, he said there was a possibility of contempt of court instead of democratic discussions. Even then, the boards and devotees should stand together, considering the seriousness of the issue. He expressed concern that the report of the Special Investigation Team into the Sabarimala gold theft is yet to see the light of the day. At this rate, the investigation would not be completed anytime soon, he said.

Govt. to fly bodies of capsized victims to India

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

The bodies of the 15 tourists, who were killed in the accident off Vietnam's Phu Quoc Island, were taken to Ho Chi Minh City on Sunday, from where they will be flown to India soon, the Indian Embassy in Hanoi said.

The Indian mission also said that 16 of the 17 rescued Indian tourists are on their way back home.

The Union government is continuing its efforts to assist the victims' kin, with steps under way to repatriate the remains.

Condition of one survivor from Andhra Pradesh is serious, forcing doctors to put off his evacuation

The condition of Gelli Kishore, the survivor from Andhra Pradesh who sustained critical injuries in the accident, remains serious, said officials, forcing doctors to postpone his evacuation.

Ten of the deceased are from Tamil Nadu, three from Andhra Pradesh, and two from Kerala.

The bodies of A.C. Thomas and his wife, Loveni Thomas, the two victims from Kerala, will be brought to the Mumbai airport on Monday around 10 p.m., the Kerala Chief Minister's Office informed.

Officials at the Andhra Pradesh Bhavan in New Delhi said Union Civil Aviation Minister K. Rammo-han Naidu had intervened to expedite the repatriation of the mortal remains of the three victims from the State.

Naidu's review

Following details furnished by the respective District

Collectors on the designated recipients, a request was submitted through the e-Care portal for transporting the mortal remains of Nallapeta Adishesaiah Ravi Teja to Bengaluru, Gelli Jaya Lakshmi to Vijayawada, and Mudiudum Sreedhar to Chennai.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu reviewed the assistance being extended to the accident victims.

Meanwhile, on Sunday, the Vietnamese police arrested the captain of the speedboat that capsized, authorities said.

(With inputs from agencies)

W.B. to replace 'Khela Hobey Divas' with 'Ayushman Divas': CM

Press Trust of India
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari on Sunday announced that the State government would observe August 16 as 'Ayushman Divas' to commemorate the Central government's public health insurance scheme, breaking with the tradition of the erstwhile Trinamool Congress (TMC) government's 'Khela Hobey Divas'.

Mr. Adhikari said the government would unveil the details of Ayushman Divas on August 16.

The day will also mark the completion of 100 days of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in the State. "August 16 is a black day in Kolkata's history as the Great Calcutta Killings [of 1946] were orchestrated from this date. The previous TMC government observed it as 'Khela Hobey Divas'.

Our government has decided that the day will be observed as Ayushman Divas. The details of our programme will soon follow," the Chief Minister told reporters after a BJP special organisational meeting in Tamuk in Purbajaya Medinipur district.

TMC chairperson and former CM Mamata Banerjee had declared August 16 as Khela Hobey Divas in 2021 to commemorate the party's victory in the Assembly election and promote sports among young people. However, the observance later came to be associated with violent confrontations in the State's charged political



CM Suwendu Adhikari

atmosphere.

Meanwhile, firming up the West Bengal government's stand on the emerging controversy over the suspension of entry passes for congregational prayers at a mosque inside the Kolkata airport, Mr. Adhikari on Sunday said the gates of a vital installation with critical geo-political importance could not be kept open for outsiders.

"National security and the security of the airport will gain priority over everything else. The location of the Kolkata international airport is critical since both China and Bangladesh are close by. It cannot keep its gates open for outsiders," he said.

'Personal matter'

"We have not stopped anyone from practising their religion, unlike what they [the Opposition] said about us. Observe your religions as a personal matter, without trying to influence others," he added.

The Chief Minister was responding to a question on the temporary suspension of prayers at the mosque, which is located in close proximity to the secondary runway on city airport premises.

Leopard seen near Tirumala walking path; surveillance stepped up

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Environment and Forests K. Pawan Kalyan has asked officials to take steps for the safety of devotees using the Tirumala footpath, after a leopard was found roaming near Dorasani Mandapam.

A press release said Mr. Pawan Kalyan had directed that H.A.N.U.M.A.N (Healing and Nurturing Units for Monitoring, Aid and Nursing of Wildlife) teams be deployed to ensure the wild cat caused no harm to the devotees.

Karnataka urges Kerala to donate elephant to Mookambika temple

K.S. Sudhi
KOCHI

The Kerala Forest Department is facing increased pressure to donate or facilitate the transfer of captive elephants to neighbouring States.

Karnataka Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar has written to his Kerala counterpart, V.D. Satheesan, to facilitate "the donation of a female elephant from any willing temple in Kerala" to the Kollur Mookambika Temple in Karnataka, to "participate in religious ceremonies and temple rituals".

Mr. Shivakumar has sought the help of Mr. Satheesan in facilitating the do-



Kerala has around 30 captive elephants in government-run camps across the State. R.K. NITHIN

nation in "compliance with all applicable statutory provisions, rules" as he felt that the "noble gesture would further strengthen the centuries-old spiritual

and cultural relationship" between the two States.

Earlier, a request from the Telangana Chief Minister seeking camp elephants — pachyderms res-

cued and maintained in the State's camp facilities — was turned down by the Kerala government, according to forest officials.

Kerala has around 30 captive elephants in camps, including at Kottor, Dhoni, Malayattoor, and Konni.

The captive elephant population of Kerala is estimated at 368.

Inter-State transfers can be permitted only in cases of elephants with ownership certificates issued before February 24, 2024, and their genetic profile entered in the electronic monitoring application of the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Assam CM announces anti-drugs campaign

Rahul Karmakar
DAULASAL (ASSAM)

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday announced a "ruthless" drive against drug trafficking and said inter-State coordination to break the backbone of the drug cartels improved after the installation of a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in West Bengal.

Launching a State-level drugs disposal campaign at the 14th Assam Police Battalion headquarters in Nalbari district's Daulasal, he said seized drugs worth ₹472.51 crore would be destroyed across nine districts. Daulasal is about 75 km west of Guwahati.

He initiated the inciner-

ation of a portion of the seized heroin, cannabis, methamphetamine, and other drugs and drove a road roller to crush bottles of illegal cough syrups.

Mr. Sarma told reporters that a joint approach between the Centre and Assam would help track the illicit movement of substances, identify history-sheeters, nab traffickers at the borders before they enter the State and prepare a strong case to prosecute them. "We will be ruthless in this fight. It is a promise and a warning," he said.

The Chief Minister said the State police and other agencies seized drugs and psychotropic substances worth ₹3,227 crore over the past five years.

SI booked for letting six-year-old drive a car

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

A Hyderabad Police Sub-Inspector has been booked after allowing his six-year-old granddaughter to drive a car on a busy road in Narsingi, with the officer claiming he was preparing her for a Guinness World Records attempt as the world's youngest driver.

The incident, which was reported on Saturday, came to light after a video showing the child behind the wheel while the officer occupied the front passenger seat went viral on social media platforms. A case has been registered against the officer.

'Move in groups'

He asked the Forest Department and the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) forest and vigilance wings to coordinate properly so that the devotees would be safe, and advised that they move in groups.

The Deputy Chief Minister advised officials to take appropriate measures to ensure that pilgrims were not disturbed. Officials explained to the Deputy Chief Minister the measures being taken, in coordination with the Forest Department, the TTD Forest Wing and the TTD Vigilance Wing, to ensure pilgrim safety.

Mr. Kalyan asked officials to alert the pilgrims and clear dense thickets in sensitive areas. He stressed the need for adequate security measures to allay fears of pilgrims.

The big cat was spotted near the Lord Narasimha Swamy temple, about halfway along the Alipiri footpath.

After Minister's incognito bus ride, Bengaluru rolls out passenger-friendly reforms

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTCL) has issued a fresh set of directives to its staff to improve passenger service and safety, following a surprise late-night bus inspection by Transport Minister Byrathi Suresh on Saturday.

The Minister travelled incognito, wearing a face mask, on over 10 BMTCL buses across Bengaluru to assess the service.

Orders suspension

During the inspection, he found a conductor and a driver allegedly derelict in

Conductor asks Minister to get down after the latter did not give exact change for two tickets

their duties and recommended their suspension. A BMTCL source told *The Hindu* that an inquiry had been ordered against the said staff members and immediate action initiated.

The Minister had boarded a bus travelling from Hebbal towards Nagashethalli on Saturday night and asked the conductor to issue two tickets after handing over a ₹100 note. The conductor showed his

bag, saying he did not have change, and asked the Minister to get off the bus if he could not give exact change.

The Minister also found that a bus driver did not halt at a stop, despite a waiting passenger signalling the driver.

Following the inspection, the BMTCL directed its drivers to halt buses at designated stops. Drivers and conductors should treat passengers with respect. Conductors should encourage commuters to use the QR code-based UPI payment facility. No passenger should be forced to alight for lack of change, it said.

Drones move TB samples, cut diagnosis costs from ₹9,451 to ₹91 in new ICMR trial

Siddharth Kumar Singh
HYDERABAD

A drone flight costing patients almost nothing could replace journeys that once left suspected tuberculosis (TB) patients spending an average of ₹9,451 out of their own pockets. A study by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Bilibinagar, in Telangana has found that transporting sputum samples by drone reduced patients' average expenditure to just ₹91 while cutting diagnosis time from 15 days to five days.

The study, published in the *International Journal of Tuberculosis and Lung Disease* evaluated the impact of using drones to transport sputum samples



The drone programme aims to streamline the transport of sputum samples from PHCs in remote areas to testing facilities. FILE PHOTO

from remote villages to TB testing centres in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district under the Indian Council of Medical Research's (ICMR) i-DRONE initiative. The study analysed data from 840 participants.

Before the intervention,

suspected TB patients from remote villages, often located 10 km to 30 km from the nearest diagnostic centre, had to travel over poor roads with limited public transport to access testing facilities. During the drone phase, patients

only needed to visit their nearest PHC or subcentre, where trained healthcare workers collected and securely packaged sputum samples before drones transported them to the designated TB facilities. The average out-of-pocket expenditure for patients, including medical expenses, travel, food and wage loss for both patients and attendants, dropped from ₹9,451 to ₹90.9. The intervention also improved reporting times. Before drones were introduced, over 92% of patients waited more than two days to receive their test results.

During the drone phase, 76.3% received results the next day, while only 16.3% experienced delays beyond two days.

Editorial



Oil conundrum

India's energy imports from Russia seem driven by confusion, not strategy

Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MCI) data on India's May crude imports show that receipts from Russia had reached the pre-sanction levels of more than 40%, which is also the highest in two years. Though India has defended this as commercially prudent, its yuan-based payments give China an edge to internationalise its currency at India's expense, even if it has no bearing on the domestic strength of the Indian rupee due to strict capital controls. Oil import concentration from a single source, and paying a premium, is risky for India, which has long pursued a diversified energy strategy. Moreover, sourcing fuel from the Gulf spot market amid evolving sanctions has its own risks. Secondary sanctions could hit trade channels, exposing Indian refiners to severe supply shocks. India's crude imports from Russia surged in June, while UAE shipments were at record levels as refiners sought to secure supplies after the Strait of Hormuz reopened. However, renewed Iran-U.S. hostilities have put those flows at risk. And even as Venezuela has emerged as a key supplier, increasing and unsustainably high one-country concentration could weaken India's bargaining power, reduce flexibility, and erode its credibility as an independent balancing power.

MCI data highlight the price impact: Russian imports carried a \$46-per-ton premium. Import value surged 83% amid a 2% fall in volume, likely diminishing Indian refiners' margins on refined products using Russian crude. While spot purchases have enabled refiners to capture discounts of up to \$10 per barrel on Russian Urals crude relative to Brent during some periods, after February this year, narrowing discounts, weaker product cracks, and geopolitical risks have moderated gross refining margins. India must strike a balance between having long-term stable contracts with multiple producers, and selectively using the spot-market to mitigate the procurement risks. Until the Russia-Ukraine conflict, nearly 70% of India's crude imports came through long-term contracts, particularly from West Asia. True, India cannot overlook the diplomatic costs as Russian energy dependence risks sanctions. When Russian crude was cheap because of discounts on account of the Ukraine war, India reduced imports under U.S. pressure; now when it is being sold at a premium because of the Iran war, India is moving back to Russian crude. India must expand its strategic petroleum reserves to cushion temporary disruptions. Whether it increases or cuts down Russian oil imports, India seems to make decisions that are far removed from any sense of strategic autonomy.

Insular incentive

Ethanol-blended fuel should not be forced on consumers irrationally

The Indian government's policy to continue producing E20 petrol at a cost higher than that of pure petrol when oil prices dip under \$70 a barrel to "compensate farmers adequately" is a deceptively well-formulated proposition. Most feedstock for the fuel-blending programme is from sugarcane, one of India's most water- and fertilizer-intensive crops, mainly grown in water-stressed Maharashtra and Karnataka. Whether the policy's net economic benefit remains positive will depend on the gains from lower crude imports, environmental improvements, and higher rural incomes outweighing these additional costs. Efficiency also remains a concern. Consumers – including people who are poorer than sugarcane farmers – pay more at the pump, oil marketing companies procure ethanol at the administered price, distilleries buy feedstock, and only then do farmers receive higher prices. Higher feedstock prices also do not address most reasons farmers have lower incomes, such as post-harvest losses and limited market access. Crucially, if the government rewards every unit of ethanol irrespective of feedstock, the policy will favour whichever feedstock has the largest installed base: sugarcane. Instead, the objectives should include resource efficiency and food security. The state could invest in irrigation and logistics and institute revenue-sharing arrangements with ethanol producers and cooperatives.

India has encouraged maize and grain-based distillation capacity has expanded rapidly, periodically allowed ethanol to be produced from the Food Corporation's surplus or damaged rice holdings, and has supported commercial plants using agricultural residues such as rice straw under Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas schemes. Maize and millets are less thirsty but maize still demands significant fertilizer inputs while millets produce less fermentable starch per hectare. Sweet sorghum is less water-intensive and has a shorter growing season than sugarcane. Lignocellulosic biomass such as rice and wheat straw, maize stover and groundnut shells can also support second-generation (2G) ethanol. 2G ethanol from agricultural residues can avoid using cropland for fuel, reducing competition with food crops and addressing stubble burning. It is more expensive and technologically demanding but that is a better problem to solve, with proactive policymaking. The government could pay a premium for ethanol produced from residues, subsidise equipment and infrastructure to collect and store crop residue, facilitate contracts between aggregators and distilleries, and provide viability-gap funding and offtake agreements. Ultimately, ethanol policy should not be independent of agricultural policy. And import substitution is no excuse for consumers being forced to pay more for lower-mileage fuel than pure petrol.

Five crore Indians wait when the courts take a break

The Supreme Court of India and the major High Courts are on a summer holiday break, i.e., shut down with some vacation Benches functioning to hear urgent matters. However, shops, markets, eating places, government and private offices, hospitals and police stations do not cease to work even though their staff enjoy personal leave. On the other hand, somewhere in an Indian jail tonight, a man who has been convicted of nothing is finishing another year behind bars, his trial still ongoing and perhaps years away from ending. He is one of the roughly three in four prisoners in this country who are undertrials: unconvicted, presumed innocent, yet serving time anyway – often longer than the sentence they would have received had they pleaded guilty. And as you read this, the courts, the public institutions that hold the fate of the poor in their hands, are functioning at only a fraction of their strength.

A three-century backlog

From June 1 to July 12, the Supreme Court is on its summer break, sitting with three or four Benches a week instead of a full court and resuming in earnest on July 13. The doors are not bolted; urgent pleas are still heard. But for six weeks, the most powerful court in the world's most populous democracy idles.

Now hold that against the number it is meant to be fighting. As of the last day of 2025, more than 5.39 crore cases were pending in Indian courts: over 4.76 crore in the district courts, 63.6 lakh in the High Courts, and more than 92,000 in the Supreme Court itself, its heaviest load in over 30 years. A government study once calculated that, at the present pace, clearing the pile could take three centuries.

Three centuries. And the Court takes the summer and winter vacations off.

To be fair, the judges deserve it. The recess is when reserved judgments finally get written, when the brutal daily cause-list eases enough to think.



Vijay L. Kelkar
Vice-Chairman of the Public International Centre



Pradeep S. Mehta
Secretary-General of CUTS International (Consumer Unity and Trust Society)

When courts rest together for vacations, crores of litigants across the country wait longer for justice

Last year the Chief Justice of India and his four senior-most colleagues worked clean through the first week of the break. Indian judges are among the most overworked in the world. This is not an accusation of laziness; no one who has seen a judge's docket could make one.

Because that is precisely the point. When the people doing the work are exhausted and the backlog is biblical, what conceivable logic shuts the whole shop at once? Not that judges rest – which they should – but that almost all of them rest together, so the institution goes quiet for six-plus weeks every year. And the habit is a colonial hand-me-down: the calendar was built for English judges who could not stand the Indian heat and retreated to cooler climes each summer, then enjoyed long Christmas holidays in the winter.

In 2024, the Court announced a fix: it renamed the "summer vacation" as "partial court working days". That was it. The number of days it actually sits – about 190 days in a year – did not change. You cannot rebrand your way out of a backlog; a litigant whose case is stuck does not care what the recess is called, only whether his matter is heard and disposed of.

Justice needs court continuity

So what would actually help? The first answer is one the judiciary's own watchdogs have urged for years: do not abolish judicial rest; stagger it. A parliamentary standing committee in 2023 objected to "the entire court going on vacation en masse", and proposed the obvious: rotate the leave, keep the Benches full, and never let the court run thin. A hospital does not empty its wards because its doctors are owed time off; it builds a roster. The Law Commission and the Justice Malmath Committee said the same, long ago. They were not enemies of the courts; they were trying to save them from themselves.

The standard objection is that all this is a sideshow: the real disease is vacancies, not vacations. It is true that courts are starved of judges, with up to a third of High Court seats

lying empty. But the objection boomerangs. If the Bench is already running at half strength, thinning it further for six weeks every summer is not a defence of the recess; it is the strongest case against it. And while filling those seats depends on the government and the collegium will drag on for years, the calendar is the judiciary's to fix. One reform needs permission; the other needs only will.

Beyond courts, towards solutions

Staggering the leave, though, only treats the symptom. The deeper fix is to keep disputes out of the courtroom in the first place; it was never meant to be the first stop for every quarrel, but the last. India already has the tools. Lok Adalats settled more than 2.59 crore cases in a single national sitting last December, and over 23.5 crore in three years. The Mediation Act of 2023 now nudges parties to attempt settlement before going to court, and arbitration can take commercial disputes entirely out of judges' hands; yet these routes remain badly underused. But none of this happens on its own.

The country has a reservoir of experience it scarcely draws on: its retired judges, who spent their careers mastering this very machinery and step down, still in full command of it, at 62 or 65. Their expertise need not retire with them. Albeit many of them do function as heads of quasi-judicial bodies and tribunals. Freed from any daily docket, a dedicated corps of former judges could be invited to take up a single targeted category: identify where cases pile up, set public targets for their disposal, and account for progress openly. Reform that belongs to everyone belongs to no one.

The judges will keep working through the heat, as they always do. The honest demand is not that they stop resting, but that the courts stop closing ranks and falling silent at the same moment, because justice, for five crore Indians, is not on vacation. It is overdue.

With contributions from Anushka Kewlani of CUTS

The making of Israel's retreat into isolation

The primary justification for the creation of Israel was that Europeans of Jewish origin persecuted and ghettoised, deserve their own state where they can live like other "normal" nations. For much of its history, Israel sought to escape the isolation that marked Jewish existence in Europe before the creation of the Jewish state. One of its goals was to transform Israel from a besieged regional outlier into an increasingly accepted member of the West Asian political order, a goal made very difficult if not impossible because of the expulsion of almost two-thirds of the Palestinian population from the territory that became Israel. However, through peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, quiet understandings with Gulf monarchies, and ultimately the Abraham Accords, Israel appeared to have broken out of its strategic ghetto.

A war's global fallout

Now, Israel seems determined to reverse that achievement. Through the unrestrained exercise of military power in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and Iran, and through its relentless expansion of settlements in the West Bank, it is steadily recreating the very isolation from which it once sought to escape. The result is a country that is militarily stronger than ever but politically more isolated than at any time in recent decades.

The principal cause of this growing isolation is the belief among Israel's current leadership that military superiority can substitute for political strategy. The devastation of Gaza has become the defining symbol of this approach. What began as a response to the Hamas attacks of October 7, 2023, evolved into a campaign that much of the world views as collective punishment on a massive scale. Images of destroyed neighbourhoods, displaced populations, and mounting civilian casualties have profoundly altered global perceptions of Israel.

Israel's actions in Iran and Lebanon have reinforced this trend. The repeated resort to military force beyond its borders reflects a



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Israel's isolation is no longer imposed; it is increasingly self-inflicted

doctrine that prioritises immediate tactical gains over long-term strategic consequences. While Israel has demonstrated impressive military capabilities, its attacks have also intensified regional instability and generated resentment among states that are forced to absorb the political and economic consequences of escalating conflict.

