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Centre	English Medium	हिंदी माध्यम
Karol Bagh (Delhi)	28 July 6:00 PM	22 जुलाई शाम 6:00 बजे
Noida (Delhi-NCR)	10 July 6:00 PM	15 जुलाई दोपहर 3:00 बजे
Indore	27 July 8:00 AM	27 जुलाई शाम 5:30 बजे
Jaipur	11 August 5:00 PM	6 अगस्त सुबह 8:00 बजे

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GRIT AND DETERMINATION

Argentina rallies past England

SPORT » PAGE 21

PARLEY

Do national honours overlook South Indians?

The debate over region, recognition and politics

OPINION » PAGE 13

LANGUAGE DEBATE

SC says third language should begin in Class 6

NEWS » PAGE 16

IN BRIEF

Two dead amid Jagannath Rath Yatra in Puri

BHUBANESWAR

Two persons were killed and several injured after a crowd surge on Badadanda, the wide road in front of the 12th century Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri, during the pulling of chariots on the occasion of the annual Rath Yatra on Thursday. » PAGE 18

AAP leaders get final chance to reply to CBI plea

NEW DELHI

The Delhi HC on Thursday granted a final chance to AAP leaders Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia and Durgesh Pathak to respond to the CBI plea challenging their discharge in the excise policy case. » PAGE 2

Wangchuk weak, Delhi HC orders regular monitoring

Wangchuk has lost over 9 kg after starting hunger strike and his body is consuming muscles and his organs may be next, says doctor; govt. assures High Court of necessary medical intervention

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

With activist Sonam Wangchuk's health condition worsening on the 19th day of his indefinite hunger strike at Jantar Mantar, the Delhi High Court ordered the Union and Delhi governments to ensure regular monitoring of his health.

Doctors warned on Thursday that Mr. Wangchuk's health condition had entered a critical stage. Satish Lamba, a doctor who has been examining Mr. Wangchuk regularly, said he has lost over 9 kg, but is "mentally alert". However, Dr. Lamba warned later in the evening that his body was likely consuming muscles and his organs may be next.



Holding ground: Sonam Wangchuk during his hunger strike at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Thursday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

Mr. Wangchuk's "blood sugar today is 80 mg/dl, and his pulse is 72 bpm," Dr. Lamba said. He said that doctors were maintaining "extra vigilance" and that at his current stage, Mr. Wangchuk's uric acid levels were likely elevated as his muscles were likely being broken down

by his body. He now weighs 56.9 kg.

Earlier in the day, the Delhi High Court ordered that Mr. Wangchuk must be "regularly medically checked up by government doctors." A Bench of Chief Justice Dvendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia asked Solicitor

General Tushar Mehta whether any mechanism was in place to monitor Mr. Wangchuk's health. Mr. Mehta submitted that Mr. Wangchuk undergoes a daily health check-up.

"He (Mr. Mehta) further assures the court that depending upon the opinion of the doctors, whatever medical intervention is needed to check the deteriorating health condition of Mr. Wangchuk will also be taken," the court recorded in its order.

The Bench passed the direction while hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) petition filed by advocate and activist Rakesh Kumar Saini.

CONTINUED ON
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MORE VOICES OF SUPPORT
» PAGE 17

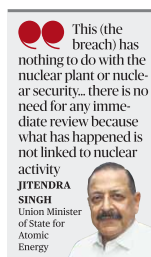
Kudankulam 'data breach' unrelated to nuclear activity: govt.

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State for Atomic Energy Jitendra Singh on Thursday downplayed concerns regarding the data breach involving electronic files linked to the Kudankulam nuclear power plant in Tamil Nadu.

"This (the breach) has nothing to do with the nuclear plant or nuclear security," he told *The Hindu*. "There's no need for any immediate review because what has happened is not linked to nuclear activity."

A senior official of Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd. (NPCIL) – the plant operator – told *The Hindu* that the organisation was not, at present, contemplating a formal police investigation. "Right now, we aren't contemplating an FIR because it is Reliance's data that has been breached – in fact, Reliance could take such ac-



tion if they wished to. From our perspective, no data regarding safety has been shared [with Reliance Infrastructure Limited]. Such kind of information on BoP (Balance of Plant) is shared with many companies," Prateek Agrawal, Executive Director (CP & CC), NPCIL, said.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 16

Parliament set to take up Bills to amend FCRA, prevent insult to Vande Mataram

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026, which seeks to amend the 1971 law to make the intentional insult of, or disruption during, the singing of National Song *Vande Mataram* a punishable offence is among the five new Bills listed by the government for the coming Monsoon Session of Parliament.

Apart from these, the government has listed the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, which was introduced during the Budget Session of Parliament, and the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025, which is currently under the consideration



Fresh start: The Monsoon Session of Parliament is scheduled to begin on July 20. ANI

of a Joint Committee of both Houses. The other four new Bills listed by the government are the Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, which proposes stricter provisions for delayed registration; the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2026; the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment

Bill, 2026; and the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (Amendment) Bill, 2026.

Legislative agenda

The legislative agenda circulated among parliamentarians does not include the 130th Constitutional Amendment Bill, which seeks the automatic remo-

val from public office of any person, including the Prime Minister and Chief Ministers, who has been jailed for 30 days, and the 131st Constitutional Amendment Bill, which proposed the delimitation of Lok Sabha seats to facilitate the implementation of women's reservation.

The former Bill is in the final stages of deliberation before a Joint Parliamentary Committee headed by BJP MP Aparajita Sarangi. The latter was defeated in the previous session of Parliament by a united Opposition. The government has not formally confirmed or denied reports that it may introduce a revised version of the Bill during the session. The session is scheduled to begin on July 20.

Fourth Trinamool Rajya Sabha MP quits; those facing pressure must leave party, says Mamata

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

A day after Trinamool Congress (TMC) chairperson Mamata Banerjee's long-time aide Madan Mitra deserted her and joined the rebel camp of MLAs, another high-profile exit rocked the party with Rajya Sabha MP Koel Mallick resigning on Thursday.

Ms. Mallick, a well-known actor, met Union Minister and BJP leader Bhupendra Yadav in New Delhi. She was sworn in as an MP three months ago and is the fourth TMC Rajya Sabha member to quit after the party lost the West Bengal Assembly



Mamata Banerjee

election in May.

Following the exit, Ms. Banerjee said those facing pressure from Central agencies should leave with "all their belongings" before July 21. "I request those who are facing various pressures from the ED, CBI or BJP to leave before July 21. Leave with all your belongings," she said

on social media.

The TMC chairperson, facing one of the biggest challenges of her political life, said those who remain with her will be her "greatest strength". "They will build the future. If we could begin afresh in 1997 [when she left the Congress and set up the TMC], we could certainly do so again in 2026," she said.

Ms. Banerjee, who has exhorted her supporters to join the Martyrs' Day rally on July 21, alleged that the administration and the police are pressuring people to stay away from the event. She said the rebels are doing everything with "backing from Delhi".

11.21 lakh candidates clear NEET-UG re-test as women outperform men

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A total of 11.21 lakh candidates qualified in the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET-UG) 2026 re-examination held on June 21, as the National Testing Agency declared the results on Thursday.

Nearly 20 lakh candidates had appeared for the re-examination following the cancellation of the original exam, held on May 3, due to an alleged paper leak.

These successful candidates are now eligible for admissions into undergraduate medical (MBBS), dental (BDS), AYUSH, and allied courses nationwide.

Two candidates, Aryan Gupta from Punjab and Panshul Bansal from Haryana, secured the highest score of 715 (out of 720 marks). Women aspirants registered a stellar performance, ac-



Test hurdle: Nearly 20 lakh students appeared for the re-test following cancellation of the original exam due to a paper leak. PTI

counting for over 58% of the candidates in the qualified pool. They also outshone men in the overall qualification rate – 56.8% of the women cleared the exam compared with 55.1% of men.

Of the top 138 candidates

(scores above 690), 93% cracked the exam on their first attempt, with 99% of them aged between 17 and 19 years.

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- Research proposal aligned with the objectives of the concerned School and / or Research Centre.

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- Publication record and research achievements
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QR Code

DU allots over 93,000 seats in first UG admission list

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The University of Delhi (DU) on Thursday released the first allocation list for undergraduate admissions, offering seats to 93,033 candidates across 221 programmes in 67 colleges against around 71,600 undergraduate seats.

As in previous years, the university has issued more allotments than the available seats to account for withdrawals and reduce the number of admission rounds.

A total of 2,18,284 candidates registered through the Common Seat Allocation System.

"The shortlisted candidates must accept their allotted seat by 11.59 p.m. on July 18. After receiving the payment link, they must pay the admission fee. Candidates seeking an upgrade can exercise the option until 11.59 p.m. on July 21," DU officials said. The second allocation list will be released on July 25.

'In interest of justice': HC gives final chance to AAP leaders to reply to CBI plea

Kejriwal, Sisodia, Pathak asked to respond within 2 weeks to plea against trial court order discharging them in excise policy case; court to hear CBI's arguments on August 17; case 'sufficiently delayed': SG

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday granted a final opportunity to Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia and Durgesh Pathak to respond within two weeks to the Central Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) plea against a trial court order discharging them in the excise policy case.

Justice Manoj Jain deferred Thursday's hearing on the CBI's revision petition after none appeared for the respondents due to work abstention by High Court lawyers in protest against the proposed enhancement of the pecuniary jurisdiction of Delhi's district courts. The lawyers have temporarily ended



AAP leaders Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia and Durgesh Pathak had earlier boycotted hearing in the case before Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma's court. FILE PHOTO

their abstention and would resume work from Friday.

The court listed the case for hearing arguments on behalf of the investigating agency on August 17.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the CBI, said the three AAP leaders were earlier given several opportunities by the High Court to file their replies, and the case has been "sufficiently delayed".

"In any case if I am giving a date, we will make it clear that they would be at liberty to file a reply," Justice Jain responded.

The judge added that a time frame shall be fixed for hearing submissions on behalf of the discharged accused persons.

"Although opportunity was granted to them earlier

on several occasions, in view of interest of justice, one last and final opportunity is granted to them to file replies within two weeks from today," the court ordered.

On May 25, the court had deferred the hearing till July 16 on CBI's petition to await the presence of counsel on behalf of the unrepresented AAP leaders, who had earlier boycotted the hearing before Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma.

Contempt action

The excise policy case came before Justice Jain after Justice Sharma released it from her board after initiating contempt action against Mr. Kejriwal, Mr. Sisodia, Mr. Pathak and others for their alleged "vilifying" social media posts against her.

Govt. clears ₹400-cr. policy to boost entrepreneurship

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Cabinet has approved the Delhi Start-up and Incubation Policy, with an allocation of ₹400 crore over the next five years, to promote innovation and self-employment, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) stated on Thursday.

Last year, the government released the draft Delhi Startup Policy, 2025, aimed at making the Capital a global innovation hub and facilitating at least 5,000 start-ups by 2035.

The policy will cover 11 State universities, 13 government-funded colleges, polytechnic institutes and Industrial Training Institutes. Students of government schools will also be eligible for its benefits through these institutions. Those whose ideas are selected will receive financial assistance.

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said the policy aims to enable the youth to become job creators rather than job seekers. She added that the government



Delhi CM Rekha Gupta at the Jagannath Rath Yatra celebrations in Shalimar Bagh on Thursday. PTI

wants to ensure that students, researchers, teachers, alumni and aspiring entrepreneurs with promising ideas have access to resources, mentorship and financial assistance.

The government will provide one-time financial assistance to eligible institutions to establish and strengthen incubation centres.

The centres will also receive annual operational support for mentoring, networking, innovation activities and ecosystem development.

Ms. Gupta stated that the State Incubation Policy Monitoring Committee

would oversee implementation of the policy. The committee, comprising representatives of the government, educational institutions, industry and the start-up ecosystem, will ensure transparent governance and provide performance-based financial support.

The Delhi government will also organise an annual Delhi Start-up Youth Festival, bringing together young innovators, educational institutions, start-ups, investors, industry representatives and policymakers to showcase ideas, build partnerships and encourage entrepreneurship.

Narela pushes DDA flat sales

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Narela emerged as the main contributor to Delhi Development Authority's robust housing sales, ac-

counting for nearly 90% of flats sold in the first quarter of 2026-27, officials said on Thursday. The DDA sold 1,284 flats during this period, generating revenue of ₹1,020 crore, officials said.

Teacher riding pillion on bike taxi crushed by truck

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A schoolteacher riding pillion on a bike taxi was killed after a truck on Thursday, the police said.

Priyanka, 46, a resident of Rama Vihar who taught in a school run by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi in K-Block, Mangolpuri, was on her way to work when the accident took place.

Police said on reaching the spot they found a truck loaded with sand stationed on the road and the woman dead under its left rear wheel. The truck driver had fled the spot, officials said, adding that a case has been registered under Sections 281 (rash or negligent driving) and 106 (causing death by negligence) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and a probe is under way. "We have contacted the truck's owner and are trying to arrest the driver," an officer said.

Bribe sought from kin of prisoners: jail officials held

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Eleven persons, including an assistant superintendent, six jail warders, two advocates and two others, have been arrested for allegedly running a bribery racket inside Delhi prisons, an Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) official said on Thursday. The accused allegedly coerced families of under-trial prisoners to pay money for their safety, protection, preferential treatment and other unauthorised facilities inside jails, the official said.

According to an official statement, a case was registered on February 9 this year after ACB received a complaint from a man alleging that he was being forced to make regular payments for the "safety" and "comfort" of his father and brother, lodged as under-trials in Rohini Jail. Based on his complaint, the ACB registered an FIR. A team was formed to probe the allegations and a trap laid to nab the accused, the official added.

BLO on SIR duty in Old Delhi complains of harassment; 4 held

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police have arrested four persons for allegedly harassing a Booth Level Officer (BLO) during the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Old Delhi's Phatak Teliyan area, police said on Thursday.

The complainant, a postgraduate teacher (special education) deputed as a BLO, alleged that while she was conducting the exercise on July 5, one of the accused persons placed the register she was carrying on her lap and signed it despite her objections.

She alleged that the others abused her, refused to accept the enumeration forms and obstructed her from discharging her official duties.

The arrested persons have been identified as Mohammad Sabreen, 44, Ateeq ur Rehman, 58, Mohammad Asif, 50 and Mohammad Afk, 44, all residents of Turkman Gate.

"Although the incident took place on July 5, the

The schoolteacher said she was abused and obstructed from discharging her official duties

complaint was brought to the notice of the police on Wednesday after the complainant approached the Additional District Magistrate of Old Delhi, who informed the police authorities," said Rohit Rajbir Singh, Deputy Commissioner of Police.

The complainant consulted her senior officers before approaching the police, the officer said, explaining the delay.

An FIR was registered under Sections 221 (obstruction of a public servant), 132 (assault on a public servant), 74 (outraging the modesty of a woman), 79 (insulting the modesty of a woman) and 3(5) (common intention) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

The house-to-house verification exercise under the SIR began on June 30 and will continue till August 8.

Eviction: Delhi Gymkhana workers write to PM Modi

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Delhi Gymkhana Workers' Association has appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to ensure jobs for around 700 employees of the club, which is under threat of eviction over lease-related issues.

In a letter to the Prime Minister on Wednesday, the association said all 700 employees, permanent and contractual, belong to middle- and lower-middle-class families and that the eviction notice has created fear and uncertainty among them.

The association said many of the employees have been working at the club for more than a decade and are dependent on it for their livelihood.

Several workers have loans to repay and have other financial liabilities, the letter stated, adding that disruption to the club's functioning would push their families into financial hardship, affecting the education and well-being of their children.

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The Executive Engineer HPPWD, Division Nauda District Hamirpur HP on behalf of Government of HP invites the Percentage rate bids, in electronic tendering system from the eligible bidders for the works as detailed below on the table below:-

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated cost (Rs.)	Starting date for downloading Bid	EMD (Rs.)	Deadline for submission of Bid
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The bidders are advised to note other details of tenders from the department website.

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ADMISSION NOTIFICATION

Ref: Approval of the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor dated: 16.07.2026

Bangalore University invites applications for admission to the various PG Courses (MAM/S.W/MVA/MPA/M.Sc/M.Com/MTTM) and B.P.Ed. courses at Bangalore University Departments, Jnanbharathi Campus, PG centre at Ramanagara and in its Affiliated Colleges for the academic year 2026-27.

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- The application fee of Rs.300/- (Rs.150/- for SC/ST/Category-I of Karnataka Domicile and transgender candidates only) is payable through online only in UUCMS portal/Bangalore University website..
- The last date for applying to B.P.Ed. & PG courses of 2026-27 academic year without penal fee 07.08.2026. However candidates can apply till 11.08.2026 with a penal fee of Rs.200/-.
- The hard copies of the filled in online application / duly filled in downloaded application along with self attested photocopies of relevant documents shall be submitted separately to the respective PG departments with in 13.08.2026 for which the candidate seeks admission.
- For more details visit the Bangalore University website; [https://bangaloreuniversity.karnataka.gov.in](#)

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Dr. B. R. AMBEDKAR UNIVERSITY DELHI
(Established by the Act of Legislative Assembly of National Capital Territory of Delhi)

Admission Notice for Academic Year 2026-27 for Undergraduate Programmes of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University Delhi

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University Delhi, a State University established by the Government of NCT of Delhi announces admissions to its various UG programmes under different Schools of Studies in Kashmir Gate, Karampura, Lodhi Road & Qutab Institutional Area Campuses for the academic session 2026-27.

Four-Year Undergraduate Programs:

S. No.	Programme Name	S. No.	Programme Name	S. No.	Programme Name
01.	BA (Hons) Economics	09.	BA Global Studies	17.	BBA (IEVD) **
02.	BA (Hons) English	10.	BA Law and Politics	18.	BSc (Hons) Mathematics
03.	BA (Hons) Hindi	11.	BA Museology, Culture and Heritage Management	19.	BVoc Accounting and Finance
04.	BA (Hons) History	12.	BA Social Science	20.	BVoc Early Childhood Care and Education Management and Entrepreneurship
05.	BA (Hons) Political Science	13.	BA Sustainable Urbanism	21.	BVoc Retail Management
06.	BA (Hons) Psychology	14.	BA-BEd (Preparatory Stage) - Admission through NCET	22.	BVoc Tourism and Hospitality
07.	BA (Hons) Social Sciences and Humanities	15.	BA-BEd (Secondary Stage) - Admission through NCET	23.	BA Visual Arts
08.	BA (Hons) Sociology	16.	BBA		

** Admissions for BBA (IEVD) is not through CUET. Please see Admission Brochure for details. Applicants shall be admitted to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University Delhi on the basis of satisfying the eligibility criterion and on the basis of their score in the specified paper code/subject combination for CUET (UG) 2026 against each respective UG programmes. Application process is now open for UG programmes. Please visit the application portal on the University website. Dated: 14.07.2026 [www.aud.delhi.gov.in](#) Registrar DIP/Shabdarth/Classified/0141/26-27

Directorate of Higher Education, Govt. of NCT of Delhi

Delhi Timings

FRIDAY, JUL 17

RISE 05:35 SET 19:20
RISE 08:33 SET 21:37

SATURDAY, JUL 18

RISE 05:35 SET 19:20
RISE 09:36 SET 22:08

SUNDAY, JUL 19

RISE 05:36 SET 19:20
RISE 10:35 SET 22:38

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 38 29
Safdarjung 38 29
Palam 38 24

Delhi Palam Today
37°C Morning will be comfortable. Day will be very warm & uneasy. Chances of light rain and thunderstorm. Night also will be comfortable.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
38°C The weather will be slight hot and windy. Night also will be comfortable. Dry weather to occur.

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THE HINDU
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IN BRIEF



Amit Shah chairs meeting with Gujarat BJP leaders

Union Home Minister Amit Shah visited Gujarat BJP headquarters, Kamalam, in Gandhinagar on Thursday and held a meeting with the State unit's top leadership. During his visit, Mr. Shah met the senior party leadership for nearly an hour and half, a source said. Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel and Deputy CM Harsh Sanghavi attended the meeting, along with State BJP president Jagdish Vishwakarma and other senior office bearers. Mr. Shah, who was in Ahmedabad to offer prayers at the Lord Jagannath temple before the beginning of the 14th Kumbh Mela early this morning, went to Kamalam late in the afternoon. **PH**

Delhi court allows jailed MP Rashid to attend Parliament

A Delhi court on Thursday allowed jailed Lok Sabha MP Engineer Rashid to attend the Monsoon Session of Parliament in custody on all dates. Special Judge (NIA) Prashant Sharma was hearing the plea filed by Rashid seeking custody parole to attend the upcoming parliamentary session scheduled from July 20 to August 13 and allowed the plea. Custody parole entails a prisoner being escorted by armed police personnel to his place of visit. Rashid was arrested for allegedly funding separatists and terror groups in Jammu and Kashmir. He has been lodged in Delhi's Tihar Jail since 2019. **PH**

Modi set to flag off India's first hydrogen-powered train from Haryana's Jind

Unlike traditional trains, the NaMo Green Rail generates its own power through chemical reaction between hydrogen and atmospheric oxygen; PM will unveil initiatives worth over ₹25,000 crore

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

In a push towards sustainable transport, modern health care and advanced connectivity, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to visit Haryana, Chandigarh, and Punjab on Friday and unveil initiatives worth over ₹25,000 crore.

The highlight of the multi-State visit will be the flagging off of the NaMo Green Rail, India's first-ever hydrogen-powered fuel cell train in Haryana's Jind.

Designed and integrated indigenously, the 10-coach train is among the world's longest and most powerful hydrogen-fuelled passenger trains. It is powered by a 3,200 horsepower propulsion system.

Unlike traditional trains, it generates its own electricity onboard through a chemical reaction between hydrogen and atmospheric oxygen, leaving behind water vapour.

The Prime Minister will



India's first hydrogen-powered train, the NaMo Green Rail, is ready for operations on Jind-Sonapat route in Haryana. X/NAVASAMNBJP

then proceed to the Ekla-vya Stadium in Jind to lay foundation stones and dedicate to the nation national highway projects worth ₹12,470 crore, including the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway.

The 157.92-km, four-lane access-controlled stretch has been built at a cost of ₹9,680 crore and will reduce the travel time between Delhi and Katra from 14 hours to six hours. The Jind-Gohana Greenfield Highway (NH-352A) will re-

duce travel time from two hours to 40 minutes.

He will also lay the foundation stone for a state-of-the-art Sikh museum in Kurukshetra to honour the legacy of the Sikh gurus. He will also dedicate to the nation new medical colleges in Bhiwani and Narnaul.

Healthcare facilities

In the afternoon, the Prime Minister will arrive in Chandigarh to inaugurate and commission health-care and road infrastruc-

ture projects worth ₹4,700 crore in the city. The projects include PGIMER Chandigarh's Advanced Mother and Child Centre, a 300-bed tertiary care facility tailored for high-risk pregnancies and intensive newborn treatment.

Mr. Modi will also inaugurate an advanced neurosciences centre, which will be an integrated hub offering neurology, neurosurgery, and neuro-critical care diagnostics under a single roof. He will lay the foundation stone for the PM-ABHIM Critical Care Block, a 150-bed emergency response and disaster backup facility.

Mr. Modi will also inaugurate the six-lane greenfield highway from IT City to Kurali (Mohali) to streamline inter-State transit between Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu & Kashmir.

Concluding his tour in Jalandhar, the Prime Minister will dedicate rail and road infrastructure projects worth ₹5,470 crore.

Will not tolerate graft, Vijay warns Ministers, officials

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI



Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay chairing a Cabinet meeting in Chennai on Thursday.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay on Thursday warned his Cabinet colleagues and senior officials that he will not tolerate corruption or irregularities in their departments.

Sources said the CM made it clear during a Cabinet meeting that he would not hesitate to take action against anyone found guilty and that no one could fault him for doing so.

According to a source, Mr. Vijay told officials that they should not think "we will be in power for only five years and that you can do whatever you want; we will continue to govern the State". He also advised Ministers not to make a spectacle out of inspections related to their departments.

"We are here to serve the people. Don't bring the government into disrepute. I will also take action against officials unwilling to cooperate with the government in implementing its programmes and achieving its goals," Mr. Vijay said.

Details of the upcoming State budget were also discussed during the Cabinet meeting. Addressing Re-

porters later, Law Minister R. Nirmalkumar said it was a routine meeting ahead of the budget. "Deliberations were held on what should be included in the budget and how it should be presented. These matters cannot be disclosed publicly yet," he said.

'Political pact'

Claiming that M.K. Stalin's DMK, the AIADMK led by general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami, and the BJP were trying to form a government together, the Minister said, "Unable to run their own parties, the DMK and the AIADMK might merge with the BJP in two or three years, securing, perhaps, two Cabinet Minister posts each for Mr. Stalin's family and Mr. Palaniswami's family."

BJP to hold protests against J&K govt. coinciding with NC's Delhi agitation demanding Statehood

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

The Jammu and Kashmir unit of the BJP has announced that it will organise protests across the Union Territory on July 20, the same day that the ruling National Conference (NC) has proposed to hold a sit-in at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi over its demands for Statehood and constitutional guarantees.

However, the State unit of the Congress has supported the NC's move.

BJP workers will assemble outside the Civil Secretariat in Srinagar on July 20 to protest against the J&K government's "outsourcing of jobs". "J&K's youth deserve merit, not out-sourcing and backdoor appointments. We will gear up the Civil Secretariat in Srinagar on July 20 and raise our voice for transpa-



CM Omar Abdullah

rent recruitment and justice," said party spokesperson Manzoor Bhat.

In Jammu, BJP leader and leader of the Opposition Sunil Sharma held a meeting of party office-bearers and district presidents at the BJP headquarters. A party spokesperson said Mr. Sharma reviewed organisational work and upcoming programmes.

"The BJP's stand is clear and consistent. Article 370 is history and J&K is moving forward on the path of peace and development

under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," Mr. Sharma said. He accused the NC of diverting people's attention from its "governance failure" by organising protests.

Senior BJP leader and J&K Waqf Board chairperson Darakhshan Andrabi said the restoration of Statehood "would not come through political protests at Jantar Mantar".

Firm on protest: Omar Meanwhile, the NC is also gearing up for its protest in the national capital. Despite uncertainty looming over whether Delhi Police will grant it permission to hold the protest, the party has resolved to go ahead.

"The venue and manner might change but not the plan to go to Delhi. We will raise our voice in some corner," Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said.

SC closes Tamil Nadu rolls revision case after Bihar verdict

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday closed the proceedings on 13 petitions filed by political parties and leaders challenging the conduct of a special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Tamil Nadu.

Petitions disposed of

A Bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant took note of submissions by petitioners that the case did not require further adjudication in view of the apex court judgment in the Bihar SIR. The Bench then disposed of all 13 petitions on the issue.

On May 27, a Bench headed by the CJI delivered its judgment on a batch of petitions challenging SIR in Bihar and upheld its power to conduct the exercise by the Election

Commission. It had held the exercise "breathes life" into the constitutional mandate for fair elections and advanced the "constitutional imperative of free and fair elections".

The parties, including the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, had challenged the SIR as a "de novo citizen-ship verification process" which ran the risk of disenfranchising lakhs of voters in the State.

The petitioners had referred to the "unilateral imposition" of the intensive exercise without consultation with State governments as an "erosion of the federal structure".

'State's role reduced'

"Tamil Nadu's role has been reduced to a mere executing agency, despite the measure's significant implications for its electorate," one of the petitions had contended.

13 Bangladeshi nationals held in Gurugram sent to Bengal for deportation proceedings: police

Press Trust of India
GURUGRAM

Thirteen alleged Bangladeshi nationals residing illegally in Gurugram have been apprehended, and a special escort team is en route to West Bengal's border town of Malda with them for their handover to the authorities concerned, police said on Thursday.

Special drive

Officers said the individuals were identified by the Crime Branch, Sector-39, under the Gurugram police's special verification drive targeting Bangladeshi nationals residing here illegally.

Those found with suspicious documents or those unable to produce valid proof of lawful residence in India will face legal action as per the provisions of law, they said, adding that the



Police personnel with 13 alleged Bangladeshi nationals detained during a special verification drive in Gurugram. FILE PHOTO

process to deport the 13 alleged immigrants has been initiated.

All necessary security arrangements have been made to ensure the safe execution of the process, according to police.

'Move according to law'

The entire deportation process is being carried out by the Gurugram police strictly in accordance with ap-

plicable laws, prescribed procedures and security protocols, (ACP) Navveen Sharma said.

Mr. Sharma further added that police are conducting intensive verification of documents and identities of individuals residing in slum areas, colonies, rented accommodations, industrial areas, hotels and other locations across the district.

In a boost to check child marriages, 5 alliances stopped through court-issued injunctions on a single day in Sikar

Mohammed Iqbal
JAIPUR

In a boost to efforts for eliminating child marriage, five such alliances were prevented on a single day in Rajasthan's Sikar district through court-issued injunction orders, following coordinated action by the police and voluntary groups working for the protection of child rights.

Among the children rescued were two boys aged nine and 12. They were to be married to girls of similar ages under the traditional *Aata-Saata* (exchange alliance) practice. Another case involved a girl below the age of 18.

Gayatri Seva Sansthan, a partner organisation of Just Rights for Children (JRC), received informa-

Among the children rescued were two boys aged nine and 12 besides a girl below the age of 18

tion that a girl was getting married in a village under the Gokulpura police station. When the organisation's members and the police reached the village to intervene, some people attempted to conceal the facts. The girl's family tried to mislead the police by claiming that she was an adult. The girl's date of birth was then verified through school records, which confirmed that she was below 18 years. It was also found that she was being married to a 42-year-old widower. During the

intervention, the team discovered that two more marriages involving boys aged nine and 12 from the same family were scheduled to take place after a couple of days under the *Aata-Saata* custom.

The Gayatri Seva Sansthan immediately approached the Additional Judicial Magistrate, Sikar, under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, seeking injunction orders to prevent the marriages.

The court issued injunctions directing that none of the children could be married before attaining the legal age of marriage, thereby preventing all five child marriages.

Issued by the court of the Judicial Magistrate under Section 130 of the Prohibition of Child Marriage

Act, an injunction order empowers the authorities to proactively prevent a child marriage before it occurs. The court also usually declares that a child marriage solemnised in contravention of the order would be void *ab initio* (from the beginning).

After his marriage was stopped, the 12-year-old boy said he dreamt of becoming a lawyer and feared that the marriage would have forced him to abandon his education and take up work instead.

'Not confined to paper'

Gayatri Seva Sansthan director Shaileendra Pandya said on Thursday that Sikar was emerging as a leading district in effective implementation of the law against child marriage.

"During Akshaya Tritiya earlier this year, Sikar witnessed the first-ever use of court injunctions to prevent the child marriages of two girls," he said.

Mr. Pandya, a former member of the Rajasthan State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, said the interventions by voluntary groups had sent a strong message that the law against child marriage was no longer confined to paper and is being enforced firmly.

JRC national convener Ravi Kant said sustained awareness campaigns launched by non-governmental organisations were encouraging local communities to come forward and report child marriages being planned in their vicinity.

Rights body flags illegal coal trade near Assam-Arunachal border

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

A local unit of the International Human Rights Council (IHRC) said coal is being illegally extracted and collected from abandoned Coal India Limited mines near the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border, and transported through an allegedly "entry system".

The Tinsukia District Committee of the IHRC outlined such activities in its investigative report into the alleged coal trade released on Thursday.

The report revealed years of illegal operations in the Itakholia area of Ledo under the Margherita Subdivision.

L. Ratan Singh, the general secretary of IHRC's Tinsukia committee, said the committee found a



Itakholia in Assam's Tinsukia district, where coal is allegedly being extracted illegally. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

large number of coal-laden vehicles - from vans and pickups to trucks and dumpers - pass daily through the Itakholia area after bringing coal from the officially abandoned mines.

The committee said that an alleged coal mafioso has been running this illegal business with the assis-

tance of a former Coal India Limited official. "The coal supplied through this network is being used to operate five brick kilns, as well as coke kilns," it said.

The committee further claimed that the alleged entry system—an accounting method for financial transactions—is controlled from a roadside dhaba, which collects the entry fees from the vehicles.

Role questioned

Questioning the role of the district authorities, police, North Eastern Coalfields (a subsidiary of Coal India Limited), Forest, and railway officials, the committee said it would submit a comprehensive report on the illegal coal trade to President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

States

Oppose education Bill, Kerala Minister urges MPs from State

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Kerala Higher Education Minister Roji M. John has appealed to all MPs from the State to oppose the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (VBSA) Bill, 2025, arguing that several of its provisions would centralise control over higher education and weaken the constitutional role of States.

In a letter addressed to Kerala MPs in both Houses of Parliament, Mr. John said while the government was projecting the Bill as a reform measure aimed at improving higher education, research and innovation, he contended that its provisions had wider constitutional implications.

"Beneath the language of reform lies a framework that concentrates unprece-

dened powers in the Union government, weakens the constitutional role of the States, and threatens the autonomy of institutions", the Minister said.

Mr. John argued that the Bill departed from the principle of cooperative federalism and pointed to Clause 49, which, he said, would allow the proposed law to override inconsistent State enactments.

The Minister also raised concerns over the governance structure envisaged under the Bill, especially the limited rotational representation for States in the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan, the apex body that would be replacing the University Grants Commission (UGC), the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), and the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE).

Establish digitised inventory for Sabarimala assets, says HC

Court tells Sabarimala Development Project officials to follow all procedural safeguards on public procurement, while considering the approval for a contract to supply cots for Sannidhanam staff

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

The Kerala High Court has directed the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) to establish a comprehensive, systematic, and preferably digitised inventory management system for all consumable and non-consumable assets maintained at the Sabarimala Sannidhanam and allied establishments.

It further directed the Chief Engineer and the Executive Engineer of the Sabarimala Development Project to ensure that every statutory requirement, financial rule, and procedural safeguard governing public procurement is scrupulously complied



The court was considering queries raised by the Audit department on a contract to supply 1,000 cots for Sannidhanam staff. FILE PHOTO

with, before finalising purchases.

A Division Bench of Justice Raja Vijayaraghavan V. and Justice K.V. Jayakumar passed the directives while considering the approval for a contract to supply 1,000 double-decker mild steel cots for daily wage

staff deployed at the Sannidhanam and the queries raised by the Audit department in this regard. The total estimate for the purchase was ₹1.66 crore, for which the TDB had granted administrative sanction. One of the objections was that though the cots

SIT visits TDB office as part of 'gold theft' probe

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A special investigation team (SIT) inquiring into the alleged misappropriation of gold from the Sabarimala Ayyappa temple visited the Travancore Devaswom Board office on Thursday.

were to be supplied by a manufacturer in Tamil Nadu, neither its photographs nor technical specifications were placed before the Ombudsman. Moreover, the Ombudsman had noted that the tender process was initiated at the eleventh hour.

Cong. alleges attempt to foil Rahul event in Dehradun today

Press Trust of India
DEHRADUN

Congress leaders in Uttarakhand on Thursday alleged that the BJP government was trying to prevent students from attending Rahul Gandhi's event in Dehradun, but said a large turnout of youth was expected.

Senior Congress leaders inspected the venue of the 'Chhatron Ki Goon' (Voice of Students) event and reviewed arrangements. Mr. Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, is scheduled to attend the programme on Friday amid Opposition criticism over alleged irregularities in NEET and other examinations.

The event was shifted to the Bannu School ground after the administration cancelled permission for the larger Parade Ground.

Senior Congress leader Harak Singh Rawat alleged that the move was aimed at limiting attendance. "Around 20,000-25,000 students are expected. Over four lakh people have registered. Even if 10% turn up, it will be a large gathering. This ground does not have that capacity," he said.

State Congress president Ganesh Godiyal said the programme would begin at 5 p.m., with Mr. Gandhi expected to arrive at 7 p.m. and leave around 9 p.m. Despite the smaller venue, he said, there was considerable enthusiasm among students.

NSUI national president Vinod Jakhar alleged that



Congress leader Harak Singh Rawat alleged the move aimed at limiting attendance. PTI

the State government was "rattled" by Mr. Gandhi's popularity and had denied permission for the larger venue for that reason. He said students from across Uttarakhand were expected to attend.

'Exam leak hub'

A day before his interaction, Mr. Gandhi said Uttarakhand had become an "epicentre" of paper leaks and asserted that he would not allow the future of youth to be "auctioned off".

He alleged that a "system" had taken root in UKSSSC (Uttarakhand Subordinate Service Selection Commission) exams, where posts such as patwari or lekhpal were secured through illegal means rather than merit. Despite an anti-cheating law, paper leaks had continued, he said, adding that students who prepare for years find positions being bought by others.

"This is not just a leak, it is theft - of a young person's rights, livelihood and future," he said.

ISRO issues memo to curb exodus of staff from key missions

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

With about 100 Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) personnel quitting the space agency in various centres across the country, the Department of Space (DoS) has issued a memorandum to curb the exodus of scientists and engineers who are working in critical missions of national importance, like the Gaganyaan.

In a memorandum issued on July 14, signed by

S.R. Rajashekar, Joint Secretary (Personnel), Department of Space, it stated, "Of late, it is noticed that there has been spate of requests for voluntary retirement and resignation from Group 'A' Scientific/Technical personnel of the ISRO including those associated with the prestigious Gaganyaan and other important missions/projects severely impacting the implementation of projects of national importance."

The memorandum addressed to Directors of the

ISRO Centers and Heads of Units has asked them to address this issue and not to accept any requests for voluntary retirement or resignation from scientific and technical personnel of Group 'A' associated with the Gaganyaan or other important missions or projects till their realisation.

"It has been decided that voluntary retirement and resignation requests from scientific and technical personnel associated with the Gaganyaan and other important mission/

projects may not be accepted as a matter of routine," the memorandum stated.

It further noted that if requests for voluntary retirement and resignation are received from scientific, technical personnel, even below the rank of scientists/engineers-SG, it may be sent to the DoS for final decision.

Union Minister of State Jitendra Singh downplayed suggestions of a manpower crisis. "I believe Mr. Narayanan [ISRO Chairman V.

Narayanan] has made a statement on that. As many go, that many will come - the project shouldn't suffer. The team is large; nobody is going away; they come and go. The memo was issued so that decisions can be taken at a much more mature level. The ISRO has a culture of working in continuity, with even retired personnel involved in projects... For instance the former chief S. Somanath worked closely on the Gaganyaan. Now he's not there. Does that

mean work on Gaganyaan stops?"

During the last Budget session of the Parliament, Mr. Singh on February 11, 2026, in a reply to a question on the details of the sanctioned, in-position and vacant positions in the ISRO, said that the overall strength (Science and Technology and Administration) was 18,142. Of this there was a vacancy of 2,613 personnel. (With inputs from Jacob Koshy in New Delhi)

INBRIEF



Wild elephant on rampage along T.N. boundary captured

A wild sub-adult tusker that terrorised several villages under Palamaner, Bangarupalem, Gudipala and Chittoor mandals on the Chittoor-Tamil Nadu border was captured on Wednesday evening, after a day-long operation involving five kumkims (trained elephants) and about 50 forest personnel, apart from veterinary experts. Speaking to *The Hindu* on Thursday, District Forest Officer G. Subburaj said the animal's unpredictable movements posed a threat to residents and motorists, prompting the Forest Department to launch the operation.

Teacher fired over 'religious homework' given to student

A Class 2 homework assignment has snowballed into a controversy at a private school in Hyderabad after the parents of a Hindu student alleged that their child was asked to memorise and recite the Kalma. The development led to protests by BJP workers outside the school on Thursday. The police detained several protesters, including BJP leader Karuna Sagar, who asked why an FIR had not been registered. With the controversy escalating, Success The School in Saidabad, terminated the teacher.

TTD gets donations worth ₹96.98 crore in a single day

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), which manages the operations of the Lord Venkateswara Temple at Tirumala, received a staggering ₹96.98 crore in donations to its various trusts and schemes in a single day on Tuesday as devotees rushed to beat the deadline for a sweeping overhaul of donor privileges. The unprecedented inflow came on the eve of the implementation of TTD's revised donor privilege policy, which took effect on Wednesday. As many as 2,460 devotees made donations during the day.

Culinary game



Blue brigade: A staff member prepares 'Argentina puttu' in the blue and white colours of the Argentine flag at a hotel in Ernakulam, Kerala, for customers celebrating the country's entry into the FIFA World Cup final. The dish was prepared using blue colour derived from butterfly pea flower (*Shankhpushpam*) extract. R.K.NITHIN

SC rejects plea against recounting in Council election in Karnataka

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday dismissed an appeal by Pranesh M.K., Deputy Chairman of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly, challenging a High Court of Karnataka direction for a recount of votes polled in the 2021 Council election.

Mr. Pranesh was elected as MLC by a narrow victory margin of six votes.

The appeal was heard by a three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant. Justice Vipul M. Pancholi, part of the Bench along with Justice Joyimalya Bagchi, pro-

nounced the verdict.

The High Court order of January 29 last year was based on a petition filed by Mr. Pranesh's rival and Congress candidate A.V. Gayathri Shanthie Gowda.

The Supreme Court reserved the appeal for judgment on March 11 this year. The judgment is yet to be uploaded on the Supreme Court website.

Meanwhile, celebrations began at the residence of Ms. Gowda in Chikkamagaluru on Thursday, minutes after news broke out that the Supreme Court had dismissed the appeal by Mr. Pranesh, challenging the outcome of the election.

Women bus riders up 87% to 12.12 lakh after Kerala govt. offers them free travel

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

After the roll-out of the Priyadarshini free travel scheme for women and transgender people on the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) buses, the average daily ridership of women passengers on Ordinary buses increased from 6.48 lakh to 12.12 lakh, an increase of 87%. Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, Transport Minister C.P. John said that women's participation in KSRTC's Ordinary services now accounts for about two-thirds of the capacity of its Ordinary buses.

According to the latest review, the share of women passengers on KSRTC



As per the latest review, the share of women passengers on KSRTC Ordinary buses rose to 66.6% after the scheme's rollout. R.K.NITHIN

Ordinary buses increased from 50.9% to 66.6% after the roll-out of the scheme.

'New travel demand'

"This is not merely a shift in the existing number of passengers but the creation of new travel demand

Highway blocked in A.P. as protest erupts over 'custodial death'

N.S. Chowdary
NELLORE

Tension prevailed on the Manubolu National Highway (NH) in Nellore, Andhra Pradesh, on Wednesday evening after the family members of Yedukondalu, who allegedly died in police custody, placed his body on a truck and attempted to block the road in protest outside the police station.

The protesters were joined by the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leaders. This led to traffic jam on the highway for a few hours. Hundreds of police personnel were deployed to clear the traffic. There

were heated arguments between the police personnel and protesters.

The YSRCP leaders alleged that Yedukondalu died due to indiscriminate beating and torture by SI Haneef and Constable Madhav, and demanded disciplinary action against them. YSRCP district president Kakani Govardhan Reddy, Tirupati MP Maddila Gurumoorthy, MLC Meriga Muralidhar, and former MLA Kiliveti Sanjeeviah demanded justice for the family.

Police officials promised that justice would be served to the family, following which the protest was called off.

SIT summons Sukhbir in Behbal Kalan firing case, sets July 20 date

Chhattisgarh passes Bill to boost business

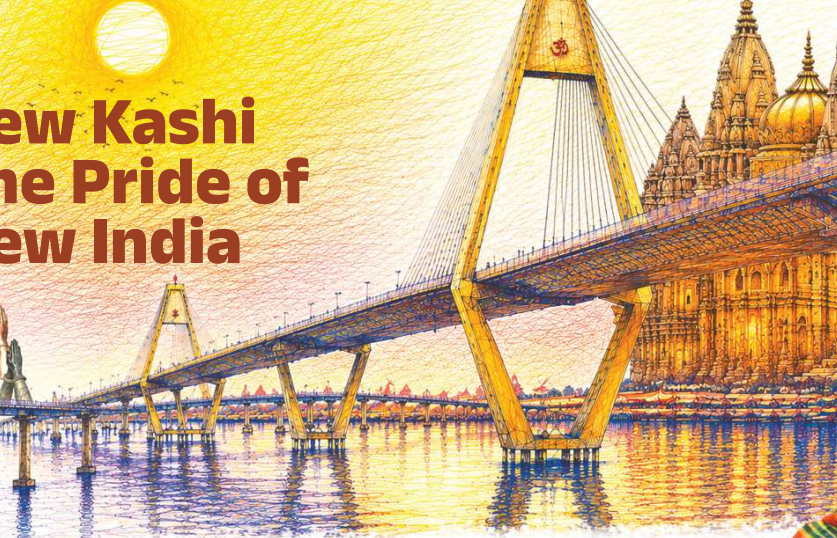
Hooda pulls up govt. over tolls

Labourer dies as concrete layer falls inside Silkyara tunnel; workers halt work

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to

Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji

for

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and

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₹25,445 Crore+

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Ganga Elevated Corridor

46.039 km long six-lane greenfield elevated corridor | 910 m cable-stayed bridge | 1.32 km extradosed pedestrian bridge
Diverts 66,809 PCUs from city traffic daily | Reduces distance between NH-19 and Kashi Railway Station
Reduces travel time from 60 minutes to approximately 20 minutes

Varuna Elevated Corridor

43.218 km elevated corridor | Airport-railway station travel time reduced to 20 minutes
Ramps providing direct connectivity to key locations such as Cantt and Chaukaghat
Designed to meet projected traffic demand up to year 2044
Seamless connectivity with the airport, railway station, ring road and national highways

Together, Let's Add to the Glory of Kashi-The Eternal City


Information and Public Relations Department, U.P.

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SPOTLIGHT

The Jagannath Temple in Puri holds its Rath Yatra every year on a date prescribed by its centuries-old ritual calendar. A branch of ISKCON, however, stages international events of the procession on dates that differ from the original, citing practical reasons. The divergence has sparked a controversy, with many in Puri viewing it as a challenge to the temple's authority and its religious identity, finds **Satyasundar Barik**



The Rath Yatra celebrations in Puri began on Thursday, with three grand chariots carrying Lord Jagannath and his siblings, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra, through Grand Road in Puri. BISWARANJAN ROUT

There is resentment in one of India's most-celebrated temple towns, Puri, against the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). The global movement to promote devotion to Lord Krishna through chanting has been organising Rath Yatra processions across several countries. In most, the dates have differed from the one prescribed by the centuries-old ritual calendar of the Shree Jagannath Temple in Odisha's Puri. Further, the organisation refused to abide by the schedule of the temple's managing committee in Puri.

This year's Rath Yatra began on Thursday at the Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri and across India, with three towering wooden chariots carrying Lord Jagannath and his siblings - Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra - through the Bada Danda (Grand Road) in Puri. However, ISKCON has been conducting the festival internationally since May 9, as per their press release, and will cover 26 locations in Asia, North America, Europe, and Africa. They are also organising Rath Yatras at 66 places in Madhya Pradesh, between July 16 and 25, two of which are outside the nine-day period recommended as per the calendar of the Jagannath Temple in Puri.

Standing near one of the chariots, Badri Mishra, a 67-year-old cultural activist, his voice trembling in anger, let out a barrage of invectives against ISKCON. "If ISKCON comes to Puri," Mishra growled, "it will face the anger of Lord Jagannath's devotees."

Escalating his attack, Mishra added, "We want governance like that of Yogi Adityanath (Uttar Pradesh's Chief Minister). Jodi kounsi sangathan Bharatara Sanatan dharmaku chara chariti pabitra sthana madhyaru gottare asanman karibaku sahas kare, tebe tahaku nischinta kada karjanyus-thana sammukhina karibaku padiba. (If any organisation dares to disrespect Sanatan Dharma at one of its four sacred centres in India, it must face strict action.) It should no longer be allowed to operate in Odisha, or for that matter in India."

The Shree Jagannath Temple Managing Committee has been raising the issue for several years now, but over the past couple of years there has been more press. People in Puri feel that with a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government at both the Centre and the State, and the country's President from Odisha, they stand a better chance at being able to influence ISKCON's stand.

Letters of request

Binayak Das Mohapatra, a Biswabasu *sevayat*, who hereditarily performs temple services, stood with Mishra next to the chariot, and said, "Would the Christian community allow others to celebrate the birth of Christ on March 2 or October 5 instead of December 25? How can ISKCON take the liberty of observing the Rath Yatra on any day other than the one designated by the Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri?"

The resentment is not limited to those directly associated with the temple. Devotees visiting Puri have also voiced concern over the matter. They say the State government did not act on the request of Dibyasingha Deb, the titular king of Puri, who is regarded as the *adhyasevak*, the foremost servant, of Lord Jagannath.

Deb, who is also the chairman of the Shree Ja-



We have been able to stop the untimely Rath Yatra from being held within India by writing to different State governments. But we have not been successful in convincing ISKCON to stop organising the Rath Yatra on foreign soil.

DIBYASINGHA DEB,
TITULAR KING OF PURI AND THE FOREMOST SERVITOR OF LORD JAGANNATH

gannath Temple Managing Committee, had sent two-page letters, each accompanied by a 152-page annexure, to President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on July 4.

Seeking their intervention, the letters raised concerns over ISKCON's conducting the Shree Jagannath Snana Yatra, the ritual bathing of the idols, and the Rath Yatra outside the prescribed dates. Deb also wrote to ISKCON, appealing to them to reconsider their stand.

This was met with a terse reply. On July 7, Madhu Sevita Dasa, ISKCON Governing Body Commission's chairperson, rejected the appeal, stating, "There is no more to add, and therefore we respectfully bow out of this discussion once and for all." ISKCON's stance comes despite other prominent Hindu religious seats advocating adherence to established theological norms.

Deb is upset. "We have been able to stop the untimely Rath Yatra from being held within India by writing to different State governments. But we have not been successful in convincing ISKCON to stop organising the Rath Yatra on foreign soil," he said.

In July this year, the Puri district administration sent a request to the Rajasthan government to stop a Rath Yatra at Sikar, to take place on July 10. Rajasthan's BJP government helped to stop it on that day. Deb emphasises that the dates are important because unlike other traditions where presiding deities remain in the sanctum and only Utsava Vigrahas (festival idols) are taken out, in the Jagannath tradition, the presiding deities themselves emerge from the temple during the Rath Yatra. The idols in other areas are consecrated in the traditions of Puri. Hence, they too need to follow the *tithi* (date).

Deb also questioned ISKCON's overall aim. "In various Rath Yatra announcements, ISKCON solicits donations for nearly every ritual observed. If this is not profit-driven, then what is?" he said.

The ongoing tussle between the Shree Jagannath Temple Managing Committee and ISKCON is widely seen as part of Puri's broader effort to safeguard its unique religious identity.

Earlier, the Odisha government, led by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, as well as former Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, had expressed deep concern over the naming of the Jagannath-inspired Temple in Digha, West Bengal. It was named Jagannath Dham, another perceived deviation. Dham is a reference to the four religious sites considered most sacred for Hindus: Jagannath Puri in the east, Badrinath in the north, Dwarka in the west, and Rameswaram in the south. Despite repeated requests from Odisha, the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress government did not act on appeals to drop the term 'Dham' from the temple complex. However, following a change in regime in West Bengal, with the BJP now in government, the term 'Dham' has been dropped.

Rath Yatra beliefs
The Rath Yatra is the most-celebrated festival associated with the Shree Jagannath Temple. Devotees in huge numbers gather on the Bada Danda to pull the three chariots as the deities travel 3 km to the Gundicha Temple and return on the ninth day. Puri Shankaracharya Nischalananda Saraswati, one of the foremost religious leaders of the Hindus, said the Rath Yatra be held after worship "on the morning of the second day of the bright fortnight of the month of Asadha", the fourth month of the Hindu lunar calendar. This corresponds to June-July in the Gregorian calendar. The other Shankaracharyas of Sringeri and Kanchi peethams, along with heads of various maths (monasteries), supported the Puri Shankaracharya.