This is particularly evident in the Gulf. The Abraham Accords were founded on a convergence of interests among Israel and several Arab states. Economic cooperation, technological exchange and a shared security concern about Iran created a basis for normalisation. But the success of the Accords depended on an implicit assumption that Israel would act with sufficient restraint to maintain continued cooperation politically sustainable for Arab governments.

That assumption has been severely undermined. The destruction of Gaza and the ethnic cleansing of much of its population has generated enormous anger across Arab societies. Israel's attacks on Iran have further complicated matters by exposing Gulf states to risks that they never sought. These states may share concerns about Iranian influence, but they do not wish to become collateral victims of Israeli military adventures. The result is a growing gap between the strategic calculations of Gulf rulers and Israeli priorities.

An alliance under strain

The deterioration of Israel's relationship with the United States is even more significant. Washington increasingly finds itself paying the diplomatic and economic costs of Israeli actions while exercising limited influence over Israeli decision-making.

Recent tensions surrounding the U.S.-Iran memorandum illustrate this dynamic. Reports of sharp exchanges between Washington and Jerusalem over the agreement culminated in United States Vice-President J.D. Vance's unusually blunt rebuke of Israeli criticism.

"Donald J. Trump is the only head of state in the entire world who is sympathetic to the nation of Israel at this moment in time," Mr. Vance declared, adding that if he were a member of the Israeli cabinet, he might not be attacking "the only powerful ally that I have anywhere left in the entire world".

The significance of the remark lay not merely in its criticism of the Benjamin Netanyahu government but in its clear acknowledgement of Israel's international isolation. The dispute is not merely about Iran. It reflects a deeper concern within the U.S. administration that Israeli policies are complicating broader American strategic objectives in West Asia. The widening daylight between the two allies does not mean that the partnership is ending, but it does indicate that unconditional American support can no longer be taken for granted.

The return of isolation

Perhaps the most self-defeating aspect of Israel's current trajectory is its policy in the West Bank. Settlement expansion has accelerated to the point where the territorial basis for a viable Palestinian state has disappeared. Simultaneously, attacks by Jewish settlers against Palestinian communities have become increasingly frequent. Reports that such actions often occur with the protection or acquiescence of elements within the Israeli security forces have further eroded Israel's international legitimacy.

By making a two-state solution impossible, Israel is replacing a political problem with a permanent system of domination that much of the world finds morally and politically reprehensible.

History offers a striking irony. Zionism sought to ensure that the Jewish people would never again live isolated behind walls of fear and hostility as they did in Europe. But contemporary Israeli policies risk producing a modern version of that condition. The difference is that this isolation is no longer imposed; it is self-inflicted.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Strengthening ties

The strategic partnership between India and New Zealand can prove beneficial for both countries, especially as global uncertainty rises due to the West Asia conflict. Strengthening ties with major economies is vital for India, particularly as the U.S.'s reliability as an ally has come under question. However, the government must ensure that exports to maintain a strong and stable balance of payments. **Nandya Prasad,**
Noida, Uttar Pradesh

S. Janaki

The passing of S. Janaki marks the poignant end of a golden era in Indian cinema. For over six decades, her versatile voice was the raw, emotional pulse of our everyday lives,

dominating South Indian cinema with an unmatched range. Whether delivering complex classical masterpieces such as "Singaravelu Deva" (Konjum Salangai), playful comic numbers, or shifting her vocal modulation to effortlessly sing in a child's voice, she was the undisputed queen of expression. What truly elevated Janaki Amma to an icon was her ability to dissolve linguistic boundaries. She never needed a government title; her listeners had already crowned her. The nightingale has fallen silent, but her staggering treasury of songs will comfort us for centuries to come. **S. Padmanabhan,**
Kochi, Kerala

Janaki Amma's mastery of the nuances of singing

made her one of the most sought-after playback singers, and she dominated the Indian music world for several decades by rendering memorable songs not only in many Indian languages but also in foreign languages. Janaki Amma, who rightly earned the sobriquet "Nightingale of the South", leaves behind a priceless legacy for us to cherish, enjoy, and remember her by forever. **Tharicus S. Fernando,**
Chennai

As someone who grew up listening to her innumerable songs, I will always savour and cherish her timeless gems, especially "Chinna Chinna Vanna Kuyil" (Mouna Ragam), "Machanai Paatheengala" (Anakkili), and "Senthora Poove" (16 Vayathinile). The legendary singer

demonstrated that music is a divine unifier that transcends all man-made barriers and divisions. **B. Suresh Kumar,**
Coimbatore

The loss of Janaki Amma stirs profound grief in hearts across India. For generations of listeners, there is a Janaki Amma song in the playlist, for every mood and occasion. Reducing her legacy to the 'Nightingale of South India' seems a disservice, especially in a country as vast and culturally diverse as India. **Lakshmi K.S.,**
Kochi

Her voice lent emotional depth to thousands of songs across Indian cinema while remaining remarkable for its simplicity and expressive power. Her

legacy will endure not only through her vast body of work but also through the timeless emotions her songs continue to evoke. **Mahiba Fatima,**
Hyderabad

Though S. Janaki sang innumerable songs and won plenty of awards, "Singaravelu Deva" remains a watermark in her outstanding career. The song, set in raga Abheri, is the eternal favourite, tugging at the heartstrings of young and old, transcending time and age boundaries. At a time when song tracks are recorded separately and later synthesised, this immortal composition was a pioneer of the technique. S. Janaki's vocals and the nadaswaram performance of Kanakurichi Arunachalam were recorded separately and blended

together later. The breathtaking exchange, in which her voice matched the complex, rapid notes of the nadaswaram note by note, catapulted her to overnight fame. **R. Sivakumar,**
Chennai

The passing of South India's Nightingale, feels like the quiet fading of a voice that cradled our childhoods, gave language to our heartbreaks, and brought a gentle, divine warmth into our homes for over six decades. While we mourn the loss of an icon whose humility was as immense as her talent, we take comfort in knowing that her songs are immortal. **Kshirasagara Balaji Rao,**
Hyderabad

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

Opinion

Judging graduates, not entrance scores

Few institutions in India carry the popularity of the IITs. Getting into them requires intense preparation and intellectual discipline. JEE ranks and GATE scores used for admissions to India's premier institutions are, therefore, important. Recruiters, too, have often treated them as an indication of a student's ability. Recently, however, the All IITs Placement Committee has decided to exclude JEE ranks, GATE scores, percentiles, and other such credentials from standard placement resumes. Even if some consider it unnecessary, this decision deserves wide support.

Beyond entrance ranks

An entrance examination captures a snapshot of a student's performance on a single day. A degree reflects years of learning. Between the two lie classrooms, laboratories, projects, internships, peer learning, teamwork, participation in various extended curricular activities, failures, recoveries and personal growth. If campus recruitment continues to privilege entrance rank, it quietly reduces the IIT experience as a whole to an interlude between JEE and employment. That is unfair to the student and to the institution.

To treat a student's entrance rank as permanent proof of ability is a constricted view. A more serious view examines whether a student has solved problems, completed meaningful projects, worked in teams, built prototypes, written code, contributed to research, communicated clearly and shown the maturity required in the workplace. Preparing oneself for work requires competence and a willingness to be a lifelong learner. It does not rely on the entrance test score alone.

The Committee's decision is also consistent with the National Education Policy (NEP 2020), which emphasises the need to move beyond an examination-dominated system. The Policy asks us to focus on



Mamidala Jagadeesh Kumar

Chairman, Review Committee for NEP 2020, Ministry of Education, GoI and former Vice-Chancellor, JNU and former Chairman, UGC. Views are personal

creating an ecosystem that enables students to develop critical thinking, creativity, ethical judgment, problem-solving, and holistic development. If our higher education institutions are expected to provide these capabilities to our students, why shouldn't placement systems recognise them?

There could be another, more sensitive reason for the decision. It could be possible to infer social category or admission route from entrance ranks by comparing programme-level opening and closing ranks. Such inference may not always be explicit, but it can influence perception. What recruiters should be looking for is not how the student entered IIT, but what the student can do now.

Both public institutions and recruiters play important roles in designing hiring processes that reduce avoidable bias. Removing entrance ranks from standard resumes prevents a potentially prejudicial and often irrelevant data point from becoming a default filter. Some may say that recruiters need filters. Nobody is contesting that need. But employers already have better instruments. They use CGPA or CPI thresholds, technical interviews, coding tests, case discussions, design tasks, project reviews, research work, communication abilities and behavioural assessments. It has long been recognised that JEE or GATE scores do not reliably capture these.

A student's entrance rank may say something about past preparation. It cannot say enough about future contributions. With enhanced access, our higher education institutions attract many first-generation learners, rural students, non-English-medium students, and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Some may take time to adjust to the new environment. Many grow substantially during their IIT years. A fair placement process should, therefore, allow them to

present what they have achieved years after obtaining their entrance scores.

Student well-being should be our top priority. If recruiting methods make ranks part of students' identities, they become a burden for many students. When the recruitment process turns ranks into hierarchies, students can experience anxiety and comparison. IITs are places where students grow beyond the circumstances of entry. Then why can't our placement system let students know that the work they do after admission matters, not their ranks?

This does not mean that entrance examinations are unimportant. But the selection process for admission and the selection process for recruitment are different altogether. The first decides entry into an academic programme. The second should judge current professional readiness. Confusing the two weakens both.

The decision to move away from publicising only the highest salary packages also deserves attention. Highest packages create headlines. They may lead students and parents to believe that high packages are normal, when in reality they are often outliers. Median salary is a better representative measure to get an overall sense of how the larger graduating cohort has fared. It is important to encourage a more mature public conversation on employment by emphasising median salaries.

A better signal

Together, these decisions show welcome institutional seriousness. They recognise that campus recruitment must assess students for what they have learnt and become during their time at the institution. A fair placement system should not allow an old rank to overshadow evidence of a student's present competence and readiness for work. Other higher education institutions would do well to draw from this example.

A.P. and the next El Niño challenge

Heatwaves and rainfall deficits could put the State's preparedness to the test

STATE OF PLAY

Nellore Sravani

Much before El Niño formed over the Pacific Ocean, Andhra Pradesh got a bitter taste of what was to come. In May, the State experienced oppressive heat, unending warm nights, and intense heatwaves. Cities and towns were a deserted look as daytime temperatures remained above 44 degrees Celsius for nine consecutive days, with the season's highest touching 48.3 degrees Celsius.

In addition to bringing back unpleasant memories of the previous El Niño events in the State, the record-breaking temperatures heralded a disturbing weather pattern, marked by scanty rainfall and more heatwaves. Even on July 12, the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Amaravati, issued heatwave alerts for the State.

This is the third time in 10 years that the State's preparedness is being put to the test, the first two being 2015 and 2023. In 2015, which witnessed a strong El Niño event, heatwaves killed at least 2,300 people in the country, with Andhra Pradesh alone accounting for 1,369 deaths, forcing the government to form the Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority (APSDMA).

Weather experts say that whenever sea surface temperatures in the Pacific Ocean rise beyond 2 degrees Celsius, meteorologists declare it a "very strong" El Niño event. Between 1951 and 2025, this threshold was crossed four times – 1972, 1982, 2015 and 2023 – according to IMD experts.

Meteorologists believe there is a high likelihood of



another strong El Niño event this year.

A testing monsoon

For Andhra Pradesh, an overall below-normal monsoon has been forecast, with isolated areas showing the probability of receiving normal or above-normal rainfall, which indicates the likelihood of the formation of low-pressure systems in the Bay of Bengal. But this is only a possibility.

The State receives most of its rainfall during the South-west monsoon, particularly in August and September, when El Niño is expected to gain strength. While the State received above normal rainfall in June, as predicted, July has begun on a slightly dry note.

According to the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, the State received 86.2 mm of rainfall against the normal 149.1 mm between June 1 and July 11, recording a deficit of 42.2%. Except for two districts that reported normal rainfall, 26 of the 28 districts have reported either deficient or largely deficient rainfall, presenting a bleak picture.

The State's long-period average annual rainfall is 858 mm, but this year's total is projected at 690 mm, which means a deviation of around 20%, which, again, is double the deviations recorded in the State in recent El Niño years. According to the APSDMA, negative deviations in recent El Niño years ranged between

4% and 11%.

The immediate impact of deficit rainfall is on the farming community and agricultural activities. In 2023, 54 mandals were declared drought-hit, while at least 6.96 lakh farmers suffered losses in 103 of the State's 688 mandals. The government has begun preparations.

At a review meeting, Andhra Pradesh Home and Disaster Management Minister V. Anitha stressed the need to disseminate weather information down to the village level to minimise crop losses. But, there is a challenge: the agricultural department issues alerts and advisories to farmers based on the agroclimatic zones. Academicians have flagged the haphazard clubbing of areas with zones of different characteristics. This can lead to a mismatch in the advisory being given and the ground reality of farmers. The government's objective cannot be achieved unless the structural issues are addressed.

The agricultural department has begun alerting farmers about shifting to drought-hardy crops in rain-fed areas of Rayalaseema to tide over the crisis. But questions have also been raised about the willingness of farmers to shift to these crops.

The State appears to have learnt from the lessons of 2015 by significantly reducing heatstroke deaths. In 2023, the number of deaths recorded had drastically come down to three. But ensuring that timely weather advisories reach farmers remains a weak link.

It is to be seen whether the government's preparedness remains only on paper or aids in mitigating the impact of the global event.

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Disproportionate SIR deletions in Manipur's tribal constituencies

Despite accounting for only 37.8% of the electorate, the ST constituencies accounted for 64.2% of deletions during the enumeration phase of the SIR

DATA POINT

Pon Vasanth B.A.
Nitika Francis

An analysis of deletions during the enumeration phase of the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of Manipur's electoral rolls showed that the 19 constituencies reserved for Scheduled Tribes (ST) saw disproportionately high deletions compared with the remaining 41 Assembly constituencies (ACs) (Chart 1).

The draft SIR rolls, released on July 5, showed that these 19 ACs in the hill areas – which have a predominant presence of the Kuki-Zo and Naga communities – accounted for 64.2% of the 1.59 lakh deletions, despite accounting for only 37.8% of the 20.93 lakh voters present on the State's rolls before SIR.

As Table 2 shows, the share of voters from ST constituencies in Manipur's electorate dropped by 2.1 percentage points due to disproportionately high deletions in those ACs.

Manipur has been in turmoil ever since ethnic violence erupted in May 2023. Among the ST ACs, deletions were more concentrated in and around Churachandpur – a district with a significant presence of the Kuki-Zo community, which was the epicentre of the conflict (Map 1).

In the ST constituencies, 76.1% of deletions were recorded as "Permanently Shifted" or "Untraceable/Absent", compared with 53.9% in the General ACs. Meanwhile, "Death" accounted for 41.9% of deletions in the General ACs, in contrast to just 18.9% in the ST ACs.

More women got deleted than men. More than 8% of female voters were deleted compared with 6% of male voters. For every 1,000 male voters deleted, 1,271 female voters were deleted, bringing the gender ratio in the rolls down from 1,071 before SIR to 1,057 in the draft rolls. In 18 ACs, 60% to 69% of the deletions were women.



Vote in question: Voters at polling station in Kangpokpi in Manipur during 2022 Assembly polls

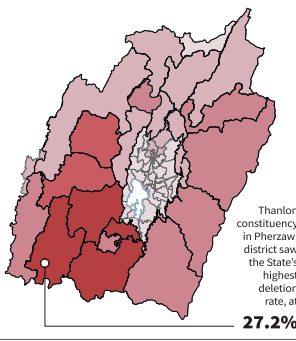
Disenfranchisement risk

Chart 1: For every name deleted in the 40 general constituencies, roughly two names were deleted in the 19 constituencies reserved for Scheduled Tribes (ST)



Map: Deletions were more concentrated in and around Churachandpur district, which has a significant presence of the Kuki-Zo community and was the epicentre of the conflict. The unshaded region in the centre of the map is the Loktak lake.

Under 5% 5–10% 10–15% 15–20% 20% & above



The data were sourced from the lists of deletions published by the Chief Electoral Officer, Manipur

Share in electorate before SIR (%) Share in deletions in draft SIR rolls (%)

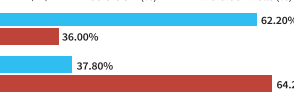


Chart 2: The chart shows shares of different reasons for which names were deleted in different types of constituencies

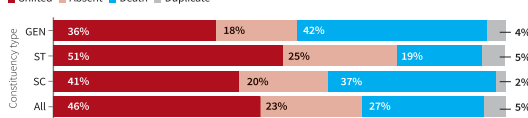


Table 2: The table below shows the reason-wise deletions in different types of constituencies

Constituency type	Shifted	Absent	Death	Duplicate	Total Deletions
GEN (40)	20,032	9,861	23,227	2,340	55,460
ST (19)	51,869	25,677	19,255	5,026	1,01,827
SC (1)	572	272	518	28	1,390
Total (60)	72,473	35,810	43,000	7,394	1,58,677

The Hindu analysed the numbers using the booth-wise lists of deletions published by the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Manipur. The Statewide aggregate numbers provided by the CEO did not include the breakdown of deletions marked as "Shifted" and as "Absent". They were clubbed under a single category

Table 3: For every 1,000 male voters deleted, 1,271 female voters got deleted	Gender	In rolls before SIR	In deletions	In draft SIR rolls
	Male	1,010,337	69,871	9,40,466
	Female	1,082,459	88,799	9,93,660
	Third Gender	300	7	293
	Total	2,093,096	158,677	1,934,419
	Gender Ratio*	1,071	1,271	1,057

* (Number of female voters per 1,000 male voters)

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindustan

FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 13, 1976

Building Code that has been given the go-by

Madras, July 12: When there was a National Building Code why not make use of it to have cheaper buildings? Posing this question the Union Industry Minister, Mr. T. A. Pai, had a dig at financial institutions for putting forth their own codes "which were totally irrelevant" and which only added to costs.

Speaking at the Indian Standards Institution here today, Mr. Pai said that if one had to borrow from the LIC it would insist on earthquake proof foundation. If it was so keen why not have an earthquake premium instead of insisting on conditions which would only raise costs, he asked jocularly. The Minister also deprecated the tendency of industries to fritter away their resources on posh buildings.

Mr. Pai said that the National Building Code evolved a long time ago had been given the go-by and the PWD and the municipal corporations refused to change. People refused to do anything sensibly. It would appear that enforcement of discipline either by law or force was the only way to "discipline ourselves", he felt.

The Minister was glad that the National Building Code was beginning to be accepted and the Planning Commission was making the State Governments to accept the code.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 13, 1926

The Lenglen episode

A correspondent of "The Star" wrote under date June 24:—

The biggest sensation of the present Wimbledon meeting occurred to-day, when Mlle. Suzanne Lenglen, the famous French tennis player, failed to put in an appearance for her two o'clock match on Court No. 1 against Mrs. G. J. Deyhurst. The meeting of these two had attracted the usual enormous crowd to Court No. 1 there being almost empty benches in the Centre Court, where J. Kozuluh and J. Pennycook were appearing and at other attractive matches in other courts.

The court was packed, and thousands tried in vain to get in. But as time went on there was no Suzanne and the frequent applause testified to the impatience of the spectators. It was the first time in the history of Wimbledon that she was not up to time or that she has kept her faithful army of admirers waiting.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Number of persons who drowned in Germany last month

99 Ninety-nine people drowned in Germany last month, the most since a record heatwave swept Europe in 2003, as per the official figures. Germany was among the nations hit by the June heatwave in western Europe, which set temperature records in several places. **AFP**

Fund sought by Delhi CM for accelerating ownership scheme

100 ₹ crore Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta has sought ₹100 crore from the Centre to accelerate the implementation of the PM-UDAY scheme, providing property rights to residents of 1,511 unauthorised colonies in the national capital, according to a statement. **PTI**

Traditional water sources cleaned in Hamirpur district

236 A campaign to clean the traditional water sources in Himachal Pradesh's Hamirpur district has restored 236 facilities so far, officials said. The campaign was launched to safeguard people from waterborne diseases during monsoon. **PTI**

Number of SIR forms submitted in two days in Punjab

30 lakh More than 30 lakh Punjab electors have submitted their enumeration forms during special camps organised Statewide over two days as part of special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Anindita Mitra said on Sunday. **PTI**

Deaths due to floods reported in Bangladesh

44 At least 44 people have died in floods and landslides over the past week in Bangladesh, officials said Sunday, as rivers remained above danger levels and 2.5 lakh families were displaced. Overnight torrential rains inundated several areas in Dhaka. **PTI**

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Why has China banned helium exports?

Why is helium emerging as a strategic resource? How vulnerable is the world to a helium supply shock? Why is it considered a critical input for future technologies? Why is storing and transporting helium so expensive? What makes it so hard to replace?

EXPLAINER

Vasudevan Mukunth

The story so far: On July 10, the Ministry of Commerce and General Administration of Customs, China, has temporarily but immediately banned helium exports from the country. As of 4.30 pm IST on July 10, Beijing had not published any other information as to why it took this step now or its scope.

Is China a major helium producer? China imports more than 80% of its helium needs but produces only around 1.6% of the world's helium. The export ban follows an extended period of supply strained by Russia's export restrictions — where the Prime Minister needs to sign off on shipments through 2027 — and supply risks tied to heightened tensions in West Asia.

The world's major helium producers are the U.S. (meeting 43% of total supply), followed by Qatar, Russia, Canada, and Algeria. In 2024, the U.S. privatised its Federal Helium Reserve and, selling its assets to the Messer Group and no longer buffering shocks such as those due to the U.S.-Iran conflict.

The next year, the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform launched an investigation into Messer's Chinese interests, stoking the risk of tit-for-tat measures. Which China's latest export ban could be.

After the U.S., Qatar has been meeting 33% of the demand, especially in Asia. After the conflict with Iran escalated, as medical chemist and *Science* columnist Derek Lowe put it, "one-third of global helium production is now literally bottled up behind the Strait of Hormuz, a much higher percentage than world oil production [where the situation is bad enough already]."

In this light, China's new export restriction could preserve the country's helium supply for its domestic chip



Helium can only be transported in vacuum-jacketed stainless steel vessels that are manufactured only by a few companies worldwide. **GETTY IMAGES**

manufacturers and its medical sector.

How is helium obtained? Helium is the second-lightest element, after hydrogen, and is not manufactured. It is a non-renewable resource generated deep in the earth's crust, where the radioactive decay of uranium and thorium atoms emits alpha particles, which capture electrons to form helium atoms.

Over millions of years, this helium migrates into the same reservoirs of natural gas, and they are extracted together. This said, natural gas is not processed to isolate the helium from it until the latter makes up at least 0.3% by volume.

But once it does, the gas is isolated using the fact that it has a different boiling point.

Some operators also recover helium from LNG plants and from the air but these quantities are too low to matter to the global demand. Helium for commercial use is usually at least 99.997% pure.

What is helium used for?

Helium has an extremely low boiling point — negative 269°C — and does not participate easily in chemical reactions. These are good properties for a coolant that needs to cool the magnets in MRI machines, the silicon wafers in the semiconductor fabricating industry, and, increasingly, some of the devices used in quantum computers. Its small atoms mean the gas escapes easily through gaps that might be too small for oxygen or nitrogen atoms — so engineers use helium as a leak-detector.

Helium is also used in the process of drawing optical fibres to rapidly and uniformly cool molten glass and to displace oxygen or nitrogen from forming bubbles inside the material. Spaceflight organisations like ISRO, NASA, and SpaceX use helium to pressurise fuel tanks in rockets. Research and the tourism sector in many parts of the world also use helium to inflate balloons and airships.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, laboratory use-cases account for

22% of the demand for helium, followed by controlled atmospheres and semiconductors (17%), lifting gas (17%), MRI scanners (15%), aerospace (9%), and detecting leaks (5%).

How much does helium cost?

In June 2026, the spot price for highly pure helium in Northeast Asia had reportedly spiked to \$150-205 per thousand cubic feet, almost double what it was in late 2025. At least one major supplier, the U.S.-based industrial supplier Airgas, has invoked force majeure and tacked on surcharges of \$13.50 per hundred cubic feet to existing contracts. Liquid helium is by default expensive to store and transport because helium only liquefies at -269°C.

In fact, the helium supply chain as a whole is cost-intensive because purification, storage, and transport are each expensive and technically sophisticated. A mid-to-large-scale purification and liquefaction facility will require more than \$100 million while smaller ones can cost around \$10 million, thanks to the need for corrosion-resistant alloys that can withstand ultra-low temperatures.

The gas can be stored in underground salt caverns, which reduce leaks significantly — but these formations are rare and developing a new one can cost more than \$200 million. It can also be stored as compressed gas or cryogenic liquid. The former typically costs up to \$10 million to build while bulk cryogenic liquid storage systems generally need between \$0.5 million and \$20 million depending on capacity. Then there are the operational expenses.

Finally, helium can only be transported in vacuum-jacketed stainless steel vessels — which are manufactured by relatively few companies worldwide, including several Chinese ones.

Finally, the contractor transporting the containers must also ensure they are delivered before the holding time expires, after which the helium will start boiling off into the atmosphere.

THE GIST

The export ban follows an extended period of supply strained by Russia's export restrictions — where the Prime Minister needs to sign off on shipments through 2027 — and supply risks tied to heightened tensions in West Asia.

Helium is an important coolant in the semiconductor fabricating industry, where it removes heat from silicon wafers.

The helium supply chain as a whole is cost-intensive because purification, storage, and transport are each expensive and technically sophisticated.

How DDCs changed local governance in J&K?

What is at stake in the debate over local democracy in Jammu and Kashmir?

Tikender Singh Panwar

The story so far:

The restructuring of Jammu and Kashmir's political and administrative framework through the constitution of District Development Councils (DDCs) has remained the subject of legal and constitutional debate. Formed in 2021, the DDCs completed their five-year term on February 24, 2026. With no fresh elections held and local government institutions remaining largely inactive in recent years, questions have resurfaced about the relevance of the DDC model. Introduced as a mechanism for direct local democracy, the DDCs are viewed by supporters as a step towards grassroots governance, while critics argue they have impeded rather than strengthened democratic decentralisation in the region.

What do the 73rd and 74th Amendments provide for?

One of the core arguments presented for

the abrogation of Article 370 was the need to fully integrate J&K with the constitutional framework applicable to the rest of India.

A central element of this argument was the introduction of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, which provide for elected rural and urban bodies. This integration was intended to ensure regular, mandatory elections and empower grassroots democracy.

How is local governance structured?

The standard constitutional framework operates on a clearly defined multi-tier electoral system where citizens directly elect their local representatives:

Urban areas: Municipal Corporations, Municipal Councils, and Nagar Panchayats.

Rural areas: A three-tier structure comprising Gram Panchayats (Village Pradhans), Block Development Councils (BDCs), and District-level bodies (Zila Parishads).

Mandated under Article 243ZD of the

Constitution, the District Planning Committee (DPC) is envisaged as a coordinating body that brings together development plans prepared by panchayats and municipalities and integrates them into a comprehensive district-level plan.

Unlike an independent executive authority, the DPC is intended to function as an institutional mechanism that reflects priorities generated by elected local bodies and facilitates bottom-up planning. In this sense, it is designed to strengthen democratic decentralisation by aggregating local mandates rather than exercising authority over them.

However, while the constitutional framework assigns a key role to DPCs in district-level planning, their functioning has been uneven across the country, with many remaining largely inactive, barring a few exceptions such as Kerala.

How do DDCs differ from DPCs?

The DDCs were established in J&K through an executive order rather than a

legislative process. While the government presents DDCs as directly elected bodies that strengthen grassroots democracy, it is contended that the model contains major contradictions within the governance framework.

Critics argue that the DDC structure bypasses existing institutions such as Zila Panchayats and urban local bodies. Unlike the DPC, which is intended to aggregate development priorities emerging from lower tiers of government, the DDC functions as a parallel administrative authority with executive and developmental powers. This blurs the relationship between the electorate and the actual exercise of power.

The key distinction is that the DPC seeks to strengthen local democracy by consolidating mandates generated from the ground up, whereas the DDC operates from above, competing with lower tiers of governance and functioning as an instrument of centralised bureaucratic control rather than democratic decentralisation.

The DDC structure raises concerns about unequal representation. The allocation of seats across districts does not adequately reflect variations in population, thereby diluting the principle of uniform political weight.

For instance, Srinagar, with a population of roughly 12 lakh, and Kishtwar, with around 2.5 lakh residents, are allocated the same number of DDC members. This creates an imbalance where the political voice per capita is drastically skewed.

The DDCs are being compared to the "special purpose vehicles" used in Smart City projects. They create an illusion of decentralisation, but act as capital-driven, bureaucratically managed structures. Since DDCs can easily jettison legislatively approved local initiatives, they function as a governance substitute rather than a governance supplement.

The creation of 280 DDC members across J&K has established a form of parallel 'parliament' in disguise. Historically, in politically fragile regions, central authorities have often sought to weaken provincial or State-level assemblies by backing district-level entities.

With the J&K State Assembly absent or weakened for years, the DDC framework has allowed key functions and financial powers that would ordinarily rest with elected legislators and local panchayats to remain concentrated under Union administration control.

What is the way forward for local democracy in J&K?

Genuine local democracy cannot be reduced to an administrative or legal exercise; it is fundamentally a political question. True decentralisation requires the restoration of the DPC model envisaged under the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, ensuring financially empowered and grounded local governments accountable to the State's electorate, rather than an administrative architecture serving centralised union control.

CACHE



ChatGPT Work is a direct competitor to Claude Cowork, which can similarly complete multi-step, tool-using tasks for users, though the two differ in their plugin ecosystems and how deeply each is woven into its maker's coding tools — Codex for OpenAI, Claude Code for Anthropic. REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

Has OpenAI's GPT-5.6 class beaten Anthropic's Fable-class models?

Just over a week after Fable 5 came back online for all users, OpenAI unveiled its own next-generation family: GPT-5.6 Sol, Terra, and Luna; rather than a single flagship, OpenAI split the release into three capability tiers priced separately with Sol at the top and Luna at the bottom

John Xavier

Anthropic and OpenAI are locked in an increasingly tight race for frontier AI supremacy, and the gap between their flagship models are narrowing to a benchmark-by-benchmark contest.

Claude has led on real-world software-engineering tasks with Fable 5 scoring 80.3% on SWE-Bench Pro — a benchmark that evaluates an AI model's software engineering capabilities through complex, realistic programming challenges — at its June launch, well ahead of GPT-5.5's 58.6%. But OpenAI's newly released GPT-5.6 Sol claims the state-of-the-art spot on the Artificial Analysis Coding Agent Index at 80, narrowly ahead of Fable 5, while using less than half the tokens and time.

Since launching Mythos and giving a select group of companies in its Glasswing Alliance early access, Anthropic has positioned itself at the front of the frontier race. It followed up by releasing Fable 5, a version of Mythos with extra safeguards around biology, cybersecurity, and AI research, to a much broader set of users, cementing that lead.

That momentum hit a snag when a dispute with the U.S. government over export controls led Anthropic to be treated as a supply-chain risk, forcing it to suspend access to Fable 5 and Mythos 5 for 19 days — from June 12 to July 1, 2026 — before the Commerce Department lifted the relevant controls and access was restored.

Just over a week after Fable 5 came back online for all users, OpenAI unveiled its own next-generation family: GPT-5.6 Sol, Terra, and Luna. Rather than a single flagship, OpenAI split the release into three capability tiers priced separately

with Sol at the top and Luna at the bottom, arguing this lets each tier advance on its own tempo.

OpenAI has been vocal that Sol edges out Anthropic's flagship on several fronts. On Agents' Last Exam, an evaluation of long-running professional workflows across 55 fields, Sol scored 53.6, which OpenAI says is 13.1 points ahead of Fable 5. On the Artificial Analysis Coding Agent Index, Sol posted a new high of 80, about 2.8 points above Fable 5. It also claims new state-of-the-art marks on BrowseComp (92.2%) and OSWorld 2.0 (62.6%).

Picture isn't one-directional

But the picture isn't one-directional. Anthropic still holds a wide lead on SWE-Bench Pro, where Fable 5's 80.3% sits far above the 64.6% OpenAI reports for Sol — a roughly 15-point gap on one of the most closely watched agentic-coding benchmarks.

Independent observers have pointed out that Terminal-Bench and SWE-Bench Pro reward different kinds of work: terminal automation favours Sol's Codex-style harness, while whole-codebase issue resolution still favours Claude.

To understand why the two companies can each claim a win, it helps to think of the two tests as different kinds of job interviews for the same candidate.

SWE-Bench Pro is like handing someone a half-finished house that a previous contractor left behind, and asking them to find exactly what's wrong and fix only that, without touching anything else or causing a different room to leak.

It rewards a model that can read carefully, navigate something large and unfamiliar, and make a precise, contained

repair — the way a software engineer fixes a specific bug in a codebase they didn't build.

Terminal-Bench 2.1, on the other hand, is less about fixing one specific thing and more about general skilfulness around the whole house. One has to evaluate whether this person can set up the electricity, get the plumbing running, and recover if a step goes wrong midway.

It's a broader test of operating a computer's control panel that includes installing software, configuring servers, running multi-step jobs, and troubleshooting failures along the way.

A model can be a meticulous bug-fixer without being a great all-around operator, and vice versa. This is roughly why Fable 5 leads on the "fix this one thing precisely" test while GPT-5.6 Sol leads on the "handle this whole messy workflow" test.

There's a second wrinkle worth knowing as these scores aren't just testing the AI model itself but they're also testing the toolkit it's given to work with.

OpenAI has evaluated its models using its own in-house "Codex" toolkit, tuned to work well with how its models like to operate, a bit like letting the operator using their own tools versus renting them a standard set of equipment. A contractor will be adept at executing well with the tools he is used to, but may find it difficult to use a different toolkit.

In a normal scenario, this contractor will require some additional time to get used to the new tools before they start working. And even when they work with the new tools, it will take some time to gain tacit knowledge. If one were to factor this into GPT-5.6 Sol's capability, then its lead with Fable 5 will be narrower.

Apart from the GPT-5.6 family of models, the company also announced

ChatGPT Work, an agentic mode built on GPT-5.6 that can read emails, summarise texts, create presentations, and organise inchoate ideas into charts and dashboards through a new "Sites" feature, as well as run scheduled or recurring tasks

Competing strengths, different trade-offs

This product is a direct competitor to Claude Cowork, which can similarly complete multi-step, tool-using tasks for users, though the two differ in their plugin ecosystems and how deeply each is woven into its maker's coding tools — Codex for OpenAI, Claude Code for Anthropic.

So how do the two flagship frontier labs' models compare and contrast? Based on what the benchmark and eval scores show, both are capable and land close to each other overall. Each comes with a different speciality rather than one model being categorically ahead.

The place where OpenAI clearly shows distinction is in token efficiency. On the Artificial Analysis Coding Agent Index, Sol matches or exceeds Fable 5's score while using less than half the output tokens, taking less than half the time, and costing about one-third less. On the broader Artificial Analysis Intelligence Index, Sol comes within a single point of Fable 5 while finishing tasks in 61% less time at roughly half the cost.

For teams weighing cost per completed task rather than raw benchmark scores this efficiency gap may be a deciding factor than which model tops any individual leaderboard. Though, as with the Codex-versus-neutral-harness comparison above, it's worth checking whether that efficiency holds up outside OpenAI's own tuned environment before betting a production workflow on it.



KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

He works for a prestigious law firm

She takes after her grandmother, especially in her love for music

S. Upendran

"I know! I'm late again. I didn't expect the traffic to be so bad at this time of the day."

"It's a pity that you haven't taken after your father."

"What should I have taken from my father? What are you talking about?"

"The expression 'take after' is used in everyday contexts. When someone says that you've taken after your father, it means you resemble him."

"In other words, I look like him. If I resemble my father, why did you say it's a pity that I haven't taken after him?"

"You can take after someone in terms of looks and in terms of character."

"In other words, I may be like him in terms of looks, but not in terms of my likes, dislikes, temperament, etc."

"Exactly! And you're nothing like your father when it comes to those things. You haven't taken after him when it comes to punctuality."

"My sister has taken after him in that respect. Tell me, how is p...t...e...s...t...i...g...i...o...u...s pronounced?"

"For native speakers of English, the word consists of three syllables. The first is pronounced like the word 'press', while the following vowel is like the 'i' in 'sit' and 'bit'. The 'g' sounds like the 'j' in 'jam' and 'juice, and the final..."

"The final 'ous' sounds like the 'ous' in 'famous'."

"Very good! The word is pronounced 'pres-TIJ-es' with the stress on the second syllable. You know what the word means, right?"

"Yes. It means respected and admired. My friend Venkatesh graduated from a very prestigious institution in India."

"Now tell me, many Indians pronounce the word 'pres-TEA-ji-es'. They pronounce it as a four syllabled word. Is it wrong to pronounce it that way?"

"A native speaker of English would probably think so. But in India, it won't be a problem. People will understand you. By the way, congratulations. Your favourite actor's new release is a big hit."

"People in the film industry are saying that it's a blockbuster. Many critics have paid the actor handsome compliments."

"Handsome compliments! What are you talking about? Isn't the word handsome always used with people? Especially men!"

"Not really! The word can be used with things as well. For example, when you say that someone paid you a handsome compliment, what you're suggesting is that the individual paid you a generous compliment."

"I see. How about this example? The company gave Sindu a handsome raise to make sure that she stays."

"To retain someone like her, they would have had to double her salary."

"Whenever Sunita goes to a restaurant, she always tips the waiter handsomely."

"That's easy to do when you get a handsome cheque every month."

upendrankye@gmail.com

THE DAILY QUIZ

A quiz on ICC Hall of Famers to mark the induction of Sourav Ganguly and Anjum Chopra

V.V. Ramanan

QUESTION 1

Of the 13 Indians inducted into the Hall of Fame, only one has not led the country. Who?

QUESTION 2

As per the ICC website, apart from Kapil Dev, who is the only other 'all-rounder' inducted to have led his country to limited-overs World Cup glory?

QUESTION 3

Who was the third inductee along with Anjum and Sourav this year?

QUESTION 4

The Sri Lankan legends

Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara were both inducted in the same year. Which year?

QUESTION 5

Name the only Indian inductee not to have played One Day Internationals?

QUESTION 6

In 1999, Anil Kumble, who was inducted in 2015, emulated a 2009 Hall of Famer in achieving a rare Test feat. Who and what feat?

QUESTION 7

Name the Pakistani cricketer who was honoured posthumously in 2022 for his feats.



Visual question: Name this only woman wicketkeeper to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. REUTERS

Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:

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. **Ans: Emily Wilson**
2. Ancient Greek plays were categorised into two forms: comedies and tragedies. Aristotle considered this the important element of a play. Name it. **Ans: Mythos (Plot)**
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. **Ans: Oedipus; Oedipus Rex, Sophocles**
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. **Ans: Plato**
5. The Iliad is also an epic poem by Homer. What is its famous opening line? **Ans: "Sing, O goddess, the anger of Achilles..."**
6. Visual: This rap artist stars in Nolan's Odyssey. Name him and the role he plays in the film. **Ans: Travis Scott; The Bard**

Early Birds

Tamal Biswas | Sitaram Saharaj | Pulkit Sathe | Kamal Pandey | Pankaj Gharde

Word of the day

Tacit:

implied by or inferred from actions or statements

Synonyms: implied, hinted

Usage: There was a tacit agreement that he would pay off the loan.

Pronunciation: newsth.live/tacit

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ˈtæs.ɪt/

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

From Page One

Iran attacks West Asian nations after U.S. strikes

The fighting raised new questions about the interim deal Iran and the U.S. reached on June 17, beginning a 60-day period aimed at reaching a permanent end to the war. "The era of one-sided deals is OVER," Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Speaker of Iran's parliament and a key negotiator, wrote. "We told you: keep your word or pay the price. Reality is knocking."

Tehran added that it would consider targeting "additional enemy bases in the region" if it faced more attacks. Missile alerts sounded in Bahrain's military also said it was intercepting incoming fire. The Omani state news agency said drones struck sites in an area that sits on the Strait of Hormuz and issued a shelter-in-place warning for residents in the region. The attack came a day after Oman and Iran held talks on the Strait.

Oman summoned the Iranian Ambassador to protest the strikes, the first such move since the war began, calling Iran's acts "irresponsible."

Three Iranian missiles struck areas across Jordan, causing minor damage but no injuries, Jordan's state news agency reported. Sirens also sounded in the UAE, but the government said missiles did not cross into its territory.

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard said multiple vessels "disregarded our warnings" and ignored instructions to follow what it called an approved route. One "was struck by a warning shot and brought to a stop". Oman on Saturday said it and Iran agreed to continue discussing the Strait "at the technical and political levels." Iran offered no statement about the Strait being open to all, something sought by the Trump administration.

PM must restore J&K Statehood, says Omar

"The restoration of Statehood is not the cause of any one party; it is the cause of every citizen of Jammu and Kashmir. That is why we have invited every political party and leader to join us on July 20. With elections still years away, this is the time to rise above politics and stand united for our shared future," Mr. Abdullah added.

"On July 20, we will go to Delhi to demand Statehood. Do we need to go to the White House and meet Trump to request Statehood?" he said. Referring to the Centre's outreach to Ladakh with Article 371 safeguards, Mr. Abdullah said, "If dialogue and constitutional safeguards can be offered to those who choose to protest, why are the democratic aspirations of the people of J&K denied? We seek nothing more than the restoration of our rightful Statehood and the authority to govern through the mandate given to us by the people."

Responding to the BJP's attack following allegations that the party had offered ₹20-30 crore to buy NC's legislators, Mr. Abdullah said, "They (the BJP) never tire of breaking up parties. What have you done to Mamata Banerjee's party in West Bengal and the Aam Aadmi Party in Punjab?"

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary said restoration of Statehood is a must to ensure good days for J&K, adding, "Give us back Statehood so that we can address employment issues. This is the voice of the people of J&K."

3 arrested in J&K for 'pro-separatist' books

The books are *Personalities and Legends of J&K*, authored by Hilal Ahmad and Santosh Meena and published by the Oerobi Book Service, Jammu, and *Great Personalities of Jammu and Kashmir*, authored by Sushant Giri and published by Anurag Prakashan, Delhi.

The first book profiles separatist leaders Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Shabir Ahmad Shah, Masarat Alam, and Maqbool Bhat. Around 251 copies of these books were circulated among schools in Jammu and Kashmir.