The Rath Yatra, marked by intricate rituals, presents a grand spectacle at the wide road connecting the two temples. The three chariots are newly constructed each year by designated temple *sevayats*. During the festival, the chariots bearing the deities are pulled by devotees and assisted by police personnel. Since non-Hindus are not permitted entry into the temple, the yatra offers them a glimpse of the deities.

"Even the king of Puri assumes the role of a sweeper, ceremonially cleaning the chariot platforms," said Sumant Mishra, a devotee of Lord Jagannath.

Maximum patronage
In 2025, the Shree Jagannath Temple administration constituted a committee to examine ISKCON's arguments for holding the festival outside the prescribed date. Harekrishna Satpathy, a member of the committee, noted that the Mukti Mandap, the temple's highest decision-making body on rituals, along with Jagannath followers, have historically shown flexibility in different aspects, including chariot sizes and offerings.

"However, the day of the Rath Yatra cannot be compromised. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Supreme Court permitted the festival within the scripture-mandated nine-day period with skeletal presence of *sevayats* and adherence to safety protocols," said Satpathy, former Vice-Chancellor of the National Sanskrit University. Amid widespread criticism over timing deviations, ISKCON said it has aligned the dates of 247 Rath Yatras in India, about a third of those it conducts, with the prescribed *tithi*. However, it cited logistical constraints in doing so internationally.

The ISKCON (Mayapur) Governing Body Commission's former chairman, Govardhan Das, responded to Deb, saying obtaining permissions abroad for minority religious events was difficult, and most volunteers were unavailable on weekdays due to professional commitments.

He added that many temples in the West share chariots across cities, and climatic differences mean some regions experience harsh winters during the Rath Yatra period. "Strict adherence to the *tithi* worldwide would reduce occurrence of the 600 Rath Yatra festivals held in the West by 90%," he said in a letter to Deb.

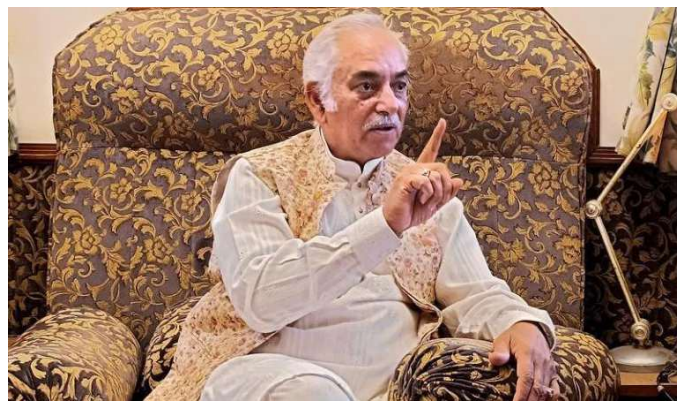
Satpathy explained that over the past four years, ISKCON now operates as two groups. While Bengaluru-based entity has agreed to follow the rituals of Puri, the group based in Mayapur in West Bengal has not.

Odisha Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan is sceptical about being able to influence the dates. "We don't have any control over ISKCON on foreign soil. Even the ISKCON temple in Mayapur seems to have not much say over their sister organisations operating outside the country."

Meanwhile, the Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON has disassociated itself from the Mayapur-headquartered ISKCON. "We will conduct the Rath Yatra in accordance with the dates advised by Shree Jagannath Temple at Puri," said Madhu Pandit Dasa, chairman, Governing Body Commission, Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON Group of Temples (Bengaluru-registered body).

Deb said a delegation will leave from Puri once the festival concludes, to meet the President and the Prime Minister. "Both are big devotees of Lord Jagannath. They know the rituals. Hopefully, they will take up the issue."

satyasundar.b@thehindu.co.in



Dibyasingha Deb, the titular king of Puri, who is regarded as the foremost servant of Lord Jagannath. BISWARANJAN ROUT



SANTOSH GOVINDARAJU

June - September: Wildflowers @ Hampta Pass

In the Kullu-Manali region, Indiahikes offers several treks to Chandrakhan Pass, the Chandrabhaga glaciers trek, and Hampta Pass. The latter, in particular, "is one of the country's most beautiful crossover treks," says Ravi Ranjan. Starting from the lush green valleys near Manali, he explains that the trail gradually climbs to the Hampta Pass at around 14,000 feet before descending into the starkly different landscapes of Lahaul. "On one side, trekkers experience dense forests. On the other, lies an arid landscape almost completely devoid of vegetation. Witnessing this sudden shift in geography and ecology over the course of a trek is a remarkable experience," he shares.

From mid-July onward, Ravi explains how the valley turns into a "spectacular alpine flower garden" with the diversity of flowers varying with altitude, terrain, and the timing of the monsoon. "One of the most striking flowers is the Himalayan bistort. These pink flower spikes carpet entire meadows, especially around the campsites of Jobra, Jwara, and Balu Ka Ghara." Other prominent species include the bright yellow Himalayan groundsel (Senecio), the blue-violet Himalayan geranium, and the delicate Himalayan anemone. "Among the most beautiful flowers found on the trail are the primroses." The final campsite at Chatru is surrounded by barren mountains. "Hampta Pass offers a complete Himalayan experience - lush valleys, river trails and more." **₹12,950 + GST for a six-day trek. Details on indiahikes.com**

Hiking trails across the Himalayas are bursting into bloom with wild flora. Here are some of the best treks

The hills are alive

Nidhi Adlakha

nidhi.adlakha@thehindu.co.in

Spring's exuberance has not left the mountains yet. All along the Himalayan region, stretching from the North to the East, wild flowers are in full bloom. From marigold fields and rhododendron-laden branches to valleys dotted with the Dzukou lily and violets, we show you where to see these beauties.

June - August: Rolling meadows @ Miyar Valley

Located deep within the Lahaul region near Udaipur in Himachal Pradesh, Miyar Valley offers trekkers a glimpse of a lesser-known Himachal traversing between 12,000 and 13,000 feet throughout. Miyar Valley is defined by its vastness and continuity, says Ravi Ranjan, chief of experience and safety, Indiahikes. "The valley is considerably wider than most Himalayan valleys and remains largely dry because it lies on the leeward side of the Pir Panjal range, which divides Kullu from Lahaul," he says.

"Unlike many valleys that are lined with forests, rhododendrons, or alpine vegetation, Miyar's landscape is dominated by open grasslands, shrubs, and rocky terrain. Towering snow-clad peaks rise on both sides of the valley, while numerous streams descend from glaciers above," says Ravi, adding that this trek is easy on the legs when compared to others. As the valley lies in a relatively drier region, the flowers are less conspicuous. Dominant species include Himalayan bistort and Himalayan geranium. "Marsh marigolds create beautiful yellow highlights, while the Himalayan blue poppy can occasionally be found in some locations." The region carries a strong Buddhist influence; there are many gompas along the trek's route. **₹14,950 plus GST for a week-long trek. Details on indiahikes.com**



June - August: Dzukou Valley, Nagaland

Khriebu Zhasa's fondest childhood memories were the winter treks she took with her family to Kohima's Shürho peak. "There was a small rest house where we would make a pit stop. My parents would prepare lunch, while we cousins would make our way to the top of Shürho," says Khriebu, 38, managing director of travel outfit, Explore Nagaland. Here, Khriebu, along with her sister Nino Zhasa, offers custom tours of the Northeast and a range of flower treks. "The village youth has popularised many flower trails in the region via social media. Akule Potato (Kigwema) for beautiful hydrangeas in June and July, Mosen View Point in October-November for cosmos..." says Nino, the founder, adding that Japfu Peak (October-April) is great for rhododendron blooms. Khriebu says the Dzukou Valley trek is open year-round, and the Dzukou lily is in full bloom from June to early August. **For bookings, call 9089948353, 8787396634.**

Sing along



Stage dreams Singer Mano during an interaction with The Hindu in Chennai. BUJOY GHOSH

B Kolappan

kolappan.b@thehindu.co.in

When a couple, accompanied by their child, told playback singer Mano that his song 'Nee Oru Kadhal Sangeetham' from the film *Nayakan* had played a pivotal role in their love story, it reaffirmed his belief that music has the power to create lifelong memories. This interaction happened during an event in the US, allowing fans to sing along with him. On similar lines, Mano has launched a mentorship programme to give aspiring singers stage opportunities. "It is not a competition," Mano said in an interview. "The idea is to give music lovers, who may never otherwise get an opportunity to perform, a platform to sing." The event Sing with Mano will take place in Chennai in October. Singers are encouraged to choose a song of their choice. Mano will then assess whether it suits their voice, guide them through rehearsals, and mentor them until they are ready for a performance with him. Born as Nagoor Babu, the singer adopted the screen name Mano at the suggestion of music director Ilaiyaraaja for whom he debuted with "Then Mozhi". He credits his training in Carnatic music to Tamil composer and music director MS Viswanathan.

To participate, send your name, profession and city, with a clip of you singing on WhatsApp to 9080366666.

A universal language

Sumathy Ram talks about global collaborations, and her latest documentary, *United We Stand Tall*

Sangita Rajan

sangitarajan.p@thehindu.co.in

Music has never been confined to a soundtrack for Texas-based filmmaker and producer Sumathy Ram. She has thought of it as a language capable of carrying ideas across borders, cultures and generations. Having worked across filmmaking, lyric writing, poetry and music production, Sumathy says every creative pursuit ultimately serves the same purpose. "I use my platform to express my views on humanity and well-being," she says.

Collaborating with artists such as Indian music composer, and three-time Grammy award winner Ricky Kej and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Kailash Satyarthi has only strengthened that conviction she says. "These collaborations give me the strength to continue believing that music is an agent of social transformation. It brings joy to communities, provides spiritual sustenance and offers emotional fulfilment." Sumathy has collaborated on projects spanning more than 40 countries, including Gandhi: Mantras of Compassion, which brought together over 230 musicians from around the world.

"Our commitment is to global peace, harmony and unity. We work together because we want to create meaningful change in society, and we use music as an agent of social transformation," she says.

Her latest project, *United We Stand Tall*, extends that idea into

documentary filmmaking. Created to mark the 25th anniversary of the 9/11 terror attacks in New York City, the project centres on healing. "The film follows a Lutheran pastor in New York who seeks to inspire hope and resilience in the wake of the tragedy," Sumathy says. "We recently interviewed him and several others in New York, and we are currently in post-production."

Alongside the documentary, the team has created an original symphonic cantata honouring those who lost their lives and the resilience that followed.

Although based in the US, Sumathy increasingly sees herself as a global storyteller. "I don't think of myself only as Indian or American. I feel like a global citizen. I enjoy working on projects from different parts of the world," she says. That outlook also informs her long-gestating project *Lajavati*, an English-language musical she has been developing for the past decade.

"*Lajavati* has already won more than 100 screenplay awards. I have been working on it for the past 10 years. It is an epic musical story and a tale of ecstasy and agony where desire and destiny play major roles."

For Sumathy, the future of storytelling lies not in working alone, but together. "I believe the future lies in collaboration across cultures and generations," she says. "That is how we honour our Indian stories while opening ourselves to new conversations around the world."

Musical harmony

Sumathy Ram and Ricky Kej. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Couture comes calling

The upcoming Hyundai India Couture Week 2026 is bringing the country's top designers to redefine what modern luxury stands for

Deepali Dhingra

The Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI) is returning with the Hyundai India Couture Week 2026 in association with Nexus New York, scheduled from July 23 to 29. While the core of the event remains anchored at New Delhi's Taj Palace, for the first time in the platform's history, the inaugural showcase is moving out of the capital to Hyderabad.

This year's curated lineup features a mix of heritage legends and contemporary innovators. The distinguished list of couturiers and design houses presenting their collections includes JJ Valaya, Tarun Tahiliani, Anamika Khanna, Rahul Mishra, Falguni Shane Peacock, Kunal Rawal, Rimzim Dadu, Rohit Bal, Masaba, Aisha

Rao, Jayanti Reddy, Arpita Mehta, and Roseoroom by Isha Jadodia.

At the New Delhi showcase, the designers will take the runway, culminating in a grand closing show on July 29 by the globally-acclaimed designer Rahul Mishra. One of the country's leading couturiers, the husband-wife duo of Falguni-Shane Peacock will open the show in Delhi on July 24. "It is a privilege to mark this moment alongside Kohler and the Fashion Design Council of India, whose shared commitment to craftsmanship,

Indian couture is actively designing its future in a way that ensures its rich heritage remains deeply rooted yet entirely contemporary

innovation and design continues to inspire us," they say.

JJ Valaya's Autumn-Winter 2026 collection will feature his signature layered historical narratives and theatricality. The designer points out that the real challenge for contemporary Indian couture lies in how it defines itself globally. "Our strength in craft and artisanal excellence is unquestionable, but I believe the future will depend on moving beyond craft as the principal narrative. Strong design identities, original thought and the ability

A grand showcase (Clockwise from left) Outfits by Rohit Bal and Amit Aggarwal from Hyundai India Couture Week 2025. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

to build distinctive 'houses' will define the next chapter," Valaya says.

Taking up Valaya's cue of moving 'beyond craft as the principal narrative' is Rimzim Dadu, for whom expanding the definition of couture beyond conventional wedding wear remains a career-long focus. "I've always been fascinated by the idea of transforming the familiar into the unexpected - making steel behave like fabric, turning architectural references into garments, or using materials in ways they were never intended to be used," she explains. This season, Rimzim is pairing her signature steel wire techniques with mother-of-pearl, a pairing inspired by Mughal inlay work and historic jewellery.

While Rimzim uses Mughal heritage to experiment with industrial metals, Jayanti Reddy uses it to reshape classic textile forms. Marking her third consecutive year at India Couture Week, Jayanti is continuing her exploration of regional heritage, turning to Hyderabad's architectural landscape for inspiration. "This season, the inspiration comes from the timeless beauty of Hyderabad's architecture and the elegance of the Nizami era," she notes. Looks like the message from the runways this year is pretty clear - Indian couture is actively designing its future in a way that ensures its rich heritage remains deeply rooted yet entirely contemporary.





Wealth of lacunae

Cybersecurity, transparency are non-negotiable in vital installations

The ransomware attack against a contractor involved in the Kudankulam nuclear power project is concerning, even if nothing threatening the plant's integrity was stolen. In 2019, malware was found on the same facility's administrative network, but the NPCIL maintained that the operational reactor network was unaffected. The new incident extends the same theme. India's breach disclosure regime is inconsistent and often plainly opaque. Affected organisations tend to believe admitting a breach will damage public confidence, share prices, contracts, and invite regulatory scrutiny. So, they tend to ease their language in public statements and avoid disclosure until compelled. Many organisations also lack mature incident response capabilities, not uncommonly because they treat cybersecurity as a matter of compliance rather than necessity. So, assessing what data has been affected in the early stages of an attack becomes technically impossible. According to public information, the facility's core infrastructure is unaffected; instead, a group called 'World Leaks' mounted a ransomware attack compromising systems belonging to Reliance Infrastructure, one of the engineering contractors of Units 3 and 4. The data in the incident were hosted by Yotta Data Services, which said it detected suspicious activity on its servers on May 29.

According to open-source intelligence platform RansomLook, the data began appearing on World Leaks on June 11. However, the NPCIL issued a formal clarification only on July 15, following widespread media reports. Some 14.3 GB of files have been released, including the layouts of ventilation systems, floor plans of an alleged "control room", supplier and vendor lists, and insurance paperwork. While the files have not been independently authenticated, the actors and their incentives merit a closer look. The NPCIL has said that the files only pertain to infrastructure beyond the facility's nuclear island. However, such information can still serve so-called intelligence preparation activities. India is the third-most breached country and has already brooked similar attacks against AIIMS Delhi, airlines, and State government portals. In this milieu, the government has positioned Kudankulam as the centrepiece of India's nuclear power ambitions. As CERT-In is conducting an investigation and Reliance and Yotta have shared their findings with the government, CERT-In and NPCIL should also clarify the nature and authenticity of the files, whether data were exfiltrated before detection, and whether any credentials or supplier accounts have been exposed. Radical transparency is impossible here but basic cyber-hygiene and proactive communication are non-negotiable.

Breaching the target

Rising inflation leaves no room for a cut in interest rates

India's retail inflation breached the RBI's 4% target for the first time under the new CPI series, rising to 4.38% in June from 2.93% in May and about 2.7% a year earlier. The latest print reflects a broader pass-through of price pressures that had, until recently, remained concentrated at the producer level, largely driven by spiralling transport and fuel costs since the U.S.-Iran conflict in late February. Consequently, the gap between wholesale and retail inflation has only marginally narrowed. Wholesale inflation (WPI), now based on 2022-23, remained elevated at 9.87% in June, up from 9.68% in May. Fuel and power continued to exert the greatest pressure on producers, recording inflation of 27.41%, only marginally lower than May's 28.18%. As India imports nearly 90% of its crude oil requirements, the value of merchandise imports surged to \$70.8 billion in June from about \$54.1 billion a year earlier, even though import volumes did not rise proportionately. This underscores how imported inflation, amplified by crude prices that briefly crossed \$110 a barrel, has driven systemic price pressures across the economy. The rupee's sharp depreciation during the conflict added to these pressures, although RBI intervention in the foreign exchange market helped cushion the fall.

The transport category merits closer examination. Transport inflation more than doubled to 4.31% in June from 1.75% in May, while the sub-group, "transport services for goods", remained elevated, rising to 7.70% from 7.63%. Another notable pressure point has been restaurants and hotels. Although the government announced a modest reduction in commercial LPG prices earlier this month, it has done little to offset the steep increases through May and June, when the price of a 19.2 kg commercial cylinder in Delhi climbed to around ₹2,930 before easing marginally. The system-wide impact is also evident in food prices, with the Consumer Food Price Index (CFPI) rising to 5.32% from 4.78% in May. Another significant price pressure on the CFPI that must be factored in is the projection of a deficient southwest monsoon and its impact on agriculture, though the extent will become clearer in the weeks ahead. Meanwhile, despite the Centre more than doubling import duties on gold and silver from 6% to 15% in May, Commerce Ministry data suggest that bullion imports have remained robust amid global uncertainty, contributing to higher jewellery prices and household inflation. Although the ceasefire announced in late June briefly eased crude prices, they have begun rising again. Given continuing geopolitical uncertainty and persistent upstream price pressures, inflation is unlikely to return to the RBI's 4% target soon, leaving no room for a rate cut at the Monetary Policy Committee's August meeting.

Beyond political reshuffles, renew education in India

When Parliament assembles next week, there will be debates, disruptions and legislation. Television studios will reduce complex issues to political arithmetic, and headlines will declare winners and losers. Yet, I cannot help asking whether the true measure of Parliament is not by the number of bills it passes, but by the questions it chooses to confront and resolve. For the past several days, one such question has been waiting outside its doors. My husband, Sonam Wangchuk, scientist, engineer, educator and social reformer, has been on an indefinite fast. Every morning I watch with growing anxiety as his body weakens. His body is paying the price for a conviction that education deserves the nation's urgent attention. Every day begins with the same silent question: how much longer can his body endure?

This is not merely a family's private concern. It has become a test of our national conscience. Those who choose the path of non-violent sacrifice hope their suffering will awaken society's conscience to a greater purpose. If this fast culminates only in the resignation or reshuffling of the Union Education Minister, India would have reduced an extraordinary act of conviction and personal sacrifice to an ordinary political outcome. Public accountability is the cornerstone of democracy. Ministers must have the moral courage to own their failures and step aside when necessary. But individuals are transient; institutions endure. More important than replacing a Minister is defining an educational future for which every Minister, regardless of party, is held accountable.

Fifteen years ago, around half of India's population was under 25. Economists celebrated this as India's demographic dividend, perhaps the greatest developmental opportunity available to any nation in the 21st century. In one of my articles, I had argued that while India has invested significantly in access to education, it has missed out on excellence. Enrolment has grown, but learning has not been transformed. If India aspires to become a Vishwa Guru, it must educate this generation differently. But India seems to have missed the opportunity.

What demographic dividend is
A demographic dividend is realised by producing better thinkers, wiser leaders, confident innovators, skilled researchers and teachers, ethical entrepreneurs, honest public servants and compassionate citizens. This, therefore, is the moment to rise above personalities, parties and politics. Sonam Wangchuk's fast should become the catalyst for a national awakening on the future of education. The question is larger than whether one Minister should resign. It is whether India will dare rebuild the education system that will shape the next century. We need more than a reshuffle — we need reform, renewal, and a renaissance. In my view, that renaissance rests on



Gitanjali J. Angmo

Founder of the Himalayan Institute of Alternatives, Ladakh, and an education reformer and public intellectual working to reimagine education, democracy, ecology and Himalayan futures through grassroots leadership and innovation

10 urgent reforms. First, reform the system of examination. Assessment determines learning. As long as examinations reward memory, schools will teach memory. If examinations reward thinking, schools will cultivate thinkers. Within three years, every examination, from school boards to JEE, NEET, CUET and the UPSC, should progressively evaluate conceptual understanding, application, creativity, analytical reasoning, ethical judgement and real world problem-solving rather than recall. Competency-based assessment should become the national norm.

Second, India must dismantle the coaching culture that it has inadvertently created as a parallel education system. Families spend fortunes on coaching because India's entrance examinations reward repetition more than reflection. Multiple examination windows, greater weightage to school performance and portfolios, and redesigned entrance tests can gradually restore learning to schools and childhood to children.

Respect for teaching

Third, build the world's best teachers: No education system can rise above the quality of its teachers as is seen in Finland, Singapore, South Korea and Japan. India needs a National Teacher Excellence Mission that treats teaching as one of the most respected professions through rigorous preparation, continuous professional development, mentoring, research opportunities and leadership training.

Fourth, every vacant teaching position represents thousands of lost learning opportunities. Vacancies from Anganwadis and primary schools to central universities, IITs, IIMs, NITs and AIIMS should be filled through transparent, merit-based recruitment within three months.

Fifth, reconnect education with society. Education must prepare young people not just for employment but also for citizenship. Every undergraduate should complete a semester of apprenticeship, research, entrepreneurship, rural immersion, community service or industry experience before graduation. Knowledge acquires meaning when tested against reality.

Sixth, India must restore faith in its government schools. Every child deserves an equal education until the age of 13, regardless of income or geography. Laboratories, libraries, sports facilities, digital infrastructure, sanitation and qualified teachers should become guaranteed minimum national standards. This can only happen when policymakers have a personal stake in public education and those responsible for governing public institutions also trust them with their own families.

Seventh, trust educational institutions with greater academic freedom that they deserve. Governments should define learning outcomes and ensure accountability. They should not

micromanage pedagogy, curriculum innovation or research. The world's finest institutions flourish because they are trusted to innovate, collaborate and respond to local contexts. Academic freedom produces excellence.

Eight, what is measured improves. Transparency is one of the most powerful drivers of reform. A real-time national public education dashboard should be set up, on which every stakeholder can compare schools and universities using verified measures of learning outcomes, teacher vacancies, infrastructure, research output, accreditation, employability, and student well-being.

Ninth, public investment in education should rise to at least six per cent of GDP, accompanied by an increase in research funding to at least two per cent of GDP. Nations become knowledge economies not through aspiration alone, but through sustained investment in schools, universities, laboratories and ideas.

Tenth, educational reform must outlive electoral cycles and not begin afresh every time governments change. India needs an independent statutory national education reform commission that establishes measurable national benchmarks, audits implementation, publishes annual progress reports to Parliament, tracks outcomes across every State/Union Territory and holds governments accountable to measurable outcomes rather than political rhetoric.

Education beyond political divides

None of these reforms belongs to one political party or to one ideology. Every government has contributed something valuable, yet every government has also inherited unresolved structural weaknesses. Education must become India's first genuinely bipartisan national mission. History offers nations only a few defining moments when public attention, moral conviction and political urgency converge. This may be one of them. Parliament will eventually adjourn. But whether the child entering class one this year will grow into an innovator or an imitator, a responsible citizen or a passive spectator depends on the education we choose to build today.

The question before India is no longer who will lead the Ministry of Education. It is whether we, as a nation, have the vision and the resolve to build an education system worthy of our children. That responsibility belongs not to one government or one political party, but to every citizen who believes that education is the foundation upon which every other national aspiration rests.

If Sonam Wangchuk's fast helps us begin that journey, then his sacrifice will not merely have drawn attention to a crisis. It will have helped awaken a nation. History will remember whether we dared to transform a personal sacrifice into a national renaissance. That responsibility belongs to all of us.

A personal sacrifice must inspire India's education renaissance movement

It is not all bad between India and Pakistan

Ever since a letter written by IIT eminent Pakistanis and Indians emerged in the public domain, an acrimonious debate has begun on whether India should reopen dialogue with its neighbour, with most pointing to the inability of Pakistan to ever live peacefully with India. While this is understandable in the aftermath of the Pahalgam horror (2025), the fact remains that India and Pakistan have, on many occasions, shown far greater circumspection than their western counterparts and have also quietly cooperated to a surprising degree. Clearly, there is potential for cooperation. Equally, however, this potential has been hit progressively harder by terrorism.

Wars, yet with restraint

Every foreign correspondent writing on the India-Pakistan relationship, will frame it with reference to their three wars (1947, 1965, 1971). But few realise that during all three wars, both sides made efforts not to bomb each other's cities and civilian spaces. But there were some targets, such as the church at Ambala that was hit in 1965 as Pakistan tried to target the air base. Military historian Rana Chhina notes that the only serious attack on civilian areas was at Chhearta, hours after a ceasefire was called, but originally meant to target a key radar station in Amritsar.