The arrests came amid Jammu and Kashmir's School Education Department and Higher Education Department laying down a new framework to strengthen institutional mechanisms for evaluation, recommendation, circulation, retention and periodic review of educational resources across all schools, colleges, universities and public libraries.

Taliban seek deeper farm ties with India

Mr. Omari is the fourth Taliban Minister to visit New Delhi in the past year. Earlier, Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, Minister of Public Health Noor Jalal Jalali, and Commerce Minister Alhaj Nooruddin Aziz visited India.

India has not yet formally recognised the Taliban administration in Kabul, but has upgraded the "technical team" in the Indian embassy in Kabul to the level of chargé d'affaires.

India has been sending food, medicines and other essential items to Afghanistan as the country continues to battle a shortage of essential commodities and life-saving medicines. Much of the assistance was routed through Iran's Chabahar port before the U.S.-Israel war against Iran disrupted the route.

One Indian seafarer missing in attack on Cyprus-flagged vessel

10 of the crew rescued; authorities are coordinating with Omani agencies and Indian Embassy in Muscat to assist the seafarers and keep kin informed; New Delhi condemns the strike on vessel; the U.S. blamed an Iranian body for the attack

M. Kalyanaraman
CHENNAI

The Indian government has condemned the attack on a Cyprus-flagged commercial vessel off the coast of Oman that left one of its 11 Indian crew members missing.

"We condemn the attack on the commercial vessel *GFS Galaxy* off the coast of Oman, earlier today. Of the 11 Indian nationals on board, 10 have been rescued so far, while one Indian national is reportedly missing," the External Affairs Ministry said in a statement.

The U.S. Central Command blamed Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), saying it had "blatantly attacked" the ship.

Evacuation and rescue
The container vessel, *MF GFS Galaxy*, with a cargo carrying capacity of about 88,000 tonnes, was sailing near Omani waters when it was hit by a projectile around 2 a.m. (UAE time).



Tense strait: A cargo ship anchored near the Strait of Hormuz off the eastern coast of UAE on Saturday, AFP

The impact reportedly caused a fire in the engine room, leaving the ship without propulsion or steering. The crew anchored the vessel before evacuating into lifeboats and liferafts.

Heramb Karmarkar, the ship's third engineer, remains missing, and search and rescue operations are continuing. His family has been informed, sources said. Three rescued crew members sustained burns and minor injuries and have been admitted to hospital in Oman. The remaining crew members are being accommodated there while formalities are

completed.

The ship had a crew of 24, comprising 11 Indians, four Ukrainians, four Filipinos, three Indonesians and two Sri Lankans. Twenty-three crew members were rescued about two hours after the evacuation by the Royal Navy of Oman under the coordination of the Oman Maritime Security Centre. The vessel's condition and the extent of the damage are yet to be ascertained. The incident occurred about nine nautical miles east of Dahit, Oman, within the Strait of Hormuz transit corridor.

Indian authorities are coordinating with Omani

agencies, the ship's management company and the Indian Embassy in Muscat to monitor the situation and assist the affected crew. The families of the Indian seafarers have been contacted and are being kept informed of developments and counselled.

The Ministry said the Indian Embassy in Oman was closely monitoring the situation and coordinating with Omani authorities in the ongoing search and rescue operation. "We thank the Omani authorities for their support," it said, adding that the continuing attacks on commercial shipping in the region were "deeply worrisome".

"We reiterate our call for immediate de-escalation of tensions, and the conclusion of ongoing negotiations for a diplomatic solution so that peace and stability can return to the region," the Ministry said.

"The targeting of commercial shipping and civilian infrastructure in the region must end, and free and unimpeded navigation and commerce through the

international waterways, in keeping with international law, must be restored at the earliest," it said.

Meanwhile, the IRGC Navy said the Strait of Hormuz was "closed until further notice" and that no vessel would be permitted to transit until U.S. intervention in the region ended.

The attack came a day after talks between Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Omani officials on bilateral ties and the Strait of Hormuz. The two sides agreed to continue discussions, but the talks did not appear to produce a breakthrough.

Oman had publicly declared a route along its coast to transit the Strait of Hormuz, which has become increasingly popular among ships. But Iran has been warning that vessels should not take the route near the Omani coast, dubbing it "unauthorised and dangerous".

The attack on *GFS Galaxy* is the third attack on ships taking the Omani route in the last five days.

Activist held for protests against hotels in Kaziranga

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

The Assam Police on Sunday detained activist Pranab Doley, who has been leading protests against proposed luxury hotels near the Kaziranga National Park.

Booked under at least 15 Sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita in a case registered at the Bokakhat police station, he was taken to Guwahati's Dispur police station for interrogation. The Kaziranga National Park is administered from Bokakhat, about 240 km east of Guwahati.

"He will be handed over to the Bokakhat Police for further legal proceedings," a police officer said.

Mr. Doley, a resident of a village near Bokakhat, said he was "arrested" without any papers. "We cannot even be the voice of the people. What kind of democracy is this?" he said before he was forced into a police vehicle.

Mr. Doley is the founder and co-founder of several organisations, including the All Kaziranga Affected Communities' Rights Committee, the People Ecology Network.

Minister questions Punjab film claims, calls for evidence

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH

Amid the controversy surrounding the film *Satjog* and its removal from an OTT platform, Union Minister of State for Railways, and Food Processing Industries Raveen Singh Bittu said on Sunday that the filmmakers could not hide behind "the excuse of creative freedom" while presenting disputed claims as established history.

The film, earlier titled *Punjab '95*, details the life of activist Jaswant Singh Khaira during the turbulent period of militancy in Punjab from the mid-1980s to the early-1990s. It was released uncut on the ZEE5 OTT platform on July 3 after being renamed *Satjog*. However, it was removed from the platform two days later.

"Punjab's painful past is not a script to be selectively edited to suit a narrative. I challenge the producer and director of the movie *Satjog* to place before the people of Punjab the com-



Raveen Singh Bittu

plete documentary evidence, official records, judicial findings and authenticated data that conclusively establish the figure of 25,000 missing or illegally cremated bodies portrayed in the film," the Minister said in a statement.

"If this figure is based merely on an estimate or allegation, why has it been projected as an established historical fact?" Mr. Bittu said. "Punjab's history cannot be rewritten through selective storytelling. Truth must prevail over propaganda, facts over fiction, and evidence over emotion."

'AIIMS final report finds skin tissue on gym belt in Twisha death case'

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The final forensic report by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi in the Twisha Sharma death case has concluded that a gymnastics belt could have been used in the alleged murder as it found the presence of the victim's skin tissue on it, sources said.

The AIIMS medical Board, which conducted a court-ordered second post-mortem on May 24, submitted the report to the CBI on July 10, confirming that the alleged ligature material – the gymnastics belt with a metal ring at the end – matched the injury pattern on the victim's neck, they said.

Former model-actor Twisha, who married lawyer Samarth Singh in December 2025, was found hanging at her marital home in Bhopal on May 12.

The sources said the CBI was studying the Delhi institute's report after the first autopsy at AIIMS, Bhopal proved inconclusive as the alleged ligature material was not produced be-



CBI officials with Samarth Singh during the recreation of the crime scene in the Twisha death case in Bhopal on June 1. PTI

fore its medical Board. The police seized the belt later and submitted it for inspection to the Board led by experts from the AIIMS, Delhi, they said.

According to sources, laboratory and histopathological examinations detected skin tissue on the belt, which corresponded with the ligature mark and injury pattern observed during the second post-mortem.

Dr. Sudhir Gupta, Head of Forensic Medicine, AIIMS, Delhi, said the Board undertook an exhaustive scientific evaluation before arriving at its conclusion.

"The medical Board deliberated very minutely on the case from all possible angles, taking into consideration all available national and international journals for almost one month before giving a detailed opinion with scientific justification," Dr. Gupta said.

Medico-legal case

According to the forwarding letter, the report was handed over to the CBI investigating officer, while the video recording of the second post-mortem remained in the custody of the investigating agency.

According to the FIR

lodged in the case, Mr. Samarth took Twisha to the AIIMS, Bhopal, where he claimed that she had hanged herself at home at 10.20 p.m. on May 12. However, a doctor at the AIIMS, Bhopal told the police later that Twisha had been brought dead to the hospital, after which a medico-legal case was registered, the FIR said.

The first post-mortem report concluded that the death was caused by "ante-mortem hanging by ligature", and found "multiple ante-mortem injuries".

However, alleging lapses in the initial investigation and post-mortem, her family approached the Madhya Pradesh High Court, which ordered a second autopsy by the AIIMS, Delhi and subsequently transferred the investigation to the CBI.

Twisha's family had alleged that she was tormented by her in-laws, who were not satisfied with the dowry paid at the time of marriage. They levelled allegations of mental torture and domestic violence.

Barricades come up in Srinagar as security tightened on eve of 1931 revolt anniversary

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir authorities on Sunday barricaded the roads leading to Srinagar's Naqshband Sahib shrine, which houses the graves of 22 civilians killed during an uprising against the Dogra monarchy in 1931.

The J&K Police had parked vehicles at the gates of the shrine, residents said. Barricades have also been erected on the roads to stop regional leaders from paying tributes at the shrine on July 13, the anniversary of the revolt.

Since the Centre ended J&K's special status in 2019, the administration has dis-



A scene outside Mehbooba Mufti's residence ahead of Martyrs' Day observance in Kashmir. X/@BJTJAMUFTI

allowed regional parties from visiting the graveyard and paying tributes. J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha removed July 13 as an official holiday from the calendar after 2019. In 2025, J&K Chief Minister

Omar Abdullah scaled the boundary walls to pay tribute at the shrine.

'House arrest'

The Opposition Peoples Democratic Party leader I-tija Mufti said that she and

her mother Mehbooba Mufti had been placed under house arrest on the eve of 'Martyrs' Day'. "This is the normalcy they claim to have established in Kashmir? Make no mistake, the local government too is hand in glove using police in Sidhra to demolish homes and place opponents in detention," Ms. Mufti said.

"The 95th Youm-e-Shohada reminds of the defining chapter in Jammu and Kashmir's struggle for justice, dignity and democratic rights," ruling National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah and the party's vice-president and J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said in a joint

statement. They described July 13, 1931 as a historic watershed that ignited a mass movement against autocracy, oppression and injustice in the erstwhile princely State. "Twenty-two unarmed Kashmiris were killed on July 13, 1931, after demanding basic civil and political rights. It laid the foundation for the people's long struggle led by Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah for human rights and dignity," they said.

The NC remains the true custodian of the legacy of the July 13 "martyrs" and was "committed to carrying forward their mission of building a just, prosperous and peaceful Jammu and Kashmir", they said.

Man shot dead in Manipur's Kangpokpi

Press Trust of India
IMPHAL

A 53-year-old man was shot dead by some armed men while he was working on a paddy field in Manipur's Kangpokpi district on Saturday evening, officials said.

Haolal Singits, a resident of Govajang village in the Kukli-majority district, died on the spot, while his wife, Nemsikim Singits, escaped unhurt.

Villagers told officials that they heard around 20 rounds of gunfire around 4 p.m. on Saturday.

Security forces rushed to the area, and the body has been recovered.

Real culprits are being protected in Ram Temple row: Cong. MP

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Senior Congress leader Pramod Tiwari on Sunday said that the real culprits in the alleged donation embezzlement at the Ayodhya Ram Temple were being protected by the administration and Uttar Pradesh government machinery. He reiterated the demand for a Supreme Court-monitored probe into the matter.

"I was a Minister in the Uttar Pradesh government during the 1980s, when the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bharatiya Janata Party started the agitation over the issue (Ram Jannabhoomi movement). I have witnessed from the beginning how they cheated common Hindu devotees. Now, the reality is coming out in public about how common people are being cheated in the name of faith," said Mr. Tiwari, Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha.

"The eight individuals arrested are very small fish in this organised corruption nexus. The real culprits are being protected by Delhi and the government machinery," he said.

RSS expresses concern over Ram Temple embezzlement

The outfit expresses confidence in SIT probe; spokesperson says delegates at regional conveners' meeting held in Belagavi underscored the need for measures to ensure such incidents don't recur

The Hindu Bureau
BELAGAVI

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) on Sunday expressed concern over the alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh.

Delegates at the annual Akhil Bharatiya Prant Pracharak Baitihak, held in Belagavi, underscored the need for measures to ensure that such incidents do not recur, a spokesperson said on the concluding day of the three-day meeting.

Sunil Ambekar, the RSS's all-India convener, communications, said the Ram Temple embezzlement case was discussed during the regional conveners' meeting.

Detailed deliberations

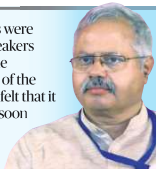
"The deliberations were in detail. Most speakers expressed confidence in the Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Uttar Pradesh Police. They felt that it would lead to clear results soon. The investigation was taken up after a request by the Shri Ram Jan-



mabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust. It was also decided to conduct the activities of the temple in such a way as not to disturb the faith of devotees," he said.

Mr. Ambekar said that the meeting, held in the Sant Meera school in Angol, was attended by regional conveners from all States, office-bearers and executives, and heads of all 42 organisations affiliated to the RSS.

"RSS Sara Sanghachalak Mohan Bhagwat and Sara Karayava Dattatreya Hosabale, and other senior leaders attended and addressed some sessions. As many as 226 Pracharaks from across the country, 83 Sangh Shiksha Varga members and 12 Karyakarta Vika-



sas Varga members participated. As many as 18,842 volunteers were trained in the three-day event," he said.

The issues discussed

The delegates discussed the "current situation" in the country, including organisational expansion, social initiatives, and national issues. "Speakers expressed concern about the demographic changes and population imbalance and the pan-India Census. Discussions focused on the working of the RSS, and national issues like rural development, family welfare, disaster management, environmental protection and other issues," Mr. Ambekar said.

He said the leadership held a review on the prepa-

rations for the RSS centenary celebrations. "The leadership also reviewed the implementation of action plans at the shakha level and discussed an intensive expansion drive planned for September to increase the number of shakhas across the country. A review of the RSS centenary celebrations was held. Discussions for the preparations for the valedictory programme for October were held."

"There was a proposal for engaging people who participated in centenary programmes in long-term social service activities and the 'five-fold transformation' initiative of the RSS was discussed. The annual travel programme of Dr. Bhagwat for 2026-27 was finalised," he said.

Some senior leaders addressed the issue of drug abuse. "They emphasised the need for a strong de-addiction movement in the country," Mr. Ambekar added. "Some others spoke of the RSS's role in the programme to commemorate the 650th birth anniversary of Sant Shriromani Ravidas Maharaj."

'Temple Trust to decide powers of CEO, there will not be govt. interference'

Press Trust of India
AYODHYA

Ram Temple Construction Committee Chairman Nripendra Misra on Sunday stated that the responsibilities and powers of the first-ever Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Ayodhya temple would be determined by the temple Trust.

The primary responsibility of the CEO would be to uphold the faith of devotees in the Trust, he said.

"The new CEO will also oversee financial arrangements," Mr. Misra told reporters in Ayodhya, adding that there would not be any "government interference" in the functioning of the Trust or its CEO.

Mr. Misra added that ensuring that devotees visiting Ayodhya receive all necessary amenities and maintaining their trust in the temple would be among the new CEO's initial responsibilities.

"In a way, the CEO will work as an assistant of the Trust, sans government interference," Mr. Misra said, noting that a three-member panel has been set up to recommend candidates for the Trust's CEO post.

Ultimately, it was up to



Nripendra Misra

the Trust to determine how much authority to delegate to the CEO, who would be responsible for arranging their own staff, while everything remained under the Trust's purview, Mr. Misra stated.

On July 6, the Trust announced a three-member committee comprising Justice Pramod Kohli (retired), Lieutenant-General Vishnukant Chaturvedi (retired), and former NIT-Raipur Chairperson Suresh Haware to screen candidates for the CEO post.

Mr. Misra flatly denied when asked if he would attend the meetings of the committee tasked with recommending names for the CEO post.

He said there had been no complaints from devotees visiting the Ram Tem-

ple, and that they felt positively about their experience.

"If you ask the devotees near Angad Teela and Sugriv Kila about their feelings, I assure you there is no complaint regarding their faith in Lord Ram, the temple arrangements, or the worship taking place here," he said.

Regarding any potential changes in the Trust, he said, "No decisions were made in my presence." He also clarified that he did not attend the meeting of the Trust on July 6.

Asked if he would attend the meeting scheduled for July 22, Mr. Misra said, "The meeting is on July 22, but I do not know the agenda. If the matter pertains to construction, I would have to be present. Please understand, we are ex-officio directors without voting rights. We provide our views on relevant subjects. After I know the agenda, I will decide whether to attend."

Regarding what might be discussed in the July 22 meeting, Mr. Misra suggested that this question should be directed to the general secretary of the temple Trust.

Cong. seeks to turn the tables on BJP using fund row

NEWS ANALYSIS

Sandeep Phukan
NEW DELHI

The Ayodhya dispute pre-dates the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), but the Ram Jannabhoomi movement made it a key issue by which the party challenged the Congress's template of secularism, which sought to keep religion and electoral politics separate.

The latest controversy of alleged misappropriation of donations at the Ram Temple has, however, given the Congress an opportunity to frame its attack against the Sangh Parivar's control over the management of the temple.

"The BJP-RSS have captured the temple administration in an unauthorised manner," former Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said on July 7.

The Congress has mounted an unusually sustained campaign demanding action against the of-



The latest campaign reflects yet another nuanced repositioning of stance by the Congress on issues of the Ram Temple. FILE PHOTO

ice-bearers of the Shri Ram Jannabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust who have Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)-Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) backgrounds. It has also asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to break his "silence" on the issue and order a Supreme Court-monitored investigation.

The Congress has held eight press conferences in New Delhi and nearly 50 across the country over the past four days.

Though neither Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge nor Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sab-

ha Rahul Gandhi has spoken on the issue, the party plans to raise the matter during the Monsoon Session of Parliament, which begins on July 20.

The latest campaign reflects yet another nuanced repositioning of stance by the Congress on Ayodhya, an issue on which the party's approach has evolved with time over the past four decades.

The Congress government led by Rajiv Gandhi was accused of facilitating the early stages of the Ram Jannabhoomi movement when, in 1986, the locks of the disputed structure

were ordered to be opened, allowing Hindu devotees access to the site.

The move was seen as an attempt to assuage Hindu sentiment in the wake of the political fallout over the Shah Bano alimony case, in which the Supreme Court (SC) ruled that Muslim women were entitled to maintenance. When a section of Muslim clergy protested against the order as interference in Muslim Personal Law, the Rajiv Gandhi government enacted the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986, to dilute the top court's order.

Three years later, in November 1989, the Narayan Dutt Tiwari-led Congress government in Uttar Pradesh permitted shilanyas (foundation-laying ceremony) adjacent to the disputed structure. The government maintained that the proposed site for the shilanyas lay outside the disputed area and that permitting the ceremony would therefore not violate the status quo ordered by

the courts. After the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992, the Congress sharply distanced itself from the movement. Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao condemned the demolition, dismissed BJP governments in four States, and pledged to rebuild the mosque if the courts so directed.

Over the following decades, the party consistently defended the constitutional principle that the dispute should be resolved through the judiciary while arguing that the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, should remain the main framework for all other religious sites.

The SC's unanimous verdict in November 2019 allowing the construction of Ram Temple marked another turning point. Welcoming the verdict, the Congress Working Committee (CWC) said that all parties to the dispute should honour the judicial process and the rule of law.

"We appeal to all the parties concerned and to

all communities to abide by the secular values and the spirit of fraternity enshrined in our Constitution and to maintain peace and harmony," the CWC resolution of November 9, 2019, said.

"The Indian National Congress favours the construction of the Ram temple," senior leader Nand Lal Prasad Surjewala, who was then the party's communications chief, told reporters after reading out the CWC statement.

But the Congress's top leadership avoided attending the pran pratishtha (consecration) ceremony on January 22, 2024, describing it as a VHP-RSS event from which the Shankaracharyas were kept away.

Now, as the spotlight falls on the Trust's office-bearers, the party, by seeking accountability and transparency and asserting that the temple belongs to devotees rather than the Sangh Parivar, is attempting to recast the narrative on Ayodhya and reclaim some political ground.

Narottam accepts BJP's bypoll choice after visiting Delhi

Mehul Malpani
BHOPAL

Days after the BJP picked another candidate over him for the bypoll in Madhya Pradesh's Datia, the State's former Home Minister Narottam Mishra, who went to Delhi on Sunday, denied meeting any leader from the party's high command, saying he "wasn't called to the national capital and 'went (there) just like that'."

Sources said Mr. Mishra met Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) national president Nitin Nabin. He was "instructed to back down and calm his supporters in Datia and work for the party's candidate", a source said.

The visit took place on a day party leaders held meetings in Datia to review preparedness for the July 30 Assembly byelection.

Late on Saturday, Mr. Mishra met Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, State BJP Chief Hemant Khandelwal and the party's zonal general secretary (organisation) Ajay Janwal in Bhopal. The meetings came amid murmurs of him resenting the party denying him the ticket and fielding debutant Ashutosh Tiwari instead. The move had triggered massive protests in Datia where Mr. Mishra's supporters turned violent. The police registered FIRs



Narottam Mishra

against more than 20 BJP workers after at least eight police personnel, including the SP and Additional SP, were injured.

Speaking in New Delhi, Mr. Mishra termed the protests a result of "sudden anger". "Today, all the main people [BJP leaders] are in Datia and they [the workers] have put forth their views. Everything has calmed down now."

Once considered among the influential BJP leaders in the State, Mr. Mishra said it has now been established that he does not have a "tall stature".

On rumours that he was denied the ticket on the insistence of some senior State BJP leaders, Mr. Mishra said, "No, I don't blame the organisation, nor do I blame the Chief Minister. I do not point fingers at anyone. I believe that there must have been some shortcoming on my part. I will introspect and improve myself."

Amid talks of switch to BJP, NCP (SP) leader says he is with Pawar

Press Trust of India
MUMBAI

NCP (SP) leader Eknath Khadse on Sunday acknowledged that he travelled to Delhi, but asserted he was no longer interested in rejoining the BJP and would remain with Sharad Pawar till the end.

Mr. Khadse, a former BJP leader, is currently a Member of the State Legislative Council (MLC) from the Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). Recently, it was reported that BJP general secretary Vinod Tawde had called on Mr. Khadse at his residence, fuelling speculation about the leader's return to the saffron party.

Mr. Khadse said it was only a courtesy call. "He

enquired about my health and there was no political discussion. I invited him to my birthday function. I have also invited Nitin Gadkari, and he has told me he will attend," the MLC said.

"I want to make it clear that I have no interest in joining the BJP now. I am with Sharad Pawar and will remain with him till the end. My workers may be interested in joining the BJP, but I am not," he asserted.

During the 2024 Lok Sabha election campaign, reports of Mr. Khadse's possible return to the BJP had gained traction after photographs of his meetings with senior party leaders in New Delhi surfaced. However, the move did not materialise.

Bengal BJP chief calls Forward Bloc members goons; party seeks apology

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

While lauding the contributions of Bharatiya Janata Party founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee, West Bengal BJP president Samik Bhattacharya recently hit out at the All India Forward Bloc (AIFB), a party founded by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, calling its members "goons".

Mr. Bhattacharya, a Rajya Sabha member, said that when Mookerjee urged Bose and his brother Sarat Chandra to raise their voice against torture of Hindus in Bangladesh, they did not listen. These remarks drew sharp criticism from the followers of Netaji and AIFB leaders.

AIFB general secretary G. Devarajan on July 11



Samik Bhattacharya, on July 6, said Syama Prasad Mookerjee was attacked by AIFB supporters during speech at Md. All Park. ANI

wrote to BJP national president Nitin Nabin demanding that he immediately direct Mr. Bhattacharya "to withdraw his derogatory statement unconditionally and issue a public apology to the Forward Bloc and to the people of the country".

"We further urge you to

instruct all BJP leaders in West Bengal to desist from making irresponsible statements against Netaji, to refrain from any attempt to erase or diminish his legacy through symbolic or administrative actions, and to respect the established history of India's freedom

movement," he said.

At a public gathering on July 6, Mr. Bhattacharya said that Mookerjee was attacked by AIFB supporters while giving a speech at Md. All Park.

The very next day, Mr. Bhattacharya said, "When Hindus were being tortured in Bangladesh between 1937 and 1939, Syama Prasad approached Subhas Chandra Bose and Sarat Bose, requesting them to raise their voice and issue statements. Neither listened to Mookerjee."

"It is equally well documented that Netaji repeatedly cautioned Mookerjee against delivering speeches that could inflame communal passions and disturb public peace," Mr. Devarajan had written in the letter.

APPOINTMENT

बिज्ञान-प्रौद्योगिकी परामर्श संस्थान
BRIC-National Institute of Animal Biotechnology
(An Autonomous Institute under the aegis of the Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science & Technology, Government of India, is aimed to harness novel and emerging biotechnologies and create knowledge in the cutting edge areas for improving animal health and productivity.
The Institute invites applications from Indian citizens for the following positions:
Position: Technical Officer Pay Level - 06 No of Post: 1-UR
For more details, please visit NAB website www.nab.res.in
Date of commencement of online applications: 13th July 2026
Last date for submitting online applications: 14th August 2026 by 5 PM
Sd/- DIRECTOR, NAB

IN BRIEF



Pune building collapse: last body found, toll rises to nine

Rescue teams recovered the body of the last missing person in the Moshi waste processing unit collapse near Pune in the early hours of Sunday, taking the death toll in the tragedy to nine, officials said. Meanwhile, a senior official at the waste-processing plant described the July 8 incident as an "act of God". The three-storey administrative building of a Waste-to-Energy (WTE) plant run by the Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation at Moshi in Pune district collapsed after the adjacent mound of garbage fell onto the structure like a landslide. The body of Waman Kasbe, the last missing person, was recovered from the rubble, while 14 persons have been rescued earlier, officials said. **PTI**

India, Canada conclude third round of talks on trade pact

India and Canada concluded the third round of negotiations for the proposed Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement in Ottawa on Friday as the two sides look to wind up the talks this year. The issues that figured in the five-day talks include trade in goods, services, intellectual property, rules of origin, sanitary measures, and technical barriers to trade, among others. The negotiations are important as the two sides seek to increase bilateral trade to \$50 billion by 2030. In 2025-26, the two-way trade dipped 8.22% to \$7.95 billion (\$4.67 billion exports, \$3.28 billion imports) from \$8.66 billion in 2024-25 (\$4.22 billion exports, \$4.44 billion imports). **PTI**

ISRO successfully carries out tests of Gaganyaan systems

One of the tests involved separation of the 'umbilical mechanism' that serves as a link between the crew module, where astronauts live, and the service module that provides propulsion, agency says

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Indian Space Research Organisation on Sunday said it had successfully carried out three major tests of the Gaganyaan crew module systems.

The first test pertained to ensuring an upright position of the crew module after splashdown in the sea, considered one of the most important crew safety requirements. To do this, a stored cold-gas-based uprighthing system was developed and tested.

"A system-level qualification test set-up consisting of all the elements of CMUS (crew module uprighthing system) was realised," the ISRO said, adding it successfully conducted inflation tests "for the primary inflation module wherein stored gas in the high-pressure gas bottle was made to inflate the floatation by operating the control valves."

The second test involved examining the separation of the umbilical mechanism that serves as a link between the crew module, where astronauts live, and the service module, which provides power



Step-by-step: (Clockwise from left) The crew module uprighthing system, the service module connect-disconnect system, and the apex cover that underwent testing. **ISRO**

and propulsion. The mechanism consists of two parts, each located at the crew module side, called CSU-1, and the service module side, called CSU-2.

Clean separation

During the crew module's earth re-entry stage, the service module first separates from the crew module

after the CSU-1 disconnects. Subsequently, just before re-entry, the CSU-2 is also separated.

"Separation test of CSU-2 from simulated crew module was carried out. The test demonstrated the clean separation of CSU-2 as well as structural stability of the crew module panel and their interfaces,"

the space agency said. The third test validated the structural integrity of the crew module during the apex cover separation event. The apex cover protects the parachutes and associated subsystems during the mission. It is separated before parachutes are deployed to decelerate the crew module.

ESIC to add 7 more healthcare facilities to its infra network

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) will add seven more healthcare facilities to its infrastructure network in six States. Union Minister for Labour Mansukh Mandaviya will inaugurate the projects at Sanathnagar in Telangana on Tuesday.

Apart from the new Outpatient Department Block of ESIC Hospital in Sanathnagar, upgraded 200-bed ESIC Hospital, Beldola, Assam; 100-bed ESIC hospital in Sripurumbudur, Tamil Nadu; hospital in Rajamahendravaram, Andhra Pradesh; dispensary and branch offices in Surendranagar, Gujarat, and Kota, Rajasthan; and ESI Dispensary at Bhawani Mandi, Rajasthan are the new facilities.

"These medical facilities, worth approximately ₹668 crore, will cater to the healthcare needs of around 53 lakh beneficiaries across the country," the Union Labour Ministry said in a release on Sunday.

The new facility in Sanathnagar, the government said, is a landmark healthcare facility that will provide modern, comprehensive outpatient services to over 12.3 lakh insured

'These facilities will cater to healthcare needs of around 53 lakh beneficiaries across the country'

persons and beneficiaries across Telangana.

The ESIC Hospital in Beldola, Assam, caters to 47 districts of Assam and Meghalaya, as well as 41 districts across Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh. "The facility is expected to cover 3.42 lakh insured persons, and a total of about 13.27 lakh beneficiaries," the government said.

The ESIC Hospital located at Sripurumbudur will cater to 5.5 lakh insured persons from Kancheepuram and Tiruvallur districts. The hospital at Rajamahendravaram, Andhra Pradesh will serve over 1.3 lakh insured persons, while 9,192 insured persons are covered under the ESIC scheme in Surendranagar district.

The Kota facility will cater to 1,500 employees, and about 75,000 insured persons. The Bhawani Mandi facility will provide healthcare services to about 800 employees and 27,715 insured persons.

Flash floods wreak havoc in Pahalgam; buildings affected

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

As flash floods due to cloudbursts in the past 24 hours caused damage to several hotels in Pahalgam, a hill station in south Kashmir, the Opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and activists on Sunday flagged the "rampant construction in violation of environmental norms".

On Saturday, four hotels and multiple houses were damaged when gushing waters in the Awoora stream swept away vehicles and entered hotel premises. Officials said scores of tourists were shifted to safer locations. A major road connecting Bijbehara and Pahalgam was cut off.

"I interacted with affected families, and directed the departments concerned to ensure immediate rescue, relief, and restoration measures. Even



Shock disaster: A damaged house after a cloudburst triggered flash floods in Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday. **PTI**

any possible assistance would be provided to help them recover from this difficult situation," Pahalgam legislator Altaf Ahmad Kaloo said.

PDP leader Itija Mufti said a mafia was operating in ecologically fragile Pahalgam, "allowing wanton illegal construction". "Hotels are encroaching upon flood channels or forest land. It is ill-thought and detrimental to Kashmir's environment already reeling

from global warming. I haven't seen Pahalgam in such a mess before," Ms. Mufti said.

Sahil Parry, an activist, said the administration was hiding the data related to hotel construction in Pahalgam.

Mr. Parry said Pahalgam faced unchecked commercialisation, rampant construction, shrinking green cover and apparent disregard for environmental safeguards.

CJI stresses need for women-centric infrastructure in judicial buildings

The Hindu Bureau
GURUGRAM

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Sunday said judicial infrastructure was no longer a luxury but a "very big necessity", and called for mandatory facilities for women advocates, including separate Bar rooms and adjoining childcare facilities, in all new court complexes.

Speaking at the inauguration of the new Tower of Justice, a seven-acre judicial complex for the Gurugram District and Sessions Court near Rajiv Chowk, the Chief Justice said providing an atmosphere that instils confidence in socially and financially backward litigants was the duty of all three organs of the Constitution.

"Just as a patient reaching a hospital is given first aid, a consumer of justice



Chief Justice of India Surya Kant speaking at the inauguration of a judicial complex in Gurugram on Sunday. **SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**

coming to court must be given first-aid in the form of basic amenities – seating, drinking water, and washrooms," Chief Justice Kant said. He noted that Gurugram's transformation from an agricultural town to an industrial hub had led to a sharp rise in legal disputes of all kinds.

Flagging the lack of facilities for women lawyers,

the CJI cited a recent Supreme Court Bar Association survey, which found that many judicial complexes across States lacked basic amenities for women members of the Bar. "Women advocates are not being provided the facilities that should be given to them in many States. It is our all-out effort that whenever new judicial infras-

tructure is constructed, it should be mandatory to provide these facilities. It would not be right to call it a modern court complex without them," he said.

He urged the Punjab and Haryana High Court to ensure a childcare room adjoining the women advocates' room in the new Gurugram complex.

Chief Justice Kant recalled that he had performed the *bhoomi puja* for the complex in January 2017 in his capacity as the in-charge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court Building Committee, calling the day "historic" and "memorable".

The new court complex has 55 modern courtrooms, compared with 45 in the old building. It houses a bank, a post office, a Bar library, a mediation centre and other citizen-centric amenities.

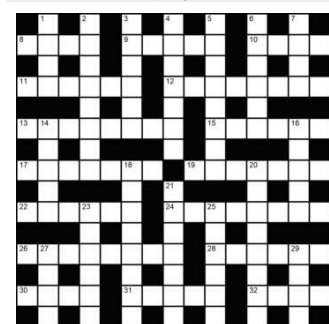
Centre brings new scheme to regularise PF Trusts

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The EPFO has invited applications from exempted Provident Fund Trusts to regularise their status under provisions of the Finance Act, 2026, the Income Tax Act, 2025, and the Code on Social Security, 2026, provides a one-time opportunity for the Trusts recognised under the Income Tax Act, 1961 to regularise their status.

Recognition under the Income Tax Act, 2025 shall be available only to Provident Funds that have obtained exemption under Section 17 of the Employees' Provident Fund and Misc. Provisions Act, 1952. The scheme applies to establishments that do not possess formal exemption from the government.

THE CROSSWORD 14844



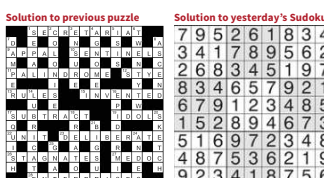
- Across**
- Repeat, "E for ____" (4)
 - Lather bubbling forth (5)
 - Pours tea on top of saucer and consumes (4)
 - Place to keep horses from second list (6)
 - Owed mint production for unproductive period (8)
 - Simmers esculents to some extent and dips (8)

- Down**
- Caledonian manages cot (4)
 - After a second, silly Romeo accepts British hat (8)
 - In absence of in-charge, officers produce tenders (6)
 - Female deity and Greek leader on strange English ship (7)
 - Thick soups that cowherds produce (8)
 - Landlord's communication (6)
 - Something to split found in Muscat, Oman (4)
 - Excitedly came across head of caliphate in holy city (5)
 - Campaign in the foyer (5)
 - Most unclear red tits fly around island (8)
 - At end of dinner, she lied cunningly, "Enjoyed" (8)
 - Silent characters going around college, producing means of reproduction (7)
 - What a crazy lover might do when after girl? (6)
 - Dull-witted subordinate moving around after dropping dinar (6)
 - Cover for wound from barricades raider leaves in disarray (4)
 - Gas none may produce (4)

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★



FAITH

God is within you

A few people may be caught in earthly pursuits (of material wealth) but when one fails to identify the presence of Perumal within, it is indeed the end of everything. This is what happened to Hiranyakasipu. Angered at the death of his brother Hiranyaksha at the hands of Varaha (Vishnu's avatar) for abducting Bhu Devi, Hiranyakasipu vowed to wage war on Vishnu. To this end, he first harassed cows and bhagavatas (devotees) as he knew they were dear to Vishnu. However, the Supreme Being did not take the bait, which frustrated Hiranyakasipu and he stormed into Vaikunta, but Perumal left from there forthwith, said Dama S. Ramakrishnan.

The moment Hiranyakasipu entered Vaikunta, Perumal entered his heart, but the demon did not realise the god within. Instead, he left Vaikunta and undertook severe penance and sought a boon from Brahma which he thought was armour enough against Perumal. On the other hand, Hiranyakasipu's unborn son Prahlada was a symbol of devotion even when he was in the womb of his mother Kayadhu. She was under the protection of Narada and the sage discussed on puranas and the many characteristics of Perumal. This grounding in spiritual knowledge helped Prahlada remain steadfast in the face of severe test of his devotion, from none other than his own father. Vishnu manifested as Nrisimha, a half-man, half-lion form, and sank his nails into Hiranyakasipu's heart. Scholars say Nrisimha plucked and searched the demon's heart for the presence of any godliness or devotion in him: even a modicum of awareness of the Supreme Being within would have saved the demon.

MONEYWISE

Claims quantified, mom's love priceless

COVERNOTE

K. Nitya Kalyani

Parents are invaluable, but insurance needs a rupee value basis for compensating financial loss. Thus long, a woman with no independent earnings and essentially a housewife, did not warrant a compensation in motor accident third-party liability cases. Now a value has been fixed for her life, enabling compensation. The Supreme Court fixed ₹30,000 a month as the minimum economic value of her contribution in terms of unpaid domestic work and caregiving, to serve as the basis for compensation.

This ruling was part of a landmark judgment delivered on June 11, 2026 in an appeal in a motor accident claim for a 2001 accident in Punjab in which a housewife died. It highlighted that unpaid domestic and caregiving work, mostly the lot of women, forms about 15% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) but has never been quantified or formalised as a metric. The fact is that a homemaker's work, though unpaid, carries enormous financial and societal value.

As a result of this ruling, a new legal category called "Loss of Domestic Care" has been created in the compensation table in the Motor Vehicles Act (MVA), 1988 and under this, the insurance company cannot follow the earlier method of ascribing a nil value for compensation as in the case of unskilled labourers.

Some background

Motor Third-Party Liability (TP) insurance compensates the insured for any legal liability to a third party created by his vehicle in an accident, including death.

MVA 1988 introduced a mathematical formula and a matrix for automatically calculating compensation amounts for death which could be awarded by courts where the income of the deceased was ₹40,000 a month or less.

Called structured compensation, it took into account the deceased's earnings, earnings potential in the future, his or her age and adjusted it for personal expenses.

By this it provided a solution that all the parties, the courts, the insurance companies and the victims' families could make peace with and not litigate endlessly in hopes of unknown high compensations. The matrix did not have a category relating to homemakers and so their life value was taken as nil, as in the case of unskilled labourers, while deciding compensation in cases.

Clearly, the multiple roles a wife or mother plays to keep the home running and the family cared for has a much higher market price than zero, should they be outsourced to professionals.

Impact on insurance and claims

In the case on which the Supreme Court Bench was ruling, the compensation earlier fixed at ₹8.43 lakh by the High Court was raised to ₹62.78 lakh.

The Supreme Court clarified that this ruling does not legally enforce a monthly salary to be paid to housewives by their husbands. Though one wishes!

Also of significance is that the ₹30,000 per month is a minimum and Motor Accident Claims Tribunals (MACT), special courts for Motor TP accident claims, can use this as a starting point for fixing compensation and individual cases can be built for higher compensations.

There is also a built in 10% increase on this baseline amount every three years for inflation.

The impact on various types of claims/cases will unfold as time goes on. On the underwriting front, homemakers could not get life insurance till now as they had no formal income and this would change enabling policies to be taken on their lives. One is sure new policies are being designed for the whole new segment that has been opened up.

One is even more sure that the premium rates for motor TP policies will go up to take care of additional claims they have to pay out under this category!

(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)



Millions of households still either do not have adequate term cover or postpone purchasing it altogether. ILLUSTRATION: B. SAINATH

Bridging the affordability gap in term life insurance

With lower servicing and acquisition costs caused by digital underwriting, pricing is becoming better and more efficient, resulting in meaningful improvement in affordability

COST EFFECTIVE

Vivek Jain

India is home to several households where a single income often supports an entire family or even generations. Life insurance is one of the most important financial tools for protecting household income, with term insurance remaining its simplest and most affordable form. Yet, despite widespread awareness about its importance, India continues to remain significantly under-protected. Millions of households still either do not have adequate term cover or postpone purchasing it altogether.

And it is not always about the lack of intent. More often than not, it is a combination of affordability concerns, complicated underwriting, documentation fatigue, and the perception that term life insurance is difficult to buy.

Technology, digital distribution, and data-led underwriting are reshaping how insurance is bought, assessed, and priced in India. These shifts are beginning to reshape the broader life insurance ecosystem, although their impact is perhaps most visible in term insurance, where underwriting has the greatest influence on pricing.

More importantly, these innovations are helping the industry address one of its biggest structural challenges, which is affordability.



Insurers today increasingly use AI-led underwriting models which can make accurate predictions about future risks based on digital records

Instead of calculating the premium based solely on manual evaluations and broad risk categories, insurers today increasingly use AI-led underwriting models which can make accurate predictions about future risk based on the customers' digital medical records, prescription history analysis, and behavioural data signals.

What this means is that instead of having a generalised pricing for every consumer, insurance companies are now moving towards more individualised risk assessment.

India's Digital Public Infrastructure has strengthened this shift. Consent-based e-KYC, the Account Aggregator framework and the gradual expansion of digital health records are giving insurers access to richer, verified data with customer consent, reducing both friction and underwriting uncertainty.

As a result, healthy customers with stable financial behaviour and low-risk lifestyle indicators can often receive faster approvals and more competitive premiums than they would have under older underwriting systems. In many



Technology, digital distribution, and data-led underwriting are reshaping how insurance is bought, assessed, and priced in India

cases, insurers are now able to issue policies instantly or within hours instead of weeks. Better underwriting improves not just affordability, but portfolio quality, enabling insurers to grow sustainably without compromising on risk selection.

One of the most important developments driving this change has been accelerated underwriting. Rather than requiring every customer to undergo extensive medical testing, insurers now use intelligent triaging systems to identify low-risk applicants who may qualify for simplified or no-medical insurance. This significantly reduces friction for customers while also lowering operational costs for insurers.

As India's health data ecosystem matures, interoperable digital health records could further reduce the need for repetitive medical tests and documentation, making underwriting faster while improving risk assessment quality.

With lower servicing and acquisition costs caused by digital underwriting, pricing is becoming better and more efficient,

resulting in meaningful improvement in affordability. Historically, life insurers often priced products conservatively because they had limited visibility into individual risk profiles.