Even in 1971, both sides restricted attacks to military targets, including oil storage sites. Official sources in India note that military casualties for all three wars at 8,211, while Pakistan's broad figures point to some 15,000. Sadly, no credible sources are available for civilian casualties, though accounts of the war show life going on 'courageously' in Pakistani towns, with the same fortitude reported from Amritsar, a flash point in all major wars. Consider that Allied air bombing during the Second World War killed an estimated 3,000-6,000,000 civilians in German cities under the new concept of "area bombing". Attacks against just Dresden, with hardly any



Tara Kartha

Former Director, National Security Council Secretariat

military value, killed 25,000. Then there was the bombing of Tokyo that killed 1,00,000. Allied planes even mined the seas to deny fishing in "Operation Starvation". Germany was hardly any better, killing thousands but its crimes have been recorded. Those by the West are hard to find, but new 'doctrines' of both held human life cheap. In contrast, India and Pakistan militaries kept to a battlefield concept. Once terrorism came into play, all these niceties were set aside. But even as Pakistan suffered terror attacks, including two attempts on General Musharraf's life, in 2003, a third was foiled quietly with Indian intelligence support; that tacitly it acknowledged strong Pakistani action against terrorist groups. True, this was in the aftermath of 9/11, where Islamabad was told to cooperate or 'be bombed back into the Stone Age' according to the General.

Fragile bridges

In yet another instance, after 26/11, President Asif Ali Zardari, instructed his ISI Chief General Shuja Pasha to visit Delhi and coordinate in the investigation. This was flatly refused by the then Chief, General Kayani. A year later U.S. Vice-President Joe Biden was telling the British that Mr. Zardari was afraid of 'being taken out'. Later, the 'Memogate' scandal had Mr. Zardari's fervent appeal for help against the generals. Later, Nawaz Sharif reached out as well, being the first to congratulate Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and attending his inaugural in 2014. Mr. Modi then made a surprise visit to Rawind for a Sharif family wedding in December 2015. In January 2016, the Pathankot attack happened. This time, Islamabad registered a case for investigation. Less than a year later, Mr. Sharif himself was forced out of office on corruption charges that were never proven. Mr. Modi, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh all invested significant political capital in reaching out to Pakistan. All three faced failure, with Manmohan Singh particularly reviled for his efforts.

Conflict has made headlines, but quiet cooperation has also shaped India-Pakistan relations

Then came the 2005 nuclear confidence-building agreement, which still holds, with the last meeting held in January 2026. In contrast, arms control agreements between Russia and the U.S. have collapsed. The agreement was tested on March 9, 2022, when India acknowledged that a technical malfunction during routine maintenance led to the accidental firing of a missile into Pakistan. No damage was reported, and Delhi ordered a high-level inquiry.

While Prime Minister Imran Khan and politicians reacted strongly, Gen. Qamar Bajwa's response showed notable restraint. Gen. Bajwa also advocated using Pakistan's geo-economic potential by opening trade corridors with India, possibly due to the country's economic crisis. However, most remarkably, even as India faced Chinese incursions in Galwan, both countries reaffirmed their ceasefire commitment during Gen. Bajwa's tenure, despite the earlier abrogation of Article 370 in 2019.

There are many more instances of cooperation, though not all are publicly recorded. The constant point is that relations deteriorated sharply once terrorism began, initially targeting the military and more recently civilians, as seen in the horrific Pahalgam attack. Pakistan has suffered further as groups it once supported, such as the Taliban, turned against it.

The path to cooperation

In 2025, terrorism rose by 34% amid growing unrest in Occupied Kashmir, the tribal areas and Balochistan. Years of military rule have weakened state institutions. Yet, cooperation remains possible in areas such as glacial melt, stubble-burning alternatives and particularly narcotics trafficking, an area where both countries have previously worked together. The key step is for Rawalpindi to demonstrate clearly an end to its support for terrorism. That could even open the way for a renegotiation of the Indus Waters Treaty to mutual benefit.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Nuclear plant security

The reported data breach involving the Kudankulam nuclear power plant in Tamil Nadu (Front page, July 16) must be treated as a matter of national security, not as a routine cyber incident. This is not comparable to leaks involving examination

papers or administrative databases. Even if the exposed files relate only to conventional infrastructure, they could still help hostile actors map systems, suppliers, and operational dependencies. An independent, time-bound investigation is essential to establish the

facts, fix accountability, and close every security gap. Equally important is transparent public communication. Confidence in India's nuclear programme rests not only on robust technology but also on the quiet assurance that safety and cybersecurity are never

compromised.

Gopalswamy J., Chennai

S. Janaki

It is touching that readers of this daily continue to write about S. Janaki, a testament to how deeply she struck a chord with generations of listeners

making her an undisputed household name. Her timeless Tamil songs such as *Naatham En Jeevnae (Kadhal Oiyam)* showcased the depth, clarity, and soul she brought to every note. S. Janaki's voice became the soundtrack of countless lives, carrying joy, longing

and devotion with equal grace. Sung with extraordinary grace and emotion, her songs have left an enduring legacy that will continue to inspire.

Raju Kolluru, Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh

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

Does national recognition come belatedly for south Indian artistes?

PARLEY



T.M. Krishna
Acclaimed
Carnatic
vocalist and
recipient of the
Ramon
Magsaysay
Award



A.R. Venkatachalapathy
Historian and
Sahitya
Akademi
Award-winning
scholar

Legendary playback singer S. Janaki, who passed away on July 11, had declined the Padma Bhushan, arguing that the honour had come far too late in her career. She maintained that artists should be recognised when they are at the height of their creative powers rather than in their old age or after death. A similar debate has long surrounded the Jnanpith Award as well, with critics arguing that several outstanding writers from south India have been overlooked despite their enduring contributions to Indian literature. Are these concerns justified? Does national recognition come belatedly for south Indian artistes? T.M. Krishna and A.R. Venkatachalapathy discuss this question in a conversation moderated by B. Kolappan.

Do you think there is some bias in the selection process? Are people from north India favoured when it comes to recipients?

T.M. Krishna: So, the first thing we have to acknowledge is that the Padma Awards have never been apolitical. Your political affiliation has influenced these choices, and where you come from has definitely influenced them. Secondly, if elections are coming up in a particular State, we can be assured that the Padma Awards will include an extra share of recipients from that State. Whether or not that has any electoral benefit is a different question. In the world of the performing arts, there has always been a great deal of lobbying for these awards. I know artists who have spent a lot of time in Delhi, meeting people in power in order to procure these awards. There is also an overbearing presence of – again, when we say north India, we have to be very careful – circles concentrated, I would rather say in Mumbai and Delhi. The cultures centred around these two cities have an overwhelming influence on the conferring of these awards. Another issue is the conferring of inappropriate honours. People who have devoted their entire lives to their art receive a Padma Shri, whereas others who are younger and whose achievements do not compare receive a Padma Bhushan.

We are talking about the south. We do not talk about the Northeast. Just think about how many artists from the Northeast receive these awards. It is also a question of which art forms are recognised and how they are chosen. What is the process?

There is another set of awards, the Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards. I think the Sahitya Akademi, at least for a long time, had some degree of independence. The Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards have never even had that level



Last hymn: People pay their respects to veteran singer S. Janaki at Maharaja's College Grounds, in Mysuru, Karnataka, on July 12, 2021.

of independence. They have also been influenced by political affiliation and by whoever is in power. The fact that a few good decisions have been made does not mean the system is sound. Fundamentally, it gives an unfair advantage to people who are closer to the centres of power in Delhi.

A.R. Venkatachalapathy: Sivaji Ganesan never received the National Award for Best Actor. Instead, adding insult to injury, the great artist was given the Best Supporting Actor award. Similarly, M.S. Viswanathan never received a National Award for his near-immortal music. But there is a larger systemic issue that needs to be addressed. Sports and cinema have a disproportionate hold over these awards. Even in the case of S. Janaki, I was not very happy when she refused the Padma Bhushan. There are so many writers and poets who have never been recognised. They would be delighted to receive even a Padma Shri in their 90s. Disproportionate importance is given to sportspeople and film personalities. Third- and fourth-rung cinema stars receive awards, while many of the country's finest artists and writers are overlooked.

M.G. Ramachandran (MGR) was awarded the Bharat Ratna, while many people who made outstanding contributions to India's economy and public life were recognised much later. Do you think the conferring of the Bharat Ratna is influenced by politics?

ARV: Every award is accompanied by politics. Whether it is the Bharat Ratna being conferred on MGR or the Chennai Central railway station being renamed as Puratchi Thalaivar Dr M.G. Ramachandran Central Railway Station – all these are political decisions. Even when the personalities being honoured are truly deserving, if such decisions are taken at particular moments for immediate political gain,



Even when the personalities being honoured are truly deserving, if such decisions are taken at particular moments for immediate political gain, there should be pushback. We should be critical of such timing

A.R. VENKATACHALAPATHY

there should be pushback. We should be critical of such timing. Sachin Tendulkar is a Bharat Ratna. But we find him endorsing commercial products. There is perhaps nothing legally wrong, but I think it is morally inappropriate. A Bharat Ratna has been conferred on figures such as Dr. Ambedkar, Rajaji, Nehru and Bismillah Khan. It carries a certain gravitas.

TMK: There is no question that Sachin Tendulkar deserved the honour. But think about the timing. If I remember correctly, it was around his final Test match. You should not time a Bharat Ratna to coincide with a public event. In my opinion, that is unethical. We can equally ask: where are Sunil Gavaskar and Kapil Dev? They too deserve the honour. But when you time it as a public spectacle, you diminish the award itself. I agree with Mr. Venkatachalapathy that the system is the problem.

ARV: I also think that posthumous awards are acceptable. After all, we can make mistakes, and we do not know when someone is going to pass away. But what constitutes a posthumous award? Can we confer the Bharat Ratna on Thiruvalluvar, Avvaiyar, Vidapati or Tansen? There should be a time limit from the date of a person's death. Perhaps within a year or two after the death of the candidates.

TMK: The Bharat Ratna is not just about excellence. It is also about an individual's contribution to, and presence in, the larger cultural life of the country. That distinction is important. Which is why every great artist need not necessarily be awarded a Bharat Ratna. M.S. Subbulakshmi is a classic example. She transcended every boundary. Amartya Sen, as an economist, similarly transcended national boundaries. They represent India not only nationally but internationally.

But do you think many musicians are overlooked when it comes to the other Padma Awards?

ARV: I would say that the classical arts have received disproportionate recognition when it comes to the Padma awards. But if you look at

other fields, particularly Tamil literature, the picture is different. Apart from Jayakanthan, who received recognition in his prime, the most respected historian from Tamil Nadu today is Y. Subbarayalu. He is 86 years old. His knowledge of Chola history and inscriptions is unmatched. But has he been recognised by the Government of Tamil Nadu? Has he even received a Kalaimamani [the highest civilian arts award conferred by Tamil Nadu]?

TMK: Kalaimamani is perhaps the worst example of how an award can be conferred. There have long been rumours that it can be bought. Recipients are simply lined up and presented with awards, sometimes several years' worth in a single ceremony. The State government must be held responsible. It has allowed a State award to become insignificant.

ARV: I agree. All awards should be conferred through a transparent process. The Government of Tamil Nadu confers numerous awards at the time of Pongal. If you look at the list of previous recipients, it is a very mixed bag and it is not entirely clear if any real standard has been applied. There are many problems. But one has to begin by getting the process right.

TMK: Whether it is the State Government or the Central Government, we do not value the Ministry of Culture. So, what is its job? What does it actually do? During the COVID-19 pandemic, through our foundation, we worked to support artists in various districts of Tamil Nadu. The Government of Tamil Nadu does not even maintain a registry of the known troupes representing different art forms across the State. Artists from marginalised communities and practitioners of diverse art forms have no meaningful support system. If the government is not engaging with the cultural life of the State or with its artists, it cannot claim to know them.

ARV: We may have our criticisms of the Sahitya Akademi or the Lalit Kala Akademi but, compared with State-level institutions, they have generally performed better. The Sahitya Akademi, the Lalit Kala Akademi and other such institutions were created on the basis of an autonomous model. Although they were funded by the government, they enjoyed a considerable degree of institutional autonomy. They have failed on many counts, but they have also succeeded in many respects.



To listen to the full interview
Scan the code or go to the link
www.thehindu.com

NOTEBOOK

The invisible co-authors

While preparation is essential for reporters to meet a deadline, some stories make it because unacknowledged strangers decide to help

Ishita Mishra

Journalism rewards preparation. But every reporter eventually learns that preparation alone is not always enough. Some stories survive because, at the exact moment things begin to fall apart, someone with no stake in the story decides that they will not let you fail.

End of last month, I was travelling to Om Parvat, situated over 18,000 feet above sea level, in Uttarakhand for a story. Days of rain had left the mountain roads unstable. Near Malpa, remembered for the devastating 1998 landslide that killed at least 60 Kailash Mansarovar pilgrims, villagers say even a brief spell of rain can send rocks crashing down.

They were right. Our vehicle was stopped twice by fresh landslides. The debris blocked the narrow road completely. I paced along the roadside, calculating what every passing minute meant for our reporting schedule. If we failed to reach Dharchula that evening, we would miss the train to Delhi the next day and, with it, the deadline. After waiting for hours, the photographer travelling with me, along with a few stranded passengers, rolled up their sleeves and began clearing rocks and mud with their bare hands. We knew it would hardly make a difference. It didn't.

Then help arrived. An Army convoy happened to be travelling behind us. The soldiers got down and cleared enough of the road for vehicles to move. That day, it wasn't a reporter who got the story home. It was a group of soldiers who probably never knew they had rescued a deadline.

The episode reminded me of another assignment years earlier when I was travelling to Bah, on the edge of the Chambal ravines in Agra. It was an important story scheduled around the launch of the newspaper I then worked for. Just before reaching the area, our cab driver received a frantic call. Another vehicle from his fleet had been stolen on the Yamuna Expressway and his colleague assaulted by thieves. He had to rush to the hospital. Returning the next day was not an option. I tried calling local contacts, but to no

avail. A villager sipping tea nearby overheard my conversation and offered to help. He called his brother, and the two ferried my photographer and me on their motorcycles, for almost 30 kms. After the road ended, we walked for nearly two-and-a-half hours through the Chambal ravines in the sweltering August heat. There was no drinking water, no mobile signal and barely any sign of habitation. Residents told me no marriage had taken place in the village for nearly 50 years because there was no road, electricity, or phone connectivity. For a brief moment, I wondered whether I had taken one risk too many. I hadn't. The story existed because two strangers decided it should.

Years later, another stranger did the same. While covering a Rahul Gandhi rally at Girodhpuri in Chhattisgarh, heavy rain brought everything to a standstill. Roads were flooded, shops shut early and Baloda Bazar's patchy mobile network disappeared altogether. My laptop battery was almost dead and filing the report seemed impossible. Hours of searching for electricity or internet access led nowhere. While standing under a tin shed outside a wedding card printing shop operating from the verandah of a modest two-room house, I called my editor to say the story might not make it.

The shopkeeper saw me drenched and exhausted and asked the reason for my condition. I shared. He asked me to wait until he finished printing the last batch of cards before offering me his ageing desktop computer. It was painfully slow, but it worked. I wrote my copy, emailed it to the newsroom and met the deadline.

Looking back, what stays with me isn't the landslide, the ravines or the storm. It's something that I was never taught in journalism classes. Reporters like to believe stories are won through persistence, planning and instinct. But sometimes they are carried across the finish line by people whose names never appear in the byline.

Perhaps every byline has invisible co-authors. We just don't know their names.

ishita.mishra@thehindu.co.in

PICTURE OF THE WEEK

Conscience of a nation



Holding on: Educator and climate activist Sonam Wangchuk observing an indefinite fast at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on July 9. He joined the Cockroach Janta Party's protest demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, and has been on hunger strike since June 28. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The **Hindu**

FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 17, 1976

A.P. to export handloom shirts to U.S.

Hyderabad, July 16: Nearly Rs. one crore worth of handloom goods are to be exported to America by October, by a new joint sector company formed here to-day by the Andhra Pradesh State Textile Development Corporation and an American firm floated by Indian citizens called India Fashions Incorporated Limited.

The Minister for Handlooms, Mr. K.V.

Kesavulu, told newsmen here to-day that the firm had entered into a deal with a chain departmental store called Sears for selling Indian-made handloom shirts and other handloom material there.

Half of the share in the new capital would be invested by some of the Telugu-speaking Indian citizens living in the U.S.

Two representatives of India Fashions, Mr. Sastri and Mr. Mohan had a discussion with the Minister and the Secretary to Government in the Industries Department, Mr. S. R. Ramamurthy, here to-day and finalised details of the agreement to be signed by them shortly.

Mr. Kesavulu said the new company would eliminate middlemen.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 17, 1926

Roorkee civil engineering college

Roorkee, July 15: H.E. Sir Malcolm Hailey, Governor of the Punjab, visited Roorkee to-day to attend the annual Convocation of the Thomason Civil Engineering College. After distributing diplomas, His Excellency gave an address in the course of which he referred to the Principal's hope that Roorkee might once more become an Imperial College. As to that, his Excellency could say nothing at the moment.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Value of critical imports identified for manufacturing push

51 \$ in billion. India is seeking to push domestic manufacturing across a pool of items currently worth \$51 billion in imports, as the Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeks to reduce the country's reliance on overseas suppliers. The nation imported \$775 billion worth of goods in the 12 months ended March 2026, a government source said. **REUTERS**

Indian seafarers stranded on the west of Hormuz

15,000 India has advised ship managers and owners against deploying Indian seafarers on vessels passing through the Strait of Hormuz amid rising security risks. Over 15,000 Indians remain stranded west of Hormuz, according to the Forward Seamen's Union of India. **REUTERS**

Minimum wage raise in Vietnam planned for next year

7.8 in per cent. Vietnam's National Wage Council will submit a plan to raise the minimum wage by an average of 7.8% across the country's four regions in 2027. If approved, the new minimum wage would range from 4.04 million dong to 5.70 million dong (\$153.86-\$217.08) per month, the government said in a statement. **REUTERS**

Premium Lilium bulbs planted over past 3 days in Choglamsar

50,000 More than 50,000 premium Lilium bulbs have been planted at Choglamsar Flower Field in Ladakh, with the first bloom expected in the first week of September, the officials said. It is set to become India's largest organised high-altitude floriculture park. **PTI**

Land approved for Phase-II acquisition for three ports in A.P.

6248 The Andhra Pradesh government on Thursday approved the Phase-II land acquisition of 6,248 acres at a cost of ₹1,638 crore for the development of three ports — Mulapeta, Machilipatnam and Ramayapatnam. **PTI**

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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How serious is Kudankulam data leak?

What exactly was leaked in the data breach? How did it occur? Did the breach affect any nuclear or reactor-related systems? Who was responsible for protecting the data? Why is the leak significant?

EXPLAINER

Aroon Deep

The story so far:

On Wednesday, reports broke out that multiple gigabytes of data pertaining to operations at the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu had been copied and subsequently leaked as part of a ransomware attack. *Reuters* reported that the breach was part of an infiltration into Reliance Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group's Reliance Infrastructure Ltd, and contained 14.3 GB of data on the power plant's operations. The data has been hosted on World Leaks, which is a Dark Web site hosted by cybercriminals who infect vulnerable firms with ransomware, threatening to leak the data if the ransom is not paid. The site claimed that the ransom was indeed not paid, and so it leaked the data. *The Hindu* opened the site and reviewed the index of files, which amount overall to 1.2TB, a slice of which pertained to the Kudankulam plant.

Was the reactor affected by the data leak?

"The files do not pertain to the core reactor's operations, which are the most sensitive in a nuclear setup," Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) said in a statement. "NPCIL reiterates that the information claimed to be available in the public domain pertains only to conventional Balance of Plant (BOP) common service facilities and does not relate to any nuclear safety, or nuclear security-related systems or information," it said in a statement.

A spokesperson for the Reliance Group told *The Hindu* that it "was informed by Yotta Data Services Private Limited (Yotta), its third-party data centre service



A view of the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu. N. RAJESH

provider, of a cybersecurity incident involving an attempted ransomware attack that resulted in a partial breach of data hosted on one of Yotta's servers," and that "Yotta has confirmed that enhanced security monitoring and preventive controls are now in place. The Company has directed Yotta to conduct a detailed investigation and submit a report."

"No ransomware execution, data loss or lateral movement occurred," Reliance said in a stock exchange filing. The files reportedly include multiple drawings of "blueprints and supplier details, meeting and inspection records, equipment reviews," and a \$112 million insurance policy against terrorist attacks, though it is unclear what the premium amount for this insured sum is.

What did Yotta say about the cyber incident?

Yotta, which runs data centres across the country, characterised Reliance as its "customer's private cloud environment," but said it took steps to address the infiltration as it was detected on May 29.

"Yotta's managed endpoint security controls detected suspicious activity on a file server of our customer, Reliance Infrastructure," the company told *The Hindu*. "We acted immediately: the suspicious process was terminated, and the affected server was isolated, preventing the suspected ransomware from executing. Our technical assessment confirmed no evidence of ransomware encryption and no lateral movement to any other server or system within the customer's private cloud environment."

The incident was limited to this single customer-managed server, with no impact on any other Yotta customer or on Yotta's shared cloud platforms, AI cloud infrastructure, datacentre infrastructure or other services."

Why does the data leak matter?

The revelations have sparked "absolute commotion" among top officials at the power plant, even as they downplay the impact of the findings.

The plant has commissioned two 1,000 Mw VVER reactors, allowing for a power supply of up to two gigawatts. The reactors are built in partnership with the Russian firm Rosatom, and the government is planning four more such units, which would triple the installed power production capacity at the facility.

THE GIST

The data has been hosted on World Leaks, which is a Dark Web site hosted by cybercriminals who infect vulnerable firms with ransomware, threatening to leak the data if the ransom is not paid.

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Why is Maharashtra's Ladki Bahin scheme under scrutiny?

What do beneficiary cuts and CAG findings reveal about its implementation?

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit

The story so far:

Ahead of the 2024 Assembly elections, the Maharashtra government launched the Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana. Under this scheme, eligible women in the State receive ₹1,500 every month through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). At its peak, the scheme covered 2.43 crore beneficiaries. However, successive rounds of verification over the past two years have led to the removal of lakhs of beneficiaries, bringing the total down to about 1.66 crore women.

The recent information about the removal of lakhs of women from the beneficiaries' list has sparked criticism, and the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has raised concerns about the scheme.

Who is eligible to receive funds under the scheme?

Women who are residents of Maharashtra, aged between 21 and 65 years, with an Aadhaar-linked bank

account, and belonging to a family with an annual income of less than ₹2.5 lakh are eligible to receive benefits under the scheme. Women of any marital status are eligible. However, only one woman per family can avail of the benefit.

The State government has said the scheme is aimed at promoting the economic independence of women. It also seeks to improve their health and nutritional status, and strengthen their role in family decision-making, according to the government. The scheme is implemented by the State's Women and Child Development Department.

What are the red flags raised by the CAG in the latest report?

The CAG said the implementation of the Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana during 2024-25 was marked by "significant deficiencies in Budget estimation, expenditure control, and financial management." While the scheme was allocated ₹29,693.09 crore for the fiscal year, the government incurred an expenditure of ₹33,237.24 crore, resulting in an excess expenditure of ₹3,544.16

crore. The CAG described the excess expenditure as "unjustified" and said the Women and Child Development Department failed to provide any specific justification for the overspending. It also observed that funds for the scheme were mobilised by reappropriating allocations from other schemes. For instance, ₹3,490.75 crore was reappropriated from the Lek Ladki Yojana. The State's supplementary Budget also allocated ₹26,200 crore for the scheme.

The CAG said that the scheme undermined the principles of budgetary discipline, financial propriety and legislative control over public finances. It said that "significant excess expenditure remained unexplained" and that large sums were drawn and parked in the Disbursing Officer's Virtual Personal Deposit Account (VPDA). "This indicates that the funds were not required for immediate utilisation and were drawn without actual expenditure needs, contrary to the principles of budgetary discipline and financial propriety," the CAG observed.

"A test check of vouchers exceeding

₹1,000 crore relating to the scheme, aggregating ₹29,732.01 crore, showed that ₹15,586 crore drawn between January and March 2025 was transferred to the Drawing and Disbursing Officer's VPDA," the report said.

Why have so many names been removed from the beneficiaries' list?

At its peak, the scheme had 2.43 crore beneficiaries. According to the Maharashtra government, the number of beneficiaries has fallen from 2.43 crore to 1.66 crore. The government said the names were removed after multiple rounds of verification found that some beneficiaries were no longer eligible. It maintained that there has been no change in the eligibility norms and attributed the reduction to the verification process.

The government also cited that the mandatory e-KYC requirement as a key reason for the drop in the number of beneficiaries, saying many women failed to complete the process. A Shiv Sena leader has now urged the State to extend the deadline for completing the e-KYC process. Meanwhile, the Opposition has accused the government of using the scheme to secure electoral gains. The Congress has demanded the immediate restoration of benefits for lakhs of women who were excluded over e-KYC-related issues, and called for an inquiry into the implementation of the scheme.

The Opposition has also criticised the government for failing to fulfil its promise of increasing the monthly assistance from ₹1,500 to ₹2,100 ahead of the State Assembly elections.

THE GIST

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It also observed that funds for the <NO>Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana-<NO>scheme were mobilised by reappropriating allocations from other schemes.

PULSE CHECK

Alexander Zverev's Grand Slam win puts Type 1 diabetes in the spotlight

Diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes at the age of four and reliant on insulin therapy and continuous glucose monitoring, Alexander Zverev's rise to the pinnacle of tennis underscores the challenges of competing with a chronic condition while performing at the highest level of a professional sport

Nitika Francis

On June 7, a five-set epic on the Roland Garros clay ended with Germany's Alexander Zverev winning his first Grand Slam title at the 2026 French Open. He also became, on his thirty-fourth attempt, the first German to win a major men's singles title in three decades. He reached the finals stage again at the Wimbledon championships on July 12. And perhaps most of all, Zverev became the first person with type 1 diabetes (T1D) to triumph in this contest.

While he is far from the first elite athlete to live with T1D, his French Open win is an important achievement. T1D is a strenuous condition to manage for a layperson, let alone a sportsperson. Zverev himself has called the process of managing blood glucose levels during a tennis set as "playing two games at once".

Understanding T1D

Like most people with the condition, Zverev was diagnosed with T1D when he was four years old.

T1D is an autoimmune disease that affects the pancreas by destroying its beta-cells, which produce insulin. This is different from type II diabetes, where the body can produce insulin but resists its effects. People with T1D need to take insulin externally to use sugar from food to produce energy.

As the body digests sugars and carbohydrates in food, it breaks them down into glucose, the main fuel for the body's cells. After a meal, blood glucose levels rise, triggering the release of insulin. Insulin helps absorb glucose from the bloodstream for immediate use or store excess glycogen for later use.

Without enough insulin, or when the body can't use it effectively, glucose builds up in the bloodstream, causing hyperglycaemia, or high blood glucose. In the short term, this can lead to increased thirst, frequent urination, headache, blurred vision, and fatigue. Over time, persistently high blood glucose can damage the eyes, kidneys, and other organs.

Managing highs

Tennis is both praised and scorned for its unique and dynamic scoring system: it barely has room for luck yet lends itself to soaring comebacks. A game in which a player leads 40-love can suddenly swing to deuce, which could lead to a long tussle for the advantage point. A player who appears to be cruising towards a 6-3 set win can suddenly find themselves locked in four additional games and a tiebreak.

Concurrently, hyperglycaemia causes energy levels in the body to fluctuate. This is usually managed by injecting insulin into the fat tissue under the skin, wherefrom it is absorbed into the bloodstream and carried around the body. Devices to do this include insulin pens, syringes, and insulin pumps.

The insulin pen contains cartridges with the hormone. A user can set the number of units insulin required and push on the injection button. With enough practice, it can be done discreetly in public places as well. The American Diabetes Association (ADA) has advised pen users to administer the shot in their abdomen.

However, a lack of awareness has led to misconceptions about injecting insulin.



Germany's Alexander Zverev returns to Italy's Jannik Sinner during their men's singles final tennis match on the fourteenth day of the 2026 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in Wimbledon, southwest London, on July 12. AFP

Zverev faced such an instance at the 2023 French Open, where a match official told him he could not inject insulin on court because it looked "weird" and that he would have to use his three-minute toilet break for that.

"I said, 'What does it look like? That I'm doping?' This argument makes no sense," he told Eurosport Germany. He added that his bathroom break was not enough and that he generally has to inject around four to five times during a match.

He also caught flak in 2019 for after appearing to check a device inside his gear bag during matches, which was against the rules preventing players from communicating by phone. Germany's Davis Cup captain Michael Kohlmann told DW-TV that Zverev was, in those cases, checking his glucose monitoring device.

Surviving the lows

On the flip side, insulin therapy carries a risk of hypoglycaemia, or low blood sugar. This can lead to loss of consciousness, cardiac arrest or even death if it isn't dealt with. Dealing requires ingesting glucose tablets or eating fast-acting carbohydrates and sugars in the form of juices, sodas or candies.

However, fluctuating sugar levels don't always show symptoms until it is too late, and generally result in loss of consciousness at first.

According to the ADA, 40% of T1D patients are unaware of hypoglycaemia. People with T1D are known to manage the rally between high and low blood sugar with trial and error.

While patients have generally used finger-prick blood tests or glucometers,

continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) devices have become commonplace, and offer more accurate, real-time updates, per the ADA.

CGMs have a sensor in the form of a small piece of material inserted under the patient's skin using a needle. The sensor transmits real-time glucose levels (via a transmitter) to a smartphone app, receiver or insulin pump. A simple computer on the smartphone or the pump decides how much insulin should be injected, how much carbohydrates to consume, etc.

More than a physical burden

Players like Zverev also have to deal with the uncertainty of when a hyper- or hypoglycemic episode could kick in during a match. A 2025 study by researchers at the University of Georgia School of Social Work found that the hypervigilance required to manage T1D often causes burnout and exacerbates mental illnesses.

Hypoglycaemia can also impair sleep efficiency and quality, which are important for sportspersons' mental and physical upkeep. Tennis tournaments, especially the majors, have multiple matches in a week and one-day gaps between matches, which means only small recovery periods.

Recovery nutrition in tennis focuses heavily on restoring glycogen levels through carbohydrates. However, the unpredictable nature of the condition also means there's a risk of a glucose spike, which could leave the athlete without being able to consume the necessary recovery carbohydrates. The physical exertion in a match could later crash the

glucose levels, and render a sleepless night.

Type 1 on the map

Zverev has said he was told he could never become an elite athlete after his T1D diagnosis. He was diagnosed at age four, spent years of his career hiding the condition, and continues to manage it in discreet ways.

"When something unexpected happens, I've learned to stay calm and trust the systems I have in place," he told Reuters in January this year. Between points and changeovers, he has said he finds himself calculating when next to take a sip from his bottle or have an energy gel.

Among others, he uses CGMs to help regulate his glucose levels. They have been his tools of choice, although his Halle Open match on June 21, which he lost, was also a bump: a malfunctioning glucose monitor gave him an incorrect reading and he injected more insulin than he needed.

He has also advocated for people with T1D both on and off the court, and set up a foundation in his name to support children with types I and II diabetes.

While he has been having a positive impact on how people live with T1D, Zverev's legacy off the court has been chequered.

He settled a legal dispute in 2025 over allegations of domestic violence (which he has denied). The Association of Tennis Professionals also closed an investigation in 2023, stemming from allegations of physical abuse by former tennis player Olya Sharypova, citing insufficient evidence.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

Sorry to have kept you waiting. I hope you weren't bored."

"Not at all. I was thumbing through this old magazine. And I must say..."

"...thumbing through an old magazine! What do you mean by that?"

"When you thumb through a magazine, book or newspaper, you go through it very quickly."

"In other words, you don't read it carefully."

"That's right! Here's an example. I thumb through your physics textbook. I must say that it is very well written."

"Very well written. Good grief! It's probably the most boring book ever written. How about this example? Aruna thumb through her address book and came up with Sandeep's telephone number."

"That's an excellent example. By the way, you can also say 'leafed through'. It means the same thing as 'thumb through'. For example..."

"...while the wife was getting dressed, the husband leafed through the newspaper."

"The examiner leafed through the dissertation."

"Did your Chairman thumb through your proposal?"

"Apparently he didn't leaf through the proposal. His P.A. told me that he went over it very carefully."

"What did the Chairman think of it?"

"He gave it the thumbs up."

"I am not interested in what soft drink your Chairman offered you. I want to know..."

"...soft drink? What are you talking about?"

"You said that the Chairman gave you Thumbs Up."

"I didn't say that! I said that the Chairman gave my proposal the thumbs up. Grow up, will you?"

"Gave your proposal the thumbs up? Does it mean what I think it means?"

"I have no clue what you think it means. When you give something the 'thumbs up', you approve of it."

"I see. How about this example? When Laxman asked his father if he could start building on their new site, his father gave him the thumbs up."

"Sounds great. After I received the thumbs up from my boss, I threw a big party at the Silver Plate. I invited all my friends."

"You didn't invite me."

"That's because you are not my friend! Anyway, did the President of your association get in touch with the Municipal authorities?"

"Yes, the poor man spent nearly five hours there. The good news is, our proposal to widen the roads was given the thumbs up by the local..."

"...really? That's wonderful news. By the way, it is also possible to say 'to get the thumbs up from someone'. For example, we got the thumbs up from the local authorities to widen the roads."

"We got the thumbs up from our parents to see Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon."

"After seeing the movie Castaway, Rohan gave it the thumbs up."

"Meaning that he approved of it?"

"Exactly!"

Published in The Hindu on April 24, 2001.

THE DAILY QUIZ

FIFA World Cup: a quiz on FIFA controversies over the years

Joan Sony Cherian

QUESTION 1

In the 2026 World Cup, France entered the quarter-finals after defeating this country. A senator of said country lashed out at one of the French players via social media using racist and dehumanising imagery. Name the country and the French player who took a stand against the racist abuse.

QUESTION 2

In 1998, France hosted the FIFA World Cup. However, before it commenced, a terror plot targeting the tournament was uncovered by intelligence agencies. Which group was plotting the terrorist attack?

QUESTION 3

This South Korean player was suspended by FIFA from two qualifying matches during the 2014 World Cup

for holding up a banner which said "Dokdo is our territory". Dokdo is islets controlled by South Korea but also claimed by Japan. Name the player.

QUESTION 4

Like the last semi-finals, England and Argentina faced each other back in 1986, then in the quarter-finals. A significant geopolitical conflict underpinned the match, making it extremely tense for both sides. What was the conflict? Two goals scored by this Argentinian player in this fateful match are now among the most well-known goals in football history. Name the player.

QUESTION 5

This plastic whistle-cum-horn which is popular in South Africa's football stadiums is a symbol of that nation's sporting culture. However, the intensity of its sound has led many confederations to outright ban them or impose restrictions. Name the instrument.



Visual question: This image showcases a flare being thrown next to a player during a match between Brazil and Chile in the 1990 FIFA World Cup. This player feigned injury alleging that the flare had hit him. Evidence quickly showed that the allegation was false and he received a lifetime ban from football. Name the player. FILE PHOTO

Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:

1. The actor portrayed the adult Damien Thorn, the Antichrist, in the third instalment of this famous film franchise, which centres on a child born to the Devil. **Ans:** **Omen III: The Final Conflict (1981)**

2. Shot in West Berlin, Neill acted opposite Isabelle Adjani in this psychological horror drama, which has attained cult status since its release. **Ans:** **Possession (1981)**

3. Neill took a sinister turn in this sci-fi slasher set aboard a haunted spacecraft, delivering the famously chilling line: "Where we're going, we won't need eyes to see." **Ans:** **Event Horizon**

5. He starred in genre master John Carpenter's lovecraftian homage as an insurance investigator probing the disappearance of a horror writer. **Ans:** **In the Mouth of Madness (1994)**

Visual: Sam Neill plays a corporate criminal-cum-vampire who plans to profit from a company that sells blood. Name the film, which stars Ethan Hawke in the lead role. **Ans:** **Daybreakers**

Early Birds

Tamal Biswas | Siddhartha Viswanathan | Pulkit Sathe | Priyali Tuli | Sudhir Thapa

Word of the day

Votary:

one bound by vows to a religion or life of worship or service a devoted adherent of a cause or person or activity

Synonyms: adherent, devotee

Usage: She is a votary of Gandhian philosophy and lives a simple life.

Pronunciation: newsth.live/votary

International Phonetic

Alphabet: /ˈvəʊt(ə)ri/

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

From Page One

Wangchuk weak, Delhi HC orders monitoring

The petition sought urgent intervention to safeguard Mr. Wangchuk's health. Mr. Saini sought intervention "even if forcibly" to save Mr. Wangchuk's life.

Mr. Wangchuk has been on a hunger strike demanding Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation over issues concerning the country's education system. On Thursday, the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP)'s protest site filled up substantially as more high-profile figures arrived at Jantar Mantar to register their support.

Three student supporters from the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)'s student outfit, the All India Students' Association (AISA), were also at a critical stage of their concurrent hunger strike. Sai Balaji, a former AISA president, said in a statement. "Aameen is at risk of a hypovolemic shock due to dehydration, Neha's RBS levels hover around a dangerous 49 mg/dl and Manish has lost more than 10% of body mass," Mr. Balaji said.

While there have been calls for Mr. Wangchuk to end his hunger strike, he has remained resolute in continuing it.

(With inputs from Soibam Rocky Singh)

'Breach' unrelated to nuclear activity: govt.

NPCIL said in a statement late on Wednesday that the drawings and technical documents reportedly leaked relate only to the Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) contract for the Common Services-Balance of Plant (BoP) package of Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project (KNPP) Units 3 and 4, which was awarded to Reliance Infrastructure Ltd. through a public tender in 2018.

The corporation stressed that these facilities are conventional in nature, comparable to those used in thermal power plants and other process industries, and are not connected to nuclear safety or nuclear security systems. BoP refers to supporting infrastructure, auxiliary systems, and components required to make the plant operational and excludes the core generating equipment.

The government-run utility said it had shared only indicative drawings and technical specifications with bidders as part of the tendering process. Based on these inputs, Reliance Infrastructure prepared detailed engineering drawings in consultation with the original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), which were subsequently reviewed and accepted by NPCIL after verifying that they met the project's technical specifications.

After commissioning two 1,000 Mwe VVER reactors, the KNPP is constructing four more similar units with Russian technical know-how at Kudankulam, which is all set to house India's biggest nuclear park with reactors generating 6,000 MW nuclear power.

According to a Reuters report, over 19,000 highly sensitive files dating between 2016 and mid-2025 and linked to KNPP's engineering blueprints on control, cooling and ventilation systems, list of vendors and suppliers supplying equipment, operational files on meeting records, reviews of joint inspection by the Indian and Russian engineers, insurance policies, etc., had been accessed by well-known ransomware group World Leaks. The leak reportedly originated from a server hosted by third party provider, Yotta, belonging to the plant's contractor Anil Ambani's Reliance Group, which has admitted that "partial breach" had happened.

11.21 lakh clear NEET re-test; women excel

Nineteen candidates crossed the 700-mark threshold. The examination was administered in 13 languages. Uttar Pradesh generated the highest number of successful candidates with over 1.7 lakh qualifiers while Lakshadweep recorded 43.

The top 17 ranks (above 705 marks) were distributed across eight States - Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana.

Regional toppers included Jigmet Yangchen Lam (Ladakh, 530 marks), Dhruv Tripathi (Andaman and Nicobar Islands, 606), and Fahmida Anees (Lakshadweep, 573).

Among the candidates who qualified, 5.12 lakh belonged to the Other Backward Classes-Non Creamy Layer category, followed by 2.91 lakh from General category; 1.59 lakh from Scheduled Caste category; 95,026 from General-Economically Weaker Sections; 63,716 from Scheduled Tribes; and 3,666 and 303 candidates respectively from Persons with Benchmark Disabilities and Persons with Disabilities categories.

The initial provisional answer keys were published and a public challenge window was opened for candidates to submit queries from June 25 to June 28.

Scanned copies of original OMR answer sheets and recorded candidate responses were hosted transparently online for direct verification from July 13 to July 15. The final verified answer key was released on Thursday, followed immediately by the final compilation and release of all-India scorecards.

"Actual merit lists, domicile verification, and counselling seat allocations fall under the purview of respective State Authorities and the Medical Counselling Committee (MCC)," the Ministry of Education stated in its official release.

'Third language should start in Class 6 and stop in Class 9'

SC judge asks Centre to not bring a third language in Class 9 as part of three-language scheme; T.N. says schools under Centre's Navodaya scheme are incompatible with two-language policy in State

Krishnadas Rajagopal

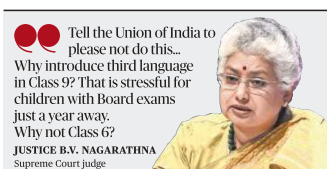
NEW DELHI

Supreme Court judge, Justice B.V. Nagarathna, made an oral appeal in open court to the government to not introduce a third language (R3) in Class 9 as part of the three-language scheme, saying it would be too stressful for children with Board exams just a year away.

She said a third language should be introduced in Class 6 and stopped in Class 9. "Third language should stop in Class 9, not start in Class 9," Justice Nagarathna, heading a Division Bench, said. The pressure of the Class 10 Board exam starts as early as in Class 8, she added.

"Tell the Union of India to please not do this... Tell the government not to do it. Why introduce third language in Class 9? That is stressful. Why not Class 6?" Justice Nagarathna said.

The judge, who is in line to become the first woman Chief Justice of India as per the seniority norm, re-



called how, while she was in school, the teaching of lessons meant for Class 10 would begin in Class 8 itself. "And this was in 1976. You can just imagine what the pressure would be on children now," she remarked.

'Backdoor' play

The Supreme Court was hearing petitions filed on the introduction of Navodaya schools in Tamil Nadu. The State government, during the previous Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) regime, had maintained that the schools envisioned under the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya Scheme were "fundamentally incompatible" with the two-language policy followed in Tamil Nadu.



The State had, in earlier hearings, argued that the Navodaya scheme based on the three-language formula was a deviation from the mandate of the Tamil Nadu Tamil Learning Act, 2006.

The State had submitted that the three-language formula was considered a core pedagogical and administrative framework of the Navodaya scheme.

It required compulsory instruction in Hindi, English, and the mother tongue/regional language. The Tamil Nadu government had maintained that the imposition of the scheme was a "backdoor" play to make Hindi compulsory.

The apex court suggested that Tamil Nadu could have its "own education

system" without denying children the option of enrolling in Navodaya schools.

Justice Nagarathna pointed out that Hindi was not compulsory under the three-language scheme. "...All other States have Navodaya schools, then why not have them for the children of Tamil Nadu?" the judge asked senior advocate Hsairipriya Padmanabhan, Additional Advocate General for Tamil Nadu.

While the earlier DMK regime was of the opinion that the implementation of the Navodaya scheme was unnecessary in Tamil Nadu, which already provided high quality residential education to meritorious students from rural and economically weaker sections, Ms. Padmanabhan adopted a cautious tone, saying the new government was engaged in talks about the Navodaya school scheme and needed some time to chalk out its course of action.

Acknowledging the intricacies of a "change of guard" in the State, the court gave time till August 11, the next date of hearing.

ED searches 13 places in 'terror-funding and illegal infiltration' case

Devesh K. Pandey

NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate on Thursday conducted searches at 13 locations across five States in connection with an alleged terror-funding and illegal infiltration network.

The case is linked to an FIR registered by the Anti-Terror Squad (ATS) of Uttar Pradesh. The searches were carried out in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, West Bengal, and Maharashtra.

The ATS FIR pertains to an organised syndicate allegedly involved in facilitating the illegal infiltration of Rohingyas and Bangladeshi nationals into India, arranging forged Indian identity documents.



Gold coins and 340 lakh in cash seized at Harora Al-Jamiatul Islamia Darul Uloom in Kolkata.

It also aided their rehabilitation in various parts of the country.

Investigation revealed a "deep-rooted financial network comprising certain charitable trusts registered under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act. They allegedly received substantial contributions from some United Kingdom-based entities."

SC orders shifting of contempt pleas on 'bulldozer justice' to High Courts

Krishnadas Rajagopal

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday passed a 'standard order' shifting contempt petitions alleging continued instances of 'bulldozer justice' to the State High Courts, reasoning it was too unwieldy to hear them all, and many would require an enquiry into facts.

The move comes in less than two years after the apex court declared illegal demolitions conducted by States on private properties and homes, especially of people accused in criminal cases, as an "arbitrary use of power".

The court's November 2024 judgment termed the "chilling sight of a bulldozer demolishing a building,



The move comes less than two years after the SC declared illegal demolitions by States as 'arbitrary use of power'. PTI

when authorities have failed to follow the basic principles of natural justice and have acted without adhering to the principle of due process" as a lawless state of affairs where "might was right".

The judgment issued a series of directions mandating due process before demolition and stressing

Bombay HC directs Centre to file reply to Kunal Kamra's plea

Chinmay Gaikwad

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Thursday directed the Union government to file an affidavit by July 29 in response to a petition filed by stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra. The plea challenges the constitutional validity of the 2025 amendment to Rule 3(1)(d) of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021. Mr. Kamra has contended that the provisions enable content take-downs without safeguards.

A Division Bench of Acting Chief Justice Ravindra Chhake and Justice Gautam Ankhad scheduled the matter for hearing on August 14. The court granted Mr. Kamra time till August 6 to file his rejoinder to the government's reply.

Senior Advocate Navroz Seervai, appearing for Mr. Kamra, submitted that the Centre had not filed its affidavit despite being granted opportunities. He said the matter pertained to Article 19(1)(a) and concerned freedom of speech and expression.

Mr. Kamra's petition argues that the mechanism creates a parallel content-

The plea challenges the validity of the Sahyog Portal and the 2025 amendment to IT Rules, 2021

blocking framework that circumvents safeguards under Section 69A of the IT Act, 2000.

The plea contends that the Portal permits content blocking without prior notice to users, violating natural justice principles and the free speech guarantee under Article 19(1)(a).

It says Rule 3(1)(d) and the Portal are *ultra vires* the IT Act and contrary to the Supreme Court's ruling in *Shreya Singhal v. Union of India* (2015).

Mr. Kamra has also challenged the delegation of powers to States and departments to issue information-blocking directions, contending that such powers fall within the Centre's exclusive legislative domain under List 1 of the Seventh Schedule.

The Karnataka High Court, while deciding a challenge by X Corp, had held the Portal is not an instrument of censorship but ensures cooperation between intermediaries and government agencies.

petitions involves disputed facts which would require separate and in-depth enquiries, the Chief Justice said. The CJ even suggested separate Benches to hear the contempt pleas.

"...Maybe these are title disputes after all... In the High Courts, you may get a better opportunity to make your case on facts... Besides, if there is a violation of this judgment throughout the country, as you allege, can everybody come directly to the Supreme Court?" Justice S.V. Mohana said.

The court said High Courts could obtain the necessary records from district courts while deciding these pleas. Any interim protections granted by the Supreme Court in these cases would continue.

DGMA tells firms not to deploy sailors via Hormuz

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Maritime Administration (DGMA) has directed ship owners, ship managers and recruitment and placement service companies to avoid deploying Indian sailors on vessels travelling through the Strait of Hormuz.

The advisory came after the attacks on two vessels this week - *MT Al Bahiyah* and *MT Mombasa* - in the Strait of Hormuz. One Indian lost his life while another sustained injuries aboard *MT Al Bahiyah*. On *MT Mombasa*, nine Indian nationals were injured.

The government on Tuesday had asked the shipping authority to set up a dashboard for providing real-time information about Indian seafarers on each vessel operating in the region, irrespective of the ship's flag.

Trinamool MP meets family that returned to Bengal after being pushed into Bangladesh

Shiv Sahay Singh

KOLKATA

Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha member and former chairperson of the West Bengal Migrant Welfare Board Samirul Islam called on the family of Sweety Bibi, who recently reached her native place in West Bengal's Birbhum after a year-long legal battle to return from Bangladesh.

Four Bengali migrants from Birbhum were detained by Delhi Police last year and pushed into Bangladesh. They were brought back to India on July 8. Mr. Islam had taken up the cause of the migrant workers and provided help to the family.

"Despite being genuine Indian citizens, these poor people were deported to Bangladesh on suspicion of being Bangladeshi nationals. We urge both the Central and State governments



Trinamool Congress leader Samirul Islam calling on the family of Sweety Bibi in Birbhum on Wednesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

to take care of these families and ensure that no genuine Indian citizen has to face such hardships because of administrative lapses," Mr. Islam said after meeting Ms. Bibi and her sons on Wednesday.

Observing that he has no objection to deporting illegal foreigners, Mr. Islam said such innocent people did not deserve to suffer such harassment at the same time.

"We should remember that India or Bharat is our

country; it is the motherland for all irrespective of identity, caste, creed or religion. It is our duty to protect them just like a mother protects her children," he said.

SC intervention

The group of returnees included Ms. Bibi, her two minor sons, and the husband of Sunali Khatun, who had returned to India with her minor son in December 2025 after the Supreme Court intervened.

'Roads to frontline key in modern warfare'

Saurabh Trivedi

NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday underlined the critical role of strategic infrastructure in future conflicts, asserting that roads, tunnels, airfields and ports will remain indispensable despite the induction of advanced weapons and cutting-edge military platforms into the armed forces.

Addressing the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) Strategic Infrastructure Conclave in New Delhi, Mr.

Singh said, "Sometimes, the first front of a war is not at the border itself, but on the road that leads our soldiers to the frontline. The person who builds that road is as vital a guardian of national security as the soldier who stands at the border," he said.

Mr. Singh cited landmark projects such as the Atal Tunnel, Umling La Pass road and the Sela Tunnel as examples of the agency's engineering capabilities and commitment under some of the world's harshest conditions.



APPEAL
Me. Bhumi Bala, Manipal Hospital No. MH011333953, 8 years is diagnosed to be suffering from SIP (Adenoid Hypertrophy) on 04/02/22. Large PM (Mandibular) VSD RD, No RVOT Gradient, free PR, confluent branch PAS good sized, severe PAV (Bicuspid), T1/T2 collaterals. She requires to undergo RVD from Cardiac Repair. The Estimated cost of the surgery is Rs. 7,50,000.
Please send donation/forward mail by Cheque/DD/M.O. Fax, Save Poor Lives A/c: Ms. Bhumi Bala, Cur. A/c Details: SBI A/c No. 20000913487, S.B.I. R.A. Puram, IFSC CODE: SBIN0018555. Please Donate by G-pay No. 8884607377, UPI ID: savepoorlives@oklaxi. Donations are exempted under 80G & 14C & 14D.
SAVE POOR LIVES, Flat No. A1, Ceebros Garden, Door No. 14/76, Kamraj Salai, Raja Annamalapuram, Chennai-600028, Ph. No. 044 42044165 / 9840873272.
Email: savepoorlives@gmail.com. Our website: www.savepoorlives.com



'Ex-Minister, son not involved in witness intimidation in farmers' death case'

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Uttar Pradesh police on Thursday told the Supreme Court that former Minister Ajay Mishra and his son Ashish, accused in the killing of four farmers in Lakhimpur Kheri in 2021, were not involved in the alleged intimidation of witnesses and not charged with the offence.

A Bench was also informed that trial proceedings in the case are likely to conclude within the next three months.

The Bench adjourned the hearing on Mr. Ashish's bail plea after taking note of the progress of the trial and fresh status report filed before it. The matter has now been listed for hearing next month.

"The chargesheet has been filed against one Amandeep Singh. Cognisance has been taken. As regards the role of Mr. Ajay, Mr. Ashish and others, the investigation reveals that they were not involved in

the alleged offence," the Bench noted.

On October 3, 2021, eight persons, including four farmers, were killed in Tikunia in Uttar Pradesh's Lakhimpur Kheri district during a protest by farmers against Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya's visit to the area.

4 farmers killed

Four farmers were allegedly mowed down by a sports utility vehicle. A driver and two BJP workers were then allegedly lynched by angry farmers. A journalist also died in the violence. The Mishras and others were accused of intimidating witnesses in the farmers' death case.

On Thursday, senior advocate Siddharth Dave, appearing for Mr. Ashish, submitted that the latest status report showed that investigation in the separate FIR on alleged witness intimidation had been completed and neither of the Mishras were found to be involved.