A lack of granular data meant that large customer pools were grouped together, with lower-risk individuals effectively subsidising higher-risk segments.

Digital underwriting is changing this equation. AI-led risk engines today assess hundreds of data points, from medical declarations and prescription histories to occupation profiles and financial behaviour, to arrive at a more nuanced assessment of mortality risk. This enables insurers to move away from one-size-fits-all pricing towards far sharper risk segmentation.

The impact is already visible. Women, for instance, typically enjoy significantly lower term insurance premiums than men because of their relatively higher life expectancy. Improved underwriting and richer actuarial data have enabled insurers to price this difference more accurately, with women often paying 15-30% lower premiums for similar covers. Similarly, non-smokers and individuals with favourable health profiles are increasingly benefiting from preferential pricing that would have been difficult under traditional underwriting models.

(The writer is Chief Business Officer, Life Insurance, Policybazaar)

The glide path for your equity allocation

THINKINVESTOR

At 45, you should have an equity allocation of not more than 70% in your retirement portfolio; then on, you must reduce your equity allocation till you reach age 55 and maintain it till you retire

Venkatesh Bangaruswamy

Previously in this column, we discussed asset allocation funds. One of the main features of such funds is the glide path. In this article, we discuss the importance of glide path in the professional management of such funds.

Slide rule

Picture a slide in a play area. Next, imagine a child climbing the steps and reaching the top of the slide only to gently slide down to reach the ground. Now, think of your equity allocation. When you start working, you gradually increase your equity allocation, just like the child climbing the stairs to reach the top of the slide.

You typically reach the top of the slide (maximum equity allocation) at age 45. That is when you should have an equity allocation of not more than 70% in your retirement portfolio. From then on, you must reduce your equity allocation (slide down) till you reach age 55 and then maintain the allocation till your retirement, presumably at 60. This process of reducing your equity allocation as you approach retirement is referred to as the glide path. Target date funds in the US adopted the glide path to reduce portfolio risk for investors approaching their retirement. Your retirement portfolio will have a large value as you approach retirement. Therefore, even a 15% price decline can be harmful for your portfolio. The glide path is a way to reduce this risk by cutting equity exposure and moving the sale proceeds to bonds.

Conclusion

The NPS applies the glide path for the auto allocation option. More recently, SEBI has allowed asset management companies (AMCs) to offer lifecycle funds that also adopt a glide path. According to the SEBI regulation, lifecycle funds that have 15 years to target date can have between 65 and 95% in equity. This allocation should drop to between 50 and 65% when the target date is less than 5 and 10 years, and to 20% or less when the target date is less than one year.

The range of glide path enables product differentiation among AMCs. A more aggressive fund will have higher equity allocation, dropping from 95% with 15 years to target date to 65% when the target date is 5 years away. A conservative fund may have a lower allocation, say, 65% 15 years to target date to 50% when the target date is 5 years away.

(The author offers training programmes for individuals to manage their personal investments)

Bank Fixed Deposit Rates

Bank Name	Interest Rates (%)			
	Highest Slab	1-year Tenure	3-year Tenure	5-year Tenure
Small Finance Banks				
AU Small Finance Bank	7.40	6.35	7.40	6.75
Equitas Small Finance Bank	8.00	7.10	7.10	7.00
ESAF Small Finance Bank	7.75	6.00	6.00	5.75
Jana Small Finance Bank	8.00	7.00	8.00	7.77
Shivalik Small Finance Bank	8.00	6.00	7.50	6.25
Slife Small Finance Bank	7.75	6.25	7.50	7.00
Suryoday Small Finance Bank	8.10	7.25	7.25	7.90
Ujjivan Small Finance Bank	7.80	7.25	7.25	7.20
Utkarsh Small Finance Bank	8.10	6.00	7.50	7.00
Private Sector Banks				
Axis Bank	6.50	6.25	6.50	6.50
Bandhan Bank	7.45	7.00	7.25	5.85
City Union Bank	7.25	6.65	6.50	6.55
CSB Bank	7.35	5.00	5.75	5.75
DBS Bank	6.85	6.30	6.40	6.25
DCB Bank	7.50	6.90	7.00	7.50
Federal Bank	6.80	6.25	6.75	6.40
HDFC Bank	6.50	6.25	6.45	6.40
ICICI Bank	6.50	6.25	6.45	6.50
IDFC FIRST Bank	7.35	6.50	7.35	6.75
Indusind Bank	7.00	6.75	7.00	6.65

Bank Name	Interest Rates (%)			
	Highest Slab	1-year Tenure	3-year Tenure	5-year Tenure
Public Sector Banks				
Jammu & Kashmir Bank	7.30	6.80	6.70	6.75
IDBI Bank	6.50	6.20	6.35	6.25
Karnataka Bank	7.00	6.50	6.15	6.15
Kotak Mahindra Bank	6.80	6.35	6.40	6.25
RBL Bank	7.20	7.00	7.20	6.70
SBI Bank India	7.30	7.10	7.10	7.00
South Indian Bank	6.80	6.25	6.20	5.70
Tamilnad Mercantile Bank	7.25	6.80	6.70	6.70
YES Bank	7.25	6.65	7.00	6.75
Public Sector Banks				
Bank of Baroda	6.75	6.25	6.25	6.30
Bank of India	6.85	6.50	6.70	6.00
Bank of Maharashtra	6.65	6.40	6.25	5.00
Canara Bank	6.60	6.25	6.25	6.25
Central Bank of India	6.70	6.10	6.00	6.00
Indian Bank	6.80	6.10	6.05	6.00
Indian Overseas Bank	6.60	6.50	6.10	6.10
Punjab National Bank	6.60	6.25	6.30	6.35
Punjab & Sind Bank	6.85	5.85	5.85	5.95
State Bank of India	6.45	6.25	6.30	6.05
Union Bank of India	6.65	6.20	6.10	6.00

Home Loan Interest Rates

Name of Lender	Loan Amount (Rs.)		
	Upto 30 lakh	Above 30 lakh & upto 75 lakh	Above 75 lakh
Public Sector Banks			
State Bank of India	7.25-9.05	7.25-9.05	7.25-9.05
Bank of Baroda	7.20-9.00	7.20-9.00	7.20-9.25
Union Bank of India*	7.15-9.60	7.15-9.60	7.15-9.60
Punjab National Bank	7.30-9.30	7.25-9.20	7.25-9.20
Bank of India	7.10-10.00	7.10-10.00	7.10-10.25
Bank of Maharashtra	7.10-9.90	7.10-9.90	7.10-9.90
Punjab and Sind Bank	7.30-10.70	7.30-10.70	7.30-10.70
Indian Overseas Bank	7.20	7.20	7.20
Indian Bank	7.15-9.55	7.15-9.55	7.15-9.55
Central Bank of India	7.10-9.15	7.10-9.15	7.10-9.15
Private Sector Banks			
Kotak Mahindra Bank	7.60	7.60	7.60
ICICI Bank	7.55	7.55	7.55
Axis Bank	8.00-11.90	8.00-11.90	8.00-9.10
HSBC Bank	7.45	7.45	7.45
South Indian Bank	7.20	7.20	7.20
Karur Vysya Bank	8.50-10.65	8.50-10.65	8.50-10.65
Karnataka Bank	7.49-11.72	7.49-11.72	7.49-11.72

Name of Lender	Loan Amount (Rs.)		
	Upto 30 lakh	Above 30 lakh & upto 75 lakh	Above 75 lakh
Housing Finance Companies (HFCs)			
Federal Bank	8.35-10.25	7.35-10.25	7.35-9.25
Tamilnad Mercantile Bank	7.90-9.30	7.90-9.30	7.90-9.30
Bandhan Bank	8.55-13.52	8.55-13.52	8.55-13.52
RBL Bank	8.20	8.20	8.20
CSB Bank	8.30	8.30	8.30
HDFC Bank	7.75	7.75	7.75
City Union Bank	8.25-9.50	8.50-10.00	8.75-10.50
Housing Finance Companies (HFCs)			
LIC Housing Finance	7.15	7.15	7.15
Bajaj Housing Finance	7.25	7.25	7.25
Tata Capital	8.00	8.00	8.00
PNB Housing Finance	7.50	7.50	7.50
GIC Housing Finance	8.20	8.20	8.20
SMFG India Home Finance	9.25	9.25	9.25
Sammaan Capital	8.75	8.75	8.75
Aditya Birla Capital	7.75	7.75	7.75
ICICI Home Finance	7.50	7.50	7.50

*Extra 0.05% concession to borrowers buying insurance Rates as on July 8

Source: Paisabazaar.com

CAIRO

Nine-year-old girl among five killed in Israeli fire and air strikes in Gaza



REUTERS

Israeli attacks killed at least five people in the Gaza Strip on Sunday, including a nine-year-old girl, Palestinian health officials said. Medics said Israeli gunfire aimed at a tent encampment in Al-Bureij refugee camp killed the youngster. An air strike at a metal factory in Sabra neighbourhood killed four people, witnesses said. REUTERS

BEIJING

Chinese geologists question safety of Brahmaputra dam near India



GETTY IMAGES

A study by Chinese geologists has found that an active fault line under the world's largest hydropower project on the Brahmaputra River in Tibet could affect its structural stability. Scientists said the Paizhen Fault is located in the reservoir area of the Yarlung Tsangpo station. The project is close to the border in Arunachal Pradesh. PTI

SEOUL

South Korea asks North Korea for help in finding missing Navy man



AP

South Korea's Unification Ministry has sought North Korea's help to find a Navy seaman who went missing on Sunday near the two countries' border on the east coast, it said. The request was sent via a text message to reporters as there is no active communication line with the North, according to the Ministry. REUTERS

BANGKOK

Detained leader Suu Kyi will be looked after, Myanmar tells ASEAN



AFP

The Southeast Asian bloc ASEAN was told on Sunday by Myanmar that detained former leader Aung San Suu Kyi was in good health and would be looked after, ASEAN's special envoy to Myanmar Maria Theresa Lazo said. Ms. Suu Kyi, 81, has been detained since her elected government was ousted in a 2021 military coup. REUTERS

Nine people killed as Russia, Ukraine intensify attacks against each other

Moscow's overnight barrage of drone and missile attacks killed four people across Ukraine; Kyiv carried out air strikes on Russia and Russian-occupied territories killing five people; strikes come a day before Ukraine's allies meet in Paris for talks

Agence France-Presse

KYIV

Russia fired a wave of drones and missiles at Ukraine overnight, killing four people, while Ukrainian strikes on Russia and Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine killed five, officials said on Sunday.

The strikes came a day before Ukraine's allies were set to meet in Paris for talks on pressuring Russia to end its more than four-year war.

U.S.-led efforts to end the fighting have stalled in recent months, as Washington has shifted focus to its war with Iran.



A person looks out from a damaged building, as flames and smoke rise, after a Russian airstrike, in Sumy, Ukraine on Saturday. REUTERS

Moscow has meanwhile escalated its campaign of ballistic missile strikes on Ukraine, killing dozens of people including in a strike on the capital Kyiv since July.

Three people were killed in Russian attacks on Ukraine's central Dnipropetrovsk region overnight, including two in a strike on an "industrial enterprise"

in the city of Kryvyi Rih, regional officials said.

A separate drone attack on the southern city of Kherson killed a 48-year-old, Mayor Yaroslav Shanko said.

Ukrainian strikes on the Russian-occupied part of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region meanwhile left four dead, while a long-range Ukrainian drone strike killed a man in Russia's Samara region, officials said.

Ukraine's air defences have come under strain from repeated Russian ballistic missile strikes in recent weeks.

The United States this week gave Ukraine permis-

sion to build U.S.-designed Patriot air defence systems capable of downing Russian ballistic missiles, but it may be months before they enter production.

Government reshuffle Meanwhile, Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko stepped down on Sunday as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced fresh changes to Ukraine's government.

Mr. Zelenskyy said the major reshuffle will include changes to heads of law enforcement agencies. He also said he planned to assign different people to manage different areas of foreign policy.

EU and 14 countries reaffirm ruling on South China Sea

Associated Press

MANILA

The United States, the United Kingdom and a dozen other Western and Asian countries reasserted on Sunday that China's expansive claims in the South China Sea are illegal based on a 2016 arbitration ruling.

A joint statement issued by the 14 nations said they rejected "destabilising" actions in the disputed waters that threaten regional stability. The 27-nation European Union released a separate statement, reaffirming the ruling as a "landmark decision in the peaceful settlement of disputes."

The other countries listed in Sunday's statement include Japan, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

The 2016 ruling invalidates China's claim in the region; verdict is null and void, says Beijing

The statements commemorated a July 12, 2016, arbitration ruling by a tribunal established in The Hague under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, saying the landmark decision is "final and legally binding."

China reiterated on Sunday that the ruling was "null and void and has no binding force" and Beijing "neither accepts nor recognises it".

China refused to join the arbitration initiated by the Philippines in 2013 after a tense stand-off in the contested waters a year earlier

that ended with Beijing effectively seizing a disputed shoal.

The tribunal largely decided in favour of the Philippines.

Beijing rejected the 2016 ruling and continues to defend its claims to virtually the entire sea passage, a key global trade route.

"We reiterate our strong opposition to any destabilising or unilateral actions including by force or coercion that threaten peace and stability in the region," they said.

"China opposes and will never accept any claim or action based on those awards," the Chinese Foreign Ministry said, adding that Beijing "does not accept any means of third-party dispute settlement or any solution imposed on China."

Hamad bin Khalifa, former leader and key architect of modern Qatar, dies aged 74

Agence France-Presse

DOHA

Qatar's government on Sunday announced the death of former leader Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, who led the country from 1995 to 2013. He was 74, according to a government website.

"With hearts steadfast in faith in God's decree and destiny, the Bureau of the Emir mourns the great loss to the nation of the late His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani," read a statement published by the Emir's office on social media.

The former leader was



Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani

seen as one of the key architects of modern Qatar and led the country during a period of rapid economic growth.

Sheikh Hamad took power in 1995, overthrowing his father in a bloodless

coup while the latter was abroad. He inherited a small, largely marginal emirate with nearly empty coffers and transformed it into a major player on the international stage.

The emirate became a leading producer and exporter of liquefied natural gas. It also rose to become one of the wealthiest countries on the planet in terms of GDP per capita.

During his time in office, Al Jazeera was launched in 1996. Also under his reign, Qatar began paying hundreds of millions of dollars to the Gaza Strip.

In 2013, Sheikh Hamad surprised many by volun-

tarily abdicating in favour of his son, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

Modi pays condolences Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief over the passing away of the former Emir, and described him as a visionary leader. India has declared a one-day national mourning as a mark of respect.

"We deeply mourn the passing of HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. A visionary leader who led Qatar to great levels of development and prosperity," Mr. Modi said in a post on X.

(With inputs from PTI)

Lindsey Graham, pivotal U.S. Republican Senator and a close Trump ally, dies at 71

Agence France-Presse

WASHINGTON

U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham, an influential ally of President Donald Trump and advocate of hawkish U.S. foreign policy, has died unexpectedly aged 71, his office said on Sunday.

Graham was a staunch supporter of the Iran war, and urged both Mr. Trump and the [Joe] Biden administrations to back Kyiv's fight against Russia's invasion.

He bitterly opposed Mr. Trump a decade ago, but came around to support him.

The office of the Repu-



Lindsey Graham

blican Senator from South Carolina said in a statement on his X account that he "passed away from a brief and sudden illness" on Saturday evening.

Mr. Trump paid tribute to the late Senator, calling

him "one of the greatest people" in a post on his Truth Social site. "He was always working, and was a true American Patriot," was the President said.

Graham made a failed bid for the presidency in 2016, warning at the time that Republicans should not back Mr. Trump because he was a "race-baiting, xenophobic, religious bigot."

Their relationship was again strained by the January 6, 2021, Capitol insurrection, with Graham saying his Republican colleagues should "count me out, enough is enough" – although he later voted

against convicting Mr. Trump in his impeachment trial.

Graham was also a strong supporter of Israel.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said: "Lindsey is a great friend of Israel and a cherished friend of mine."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he was deeply saddened by the death of Graham, whom he met in Kyiv on Friday. "He visited Ukraine ten times during the years of Russia's full-scale invasion and was here with our people when it was most needed," Mr. Zelenskyy said in a Facebook post.

Sport

Snehit does the star turn for Pune Jaguars

UTT

K. Keerthivasan

PANAJI

S.F.R. Snehit put his heart and soul into both his matches as PBG Pune Jaguars edged UP Prometheans 9-6 in an absorbing Ultimate Table Tennis Season 7 clash at the Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Indoor Stadium here on Sunday.

Riding on its dominant singles victories, Dempo Goa Challengers scripted an 8-7 win over Ahmedabad APL Pipers in the day's second tie. Alvaro Robles, Syndreela Das and P. B. Abhinandh won their respective singles matches with ease to pocket the tie.

The match that took the cake was the one between 16-year-old Syndreela and three-time Olympian Mani-



Scintillating display: Syndreela outclassed Manika in three straight games as Challengers beat Pipers. BUTTERFLY UTT

ka Batra. The teenager produced a scintillating attacking display to outclass Manika in three straight games before Abhinandh provided the finishing touches.

There was little doubt that Snehit was the driving

force behind Pune's victory, providing the momentum that carried his team to victory.

It was by no means an easy outing for the 26-year-old Indian, ranked World No. 113. After the opening three singles were shared,

with UP Prometheans' Ricardo Walther overcoming Omar Assar 2-1 and Pune's Diya Chitale defeating Sayali Wani by an identical margin, the mixed doubles assumed significance.

Partnering France's Prithika Pavade, Snehit dug deep to edge past Walther and Swastika Ghosh in three hard-fought games, giving Pune a crucial advantage. In fact, Snehit and Prithika saved four match points to win the third game on golden point. He then returned for the fourth singles and overcame the experienced Sudhanshu Grover 2-1 to stretch Pune's lead to 7-5.

UP successfully challenged Snehit's service arm exceeding 30 degree four times – twice in the mixed doubles and twice in the singles – but he remained unfazed, quickly

adjusting his tactics and maintaining intensity to guide Pune closer to victory.

UP, meanwhile, sorely missed the services of its top paddler Manav Thakkar, who was reportedly unwell.

The results: PBG Pune Jaguars bt UP Prometheans 9-6 (Omar Assar lost to Ricardo Walther 4-11, 10-11, 11-9; Diya Chitale bt Sayali Wani 9-11, 11-8, 11-10; 11-10, 11-10; Snehit bt Sudhanshu Grover 11-7, 9-11, 11-9; Prithika bt Yangqi Liu 4-11, 11-7, 11-9). **Dempo Goa Challengers bt Ahmedabad APL Pipers 8-7** (Alvaro Robles bt Adrien Rassenfosse 11-7, 11-8, 11-2; Syndreela Das bt Manika Batra 11-10, 11-9, 11-9; P.B. Abhinandh & Bernadette Szocs lost to Payas Jain & Sofia Polcanova 7-11, 5-11, 10-11; Abhinandh bt Payas 11-6, 11-10, 5-11; Szocs lost to Sofia 8-11, 6-11, 8-11).

Anand clinches the javelin gold; women's 4x400m team wins

ATHLETICS

Press Trust of India

ORDOS (CHINA)

Javelin thrower Anand Singh and the women's 4x400m relay team clinched a gold medal each as India ended its campaign on a strong note at the inaugural Asian under-23 athletics on Sunday.

Overall, the Indian team won 16 medals – three gold, four silver and nine bronze. On his way to winning the gold, Anand joined the 80m club. His gold-winning throw of 80.57m, a personal best, was achieved in his last attempt. Shivam Lohakare won bronze with 77.70m.

The gold winning quartet of Shrivani Sachin San-



On top: The quartet of Sandramol, Pravalika, Nofisa and Shrivani.



Anand recorded a personal best of 80.57m.

gle, Sandramol Sabu, Pravalika Narimalla and Nofisa Khatun clocked 3:33.62s in the women's

4x400m relay. India also won a silver in the women's 4x100m relay in 44.68s, with Sanjiana, Akshaya Saravanan, Sudheeksha V. and Shreeya Rajesh being the runners.

The men's 4x400m relay team – Astik Pradhan, Sharan Megavarnam, Setu Mishra and Aman Choudhary – also won silver in 3:04.24s.

Sport

INSPIRATIONAL

Putting Norway on the map touches me the most: Haaland



GETTY IMAGES

Erling Haaland said that Norway's World Cup performances had inspired a new generation. "How we put Norway on the map touches me the most. Hopefully, we can establish something when it comes to Euros, World Cups. This gives motivation to young people that it is possible to play on a big stage."

UNLUCKY

Ball hit the camera cable before England's equaliser: Norway coach



REUTERS

Norway coach Stale Solbakken was convinced that the ball struck an overhead camera cable before England's crucial equaliser in its World Cup 2-1 quarterfinal victory. "That was unlucky for us. The ball fell straight down from the sky, so it changed its direction. But we cannot do anything about that. So, that is how it is."

MASSIVE CROWD

New world record attendance set for single day at women's Test



REUTERS

A world record attendance (15,243) for a single day at a women's Test was set on the second day of the one-off match between England and India at Lord's on Saturday. It surpassed the previous single-day attendance of 11,918 during the women's Ashes game at the Melbourne Cricket Ground in 2025.

GOODBYE

Knight to bid adieu to intl. cricket after the Lord's Test



GETTY IMAGES

Heather Knight, the first woman to hit centuries in all the three formats, will not play for England after the Lord's Test against India. "I am extremely grateful and privileged to have gone on the journey that I have been on as an England cricketer," said Knight, who scored over 8,000 international runs.

England navigates past choppy Norway, earns semifinal berth

In hot and humid conditions, Bellingham decides the issue with two goals, including one in extra-time, after the Three Lions had fallen behind to a Schjelderup screamer; English defenders ensure Haaland has a rare off-day

FIFA WORLD CUP

Ayon Sengupta
MIAMI

Miami is sold to the world in post-cards of turquoise water, yachts gliding through Biscayne Bay and pristine beaches. But the World Cup quarterfinal between England and Norway, separated by the choppy North Sea, unfolded nearly 30 kilometres inland, in the hot, humid sprawl of Miami Gardens, where Jude Bellingham's extra-time goal secured the former a 2-1 victory.

The Three Lions began with more of the ball and looked most threatening whenever Noni Madueke escaped down the right, but his final delivery rarely matched the menace of his movement.

Jude Bellingham briefly wriggled clear before Kristoffer Ajer hauled him down, but Harry Kane's freekick drifted harmlessly over the crossbar.

Norway, meanwhile, defended deep, and trusted that a mistake would eventually arrive. It even came from John Stones. His loose touch inside his



Inevitable: Bellingham sneaks in ahead of Ostigard to prod home England's second. REUTERS

Semifinal schedule

DATE	TEAMS	TIME
July 15	France vs. Spain	00.30 a.m.
July 16	England vs. Argentina	00.30 a.m.

* The dates and times pertain to India

own area invited Erling Haaland onto the ball, but the Norwegian striker seemed caught off guard by the unexpected gift, al-

lowing Jordan Pickford to smother any impending danger.

The reprieve lasted only moments. Patrick Berg

stripped Kane in midfield, and quickly found Andreas Schjelderup on the left. He curled a left-footed shot beyond Pickford, the ball kissing the inside of the far post before settling into the net.

England responded soon. Bellingham collected possession outside the area, shrugged off his marker and bent a finish

THE RESULTS

Quarterfinals: Norway 1 (Schjelderup 36) lost to England 2 (Bellingham 45+2, 93) (aet); Argentina 3 (Mac Allister 10, Alvarez 112, L. Martinez 120+1) bt Switzerland 1 (Ndoye 67) (aet).

beyond Orjan Nyland.

Kane then thought he had completed the turnaround with a delicate chip over Nyland, only for the assistant's flag to reveal that he had strayed just ahead.

It was Norway's turn to believe that it had restored its lead when Torbjorn Heggem bundled home after a frantic scramble following a third successive corner. But this celebration was also cut short by VAR.

Right at the start of the extra-time, Nyland spilled Morgan Rogers' long-range effort and, as he had done so often at this World Cup, Bellingham arrived first to stab England ahead.

Norway had spent the evening trying to drag England into the choppy waters it knows so well, but as the lights dimmed over Miami Gardens, it was the English Lions that emerged with a steadier hand on the tiller and a place in the semifinals.

Alvarez helps Argentina pip 10-man Switzerland



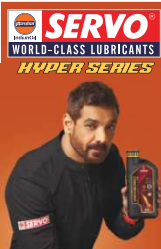
Moment of magic: Alvarez comes up with a stunner to regain the lead for Argentina. AP

Agence France-Presse
KANSAS CITY

Julian Alvarez scored a breathtaking goal as Argentina battled past 10-man Switzerland 3-1 after extra-time on Saturday, setting up a World Cup semifinal against England.

Fans of the South American team dominated the stands and were celebrating as early as the 10th minute when their hero Lionel Messi set up Alexis Mac Allister's opener. The Liverpool midfielder rose between Djibril Sow and Breel Embolo to glance a header into the far corner.

Switzerland levelled via Dan Ndoye but disaster struck minutes later as Em-



bolo was sent off after picking up a second yellow card for simulation.

The game struggled to catch fire early in the second period but Murat Yakin's men got their de-

served reward through Ndoye, with the forward sweeping the ball home following a clever pass from Ricardo Rodriguez.

But Switzerland shot itself in the foot when Embolo, who had been booked in the first half, threw himself to the ground and was dismissed following a VAR check.

Switzerland snuffed out wave after wave of attacks until Alvarez curled a stunning strike into the top corner in the 112th minute. Lautaro Martinez added gloss to the scoreline with a late third. The victory for Lionel Scaloni's men means the top four teams in the FIFA rankings will contest the semifinals.

Sinner knocks Zverev down

WIMBLEDON

N. Sudarshan
LONDON

Like a skilled mason bringing down a well-hardened wall brick by brick, Jannik Sinner dismantled Alexander Zverev 6-7(7), 7-6(2), 6-3, 6-4 to win his second straight Wimbledon and fifth Grand Slam title.

Sunday's triumph on Centre Court extended Sinner's winning streak against Zverev to 10 matches and made him the fourth man in the last 25 years to defend the crown at the All England Club after Roger Federer, Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz.

The first two sets were mostly serve fests and there wasn't a single break. But an uptick in Sinner's return game in the third and fourth sets, where he broke in the eighth and seventh games respectively, swung the tide.

The first set was all staccato, with the style of tennis resembling that of a bygone era, not of serve and volley which used to be in vogue but of the 'Big Game' approach of a cannonball serve followed by a crushing putaway.

Both men served as well as they could. The difference



It's Jannik! Sinner savours the special moment. AFP

rence was in what they did after the first shot. Sinner was mostly steady, without being spectacular. Zverev was impatient and tried to hit through the court.

The German's restlessness was understandable, for a safe game would have played right into the World No. 1's hands. It was that bravery which helped Zverev take the first set in a tie-break as he dished out the first-rate forehand at 8-7.

The second stanza was an extension of the first, and it was hardly surprising to see another tiebreak. But a tinge of lethargy and sluggishness crept into Zverev's game and Sinner capitalised. He ran up a 4-0 lead and took the tiebreak to two points when the second seed hit a backhand cross-court wide.

The momentum seemed to be with Sinner, but it was Zverev who had the first opportunity to break open the contest in the third set. At 3-3, he earned a break-point but Sinner saved it with a drop.

Zverev slipped while trying to chase it and went down clutching his right knee.

For the audience, it immediately brought back memories of 2022 when he rolled his ankle badly in the French Open semifinal against Rafael Nadal.

Sinner walked all the way across the net to check, and was soon locked in a side-hug with Zverev.

However, the goodwill ended there as Sinner broke Zverev to 5-3 despite the latter being 40-15 up. A hold to love put the Italian on the ascendancy, and tennis' most prestigious crown was soon his.

Yastika, bowlers put India on the cusp of victory

INDIA IN ENGLAND

P.K. Ajith Kumar
LONDON

It was just one run. It was much more than one run.

Yastika Bhatia gently drove Issy Wong to extra cover, ran for a single, raised her fist left hand. She then removed her helmet, kissed it, knelt down, kissed the ground, made a prayer looking towards the sun, and raised her bat. The crowd, not a particularly big one, applauded.

Yastika has played some gorgeous shots, for sixes and fours to all parts of a cricket ground, but this was one run she will never forget. It was the run that took her to the Lord's honours board on Sunday.

The elegant left-hander from Vadodra became the first woman ever to make it to that prestigious board for scoring a Test hundred (113, 158b, 14x4). That was a day after her teammate Kranti Gaud became the first woman to make it, for her five-wicket haul in the historic women's Test at cricket's most iconic venue.

This was Yastika's day. She made it India's day, too. It is very much India's match now.

Harmanpreet Kaur's



Unique honour: Yastika became the first woman to score a Test century at Lord's. GETTY IMAGES

women need to take just four more wickets. England, chasing an improbable 457, finished the third day at 130 for six.

India had declared at 341 for seven, and an early tea was taken.

Earlier, India resumed at 154 for one with the two stylish left-handers at the wicket. Smriti Mandhana (70, 130b, 9x4, 1x6), ho-

wever, didn't last long; she tried to glance Lauren Bell and was beautifully caught behind one-handed by a diving Amy Jones.

Bell, then, bowled Jemimah Rodrigues through the gate. Yastika, at the end, was looking sublime. That was after a bizarre start to the day, when Bell's first ball hit Yastika's off stump but the balls refused

SCOREBOARD

INDIA — 1ST INNINGS
285 in 74.5 overs
ENGLAND — 1ST INNINGS
170 in 59.1 overs

INDIA — 2ND INNINGS
Smriti Mandhana c Jones b Bell 70 (130b, 9x4, 1x6), Shafali Verma c sub (Lamb) b Ecclestone 33 (55b, 7x4), Yastika Bhatia c Villiers b Ecclestone 113 (158b, 14x4), Jemimah Rodrigues b Bell 3 (12b), Harmanpreet Kaur lbw b Ecclestone 16 (34b, 3x4), Deepti Sharma lbw b Ecclestone 10 (33b), Richa Ghosh (not out) 50 (52b, 8x4), Sneha Rana b Ecclestone 1 (14b), Sayali Satghare (not out) 18 (31b, 4x4), Extras (lb-23, lb-2, w-2): 27; Total (for seven wickets, decd. in 86.3 overs): 341.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-88 (Shafali, 20.4 overs), 2-161 (Smriti, 44.4), 3-177 (Jemimah, 48.3), 4-212 (Harmanpreet, 55.5), 5-264 (Deepti, 68.4), 6-287 (Yastika, 72.2), 7-299 (Sneha, 76.6).

ENGLAND BOWLING

to budge. Off the next delivery, however, she scored a boundary through a flowing drive. She also pulled with panache, and stepped out with authority.

Richa Ghosh, the fellow wicketkeeper, then struck a 52-ball 50 not out (8x4) before India declared. Sophie Ecclestone also reserved a place on the honours board with figures of five for 118.

The English batters struggled against the sharp

Bell 16-8-27-2, Filer 12-1-61-0, Ecclestone 33-3-4-118-5, Wong 14-3-68-0, Villiers 11-0-42-0.

ENGLAND — 2ND INNINGS

Target: 457

Maia Bouchier lbw b Sayali 2 (8b), Tammy Beaumont b Kranti 0 (1b), Heather Knight c Richa b Kranti 13 (34b, 1x4), Nat Sciver-Burnt b Sneha 11 (25b, 2x4), Alice Caspey b Sayali 21 (35b, 2x4), Amy Jones (batting) 52 (72b, 6x4), Mady Villiers c Richa b Sneha 26 (63b, 3x4), Sophie Ecclestone (batting) 1 (2b); Extras (lb-4): 4; Total (for six wickets, in 40 overs): 130.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-2 (Beaumont, 1.1), 2-6 (Bouchier, 2.2), 3-23 (Sciver-Burnt, 9.3), 4-34 (Knight, 13.3), 5-59 (Caspey, 19.3), 6-126 (Villiers, 36.6).

INDIA BOWLING

Sayali 8-2-19-2, Kranti 8-0-40-2, Sneha 11-2-33-2, Shree Charani 5-0-17-0, Deepti 7-0-16-0, Shafali 1-0-1-0.

Indian attack yet again. The openers walked back towards Lord's famous long room within three overs.

Then Kranti struck again. She accounted for Heather Knight, in her last Test innings, and Sneha Rana for Nat Sciver-Burnt.

Jones (52 batting, 72b, 6x4) and Mady Villiers (26) ensured there would after all be a fourth day with their sixth-wicket stand of 67.

Sport

IN BRIEF



Carty and Hope steer Windies home against the Kiwis

Keacy Carty, in pic., was dismissed on 95 and Shai Hope made an unbeaten 87 in a 131-run third wicket partnership which steered the West Indies to a seven-wicket win over New Zealand on Saturday in the first of the five One-Day Internationals in Guyana.

The scores: New Zealand 267 in 49.5 overs (Mitchell 65, Young 49, Alzarri 4/41, Lawes 3/54) lost to West Indies 268/3 in 48.5 overs (Carty 95, Hope 87 n.o.). **Toss:** West Indies. **PoM:** Carty.



Argentina football legend Rattin passes away at 89

Former Argentina international Antonio Rattin, regarded as one of the country's finest midfielders and a Boca Juniors legend, passed away on Saturday at the age of 89. Rattin represented Argentina at the 1962 and 1966 FIFA World Cups. Rattin made 382 appearances for Boca Juniors between 1956 and 1970, scoring 28 goals and helping the club win four Argentine league titles.



Marquez wins Germany MotoGP, equals record

Marc Marquez won the Germany MotoGP Grand Prix at Hohenstein-Ernststadt on Sunday, equalling Italian legend Giacomo Agostini's record of 10 premier class wins on a single circuit. The Spanish seven-time World champion started on pole as he glided to a dominant win, 1.996 seconds ahead of Japan's Ai Ogura in second with fellow Spaniard Raul Fernandez completing the podium.

Indian recurve archers lose bronze medal matches

Indian recurve archers missed out on podium finishes after losing the women's individual and mixed team bronze medal matches at the Archery World Cup Stage-4 in Madrid on Sunday.

The results: Recurve: Women: Individual: Kirti lost to Elf Gokkir (Tur) 3-7 (semifinals); lost to Oh Yejin (Kor) 1-7 (bronze medal match). **Mixed team:** India (Kirti, B. Dhiraaj) lost to Italy (Roberta Di Francesco, Matteo Borsani) 3-5 (bronze medal match).



Arshi sweeps Mini Max category at National karting

Ten-year-old Arshi Gupta won all four races in the Mini Max category in the second round of the 2026 MECO-FMSCI National Karting Championship (RMC India) in Chennai on Sunday. After qualifying second, Arshi won both heats, the pre-final, and the main final to complete a clean sweep. The performance came after a difficult opening round in Coimbatore and marked another milestone following her historic 2025 season, when she became the first female National champion in Rotax India history.

LIVE TELECAST

England Women vs India Women: One-off Test, Day 4, So- Sports Ten 2 & LVJ, 3.30 p.m.

Rohit and Kohli will pose a 'double headache': Swann

The former England offie says the two veterans should be allowed to bowl out on their own terms; feels captain Gill's batting prowess and Bumrah's return would serve India well in the ODI series

INDIA IN ENGLAND

S. Shrivatsan

Former England off-spinner Graeme Swann was suffering from the aftereffects of staying up all night for the FIFA World Cup quarterfinal matches.

Scheduled to address the media virtually on Sunday evening, Swann — currently on broadcast duty in India for the Men in Blue's tour of England — would not have minded more rest before facing the scribes. But when he was put on the spot, firstly with the most obvious question on Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli's presence in the ODI series, he responded with clarity.

Hails the chase-master Swann opined that the 39-year-old Rohit and Kohli, 37, possess the tools to succeed despite not having age on their side.

"When Rohit and Virat play together, they pose a double headache for the fielding team. When India bats first, Rohit is the best I have seen... batting on a fresh pitch, taking the



Plenty left in the tank: Swann opines that Kohli and Rohit possess the tools to succeed despite not having age on their side. FILE PHOTO: K.R. DEEPAK

game away from the opposition and posting a big total," said the 47-year-old.

"I believe that Kohli is the greatest chaser we have ever witnessed; some of his knockings are stupendous. Having both is a massive bonus for India."

He remarked that the veterans, who are one-format players nowadays, should be allowed to bowl out of international cricket on their own terms.

"Because of the standards Rohit and Virat have set and careers they have had, it is up to them when they want to finish. I do not think that they have much to worry about because they are still brilliant players," Swann added.

Fresh impetus

Swann felt that the batting might of ODI skipper Shubman Gill and return of ace pacer Jasprit Bumrah, be-

sides the quality of Rohit and Kohli, should provide India hope. "It is amazing to have players of that stature come straight back in to the team. After the T20I series (where India was thrashed 0-4), you need fresh impetus."

(Watch the three-match ODI series between England and India live on Sony Sports Ten 1 SD & HD & Sony Sports Ten 5 SD & HD from July 14).

McCullum steps down as England Test team coach

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

Brendon McCullum has left his role as England's Test head coach but will remain in charge of the national white-ball set-up, the England and Wales Cricket Board announced on Sunday.

England has lost seven of its last nine Tests under the former New Zealand captain.

This includes a woeful 4-1 Ashes defeat in Australia in 2025-26 and last month's 2-1 loss at home to New Zealand, with both series overshadowed by allegations of a team drinking culture.

"I've absolutely loved coaching the Test side and I'm incredibly proud of what we've achieved together," said McCullum in an ECB statement, adding: "Of course I'm gutted not to be continuing, but I respect the decision."

Former England captain Ben Stokes announced his international retirement midway through what turned out to a crushing



Mixed bag: McCullum oversaw heady success and crushing defeats.

defeat in the third and final Test against New Zealand at Trent Bridge — the final match of McCullum's red-ball reign.

His time as Test boss started in remarkable fashion with especially aggressive batting in particular as Stokes led England to 3-0 series wins over New Zealand and in Pakistan, where 500 runs were scored in one day, before a thrilling 2-2 home Ashes in 2023.

But a crushing 4-1 loss in India two years ago ex-

posed the limits of England's 'one size fits all approach' when it could not simply smash its way out of trouble.

And the writing was on the wall for McCullum when England lost the Ashes series in Australia in just 11 days' cricket.

After a winning start to the New Zealand series, fresh off-field problems saw Stokes and fast bowler Gus Atkinson omitted from the second Test after breaking a midnight team curfew in a London bar.

Prince replaces injured Harshit in ODI squad

Press Trust of India
BIRMINGHAM

Young pacer Harshit Rana and veteran spinner Varun Chakravarty have been ruled out of competitive cricket for indefinite period due to hamstring injuries of various degrees, while Prince Yadav and Ravi Bishnoi named as their replacements for India's upcoming ODI and T20I assignments respectively.

Leg-spinner Bishnoi, whose expensive 17th over that went for 29 runs, resulting in India's defeat in the second T20I against England, got a lifeline after replacing Varun for the three-match T20I series in Zimbabwe later this month.

"Rana reported a sudden onset of discomfort in his right hamstring during the third T20I against England at Trent Bridge. Subsequent scans revealed a Grade I hamstring injury," BCCI said in a statement.

"He has been ruled out of the forthcoming ODI series against England and will report to the BCCI Centre of Excellence (CoE) for further assessment and



Hard time: A dejected Shreyas walks back after getting out in the fifth and final T20I. REUTERS

We didn't adapt quickly, admits skipper Shreyas

Press Trust of India
SOUTHAMPTON

India failed to adapt to English conditions and was outplayed in all departments by England, skipper Shreyas Iyer said, adding that the experience would only make him a better leader.

Shreyas endured a disastrous start to his captaincy after taking over from Suryakumar Yadav following India's T20 World Cup triumph, as the team suffered a 0-2 defeat to Ireland before losing the series 0-4 to England after the opening game was washed out.

"It's not hard, honestly," said Shreyas when asked how he dealt with the expectations during the post-match press conference. "I feel it's a privilege for me to take over the cap-

taincy. Every individual dreams of captaining for the Indian team and taking on from high. Definitely, I love pressure. So, for me to thrive under pressure, to learn from these moments is definitely going to make me better going forward."

India suffered a 56-run loss to England in the fifth and final T20 on Saturday and Shreyas admitted his men just couldn't adapt to the conditions quickly during the tour.

"Just to adapt as quickly as we could have anticipated that didn't happen, that was one challenge and the other one is definitely they outplayed us in all departments."

The scores: England 257/3 in 20 overs bt India 201/8 in 20 overs (Kishan 56, Tilak 53, Curran 3/36, Rashid 2/24). **Toss:** India. **PoM:** Buttler. **Ps:** Brook.

van der Poel wins ninth stage; Pogacar still in lead

Reuters
USSEL

"The Flying Dutchman" Mathieu van der Poel triumphed in a scramble for the finish line on stage nine of the Tour de France on Sunday, as the Alpecin-Premier Tech rider secured his first Grand Tour stage win of the year.

Tobias Johansson and Tom Pidcock finished second and third, while Slovenian four-time champion Tadej Pogacar crossed the line soon after to maintain his overall lead.



van der Poel. REUTERS

D'artagnan wins Zavaray S. Poonawalla Bangalore Summer Derby

RACING

BENGALURU: P. Shroff-trained D'artagnan (Yash) won the Zavaray S. Poonawalla Bangalore Summer Derby (2,000m), the stellar attraction of the races held here on Sunday (July 12).

The winner is owned by Mr. & Mrs. Vijay B. Shirke & Mr. Jay V. Shirke rep. Horse Haven Breeding and Racing Pvt. Ltd., Mr. & Mrs. Farouk K. Rattoney rep. Hyperion Bloodstock Pvt. Ltd., Mr. Mehemosh H. Deboo, Mrs. Liane Luthria, Mr. Milan Luthria, Mrs. Daisy K.D.B. Mehta, Mr. Darashaw Keki Mehta rep. Darashaw Racing & Breeding Pvt. Ltd., Mr. & Mrs. Farouk K. Rattoney, Mr. Sameer F. Rattoney & Mr. Zaheer F. Rattoney rep. Hyperion Bloodstock Pvt. Ltd. Trainer Prasanna Kumar won three races on the day. Yash confidently kept his colt a handy third position till the bend before manoeuvring the mount from wide outside in the home stretch. D'artagnan responded well to the reminders, started galloping tremendously and overtook the leader Knotty Emperor while passing the last 100m to win resolutely.