Cong. to 'strongly oppose' move to reintroduce delimitation Bill

Kharage urges Modi to convene an all-party meeting on the Bill; party identifies Ram Temple row, 'corrosion' of educational institutions, and foreign policy failures as key issues for the Monsoon Session; INDIA bloc to hold strategy meet on Monday

Sandeep Phukan
NEW DELHI

The alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, and the "systematic corrosion" of educational institutions, were among the key issues identified by the Congress parliamentary strategy group on Thursday for the forthcoming Monsoon Session of Parliament.

The party also resolved to strongly oppose any attempt by the Centre to reintroduce the Constitution (31st Amendment) Bill, which proposes to increase the strength of the Lok Sabha and initiate the delimitation exercise.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, urging him to convene an all-party meeting before any revised version of the Bill is introduced. "I would, once again, request you to convene an all-party meeting to discuss the go-



Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge along with leaders Jairam Ramesh, P. Chidambaram and others during the meeting. ANI

vernment's revised proposals on delimitation, etc., and give us adequate time to study them in detail before they are introduced in Parliament," he said.

In a post on X after the meeting, Mr. Kharge said the party would hold the government accountable over the alleged "chanda chori" (donation theft) at the Ram Temple, paper leaks, the "systemic corrosion" of the education system, institutional capture, the breaking of political

parties, corruption, inflation, foreign policy failures, ethanol blending, deforestation, and the alleged assault on the rights of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and minorities.

The strategy meeting, chaired by Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi, was attended by Mr. Kharge, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, and senior leaders

K.C. Venugopal, P. Chidambaram, Jairam Ramesh, Shashi Tharoor, Manish Tewari, Kumari Selja, Gaurav Gogoi, and Manickam Tagore, among others.

Addressing a press conference, Congress's communications chief Jairam Ramesh alleged that the Union government was attempting to revive the delimitation Bill after failing to secure the required two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha in April.

'Will maintain unity'

"The Congress party has consistently maintained that it will strongly oppose the delimitation Bill and will continue to do so. We will also make every effort to maintain the unity and solidarity of all Opposition parties," he said, adding that the party would also oppose the proposed Constitutional amendment relating to the removal of Ministers facing 30 days of custody. The Congress would oppose the pro-

posed Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025 would lead to the concentration of extensive regulatory powers in a single central regulator, thereby affecting the institutional autonomy, a joint committee of Parliament has noted.

According to the draft report of the joint panel circulated to members, the graded penalty architecture proposed in the Bill cannot be imposed arbitrarily.

The Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha in December, 2025, following which it was referred to a joint committee. It proposes a massive overhaul of the higher education sector. "The committee expressed apprehension that concentration of extensive regulatory powers in a single central regulator could lead to bureaucratic or ideological overreach, thereby affecting the institutional autonomy presently available under the existing UGC framework," the draft report said.

Panel flags autonomy risks under VBSA Bill

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025 would lead to the concentration of extensive regulatory powers in a single central regulator, thereby affecting the institutional autonomy, a joint committee of Parliament has noted.

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On the draw



SC verdicts say state has the duty to preserve life of a person on indefinite fast

NEWS ANALYSIS

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

Multiple Supreme Court judgments and orders highlight the state's paternalistic duty of care to preserve the life of a person on a hunger strike without disrupting his right to dissent.

Yet the government has responded to activist Sonam Wangchuk's ongoing fasting at Jantar Mantar with silence for the past 19 days even as an alarmed Delhi High Court asserted on July 16 that the "life of any citizen is precious".

A series of orders of a Supreme Court Bench headed by Justice Surya Kant, currently the Chief Justice of India, have similarly stressed the constitutional duty and responsibility of the state to ensure that no harm is caused to the life of a person on an indefinite fast.

The orders were passed during periodic hearings held in the case of Punjab farmer leader Jagjit Singh Kant, currently the Chief Justice of India, have similarly stressed the constitutional duty and responsibility of the state to ensure that no harm is caused to the life of a person on an indefinite fast.

Hunger strikes are neither unconstitutional nor barred under any law in the country

The court had highlighted that both the Union of India and the State of Punjab must take into consideration the age, medical health issues, and the fact that Mr. Dalal was a prominent citizen.

The Bench had held that it was the "bounden duty of the State of Punjab, the Union of India and other stakeholders to take all necessary measures to provide immediate adequate medical aid to Mr. Jagjit Singh Dalal without forcing him to break his fast unless it is imperative to do so to save his life".

In the top court judgment in the *suo motu* case of *In Re: Ramilla Maidan Incident*, the court narrated instances of the then United Progressive Alliance government reaching out to Baba Ramdev to dissuade him from going on a hunger strike against corruption in 2011.

It recorded that the then Prime Minister, the late Dr. Manmohan Singh, had gone the "extra mile" to dissuade Baba Ramdev.

"On May 4, 2011, Baba Ramdev had written a letter to the PM stating his intention to go on fast to protest against the government's inaction against bringing back the black money. This was responded to by the PM on May 19, 2011 assuring him that the government was determined to fight with the problem of corruption...

and asking him to drop the idea of going on a hunger strike till death," the judgment recorded.

It narrated how four senior Ministers of the UPA government had met Baba Ramdev at the airport when he arrived in Delhi in 2011 to persuade him against the hunger strike.

The court has discouraged the executive from taking a hostile view of persons who want to express their stand by fasting. It has held that the state cannot disrupt the right of expression unless there was a "genuine threat or reasonable bias of communal disharmony, social disorder and public tranquillity".

Opposition leaders, film industry members rally behind Sonam Wangchuk

Aaron Deep
NEW DELHI

Even as his fast approached a critical stage on Thursday, activist Sonam Wangchuk's strike attracted more voices of support, with Jantar Mantar's protest site seeing a massive increase in crowds as former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal came to the site.

Samajwadi Party MP Dimple Yadav also visited Mr. Wangchuk, and urged the Union government to "show some sensitivity" to the protest and initiate a dialogue with the activist.

The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) has planned a march to Parliament on July 20, a demonstration that Mr. Wangchuk has urged supporters to attend.

The Congress, which has been conducting its own rallies focusing on the NEET leak and CBSE exam irregularities, has maintained its distance, but broke its silence, with party general secretary (Organisation) K.C. Venugopal urging Mr. Wangchuk to break his fast.

The Congress "has been making this very demand [on Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation] for over a month-and-a-half," Mr. Venugopal said.

Mr. Wangchuk's "concerns are our concerns and that of other Opposition



Life at risk: AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal with Activist Sonam Wangchuk in New Delhi on Thursday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

parties as well", he added. The Congress has a "Chhatron Ki Goonj" rally planned in Dehradun on Friday, and the same issues will be raised there, party general secretary Jairam Ramesh said.

Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam deputy general secretary A. Raja also met Mr. Wangchuk and the three students who are on a fast concurrently nearby on Thursday. Mr. Raja said on X that he "expressed the DMK's support" to the activist.

J&K CM voices concern

J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah voiced concern over Mr. Wangchuk's condition. "Politics has its place, but there must also be a room for humanity and compassion," Mr. Abdullah said, ruling that "the government does not seem to pay attention to these matters... We are also asking for justice".

"The confidence that,

with effort and talent, anyone can surpass the children of the rich has started to founder," Mr. Kejriwal said in a speech after meeting Mr. Wangchuk.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray said he would hold a protest in Mumbai on Friday in support of Mr. Wangchuk.

The Supreme Court Bar Association's president, senior advocate Vikas Singh, also met with Mr. Wangchuk. "We need you alive, working and leading from the front," Mr. Singh said, urging Mr. Wangchuk to break his fast.

A few more celebrities backed Mr. Wangchuk. "From the millions of students whose honest efforts were invalidated with barely a shrug, to the millions more who stood up and continue to stand against injustice... I see you," actor Imran Khan said on Instagram. Actors Sonakshi Sinha and Fatima Sana Shaikh too voiced their support.

INDIA bloc will take a collective call on delimitation: Raut

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit
MUMBAI

A day after the NCP(SP) hinted that there could be a rethink in the Opposition's position on the delimitation Bill, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Thursday said that Opposition parties will discuss it if the Centre considers the amendments suggested by them.

"If there is an increase in seats by 50%, and if the government brings about the amendment to that effect, then there can be discussion about it," he said while speaking with presspersons in Nagpur.

Mr. Raut said that the decision about the Bill will be taken collectively by all the parties of the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance. "No single party will take a call on it. The decision about it will be taken by everyone together. If the government brings up a different proposal, all the parties of INDIA bloc will sit together. I don't think any one party will take its own decision. It will be a collective decision," he said.

The strength of the Shiv Sena (UBT) in the Lok Sabha has been drastically reduced. From nine MPs, the party has come down to three Lok Sabha members after six of its MPs extended



Sanjay Raut

support to Shiv Sena leader Eknath Shinde. The six MPs met Union Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday.

After the meeting, Mr. Shinde had expressed confidence that the delimitation Bill will sail through smoothly in Parliament this time.

Congress leaders in Maharashtra said they were bracing to face the impact alone. "We will not support the Bill in any condition. The question of rethinking does not arise. With the kind of statements which have been made by the NCP(SP), it is not clear if they will stick together with the INDIA bloc for voting against the delimitation Bill," a senior Congress leader told *The Hindu*. The NCP(SP) has eight Lok Sabha members.

The Congress said that there were questions about the fate of the Maha Vikas Aghadi in Maharashtra.

PM speaks to Amir of Qatar, condoles loss

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday spoke to Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and conveyed his heartfelt condolences on the passing of the Father Amir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. He said the late leader's enduring legacy will continue to guide the two countries.

TELANGANA POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD
A-3, Industrial Estate, Sanathnagar, Hyderabad-500018
e-TENDER NOTICE
Tender No. 363/TGPCB/LAR/PROC/CQAOMS/2026 Date: 15.07.2026
e-Tenders are invited on behalf of the Member Secretary, TGPCB from Experienced OEMs/Bidders for Supply, Installation, Operation & Maintenance of Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring System (CAQMS)-13 Nos. The tender document can be downloaded from <https://tenders.telanganapcb.gov.in> The last date for submission of e-tender is 20.07.2026 at 03.00 PM. Sd/- MEMBER SECRETARY
DPR R.O. No. 326/PPCL/CL/AGC/ENV/2026-27 TOPCB, HYDERABAD

ADMINISTRATION OF THE UNION TERRITORY OF LAKSHADWEEP
DIRECTORATE OF HEALTH SERVICES
KAVARATTI - 682555
F.No.73/22/2021-DHS-(STAT) Dated: 09.07.2026
ADVERTISEMENT
Department of Health Services, UT of Lakshadweep, invites applications for various Specialist posts required for the health institutions of Lakshadweep. Detailed notification is available on the official website of Lakshadweep (<https://lakshadweep.gov.in>). The last date for submission of applications is 24.07.2026.
Sd/- (M. Bharani, DANICS) Director of Health Services

KSPCL KERALA STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD LIMITED - TENDER NOTICE
Oio The Chief Engineer (S.C.M) & C.S.O. Vidyuthi Bhavanam, Thiruvananthapuram.
e-Tender ID No. 2026_KSEB_85820_1
PAC: Rs.13,30,76,900/-, Last Date: 31.07.2026, 05.00 pm.
Oio The Deputy Chief Engineer, Civil Circle: Pallom, Kottayam.
Tender ID No. GEN/2026/07/70634, PAC: Rs. 2,98,31,360/-, Last Date: 31.07.2026, 03.00 pm.
Documents available in website <https://gem.gov.in>
CORRECTION
Oio The Executive Engineer, Generation Division, Poringalkuthu, Thrissur.
e-Tender ID No. 2026_KSEB_954110_1, PAC: Rs.1,06,52,000/-, Last Date: 22.07.2026, 03.00 pm.
Visit <https://e-tenders.kerala.gov.in> and www.kseb.in
Ref: PR/MC/1/E622 - e-Tender/2026

BHARAT DYNAMICS LIMITED
(A Govt. of India Enterprise, Ministry of Defence)
GACHIBOWLI, HYDERABAD - 500 032
Ref:BD/CC/01/001/2026-27 Dt: 17.07.2026
e-PROCUREMENT ABRIDGED TENDER NOTICE
Inviting Indigenous Competitive Bidding
Sl. No. 1 Tender ID 69697
Description
Notice to participate against Tender ID:69697 for Shackle Mechanism
Please visit website <https://bidders.bdcprocure.com>, select online tenders on dashboard for further details. Bids should be submitted online only, "corrigendum if any shall be issued through our e-portal only and not in Newspapers"
Bidders are requested to apply for online Vendor Registration in BDL website <https://bdh.india.in/indian-industrial-industry-contractors> prospectus.
ADDITIONAL GENERAL MANAGER (Corp Comt)

INBRIEF



Akhilesh hits out at BJP over notice to Azam Khan's varsity

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Thursday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party of "seeing communalism even in education" after a demolition notice to Mohammad Ali Jahar University in Rampur, run by Azam Khan. The Rampur Development Authority has ordered demolition of 38 of 40 buildings, citing unauthorised construction, and given 15 days for compliance to authorities concerned. The Congress termed the move "targeted" and sought suo motu cognisance by the court, alleging attempts to polarise society ahead of elections. Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) MP Manoj Kumar Jha said such actions undermine democratic values and public institutions.

PF interest credited to all 34 crore accounts on July 15

For the first time, interest for the financial year 2025-26 for the deposits in Provident Fund accounts was credited to all 34 crore accounts in one go on July 15. Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya had earlier said that after implementing the Centralised IT Enabled Services project for updating the database of the EPFO, the interest amounting to over ₹1.44 lakh crore would be credited to accounts of 34 crore members. The Union Finance Ministry had recently approved the recommendation of the EPFO's Central Board of Trustees to provide interest at the rate of 8.25%.

'Frame policy for release of aged, terminally ill inmates'

The Supreme Court orders States and UTs to draft uniform policy for premature release of such prisoners within three months in coordination with the respective State Legal Services Authorities

Aaratrika Bhauinik
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday directed all States and Union Territories to put in place, within three months, a uniform policy governing the premature release of elderly and terminally ill prisoners, observing that such inmates are entitled to a humane and time-bound mechanism for remission or early release on compassionate grounds.

A Bench comprising Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta directed that every State policy must clearly lay down the eligibility criteria and procedural framework governing such releases.

"All States and Union Territories shall, within a period of three months from the date of this judgment, formulate and notify a comprehensive policy for early or premature release of prisoners who are of advanced age and/or are terminally ill. Such policy shall be framed in consultation with the respective State Legal Services Authorities so as to ensure institutional coordination and



Joint approach: The policy must ensure institutional coordination to identify eligible prisoners, the court said. ISTOCK

effective identification of eligible prisoners," the Bench said.

NALSA petition

The directions were issued while hearing a petition filed by the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), which, based on inspections conducted in prisons across the country, pointed to the lack of a common framework for the premature release of aged and terminally ill prisoners. The petition contended that facilitating the release of such inmates would not only address a humanitarian concern but also help reduce overcrowding in prisons.

The court directed that

every policy must incorporate a clear and uniform definition of "terminal illness". It permitted the authorities to draw upon the definition contained in the *Handbook on Prisoners with Special Needs* published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which describes terminal illness as "a condition where there is no reasonable medical possibility that the patient's condition will not continue to degenerate and result in death".

It also directed the States and Union Territories to constitute independent medical boards to assess and certify cases of terminal illness or ad-

vanced medical vulnerability in accordance with uniform eligibility criteria while considering applications for remission of prison sentences.

To facilitate the implementation of its directions, the Bench directed the Union government, in coordination with the National Informatics Centre (NIC), to provide the States and Union Territories with technical assistance, digital infrastructure, software support and training.

Compliance affidavits

The Bench directed the Centre, States and Union Territories to file compliance affidavits within six months, detailing the number of prisoners identified under the policy, those granted premature release, and those whose cases remain under consideration. The matter has been listed on January 19, 2027.

The petition had pointed out that India's prisons had an occupancy rate of 131% as of December 31, 2022, and that terminally ill and elderly inmates often require specialised care that prison authorities are ill-equipped to provide.

NITI Aayog suggests ₹50,000-crore fund for biotech growth

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

A NITI Aayog road map has proposed creating a ₹50,000-crore BioEconomy Growth Fund, a dedicated production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for biomanufacturing and six national biotechnology missions as part of an ambitious strategy to transform India into one of the world's top three biotechnology powers by 2035.

The report, "Roadmap for building India as a leading bioeconomy powerhouse by 2035", released on Thursday, says India should move beyond the broad framework laid out under the Biotechnology for Economy, Environment and Employment (BioE3) policy and adopt a mission-mode execution strategy backed by new financing, regulatory reforms and cross-ministerial governance. It targets expanding India's bioeconomy from ₹95.3 billion in 2025 to ₹691 billion by 2035 and ₹2.6 trillion by 2047, while creating over 30 million high-value jobs.

"The goal is not to just research but to build globally competitive biotechnology companies," said Debjani Ghosh, Distinguished Fellow, NITI

Aayog, at the launch.

The centrepiece of the recommendation is a proposed ₹50,000-crore fund for 2026-35 to bridge the biotechnology sector's "valley of death" – the gap between proof-of-concept research and commercial-scale manufacturing. The fund would provide blended finance, equity-risk instruments, viability-gap funding and infrastructure support for biomanufacturing, advanced therapeutics, synthetic biology, fermentation technologies and diagnostics.

The roadmap also recommends launching six National BioMissions with clearly identified lead Ministries and measurable outcomes by 2035. These include GenIndia for affordable gene and cell therapies, AgriBio 2.0 for climate-resilient gene-edited crops and biological farm inputs, BioX Foundry to commercialise synthetic biology innovations, One Health Grid for integrated surveillance of infectious diseases and antimicrobial resistance, Marine Biotechnology to expand seaweed cultivation and marine bioproducts, and BioPharma-Next to establish India as a global hub for biologics, biosimilars and AI-enabled drug discovery.

After ambushes, CRPF tells forces in Manipur to use armoured vehicles

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

In the wake of two ambushes on Assam Rifles personnel in Manipur and Nagaland, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) units deployed in Manipur have been instructed to use only armoured vehicles for movement and to avoid sudden or unplanned deployments, a senior government official said on Thursday.

In June, the CRPF inducted two battalions of the Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA), a specialised unit raised for anti-Maoist operations, in the northeastern State to step up operations against armed groups, dismantling of bunkers, and recovery of weapons.

At least 100 armoured vehicles have been sent to Manipur in the past two



Army personnel carry the coffins of two Assam Rifles personnel, who were killed in an attack in Manipur on July 6. PTI

months, the official said.

The CRPF is the largest Central security force deployed in Manipur, with 200 companies comprising around 20,000 personnel.

In addition to the CRPF, the State has around 100 Border Security Force companies, comprising approximately 10,000 personnel, and about 26,000

personnel from the Assam Rifles and the Indian Army deployed across the region.

The CoBRA battalions have been given pre-induction training in crowd management as the State often witnesses obstruction by locals, especially women, during security-related operations.

"We have advised the

personnel to avoid any sudden movement for administrative or operational reasons. They have also been asked to take action against armed miscreants, anyone found with a gun is to be arrested or fired upon, if they do not surrender," said the official.

As the ethnic conflict between the Kuki and Meitei people in Manipur has now expanded to tensions between Kukis and the Naga people, plans are afoot to deploy the CoBRA battalions in the hill districts of Churachandpur, Kangpokpi, and Ukhrul, another government official said.

While Churachandpur and Kangpokpi are Kuki-Zo-dominated districts, Ukhrul is a Naga-majority area.

The ethnic violence, which erupted on May 3, 2023, has claimed the lives of 300 people so far.

Two dead, several injured as lakhs attend Jagannath Rath Yatra in Puri

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

Two persons were killed and several injured after a crowd surge on *Badadanda*, the wide road in front of the 12th century Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri, during the pulling of chariots on the occasion of the annual Rath Yatra on Thursday.

The stampede-like situation occurred near the Marichikote Chowk when devotees were pushed aside to make way for an ambulance moving through the crowd.

Amid the massive rush, several people fell over one another, leading to injuries. The injured were rushed to the District Headquarters Hospital in Puri, many with fractures in their hands and legs.

Two persons were declared dead at the hospital.



An ambulance stuck amid a crowd surge during the Rath Yatra in Puri on Thursday. PTI

One of the deceased was identified as Anil Dash (35), while the identity of the other is yet to be ascertained.

Around a hundred devotees were admitted for treatment, sources in the hospital said. While most were declared out of danger, the condition of two of them remained critical.

"The overall conduct of the festival remained peaceful, orderly and well managed. There was no incident of stampede or any systemic breakdown of crowd management," the Chief Minister's Office said, while confirming the deaths of two persons.

"I am deeply saddened by the loss of lives in the stampede at *Badadanda* during Rath Yatra. I pray

for the eternal peace of the departed souls and for the swift recovery of the injured," former Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said.

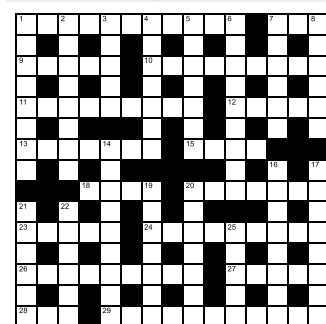
"In this hour of grief, all Biju Janata Dal workers will extend full cooperation to assist those affected. I hope the State government ensures better crowd management for the safety and convenience of devotees," Mr. Patnaik added in a post on social media platform X.

Earlier in the day, lakhs of devotees braved incense rain to travel the 3 km-long *Badadanda*, connecting the Shree Jagannath Temple with the Gundicha Temple.

However, the chariots could not reach the Gundicha Temple and were halted midway.

The pulling of the chariots is scheduled to resume on Friday.

THE CROSSWORD 14848

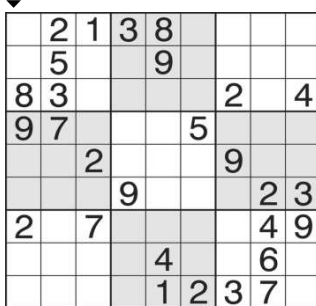


- Across**
- Say, Lily's working to acquire new apparatus to disperse crowds (5,6)
 - Trap bachelor for girl (3)
 - Setback after Republican's order had repetitions (5)
 - Careless guru dead, ingesting some nightshade carelessly (9)
 - Brigadier designs a delivery mechanism (3,6)
 - Tremulous sound from other end of boat on stream (5)

- Viscous black liquid layer over lake at Ajmer outskirts (4,3)
- Course beginners in Tamil indicate difficulty & ennuï (4)
- Victim, a mother saved by a religious leader (4)
- Short lady initially cried on everyone's hate (7)
- Central forecast on regulation (5)
- Amanda, Laila, Matilda contributing to someone like 18 (5,4)
- Cooked ribs, had half of port in a vessel (9)
- Falls for medico at work, over heels ultimately (5)
- Carpet is 50% bumpy (3)
- One who repeats and reinforces opinions of coach Herb and me in a bad way (4,7)

- Down**
- Victory celebration at area and shortly at both sides of college (3,5)
 - Coaching for test covers university model only (8)
 - A vertical pipe at the floor corner is interred in the middle (5)
 - When in Paris, one doctor inserted tip of needle in parts (7)
 - Overlook end of the session, say T-part lecture ending after 4th (7)
 - Wave patterns occurring twice a month, when sea in depth almost gets choppy (4,5)
 - Friend's girl lied; clipped the wings of a bird (6)
 - Nuisance of a lady, fricking heartless badger... (6)
 - ...I met in board programme (9)
 - Auditor and doctor buy a snack underground, perhaps (8)
 - Charlie prefers regularly procuring Pears soap, say (8)
 - Say, a holistic therapy's dumb, that nearly is silly (3,4)
 - Setter's icon making a comeback primarily composing for a musical (7)
 - Incense container at church at all directions but one on the right (6)
 - Whacking in disguise (6)
 - One's leaving a country to another (5)

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle

A	U	R	E	N	O	P	E	
A	U	R	E	N	O	P	E	
A	U	R	E	N	O	P	E	
A	U	R	E	N	O	P	E	
A	U	R	E	N	O	P	E	
A	U	R	E	N	O	P	E	
A	U	R	E	N	O	P	E	
A	U	R	E	N	O	P	E	
A	U	R	E	N	O	P	E	

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

1	3	7	2	4	6	8	9	5
4	9	5	8	1	7	6	3	2
2	6	8	3	5	9	7	4	1
9	5	4	6	3	2	1	7	8
3	1	6	4	7	8	5	2	9
8	7	2	5	9	1	3	6	4
7	8	3	1	2	4	9	5	6
6	2	9	7	8	5	4	1	3
5	4	1	9	6	3	2	8	7

FAITH

Incarnation of Mahalakshmi

Kamban's Ramayana, containing 10,569 stanzas of four lines each, speaks the language of devotion in such a poetic form that a devotee will return to reading the epic frequently. Faithful to the storyline of Valmiki, Kamban's descriptions, such as the one on Sita's birth, convey a wealth of information.

Janaka, the king of Mithila, is both valourous and devout. Ahead of a yaga, he used a golden plough to till the earth for the yaga site. Kamban says while doing so, he suddenly saw a bright light shining from the ground, as though it was the sun rising. Puzzled as to how the sun could be on the ground, Janaka looked closer and saw a radiant girl child, more lustrous than anything on earth, nestled there. Kamban says the beauty was so lustrous that for a moment it appeared as though Bhooma Devi, the earth goddess, was there. Kamban further adds that the radiance of the baby overshadowed even that of Mahalakshmi emerging from the Milky Ocean. Janaka named her as Sita (*seet* in Sanskrit refers to the edge of the plough) and raised her as his own. This is Mahalakshmi taking avatar as Sita, while Vishnu incarnated as Dasaratha's son Rama, and both Purnima and Mahalakshmi are more lustrous than they are when manifested on earth to aid devotees, than they are in Vaikunta, said Tirukkudanthai Dr. Venkatesh.