The BTC felicitated jockey P. Tre-



Rewarding excellence: Vijay B. Shirke and Milan Luthria, co-owners of D'artagnan, receiving Bangalore Summer Derby trophy from Zavaray S. Poonawalla and BTC chairman L. Shivashankar.

THE RESULTS: 1. HYDERABAD SILVER (1,400m): STARZELLA (Antony) 1, Sicyon (Yash) 2, Valiant Stream (Ashay K) 3 and Glorious Strides (Neeraj) 4. 3-1/4, 1-1/4 and 1/2. Im, 23.37s. T2 (w), 10, 12 and 29 (p), SHP: 33. THP: 59, FP: 48, Q: 30, Trinella: 326/228, Exacta: 1,743/747. Favourite: Starzella. Owners: Capt. Jamshed J. Appoo, Mr. K. Narayan, Dr.

N. Swaroop Kumar, M/s. Blazing Saddles (PF) & Mr. Rustam Phiroze Mehta. Trainer: Prasanna Kumar. 2. INDIAN PATTERN COMMITTEE TROPHY (DIV. I) (1,200m): DI MIN-NAL (Md. Ashraf Reza) 1, A Great Buzz (Trevar) 2, Waitara (Aleemuddin) 3 and IL Volo (Vaibhav) 4. 2-1/4, Snk and 2-1/4. Im, 12.37s. T160 (w), 28, 10 and 13 (p), SHP: 22, THP: 49, FP: 883, Q: SHP: 74, THP: 40, FP: 129, Q: 86, Trinella: 293/104, Exacta: 2,238/

Buzz. Owner: and trainer: Mr. Aravind Ganapathy. 3. MUMBAI CUP (1,200m): MASATO (A. Asbar) 1, Echoes Of Time (Neeraj) 2, Star Glory (M. Prabhakaran) 3 and Mandarin (Pavan) 4. Not run: Capt. 1, Ran-velino (Sandesh) 2, Once You Go Black (Yash) 3 and Galahad (Akshay K). 4-1/4, 1/2 and Shd. Im, 22.36s (record time), T16 (w), 10, 25 and 19 (p), SHP: 50, THP: 52, FP: 68, Q: 60, Trinella: 447/171, Exacta: 6,387/2,998. Favourite: Money Bags. Owners: Capt. Jamshed J. Appoo, Mr. K. Manoj Kumar, Mr. K. Kalysperumal & Mr. J. Ramesh. Trainer: Prasanna Kumar. 5. FIVE STARS SHIPPING MILLION (1,600m): ASTERION (Ashay K) 1, Royal Legacy (Neeraj) 2, Sensuous (Suraj) 3 and O.C. Fashioned (Suraj) 4. 1, 2-1/2 and 1, Im, 36.61s. T25 (w), 12, 22 and 12 (p), SHP: 74, THP: 40, FP: 129, Q: 86, Trinella: 293/104, Exacta: 2,238/

1,772. Favourite: Asterion. Owner: Mr. C. Aryama Sundaram. Trainer: Karthik Ganapathy. 6. TURF AUTHORITIES OF INDIA TROPHY (1,600m): YOUREMARBORNE (Sandesh) 1, Winfield (Antony) 2, Oliver (Aleemuddin) 3 and Alamgir (Neeraj) 4. 3-1/4, 1/2 and 2. Im, 49.28s. T20 (w), 12, 13 and 12 (p), SHP: 39, THP: 44, FP: 68, Q: 39, Trinella: 118/51, Exacta: 479/334. Favourite: Youremanborne. Owner: Mr. B. Vijeth Bhandari. Trainer: P.S. Chouhan. 7. ZAVARAY S. POONAWALLA BANGALORE SUMMER DERBY (2,000m): PARTAGNAN (DEAUVILLE-EXCEPTION) YASH 1, Margaretta (Belardo Bish) 2, Knotty Emperor (Gusto-Pat Excelle) Suraj 3 and Moomevel (Sanus Per Aquam-Electra) Trevar 4. 1/2, 1-1/4 and 3-3/4. 2m, 03.88s. T20 (w), 11, 10 and 14 (p), SHP: 40, THP: 33, FP: 57, Q: 20, Trinella: 125/87, Exacta: 706/378. Favourite: Margaretta. Owners: Mr. & Mrs. Vijay B. Shirke & Mr. Jay V. Shirke rep. Horse Haven Breeding and Racing Pvt. Ltd., Mr. & Mrs. Farouk K. Rattoney rep. Hyperion Bloodstock Pvt. Ltd., Mr. Mehemosh H. Deboo, Mrs. Liane Luthria, Mr. Milan Luthria, Mrs. Daisy K.D.B. Mehta, Mr. Darashaw Keki Mehta rep. Darashaw Racing & Breeding Pvt. Ltd., Mr. & Mrs. Farouk K. Rattoney & Mr. Zaheer F. Rattoney rep. Hyperion Bloodstock Pvt. Ltd. Trainer: Prasanna Kumar. 8. JACOB: 66,943. Runner-up: 1,974. Mini Jackpot: 2,251. Treble (10: 2,678; (10): 104; (10): 737.

Farouk K. Rattoney, Mr. Sameer F. Rattoney & Mr. Zaheer F. Rattoney rep. Hyperion Bloodstock Pvt. Ltd. Trainer: P. Shroff. 8. INDIAN PATTERN COMMITTEE TROPHY (DIV. II), 1,200m: LASYA (Bhawani S) 1, Agrador (Neeraj) 2, Supreme Success (Vishwa V) 3 and Lena (A. Asbar) 4. 1-3/4, Link and Link. Im, 12.48s. T184 (w), 35, 14 and 24 (p), SHP: 26, THP: 57, FP: 1,456, Q: 347, Trinella: 9,284/4,547, Exacta: 8,401/2,118. Favourite: Lena. Owner: Mr. Kapil Dev M. Trainer: Aravind Ganapathy. 9. INDIAN PATTERN COMMITTEE TROPHY (DIV. III), 1,200m: POWER OF THE SEA (Antony) 1, Big B (M. Rajesh K) 2, SD Good Sam (R. Pradeep) 3 and Blind Faith (Md. Talib) 4. Not run: Character: 1/2, 3-3/4 and 3/4. Im, 13.22s. T17 (w), 10, 16 and 44 (p), SHP: 40, THP: 120, FP: 56, Q: 44, Trinella: 1,386/998, Exacta: 11,222/2,219. Favourite: Power Of The Sea. Owners: Mr. Anjan Kumar Rangaraj, Manji Horse Breeders' Farm Pvt. Ltd. & Stride Livestock Pvt. Ltd. Trainer: Prasanna Kumar. 10. JACKPOT: 66,943. Runner-up: 1,974. Mini Jackpot: 2,251. Treble (10: 2,678; (10): 104; (10): 737.

Abdication of the throne — the need to hit refresh and rejig

Once they succumbed unexpectedly to Ireland, India became diffident, almost second-guessing themselves. They didn't play the conditions well enough, they left their smarts behind at home



AFP & REUTERS

R. Kaushik

As far as reigns go, this will be hard to match. Impossible, one is tempted to say, given that the said reign was in the most unpredictable of formats. For 1,605 days, from 20 February 2022 to 11 July 2026, India ruled the Twenty20 International landscape with an iron fist, occupying the top perch in the ICC rankings, stacking up an enviable record that encompassed two T20 World Cup crowns (with a solitary defeat the sole, easily delible blot) and an unquestioned dominance that stemmed from fearlessness and the foresight to stack their sides with the personnel that would translate the mantra of intrepidity to glorious reality.

All good things in life must come to an end, however. Nothing is permanent, most certainly not ruling the roost in any of the three cricketing formats. That's the brutal truth, but the manner in which India was crushed in the T20I series in Ireland and England left a sour taste in the mouth.

England were fabulous, that can't be denied. Where Ireland hoped to contest on even terms, England knew they were on an equal footing, at the very least. True, their familiarity with conditions helped, as did their knowledge of the Indian players with whom several in the English set-up interacted for more than two months just a little while back in the IPL, either from the same dressing or on opposite sides of the fence. But by the same token, the Indians knew what to expect from a Buttler or a Jofra Archer, and have had plenty of experience of playing both in England and against the likes of Brook and Sam Curran.

Once they succumbed unexpectedly to Ireland, India became diffident, almost second-guessing themselves. They didn't play the conditions well enough, they left their smarts behind at home and tried to adopt the same approach while wildly hoping for different results. England were clinical and ruthless, India traversed the other end of this spectrum and therefore it was no surprise that they were comprehensively put in their place. The negatives are piling up in the Gautam Gambhir-Ajit Agarkar coach-chief selector era, and there is unlikely to be any earth-shattering decision when a review meeting is held by the Board of Control for Cricket in India at the conclusion of the three-match ODI series on July 19, a demand - a strident, relentless demand - for accountability will not be out of place.

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Bumrah and Pandya weren't around will be disrespecting the skills and the mettle of those who were in the mix. India were outplayed; they were lame and timid and limp and almost fearful, the antithesis of the philosophy they have espoused for so long.

Doom-and-gloom time? For now, definitely, no matter that India will bounce back strongly because that's what they do. That's what they have done. But they find themselves in uncharted territory so far as the 20-over game is concerned, and it will be interesting to see how they rouse themselves, how they respond to the scent of battle next time around.

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Meaningful runs

Shreyas made up for a poor start with the bat in Ireland by stacking up meaningful runs in England, extending his IPL form to the world stage despite coming in cold to the T20I ecosystem. The first of two matches in Ireland was the Mumbai's first 20-over international in more than two and a half years, during which time India played upwards of 60 games. Just to

be reintegrated with the setup after such a long gap would have been demanding; to compound matters, he was entrusted with the leadership of a world-beating outfit for the first time ever. Shreyas has termed the captaincy a privilege, which it certainly is, though very quickly, he has realised from bitter experience that it is a double-edged sword and that privilege can rapidly start to assume proportions of a millstone.

India made their task more difficult with several strange selection calls, not least the recall of leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi. The little man had a tour to forget like many of his colleagues; his unforgivable foot-faults that gifted England with numerous free hits perfectly summed up India's woes. Bishnoi wasn't the lone culprit in that regard, with debutant Prince Yadav and Prasidh Krishna too guilty of overstepping and doling out freebies.

No impactful returns

Poor execution of bowling plans and tardiness in the field which resulted in dropped catches and runs squandered were, however, pushed a little into the background by the lack of impactful returns from the batters. India lost wickets in a bunch in the PowerPlay time and again, leaving the middle order with too much to do against an English pace-orientated attack that made optimum use of height, and therefore bounce and pace. Short deliveries became the go-to weapon for Archer and Josh Tongue with the new ball, while Curran, the master of deception, was excellent in the middle stages and extraordinary at the death.

By going too hard too soon without sizing up the conditions, India paid a heavy price. Shreyas stood tall with 218 runs, second across teams and only behind his English counterpart whose 229 runs came at a breathtaking strike-rate of 214.01. Of the rest, Abhishek Sharma shone in patches while making 131 runs, and Ishan Kishan and Tilak Varma had a half-century apiece but didn't do much otherwise to write home about. India's pronounced left-handedness - they had just one right-hander, Shreyas, in the top eight in the fourth fixture - hurt them badly, like it briefly threatened to during the T20 World Cup. But where they found a solution at home by dropping Rinku Singh and bringing Sanju Samson into the picture once they had played themselves into a corner after their defeat to South Africa in Ahmedabad, they were slow to respond (did they even respond?) in England and were therefore comprehensively overpowered.

Samson was the big disappointment of the tour, failing to build on his three wondrous efforts in the last three games of the World Cup when he answered the team's call with a rare streak of electric consistency. In Ireland and England, Samson went out of favour after just six runs in his first three outings as India unleashed the 15-year-old phenom,

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi. The teen sensation showed no more than glimpses of his destructive abilities and not too much should be read into returns of 42 runs at an average of 14. Samson averaged the exact same number in England and a disappointing 8.25 across the tour. Much has been made of Samson making way for Sooryavanshi for the second, third and fourth T20Is, and of being left out of the tour of Zimbabwe later this month when V.V.S. Laxman will travel as the head coach. In his heart of hearts, the well-backed right-hander from Kerala will acknowledge that he was a long way short of his best and that he has plenty of work ahead of him even if his heroics at the World Cup guarantee a longer than usual rope.

Truth to tell, India need not press the panic button for so many reasons, not least because the next World Cup is a long way away. These matches are good for the experience they provide - of what it takes to play well overseas, on pitches that have some assistance for the faster bowlers as opposed to on tracks that reduce the entire bowling fraternity to mere serfs - but the pathetic waving of the white flag without so much as a second thought can't be wished away. Most of the blame will, and should, fall on the players, but inconsistencies in selection and the unwillingness to allow players to settle into their roles cannot be overlooked.

New vice-captain Tilak is the classic example of being a victim of his own versatility, like K.L. Rahul has been in the two longer formats. In his last nine innings starting from the semifinal of the T20 World Cup, he has batted at No. 7 (once), No. 6 (four times) and No. 5. There is a great emphasis on 'entry points' in T20s, but sometimes, it helps having role clarity and one isn't certain that's the case with Tilak or even Washington Sundar, for that matter.

The England spanking is an eye-opener but also a blessing in disguise in that it has come so quickly after the last World Cup and with so much time to go to the next one. Lessons in humility, among other things, must be imbibed quickly if a one-off (as it stands) isn't to spiral into something much more alarmingly debilitating.

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THE GIST

The negatives are piling up in the Gambhir-Agarkar coach-chief selector era. However, there is unlikely to be any earth-shattering decision when a review meeting is held by the Board of Control for Cricket in India at the conclusion of the three-match ODI series

The pathetic waving of the white flag without so much as a second thought can't be wished away. Most of the blame will, and should, fall on the players, but inconsistencies in selection and the unwillingness to allow players to settle into their roles have not helped either

There is a great emphasis on 'entry points' in T20s, but sometimes, it helps having role clarity and one isn't certain that's the case with Tilak or even Washington



S NO-IDE

SCIENCE

Fading research hubs are stalling Kerala's leap into the bio-economy

Kerala's approach to science has changed, with basic research losing its place among public policy priorities: the State is attracted to projects that deliver visible and immediate outcomes, but that does not mean abdicating fundamental scientific research is okay; only such research can lead to long-term value creation

Biju Dharmapalan

Kerala has long taken pride in its literacy, scientific temper, and environmental consciousness. Home to the biodiverse Western Ghats and centuries of traditional knowledge, it should have emerged as India's leading hub for biological research and the bioeconomy. But instead, many of its premier biological research institutions are today on the decline.

The reasons are clear: policy support for basic scientific research has eroded and institutions that were once internationally respected centres of excellence have become increasingly politicised.

The prime example is the Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute (JNTBGRI) in Palode, in Thiruvananthapuram district. Established following the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, JNTBGRI transformed nearly 300 acres of forest into one of Asia's finest centres for tropical plant research and conservation. It has housed more than 50,000 plant accessions representing over 5,000 species, and was for most of its life a living repository of India's botanical wealth. Its achievements ranged from documenting biodiversity and conserving endangered plants to pioneering research on medicinal plants and sustainable utilisation of biological resources.

The institute also demonstrated how scientific research could benefit society. Its researchers' development of 'Jeevani', an anti-fatigue herbal formulation, based on the traditional knowledge of the Kani tribe became an internationally acclaimed model of access and benefit-sharing. In 2024, JNTBGRI also received the Botanic Gardens Conservation International's Global Genome Initiative for Gardens Award.

These accomplishments were only possible because successive generations of scientists enjoyed the freedom, leadership, and institutional stability that long-term research demands. Today, however, a large fraction of experienced scientists have retired and JNTBGRI has not adequately recruited their successors. The number of research scholars has also dwindled. Together, the technical expertise the institute built over decades is at risk of disappearing.

This crisis at JNTBGRI is actually symptomatic of a larger change in Kerala's approach to science. Basic research has slowly but surely lost its place among the State's public policy priorities. State and local governments are understandably



The Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute in Palode, Kerala, has demonstrated how scientific research can benefit society. JNTBGRI

attracted to projects that deliver visible and immediate outcomes — but that does not mean abdicating fundamental scientific research is okay. Only such research can lead to long-term innovation and value creation.

For example, discoveries in taxonomy, ecology, genetics, and plant biology usually take decades to turn into medicines, climate-resilient crops, and commercial technologies — but once they do, their effects become transformative. Short-term investments cannot achieve this.

Sadly, this retreat from basic research also comes at a time when the global bioeconomy is expanding at an unprecedented scale. Countries are investing heavily in biotechnology, natural products, synthetic biology, nutraceuticals, and biodiversity-based industries.

Kerala has the raw material to participate in this revolution, including biodiversity and trained scientists and institutions with decades of expertise; what it crucially lacks at this time is a coherent long-term vision.

Conditions for success

Equally concerning is the gradual politicisation of scientific institutions. Research organisations thrive when scientific excellence determines leadership, recruitment, and institutional priorities. But when political considerations influence these decisions, the scientific culture inevitably suffers. Administrators replace academic leaders and long-term research planning gives way to a fondness for routine

management. Thus scientific autonomy gradually erodes and institutions become less attractive to talented young researchers.

Many of Kerala's leading scientific institutions were built by visionary scientists who enjoyed considerable administrative autonomy, including because their credibility stemmed from academic excellence rather than political affiliation. That culture now appears to be declining, with the consequences going beyond laboratories. Scientific institutions are repositories of specialised knowledge that cannot be recreated overnight.

The State's scientific ecosystem also suffers from a tendency to create new institutions while existing ones struggle with vacancies, ageing infrastructure, and declining manpower.

New centres certainly have their place but scientific excellence cannot be built merely by inaugurating new buildings or announcing ambitious missions. Institutions mature through sustained investment in people, infrastructure, and the research culture.

So instead, the State should focus on revitalising its established centres of excellence. Institutions such as JNTBGRI, the Kerala Forest Research Institute, and the Malabar Botanical Garden already possess internationally recognised collections, infrastructure, and scientific credibility. Strengthening these institutions will yield greater dividends than continuously expanding the institutional landscape without adequately supporting existing facilities.

Kerala also needs to rethink how it views biodiversity. Its forests, medicinal

plants, endemic species, and traditional knowledge systems are ecological assets, yes, but they also present significant economic opportunities. With appropriate safeguards for conservation and equitable benefit-sharing, biological research can support biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, natural cosmetics, and climate-resilient agriculture. Around the world, scientists and policymakers are increasingly recognising biodiversity as the foundation of future bioeconomies. Kerala should be leading this transformation.

Reversing the decline will also require a renewed commitment to basic science, transparent and merit-based institutional leadership, timely recruitment of young scientists, greater research autonomy, and stronger partnerships with universities and responsible industries.

The trajectory of JNTBGRI reflects Kerala's changing relationship with science. The State once demonstrated that patient investment in scientific institutions could produce global recognition, conservation success and innovations that benefited society.

The forests of the Western Ghats continue to hold countless scientific discoveries waiting to be made. Whether Kerala remains at the forefront of that exploration or becomes a spectator to opportunities seized elsewhere will depend on the choices policymakers make today.

(Biju Dharmapalan is dean, Academic Affairs, Garden City University, Bengaluru and an adjunct faculty member at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru. bijudharmapalan@gmail.com)

THE GIST

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BIG SHOT



A red blanket: An aircraft drops fire retardant above wildfires in the Almeria province of Spain. After strong winds eased on Saturday, firefighters continued to beat back the flames that have forced 1,400 people to evacuate their homes as they spread through the mountains in the southeast. REUTERS

WHAT IS IT?

Eärendil-1: bright or blight?

Vasudevan Mukunth

On July 9, the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) authorised a company named Reflect Orbital to launch and operate a test satellite designed to deploy a large mirror in orbit around the earth, despite the controversy and debate surrounding its aims.

Eärendil-1 — named for a character in the Tolkien fantasy epic *The Silmarillion* — will be a single satellite in a non-geostationary orbit fit with a “deployable, highly specular thin-film reflector”.

The reflector will be motorised and can be steered to different orientations. Its purpose is to reflect sunlight towards specific spots on the earth at nighttime. Reflect Orbital has said it intends to use this technology to extend the usable hours for solar panels and provide light during “critical operations” like emergency or humanitarian missions. The satellite will operate at an altitude of around 625 km with a high inclination of 88°. The FCC has granted a limited two-year license for the test. The approval itself followed significant debate.

Organisations like the American Astronomical Society (AAS) raised concerns regarding background skyglow and the mission's potential to disrupt optical astronomy. In its order (DA 26-706), the FCC ruled while it regulates radiofrequency interference and orbital debris, the visual impact of reflected sunlight is



Eärendil-1 won't be the first mirror in orbit. Shown here is Znamya-2, which Russia deployed as part of a series of orbital space mirror experiments in the 1990s. RSC ENERGIA

outside its statutory authority. Nonetheless, the FCC has also imposed some conditions. Reflect Orbital has to coordinate with NASA, the U.S. National Science Foundation, and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to protect astronomy, and Eärendil-1 has to abide by specific duty cycles and conjunction angles to avoid interfering with other missions.

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