When Viswamitra brought Rama and Lakshmana to Mithila, after the princes successfully destroyed the rakshasas who attempted to pollute the sage's sacrificial fire, the princes were awed by the grandeur of Mithila. Kamban says the flagpoles and the flags flying on the ramparts extended their welcome to the brothers in a grand manner.

WASHINGTON

Indian national stabbed in the U.S. over his religion; suspect arrested



An Indian man, Syed Sohailuddin, was allegedly stabbed 15 times inside a shopping mall near Salt Lake City in the U.S. state of Utah because of his religion, media reports said. The suspect, Peter Michael Larsen, told the police after being arrested that "he believes he is a catalyst and he intends to kill Muslims". PTI

KYIV

Zelenskyy's dismissal of Ukraine's Defence Minister sparks protests



Hundreds of protesters gathered in downtown Kyiv and in other Ukrainian cities on Thursday after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy dismissed his Defence Minister Mykhailo Fedorov. Meanwhile, Ukraine's Parliament approved the appointment of Naftogaz boss Sergii Koryk as the new Prime Minister. AP

WASHINGTON

U.S. approves nearly \$2 billion in weapons sales to Saudi Arabia



The U.S. State Department said on Wednesday it has approved the sale of an estimated \$1.96 billion in weapons to bolster Saudi Arabia's air defences, as the war ramps up in the West Asia. Among the weapons the Gulf kingdom seeks are up to 20,000 Advanced Precision Kill Weapon Systems and its warheads. AFP

GENEVA

Over 500 feared dead in suspected shipwrecks off Myanmar, says UN



The United Nations warned on Thursday that more than 500 people were feared dead following reports of two large shipwrecks off Myanmar since late June. Preliminary information indicated that the two vessels departed from Rakhine State with mainly members of the country's Muslim Rohingya minority onboard. AFP

Iran slams 'barbaric' U.S. attack near hospital

Agence France-Presse
TEHRAN

Tehran on Thursday accused the United States of carrying out a "barbaric attack" after a cancer hospital in Iran's southwest, Ahvaz, was forced to evacuate and the patients transferred to other medical centres due to nearby strikes.

"This barbaric attack, reminiscent of Israel's atrocities against health-care facilities, caused severe suffering and anxiety under the hospitalised children," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei posted on X, saying "21 patients undergoing chemotherapy" were evacuated.

Hani, a 34-year-old teacher from Ahvaz, said the strikes were "very intense", adding: "My hands are shaking. There were at least 11, 12 explosions. My ears are exploding."

U.S. expands Iran strike, hits ship trying to run blockade

Iran retaliated by launching missiles and drones at U.S. allies in the region, and warned its attacks may escalate; Tehran says American attacks have killed more than 35 people and wounded 300

Associated Press
DUBAI

The U.S. intensified its strikes on Iran early Thursday, hitting targets farther north and firing into a ship the U.S. accused of trying to break its naval blockade on the Islamic Republic. Iran retaliated by launching missiles and drones at U.S. allies in the region, and warned its attacks may escalate.

Days of back-and-forth strikes by the U.S. and Iran across West Asia – and renewed threats to the Strait of Hormuz – have shredded the interim deal to end the Iran war and could tip the region back into all-out war. Iranian officials say U.S. strikes have killed more than 35 people and wounded over 300.



The Carrier Air Wing 7 flying in formation over the USS George H.W. Bush in the Arabian Sea during the West Asia war. AFP

For the first time in this latest round of violence, strikes also reached into areas around Iran's capital, Tehran, showing a widening set of targets for the Americans.

Col. Ebrahim Zolfaghari, a spokesperson for the Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, threatened

that Iran could launch widespread attacks on regional infrastructure if the U.S. acts on President Donald Trump's repeated warnings that America could hit Iranian bridges and power plants.

"All the infrastructure in the region will be crushed under the steel blows of

the powerful armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran" should Trump's threat be carried out, Mr. Zolfaghari said.

"Under no circumstances and in no way will we allow America, as a foreign and extraregional country, to interfere in the Strait of Hormuz. This is Iran's inviolable red line."

The U.S. strikes early Thursday hit around Tehran, state media reported. It also reported that American attacks targeted Semnan province, home to Iran's ballistic missile production and space programme.

Iranian media also reported "American missile strike in the vicinity of Qeshm" and "American enemy's aggression" on the port city of Bandar Abbas later on Thursday.

Israel 'will keep troops in Lebanon, Syria, and Gaza'

Agence France-Presse
JERUSALEM

Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz told his U.S. counterpart Pete Hegseth early Thursday that Israel is determined to keep its forces in "security zones" it has carved out inside Lebanon, Syria and the Gaza Strip.

In a statement, Mr. Katz's office said the two men spoke overnight and the Minister "emphasised Israel's determination to remain in the security zones in Syria, Gaza, and Lebanon in order to protect Israel's borders and the communities near the border from the threats posed by jihadist forces".

"We have never asked the United States to act in our place along our borders," Mr. Katz said.

His comments come days after U.S. President Donald Trump asked Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to pull Israeli



Israeli soldiers stand at the site where a house was damaged amid hostilities between Hezbollah and Israeli forces. REUTERS

forces out of Syria and Lebanon, according to U.S. news outlet Axios.

Citing a U.S. official, Axios reported that Mr. Trump told Mr. Netanyahu the Israeli deployment was fuelling tensions in Syria.

"They don't want you there. You should redeploy," Mr. Trump told him, according to Axios.

After the December 2024 overthrow of Syria's long-time ruler Bashar al-Assad, Israel sent troops into a United Nations-pa-

trolled buffer zone that separated Israeli and Syrian forces on the Golan Heights.

Israel has also carried out repeated incursions into Syrian territory since then, as well as bombings, and has said it wants a demilitarised zone in the country's south.

In Lebanon, Israeli forces remain deployed in what the military describes as a security zone extending roughly 10 kilometres into Lebanese territory.

Kremlin says no hope of resuming peace talks as strikes kill 5

Agence France-Presse
KYIV

The Kremlin said on Thursday that there is no immediate prospect of resuming peace talks with Ukraine, though it said that Russia remains open to the idea of negotiations. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Russia was appreciative of Turkey's willingness to help peace efforts, but no new talks were expected for now.

Russian and Ukrainian strikes killed five people on both sides of the war border, officials said on Thursday.

The attacks came as Ukraine has stepped up drone barrages against Russia in what it calls retribution for Moscow's invasion, now in its fifth year.

Ukrainian shelling killed a 15-year-old girl and her grandmother in a village in the western Russian border region of Bryansk, said acting governor Yegor Kovalchuk.

Ukraine and Russia also launched missiles and drone attacks on vessels in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. Ukraine's military said it struck six Russian tankers and two tugboats, while Russia's Defence Ministry said its forces hit a maritime vessel and a speedboat of the Ukrainian armed forces while they were en route to ports in the Odessa region. Russia also has intensified strikes on Ukraine's deepwater Black Sea ports in the Greater Odesa area.

Open threat



Defiant streets: A woman crosses Tehran's Enghelab Square on Wednesday, past a giant anti-U.S. billboard featuring U.S. President Donald Trump in a coffin with text in Persian reading 'We Kill Trump'. AFP

Bangladesh diplomat named head of UN mission in Afghanistan

Agence France-Presse
UNITED NATIONS

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Wednesday named a senior international official from Bangladesh, Rabab Fatima, as the new head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

A career diplomat who served in several capitals before representing her country at the United Nations, Ms. Fatima is currently the global body's high representative for the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small developing states.

"Ms. Fatima brings to the position over 30 years of experience in national and international civil ser-



Rabab Fatima

vice, encompassing bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, policymaking, advocacy, program planning and implementation," the office of Mr. Guterres's spokesperson said.

She takes over from Canadian Georgette Gagnon, the deputy special representative of UNAMA who had been serving as acting head of mission.

U.S. changes rules to limit stays of students, journalists

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration finalised rules on Thursday that impose stricter limits on how long foreign students and journalists can stay in the United States, the latest bid to tighten legal immigration in the country. Under a change that could be implemented as soon as September, foreigners on student visas would be admitted for the length of their academic programme up to a maximum of four years.

Foreign journalists would be limited to stays of just 240 days, or

around eight months, although they could apply to extend by 240-day periods, except for Chinese journalists who would get just 90 days.

The move forms part of a broader immigration crackdown that Mr. Trump has made a centerpiece of his presidency, spanning aggressive enforcement operations in major cities as well as new restrictions on legal pathways to citizenship.

When it proposed the rule, Department of Homeland Security alleged that foreigners were indefinitely extending their studies so they could remain in the country.

TAMIL NADU LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
W Floor, Integrated Office Complex for Animal Husbandry & Fisheries Department,
571, Anna Salai, Sadagop Veterinary Polytechnic Campus, Nendran P.O., Chennai - 35 e-mail: tnld2016@gmail.com
*TENDER NOTICE

E-tenders are invited from eligible bidders online through <https://tnldenders.gov.in> for the following item under "Two part System"

S.No	Slender Ref. No	Name of the Item	Quantity (Nos.)
2026/1	2026/1	Artificial Insemination Gun	250
2026/2	2026/2	All in One Desktop	5
2026/3	2026/3	Milking Machine	2
2026/4	2026/4	Power Generator for Milking Machine	1
2026/5	2026/5	Phase Control Microprocessor	18
2026/6	2026/6	Plastic, Global (15mm, 35mm, 60mm)	13709
2026/7	2026/7	Aluminium, Global (15mm, 35mm)	11339
2026/8	2026/8	Scissors	5550
2026/9	2026/9	Thawing Kit	1
2026/10	2026/10	1/2" Measuring Wooden Scale	5550
2026/11	2026/11	Straw Holding Forceps	5550
2026/12	2026/12	National Livestock Mission-Livestock Insurance Scheme	6,00,000 cattle units

Individual tender documents with full details can be downloaded free of cost from <https://tnldenders.gov.in> upto: 17.08.2026, 11.00 am. Last date for submission of tenders: 17.08.2026, 11.00 am
Conferendum/Auction to this publication, if any, would appear only on the above website
DIPR/2298/TENDER/2026

Chief Executive Officer

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ELECTRONICS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, CHENNAI
MeitY, Govt. of India

Vacancies for Multiple Position (Purely Contract Basis)

- Project Engineer (IT)- 2 Nos.
- Project Associate - 1 No.
- Project Engineer (DevOps)- 1 No.
- Project Engineer (IS)- 1 No.

Online Interview will be held on 04.08.2026
For further details, please visit: <https://nietc.nielit.chennai.edu.in>
E-mail: chennai@nielit.gov.in
Ph: +91 9445880125
Advt.No.02/04/2026/Contract Recruitment
Director in charge

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE EDUCATION & RESEARCH BHOPAL
Institute Works Department, Bhopal Bypass Road, Bhauri, Bhopal - 462 066

The Superintending Engineer, Institute Works Department, ISER Bhopal on behalf of the Board of Governors invites online percentage rate tender from eligible firms / contractors of repute in two envelopes system for the following work:

Sl.	NI T No. & date	Name of work	Estimated Cost	Earnest Money	Period
1	IWD/SE/NI/T-2026-27/63 dt. 16/07/2026	Annual comprehensive maintenance of Animal Facility at ISER Bhopal during 2026-27	Rs. 11,99,068/-	Rs. 23,981/-	12 months
2	IWD/SE/NI/T-2026-27/61 dt. 16/07/2026	Comprehensive annual maintenance contract of 5 x 250 KVA and 2 x 200 KVA servo voltage stabilizers installed for Chillers and Heaters in AB-2 building at ISER Bhopal for three years	Rs.10,88,550/-	Rs. 21,771/-	36 months
3	IWD/SE/NI/T-2026-27/62 dt. 16/07/2026	Supply of Spare part materials for the ROS and Water Cooler installed in entire campus at ISER Bhopal	Rs. 10,24,769/-	Rs.20,495/-	45 days
4	IWD/SE/NI/T-2026-27/64 dt. 16/07/2026	Providing and fixing Safety Signages, Emergency Signages, Night glow tape etc. in the Hostel Buildings at ISER Bhopal	Rs. 11,17,971/-	Rs.22,359/-	3 months

The bids forms and other details for application can be obtained from the website <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>. The press notice is also available in Institute website www.iserb.ac.in.

Sport

WILL TO WIN

We never stopped believing: Messi on the comeback in 'special fixture'



GETTY IMAGES

These are special feelings. The squad could feel it, and this was a game the Argentine people and players really wanted to win. This is a special fixture. Once again we managed to do the job when things were looking bad. We never stopped believing — Argentina captain Lionel Messi on the victory over England.

DEEPLY HURT

England manager Tuchel defends his tactics in agonising defeat



REUTERS

England manager Thomas Tuchel defended his tactics in the agonising World Cup defeat to Argentina. "As soon as you lose, you get criticised. No one knows what would have happened if we had made different decisions. So, it makes no sense to engage in that and lose my head. I am responsible for them. I take the criticism".

PRESAGING IT

I dreamed of it, says Lautaro on his all-important match-winning goal



GETTY IMAGES

Argentina striker Lautaro Martinez said that he dreamed of scoring the winning goal against England. "I dreamed of it, I swear. I told Alexis [Mac Allister] that I was going to score. I told him that I was going to come on and I was going to win it. It (ball) fell to me. Enzo Fernandez scored a great goal too," Lautaro was quoted by FIFA.

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

'Gutted' Kane admits England got it wrong after taking the lead



AFP

I am gutted for the boys, gutted for everyone — the team, the staff, the fans. We played a good game, the large majority of it. When we went 1-0 up, we seemed to try and hold on, which at this level is not enough — England captain Harry Kane after the 1-2 loss to Argentina in the World Cup semifinal.

Argentina punches past a retreating England

Messi turns provider for Fernandez and Lautaro's goals as *La Albiceleste* conjure a back-to-the-walls win to enter the final; the Three Lions inexplicably withdraw into a shell after taking the lead

FIFA WORLD CUP

Avon Sengupta

ATLANTA

There are teams that survive because they are talented. There are others that do because they refuse to accept that a match can be lost while time remains on the clock. Throughout this World Cup, Argentina has believed in that.

On Wednesday night, that belief carried Argentina into another final after yet another comeback — this time a 2-1 victory over England that left Thomas Tuchel's side wondering what could have been.

Football took time to emerge. What arrived first was confrontation. Every loose ball invited a challenge, every challenge carried an edge. England hunted in packs, Argentina answered with fouls.

Jude Bellingham was one of the first to feel the attention. His burst from the left was halted by Enzo Fernandez's outstretched leg.

The resulting freekick was headed harmlessly



Comeback complete: Fernandez breathed life into the contest with a stunning leveller before super-sub Lautaro did just what the doctor ordered with a pin-point header. GETTY IMAGES & AP

wide by John Stones, but England's aggressive press, particularly down the left, had begun to unsettle Lionel Scaloni's side.

Then, as it so often does, the game briefly belonged to Lionel Messi. In the 35th minute, a quickly worked pass found him near the centre circle. One

turn carried him beyond Djed Spence, another touch took Harry Kane out, and Antony Gordon was left chasing shadows.

The danger was obvious and Elliott Anderson hauled Messi down before the move could gather irresistible momentum.

England struck through

THE RESULT

Semifinal: England 1 (Gordon 55) lost to Argentina 2 (Fernandez 85, Lautaro Martinez 90+2).

a ruthless transition. Morgan Rogers's cross from the right bounced awkwardly across the six-yard box, inviting hesitation. Nahuel

Molina paused for a fraction too long, and Antony Gordon ghosted behind the defender to drive his finish beyond Emiliano Martinez.

Tuchel's side immediately retreated into a compact low block, squeezing all ten outfield players to within a few

metres of their own penalty area and daring Argentina to find a way out.

Jordan Pickford reacted superbly to claw away Nico Gonzalez's glancing header after Messi had drifted to the right to deliver an inviting cross.

Moments later, Alexis Mac Allister's header

crashed against the side post. The sea of blue and white inside the stadium simply sang louder, convinced another chance would soon arrive.

It arrived through Enzo. The midfielder met Messi's cutback nearly 25 yards from goal and struck through it with the force of

a blacksmith driving a hammer into glowing steel.

Then Messi, again drifting into space on the right, clipped another teasing cross into the penalty area and Lautaro Martinez rose above the tiring defence to power his header beyond Pickford and complete another turnaround.

Argentina coach Scaloni all praise for his troupe of great escape artists

Avon Sengupta

ATLANTA

Lionel Scaloni has spent nearly eight years building one of the most successful teams in Argentina's history. Yet even now, he admits it continues to surprise him.

After watching his side overturn another deficit to beat England 2-1 and reach a second successive FIFA World Cup final, the coach searched for words to explain a team that seems to thrive when the odds are stacked against it.

"I think this team plays its best football when we are facing adversity," Scaloni said. "We had a challenging game, a challenging situation. There was blood in the water, and we went for it. That was the feeling I had."

It was another comeback to add to a growing collection. Just days after rescuing itself from the brink against Egypt in the round of 16, Argentina again refused to accept defeat. England led with five minutes of normal time remaining before Enzo Fernandez equalised and Lautaro Martinez completed yet another dramatic turnaround.

"You just have to keep going," Scaloni said. "We hit the crossbar. We hit the post and it just couldn't go in. There were six or seven chances. But I'm very

Stat attack

1 Argentina registered its first win against England (in all competitions) since the 1986 World Cup quarterfinals

1 Lautaro Martinez is the first Argentine to score multiple goals as a substitute in an edition of the quadrennial extravaganza

2 Enzo Fernandez became the first Argentine who Messi assisted twice in the World Cup. The maestro's previous assists were to 10 different players

4 Messi is the first to have four assists in the knockout stages of an edition since Pele (4, 1970)

5 England made its fewest shots in a World Cup game

7 Argentina pulled level with Brazil for the second-most final appearances, behind only Germany (8)

11 Messi has scored or assisted in 11 straight games, dating back to 2022, the longest streak in history

12 Messi won 12 duels against England, his most in a World Cup contest since 2014

13 Argentina's two or more goals in 13 consecutive matches at the marquee event is the longest ever

33 Messi's goal contributions in 33 World Cup games (21 goals, 12 assists), the best in history

39y 21d Messi became the oldest outfield player to figure in the semifinals, and the third oldest behind Shilton in 1990 (40y 289d) and Zoff in 1982 (40y 130d)

61.5 Messi reached his eighth final in 13 major tournaments with Argentina (61.5%)

121 Kane went past Rooney (120) for most appearances for England. Only goalkeeper Shilton (125) has played more for the Three Lions

Compiled by ANIRUDDH VELAMURI

10 Messi's assists, the highest in the knockout stages of the football showpiece. Pele and Griezmann are next (four each)



Thin line between failure and folklore

R.K. Arjun

They say champions always find a way. Argentina has found four, each arriving with a sense of inevitability, each feeling more like fate than football. This is a team that seems to need the abyss before it can find the light.

It started in the round-of-32 clash against Cape Verde, where Argentina led before the debutant pegged it back twice. It took an own goal in the second period of extra time for the *Albiceleste* to shake off the smallest nation to reach a WC knockout round. If that was a scare, the last-16 game against Egypt was closer to a heart attack. Trailing 0-2 with time being its enemy, Argentina looked finished until Cristian Romero, Lionel Messi, and Enzo Fernandez conjured goals in the space of 14 frantic minutes.

The quarterfinal offered no relief either. A 10-man Switzerland side pushed Argentina into extra time before Julian Alvarez and Lautaro Martinez struck late to settle it. Then came the last-four fixture, where Argentina looked short of answers against an English team matching it physically and tactically. However, Fernandez and Lautaro sent Argentina into its third tie decider in four editions. Will Spain tackle the comeback kings?

Fowler, Kahn expect the final to be a tactical battle



Tall task: England's play to double-team or triple-team Messi didn't faze him. Will Spain do better? AP

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

As Spain and Argentina prepare to lock horns in Sunday's World Cup final, two of European football's biggest names highlighted the tactical intrigue that could define the contest while stopping short of predicting a winner.

Former England striker Robbie Fowler and legendary Germany goalkeeper Oliver Kahn, speaking as Zees experts, agreed that Spain has set the benchmark but felt that Argentina possesses enough quality to test the European champion.

"The obvious one is that Spain is going to have a little bit more of the ball," Fowler said on Thursday. "You stop Lionel Messi from dominating games by not letting Argentina have the ball. It's easier said than done, but Spain is a



possession-based team with a purpose. It's not possession for the sake of it. It plays forward, breaks presses and looks to attack in transition."

The Liverpool stalwart felt Spain's ability to monopolise possession also serves as its primary defensive weapon. "It will try to control the ball, control areas of the pitch and stop

Argentina from having the ball. That's a great defensive attribute," he said.

Kahn admitted that he had struggled to identify a weakness in the Spanish side. But the former goalkeeper suggested that Spain could be vulnerable if its attacking full-backs, Marc Cucurella and Pedro Porro, push too high up the pitch. "But the question is whether Spain will offer this space to Argentina. Spain's players are so intelligent. They have high playing intelligence and are extremely smart on the field," Kahn said.

"This is a match between rational guys playing super-smart football against emotional, aggressive guys playing a totally different style. It is a battle between systems and tactics, but you also have outstanding players like Rodri, Lamine Yamal, Messi, and Rodrigo De Paul."

INBRIEF



Merlier wins Tour de France 12th stage in sprint finish

Belgian sprint star Tim Merlier trebled up at the Tour de France on Thursday as he won the 12th stage at Chalon-sur-Saône. The Soudal-Quick Step rider edged out Dutchman Olav Kooij and fellow Belgian Jasper Philipsen to claim his third stage win of this year's Tour, and sixth overall. Tadej Pogacar maintained his overall lead.

Lakshya hits double ton, Manav makes century

Lakshya Raichandani's gritty double century was the standout performance as the first Youth 'Test' between Sri Lanka and India ended in a draw in Galle on Thursday. Resuming on 196, the opener made 207 off 324 balls. Wicketkeeper-batter Manav Krishna made 100 off 151 deliveries and was the last man out as India amassed 576.

The scores: Sri Lanka u-19 424 for 9 decd, & 178 for 6 decd, in 39.1 overs (Dulnith Sigeru 72, Kavija Gamage 51, Yashardhan Chauhan 4/49) drew with India u-19 576 in 173.5 overs (Lakshya Raichandani 207, Sagar Virk 134, Kush Patel 42, Manav Krishna 100, Lathendra Akkash 3/66).

India pacer Gurnoor handed warning, demerit point

India pacer Gurnoor Brar has been handed a warning and a demerit point for throwing the ball in an "inappropriate and dangerous" manner during the first ODI against England.

G. D. Goenka, Bharti PS win Oriental Cup

G.D. Goenka School and Bharti Public School triumphed in the boys' and girls' categories of the fourth Oriental Cup football tournament at the Dr. Ambedkar Stadium in Delhi on Thursday.

The results (final): Boys: G.D. Goenka School bt Step by Step School, Noida 2-1. **Girls:** Bharti Public School bt Modern School, Noida 1-0.

Wrestler Jaspreet runs afoul of anti-doping rule

Indian wrestler Jaspreet Kaur has returned an adverse analytical finding for octodrine (1,5-dimethylhexylamine) and its metabolite heptaminol from her urine sample collected during the sixth Asian Beach Games in Sanya, China, in April. Jaspreet, who bagged a bronze in women's 70kg category, has accepted the consequences of her Anti-Doping Rule Violation (ADRV) and the disqualification of her result.

Firouzja gets the better of Praneish; other games end in stalemates



Success and survival: Firouzja wore down Praneish in a marathon 79-move game while Gukesh put time trouble behind him to emerge unscathed against Nihal. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

CHESS

C. Shyam Sundar CHENNAI

Alireza Firouzja got off to a winning start, dismantling M. Praneish in a longish game, at the Chennai Grand Masters chess tournament at Hotel Westin Velachery on Thursday. The Frenchman, entering the event in good nick after a title-winning run in the Grand Chess Tour-Croatia leg, wore down the young Indian in a 79-move game.

He had to dig deep as the match went into the fifth hour before taking the point with black pieces.

The Frenchman emerged with a slight edge

from a Sicilian Defence before Praneish's 36th move allowed him a breakthrough.

The 23-year-old Firouzja was the only winner on the opening day as World champion D. Gukesh was held by compatriot Nihal Sarin while Uzbekistan's Nodirbek Abdusattorov, the highest-rated player in the tournament, split the point with USA's Hans Moke Niemann and local hope Arjun Erigaisi shared honours with Russian Dmitry Andreikin.

Holding firm Abdusattorov held firm despite coming under pressure from Niemann for a major part of the game.

The Gukesh-Nihal encounter saw the former

England pacers shoot out India for 233

Archer, Atkinson, Mahmood and Curran account for nine of the 10 wickets; Kohli and Shreyas notch up fifties after skipper Gill makes a brisk 31

INDIA IN ENGLAND

N. Sudarshan CARDIFF

On a warm summer afternoon at the Sophia Gardens here on Thursday, the English players walked back to the pavilion for the mid-match break with a spring in their steps.

Harry Brook's men had bowled India out for a seemingly mediocre 233-run total after asking the visitors to take first strike in the second ODI. History – both recent and distant – suggest that it is a very chaseable score. Eight of the previous 12 ODIs, including the last four, have been won by teams batting second.

The record is set to be extended unless the India bowlers, led by the irrepressible Jasprit Bumrah have other plans.

The home side's decision to bring in speedsters Saqib Mahmood and Gus Atkinson for Josh Tongue and Liam Dawson – who made 68 in Birmingham and bowled two overs of left-arm spin – proved right as nine of the 10 wickets were picked up by the pacers, including five by



Fighting knock: Shreyas top-scored for the Men in Blue with a 71-ball 66. AFP

Atkinson and Mahmood combined.

The Indian top-three made more than half the runs and there was precious little from the rest except Shreyas Iyer, who top-scored with 66 (71b, 5x4, 2x4).

Four of the top-six also fell playing cross-batted strokes and across the line.

Rohit Sharma made an unconvincing 26 (47b, 1x4, 1x6), during which he

England 167/5 in 35 overs

Root (78) and Jacks (11) were batting. Duckett (0), Bethell (4), Brook (16), Curran (26) and Buttler (17) were dismissed. Bumrah, Prasidh, Gurnoor, Dube and Aar took a wicket each

pulled Atkinson for a trademark six but was also dropped by the same man at deep backward square-leg on five.

A top-edged sweep into

the hands of wicketkeeper Jos Buttler off Will Jacks ended his stay.

Captain Shubman Gill (31, 30b, 6x4) played a few pleasing leg-glances and flicks but drilled Atkinson straight to Ben Duckett at cover. Ishan Kishan, who replaced K.L. Rahul in the XI because of the latter's illness, was out executing a wild pull.

Virat Kohli was assured during his 65-run knock

SCOREBOARD

INDIA

Rohit Sharma c Buttler b Jacks 26 (47b, 1x4, 1x6), Shubman Gill c Duckett b Atkinson 31 (30b, 6x4), Virat Kohli c Rashid b Archer 65 (66b, 8x4), Ishan Kishan c & b Curran 1 (8b), Shreyas Iyer c Buttler b Atkinson 66 (71b, 5x4, 2x6), Washington Sundar c Buttler b Mahmood 2 (5b), Axar Patel c Buttler b Archer 1 (5b), Shivam Dube c & b Archer 0 (1b), Gurnoor Brar c Atkinson b Mahmood 7 (15b), Jasprit Bumrah (not out) 20 (13b, 3x4, 1x6), Prasidh Krishna b Atkinson

0 (3b); Extras (lb-6, w-8); Total (in 44 overs): 233.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-44 (Gill, 7.4 overs), 2-104 (Rohit, 17.5), 3-111 (Kishan, 20.3), 4-178 (Kohli, 31.4), 5-181 (Washington, 32.4), 6-193 (Axar, 35.4), 7-193 (Dube, 35.5), 8-210 (Gurnoor, 40.2), 9-233 (Shreyas, 43.3).

ENGLAND BOWLING

Archer 10-0-47-3, Mahmood 9-1-52-2, Atkinson 9-1-50-3, Rashid 5-0-34-0, Curran 6-1-23-1, Jacks 5-0-21-1.

Toss: England.

(66b, 8x4), collecting many a boundary in the arc between mid-wicket and the bowler. His half-century off 50 balls was completed with a pleasing straight drive off Sam Curran, but an attempted heave over mid-wicket ended up in the hands of the third-man fielder.

In the 33rd over, a single Shreyas took in the cover area injured a bird. Jacob Bethell, quite admirably, picked it up and handed it over to the ground staff. But it was India which came out feathered and tarred.

Washington Sundar, who had just received treatment for an issue in his thigh, tried to hook Mahmood and was caught

by Buttler. Archer then delivered a double blow, forcing Axar Patel to upper-cut his way into Buttler's gloves and having Shivam Dube caught and bowled.

But Shreyas, who is perceived to have a deficiency against short-pitched bowling, seemed most at ease, even carving Archer for a six over fine-leg to bring up his half-century from 42 balls.

However, when he was caught behind trying to poke at an Atkinson delivery, there were more than six overs remaining.

Bumrah remained unbeaten on a 13-ball 20 that featured three fours and a six. Will it carry more weight than just mere entertainment?

Sports ministry instructs IOA to form enquiry committee into HI allegations

GENERAL

Uthra Ganesan NEW DELHI

The allegations of sexual harassment, criminal intimidation and institutional protection for the accused within Hockey India (HI) have gone beyond the federation's internal purview.

The sports ministry, recognising the seriousness of the matter, has now directed the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) to look into it.

"The sports ministry has asked the IOA to form a neutral, fair and transparent committee to probe

the allegations made by the ex India captain Asunta Lakra. The ministry has also sought a clarification from Hockey India on the same," sources in the ministry confirmed.

Impartial probe

Asunta had written to the ministry seeking an impartial probe against HI secretary general Bholanath Singh, fearing bias if the matter was handled by the federation through its internal process.

The ministry's decision follows a similar request by Hockey India president Dilip Tirkey himself to the ministry on Wednesday.

He also informed the HI EB of the same.

"Since both the complainant and the respondent are members of the Executive Board, it would not be appropriate for Hockey India to conduct its own inquiry as this may give rise to concerns regarding impartiality.

"Accordingly, I have requested the sports secretary to constitute an independent committee... Hockey India will extend its full cooperation," Tirkey wrote informing the HI EB.

Meanwhile, a group of 13 national and international players from Jharkhand have also legally chal-

lenged Hockey Jharkhand elections, officially scheduled for July 19, with all posts including that of Bholanath as president being filled unanimously.

The group, including the likes of Manohar Topno and Sumrai Tete, have accused Bholanath of continuing illegally for a fourth term and flouting rules under the National Sports Governance Act.

LIVE TELECAST

Golf: British Open, Day 2, FanCode, 11 a.m.

Zimbabwe vs Bangladesh: Second T20, FanCode, 4 p.m.

Sindhu stuns Han, enters quarterfinals

BADMINTON

Press Trust of India TOKYO

P.V. Sindhu produced one of her best performances

of the season to outclass World No. 5 Han Yue of China in quarterfinals and storm into the quarterfinals of the Japan Open Super 750 badminton tournament, here on Thursday.

The World No. 10 Indian needed just 35 minutes to register a 21-16, 21-14 win over the higher-ranked Chinese shuttler in their second-round contest.

Sindhu found her rhythm midway through the opening game, striking

the shuttle cleanly and dictating the rallies to take the lead. The former World champion then completely dominated the second game, racing to an 8-0 advantage before comfortably sealing the contest.

The 31-year-old will next face Nozomi Okuhara of Japan, who received a walk-over after top seed An Se-young of South Korea withdrew from their second-round match.

The mixed doubles pair of Tanisha Crasto and Dhruv Kapila bowed out in the pre-quarterfinals, losing 20-22, 17-21 to top seeds Feng Yang Zhe and Huang Dong Ping of China in their round-of-16 clash in 47 minutes.

Vishvanath and Ganga clinch gold

ASIAN JR. BOXING

Press Trust of India JAKART

Vishvanath Suresh (50kg) and Ganga (55kg) clinched gold in the u-23 class as India concluded its Asian u-19 and u-23 boxing championships men's campaign with strong performances here on Thursday.

Vishvanath, the reigning senior Asian champion, eked out a 3-2 victory over

Japan's Daichi Iwai while Ganga edged past Kazakhstan's Bekulnat Boranbek by the same margin.

Vanshaj (65kg) had to settle for a silver medal after a 1-4 loss to Ilkhomjon Ergashev of Uzbekistan.

Second-best

In the u-19 finals, Aditya (55kg) went down to Uzbekistan's Elyor Rustamov 0-5 while Shubham Rajput (90kg) lost to Asadbek Sultanboev from Uzbekistan by the same scoreline.



Well-earned success: Vishvanath, Nisha (u-23 women's 54kg) and Ganga went all the way. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

U Mumba edges Pune Jaguars for second win in succession

UTT

K. Keerthivasan PANAJI

Manush Shah remains a vital cog in U Mumba TT's wheel, even if his form has fluctuated in Ultimate Table Tennis Season 7. A dependable singles player and one of the league's finest doubles specialists, much of the defending champion's fortunes rest on his shoulders.

Against PBG Pune Jaguars at the Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Indoor Stadium here on Thursday, Manush once again proved his worth.

Although he lost his opening singles match, he rose to the occasion in the pivotal mixed doubles as U Mumba edged Pune 9-6 to register its second successive victory.

U Mumba had earlier drawn level through Anna Hurshey, whose disciplined counter-attacking game proved too good for Diya Chitale in the second match.

The Welsh youngster prevailed 2-1 to extend her unbeaten run this season



Gaining control: Manush and Hurshey outclassed Snehit and Prithika in the pivotal mixed doubles. BUTTERFLY UTT

and made it 3-3 in the tie.

The momentum then swung decisively in U Mumba's favour in the mixed doubles.

Manush and Anna combined brilliantly to outclass S.F.R. Snehit and Prithika Pavade 3-0.

Manush's sharp angles from deep behind the table complemented Anna's consistency and composure in the crucial exchanges as the defending champion surged to a 6-2 lead, needing just two more games from the remaining two matches.

In the reverse men's singles, Lilian Bardet produced another fearless display against Omar Assar, the highest-ranked player

in the league at World No. 35. A compulsive attacker who lives by the sword, the Frenchman stuck to his high-risk, high-reward game plan.

It paid off as he battled to a 2-1 victory and virtually (8-4) sealing the tie.

Pune reduced the margin when Prithika Pavade defeated Anusha Kutumbale 2-1 in the final singles match.

The results: U Mumba bt PBG Pune Jaguars 9-6 (Manush Shah lost to S.F.R. Snehit 11-6, 9-11, 6-11; Anna Hurshey bt Diya Chitale 11-9, 9-11, 11-6; Manush & Anna bt Snehit & Prithika Pavade 11-9, 11-4, 11-2; Lilian Bardet bt Omar Assar 7-11, 11-7, 11-10; Anusha Kutumbale lost to Prithika Pavade 8-11, 10-11, 11-10).

Will expansion lead to elevation?

With the 50-over format struggling for identity amid great response to the T20 version, there are question marks over whether the 14-team ODI World Cup will provide enough quality



GETTY IMAGES

R. Kaushik

It feels like it was only the other night that co-hosts Mexico and South Africa kicked off the 23rd edition of the FIFA World Cup, and here we are with only two of the gargantuan 104 matches left to play in the tournament.

One of them, the third-place playoff, is a match no team wants to feature in. It is not even a necessary evil, a consolation prize that offers scant to no consolation. Just days after suffering heartbreaking losses to Spain and Argentina respectively, expecting France and England to put on a show is asking for a little too much. But such are the demands on modern professional sport that the show must go on, no matter that the protagonists believe it is nothing if not a formality.

Contrary to the popular perception that accompanied the expansion of the World Cup to 48 teams for the first time in its long and storied history, this edition has been anything but lop-sided, predictable and undimensional.

The success of Cape Verde, more than anyone else, is a massive shot in the arm for the sport's governing body, which had copped its fair share of criticism when it added 16 nations to the World Cup compared to the previous edition in what was seen largely as a self-appealing, populist move. Till date, Cape Verde remain the only team not to have lost to Spain in this edition, a result Lionel Messi-fuelled Argentina will seek to reprise in Sunday's final at the MetLife Stadium in New Jersey.

Such has been the overwhelming success of the tournament that FIFA boss Gianni Infantino has thrown up the realistic prospect of an even larger field at the next edition in four years' time. It will be jointly co-hosted by Spain, Portugal and Morocco with a game apiece in Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the tournament, first held in Uruguay in 1930.

Just a month prior to this public pondering, Infantino had joked that the only way Italy, the country of his birth and four-time champions, could qualify was if the field was expanded to 64 teams, "or maybe even 208". Obviously, that's not why Infantino's FIFA is mulling another expansion, though it isn't lost on anyone that the Italian national side has hit a terrible roadblock after failing to make it to the World Cup for a third edition on the trot.

Even as the 'Beautiful Game' is considering various possibilities, FIFA's cricketing counterpart, the International Cricket Council, announced an expanded field for the next 50-over World Cup, to be staged in 2027. At a time when the One-Day International version is battling for relevance and primacy, the constant change in formats is anything but ideal.

One would have thought the system in vogue for the last two editions – in



The ODI World Cup. GETTY IMAGES

England in 2019 and in India in 2023 where the 10 participating teams played each other once in a round-robin format with the top four making it to the semifinals – was fair and just because it pitted the strongest sides in the world against each other and offered insurance against a bad day in office or an unkind cut from the elements.

But apparently, those who are more invested in the sport and who are far more qualified to take such calls don't feel so, which is why the 2028 edition will be a 14-team affair, as the ICC had indicated more than five years ago.

Bilateral 50-over contests no longer hold the same interest, attention or standing as they once used to, when T20 cricket was not even in the realms of the imagination. Limited-overs cricket was driven globally entirely by the ODI iteration and series of five, six or even seven matches weren't uncommon. Now, even in the imminence of a World Cup, seldom do teams square off in a series of more than three games. It is perhaps in deference to a pronounced apathy from the fans to whom context has started to matter a lot more in the wake of the 20-over revolution that promises and delivers non-stop excitement, with the bonus of a decisive outcome guaranteed inside four hours (provided teams don't mess around with the overrate).

A thing of the past

Just the other day, Shubman Gill reflected nostalgically on the tri-series showdowns that once dominated the ODI ecosystem. Every summer in Australia, the host nation would lock horns with two other sides over an extended period culminating in a best-of-three finals.

It did sometimes appear too inflated and long drawn-out, but there was so much prestige attached to those trilateral contests. Victory in the finals was often considered next only to clinching the World Cup or the Champions Trophy (instituted in 1998 as the ICC KnockOut Trophy).

Indeed, who can forget the ecstasy in India when M.S. Dhoni's warriors swept the finals 2-0 in early 2008 in the immediacy of the Monkeygate scandal.



The T20 World Cup. GETTY IMAGES

The peerless Sachin Tendulkar was in the forefront of two amazing title clashes that justified Ricky Ponting's prediction that the scoreline in the finals would be 2-0 – except that his team was on the wrong side of the result.

The duels in Sharjah are memorable, not least the one in April 1998 when India sneaked into the final ahead of New Zealand on run rate after Tendulkar's magnificent Desert Storm that was more furious than even the sandstorm which first interrupted and then truncated the final league clash against Australia. And also when Tendulkar celebrated his 25th birthday in style with a second magnificent century in three nights to consign hitherto unbeaten Australia, the great Steve Waugh's Australia, to a crushing defeat.

Now, there are hardly any triangular competitions. Even several bilateral series are played in front of empty stands, and potentially the only occasion when more than two countries play in the same tournament is during the Asia Cup, which switches between 50- and 20-over versions depending on the format in which the next World Cup is to be played.

Rise of the shortest format

Given the packed calendars, the profusion of T20 leagues worldwide and a marked slant towards cramming as many 20-over games as possible into a tight timeframe, the 50-over game has almost been cannibalised, depending largely – if not only – on the flagship World Cup to keep its head just above the swirling water.

How will this 14-team World Cup play out next year? Only time will tell, though this isn't the first time the tournament will have this many teams. In any case, the 'actual' action will only begin from the second stage onwards, when 12 sides will be divided into two groups of six each. The original plan, envisaged in June 2021, to have seven teams in each of the two pools, has been shelved. Rightly so, because of the fear of one-sided matches which will in turn impact both bums on the seats in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia – the joint hosts – and a larger television audience that drives and decides the market value of broadcast

rights and sponsorship wars, among other things.

One set of pundits has argued that a World Cup, especially of the 50-over variety, must be a tight, compact competition involving only the cream so that the 'sanctity' of the event is maintained. They have dismissed Kenya's conquest of the West Indies in 1996 or Ireland's stunning defeat of England 15 years later as the occasional flash in the pan that does not justify the diluting of the field. They argue that as it is, the ICC ODI team rankings encompass only 20 teams, and to have 14 of them playing in a World Cup is a little much, even if only 12 will eventually be in the running for top honours with two teams being eliminated in the first triangular round.

They contend that if there is a perceived need, or even a case, to have more teams in a World Cup, it should be accommodated in the 20-over kind where 93 teams enjoy ICC rankings, from recently crowned No. 1 England to Costa Rica, who currently bring up the foot of the table.

While they might not be thrilled at the 50-over showpiece entity becoming numerically larger, they may be fine with 20 teams competing in the T20 World Cup for the third successive time.

The vehicle to popularity

In its bid to globalise the sport and spread its tentacles to hitherto untouched territories, the ICC chose to use T20s as the vehicle to catch the eye of those in, say, Japan and Italy, in Fiji and Brazil. That it has succeeded to a large extent in its stated desire to attract new nations to its fold is beyond question – at its Annual Conference in Edinburgh on Wednesday, the ICC officially inducted Mauritius as its 11th member nation.

The growing pull of the dramatic 20-over variant has resulted in the return of cricket to the Olympic fold at the 2028 summer Games in Los Angeles, a shot in the arm for a discipline that has been out of the quadrennial extravaganza since its only appearance at the Paris Games in 1900 when only two contestants, Great Britain and the hosts, battled for the gold medal.

While the 20-over game, with its unquestioned charm and magnetic tug, will lure many other countries to the ICC fold, it is hard to see its longer white-ball counterpart taking deep root in too many nations that are not already playing the sport. Against this backdrop, the debate on whether the 50-over World Cup should continue to mushroom numerically will rage on.

There is no right answer, of course. Cricket is on course-correction mode, seeking to erase its 'elitist' reputation. But when only 12 countries play the longest, most traditional format (Tests) and only eight more are part of the ODI ecosystem, it finds itself in the middle of a grim battle somewhat lightened by the tremendous response to the slam-bang 20-over module.

THE GIST

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HEALTH

Beyond weight loss: how GLP-1s can affect your skin, hair and nails

The skin, hair and nails are highly responsive to changes in weight, nutrition, hormones, inflammation and physiological stress; patients taking GLP-1 drugs must plan ahead and ensure they are used carefully, with coordination between the prescribing physician and a dermatologist

Monisha Madhumita

GLP-1 (Glucagon-Like Peptide-1) based medicines have changed the management of obesity, type 2 diabetes and metabolic health across the world. Drugs such as and tirzepatide are prescription medicines, however, not cosmetic treatments. Their primary role is medical: improving weight-related health, blood sugar control and cardiometabolic risk. However, their effects are often visible externally. For this reason, dermatology is becoming an important part of the GLP-1 conversation.

Weight-skin connection

The skin, hair and nails are highly responsive to changes in weight, nutrition, hormones, inflammation and physiological stress. When a person loses weight rapidly on GLP-1 treatment, changes may be seen in the face, body, scalp and nails. These changes are not usually dangerous, but they can affect comfort, appearance, confidence and quality of life. In some patients, they may also signal nutritional deficiency, worsening of an underlying condition, or the need for medical intervention.

The most widely discussed change is facial volume loss. As body weight reduces, facial fat may reduce as well. Some people notice hollowing of the cheeks or temples, deeper folds, looser skin around the jawline, or a more tired appearance.

The phrase 'Ozempic face' is commonly used, but it is not medically precise. These changes can occur after any significant or rapid weight loss, whether or not medication is involved. What is new now, is the number of patients now experiencing medically assisted weight loss and seeking advice about the aesthetic consequences.

The skin on the body may also change. After substantial weight reduction, loose skin can appear over the abdomen, arms, thighs, breasts or under the chin. In humid climates, these folds can become sites of sweating, friction, itching, pigmentation, intertrigo, fungal infections or bacterial irritation. In skin of colour, post-inflammatory pigmentation in these areas can be persistent and distressing. For some patients, what begins as loose skin may become a recurring medical problem involving itching, odour, rash or infection.

Effects on hair

Hair shedding is another common concern. Many patients report increased hair fall a few months after starting treatment. This often resembles telogen effluvium, a temporary shedding pattern that can follow rapid weight loss, illness, surgery, childbirth, crash dieting or nutritional stress. The medication may not be the only reason. Reduced intake of protein, iron, vitamin D, vitamin B12, zinc or overall calories may contribute. Some



Addressing concerns: When a person loses weight rapidly on GLP-1 treatment, changes may be seen in the face, body, scalp and nails. For this reason, dermatology is becoming an important part of the GLP-1 conversation. GETTY IMAGES

patients may also have underlying female pattern hair loss, PMOS, thyroid disease, low ferritin or autoimmune hair loss that becomes more apparent during weight loss. Hair fall during GLP-1 treatment should therefore be assessed properly rather than dismissed. After thorough examination, depending on the diagnosis, treatment may include topical minoxidil, low-dose oral minoxidil, correction of nutritional deficiencies, anti-androgen therapy in some women, platelet-rich plasma, treatment of dandruff or scalp inflammation, or clinical monitoring when the pattern is self-limiting.

Nail changes receive less attention but remain relevant. Patients may notice brittle nails, peeling, ridging, slower growth or easy breakage. These changes may reflect reduced nutrition, frequent wet work, thyroid disease, eczema, psoriasis, fungal infection or anaemia. Treatment should be directed at the cause: moisturising the nail folds, avoiding repeated trauma from harsh manicures, checking for fungal infections when indicated, and correcting deficiencies when present.

GLP-1s to treat skin diseases

There is now a growing interest in the role of GLP-1s in inflammatory skin disease. These medicines may have anti-inflammatory effects beyond weight loss and blood sugar control. Early reports suggest possible benefits in conditions such as psoriasis and hidradenitis suppurativa, especially in patients who also have obesity, insulin resistance or type 2 diabetes.

This is clinically plausible. Psoriasis and hidradenitis suppurativa are not

GLP-1s are not beauty drugs. They are powerful metabolic medicines with visible dermatological consequences and early anti-inflammatory promise

simply local skin problems. They are chronic inflammatory diseases that often overlap with metabolic dysfunction. Weight loss, improved insulin sensitivity and reduced systemic inflammation may improve disease severity in some patients. Early studies and case reports suggest that GLP-1 therapy may reduce flares, pain, scaling, drainage or itching in selected individuals.

However, the evidence is still developing. GLP-1s should not yet be presented as standard dermatology treatments for psoriasis or hidradenitis suppurativa. Their role may be most relevant when inflammatory skin disease and metabolic disease coexist, but larger controlled studies are needed.

Planning ahead

From an aesthetic perspective, the priority should be to plan rather than panic. Patients who already have hair loss, acne, pigmentation, psoriasis, eczema, hidradenitis suppurativa, loose skin concerns or nutritional deficiencies may benefit from a baseline dermatology review before, or early during treatment. This is especially important for women, vegetarians, people with PMOS, post-partum patients, those with heavy menstrual bleeding, and patients with a history of bariatric surgery or low iron stores.

Skincare during GLP-1 treatment should be simple, consistent and barrier-supportive: a gentle cleanser, regular moisturiser, sunscreen, and treatment of specific concerns as they arise. Retinoids, peels, lasers, radiofrequency, ultrasound tightening, fillers, biostimulators, platelet-rich plasma or surgery may all have a role in selected patients. However, timing matters. Major aesthetic procedures are often better planned once weight has stabilised, because ongoing weight loss can alter facial volume, skin laxity and procedural outcomes.

Multi-pronged approach

The central message is coordination of care. The endocrinologist or prescribing physician manages the indication for treatment, dose escalation, metabolic response, systemic side effects and long-term safety. The dermatologist manages the visible and inflammatory consequences: hair shedding, skin laxity, pigmentation, acne, intertrigo, psoriasis, hidradenitis suppurativa, nail changes and procedural planning. GLP-1s are not beauty drugs. They are powerful metabolic medicines with visible dermatological consequences and early anti-inflammatory promise. Used carefully, and with close collaboration between the dermatologist and endocrinologist, they can support metabolic health while helping patients manage changes in their skin, hair, nails and aesthetic confidence in a safe and informed way.

(Dr. Monisha Madhumita is a consultant dermatologist at Saveetha Medical College, Chennai. mail.monisha.m@gmail.com)

THE GIST

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HUMERUS



Cyclosporiasis outbreak: what is gastrointestinal illness that has affected over 1,500 in the U.S.

Zubeda Hamid

A widespread outbreak of a gastrointestinal illness has been reported in the United States. The infection, cyclosporiasis, caused by the cyclospora parasite, occurs when people consume food or water that contains the parasite.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in a health advisory issued on July 14, it has received reports of 1,645 confirmed domestic cases of cyclosporiasis since May 1 and is aware of 5,100 cases that require further analysis to confirm the illness, from 34 States, substantially higher than the 249 cases reported in the country by this same time last year. Because cyclosporiasis is often underdiagnosed and underreported, the true number of illnesses is likely higher than what has been reported, it noted. At present, a specific food item has not yet been confirmed as the source.

Cyclosporiasis is a type of food poisoning, caused by the microscopic parasite, *Cyclospora cayentensis*. It spreads through the faeco-oral route, which means that



Cyclosporiasis is a type of food poisoning, caused by the microscopic parasite, *Cyclospora cayentensis*. GETTY IMAGES

food or water contaminated by faeces containing the parasite, cause the illness. It does not spread from person to person. While it is usually not life-threatening, symptoms can range from mild to severe and may last from anywhere between a few days to over a month. Symptoms usually begin about a week after exposure. The main symptom is frequent, explosive, watery diarrhoea. Other symptoms include bloating, loss of appetite, stomach

cramps, fatigue and even weight loss. Sometimes vomiting and low-grade fever may be experienced.

Anyone can contract the infection. In children, the elderly and those with weak immune systems, the infection may be severe. Untreated, the symptoms can last for a long time and patients can relapse as well. Complications can include severe dehydration, malabsorption (a digestive disorder where your intestine is unable to absorb nutrients), cholecystitis (inflammation of the gall bladder), and reactive arthritis (joint inflammation).

Testing and treatment

Testing for cyclosporiasis is challenging, because the parasite might not shed enough to be detected in one stool sample, and it is not part of routine stool testing. This means that patients may have to more than one sample over several days for an accurate diagnosis. Stool PCR tests to identify the parasite's DNA and stool microscopy that identifies the parasite's eggs can diagnose the condition.

As far as treatment goes, the CDC

recommends treating confirmed cases of cyclosporiasis with 740 days of trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole (TMP-SMX) for adults and children aged over two months. Longer courses may be considered for patients with immunocompromising conditions. Hydration is also recommended.

While the infection may go away on its own without treatment, it can put patients at risk of complications and the CDC recommends visiting a clinician if you have prolonged or watery diarrhea, especially if it lasts more than a few days.

This is not the first cyclosporiasis outbreak in the U.S. Previous outbreaks have been linked to consuming contaminated fresh produce. Fruits and vegetables tied to cyclosporiasis outbreaks include: leafy greens, lettuce, spinach, basil, cilantro and parsley as well as other produce such as raspberries and snow peas.

The CDC recommends reducing risk by thoroughly washing fresh produce under clean running water before eating and by following safe food handling practices. (zubeda.h@thehindu.co.in)