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STRONG INFLOWS
India records highest quarterly FDI in 15 years
BUSINESS » PAGE 13

TRUMP'S CRACKDOWN
U.S. pauses immigrant visa appointments
WORLD » PAGE 14

CLOSING IN
India has Sri Lanka on the mat in second Test
SPORT » PAGE 15

95 killed in Nepal flash flood, hundreds missing

Around 133 Indians among those missing from villages bordering Tibet; a rock-and-ice landslide along the Nepal-China border caused a debris-laden flood, say authorities citing satellite imagery

Sanjeev Satgainya
KATHMANDU

At least 95 people were killed and more than 400, including around 133 Indians, were reported missing or out of contact after a massive flash flood in Nepal's Bhotekoshi River swept through villages in Rasuwa, a district bordering China's Tibet region, on Wednesday morning, authorities said.

The Office of the Prime Minister (PMO) and Council of Ministers said in the evening that 95 bodies had been recovered as of 7 p.m. (Nepal time), adding that 391 foreign nationals and 93 Nepali citizens were out of contact. "Several security personnel, government officials and employees of hydropower projects are also out of contact," the PMO said. "The disaster has damaged 19 motorable bridges and 40 kilometres of road."

As authorities stepped up rescue operations, officials said the death toll could rise and that it would take days to assess the full extent of the damage.

Nepal's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority, citing a preliminary analysis of Planet Labs satellite imagery, said in the evening that a rock-and-ice landslide along the Nepal-China border, about 20 km northeast of the Rasuwagadhi border crossing, caused a debris-laden flood in the Lhende River, a tributary of Bhotekoshi, that flowed through Timure and entered the Trishuli River.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10
WESTERN DISTURBANCE
» PAGE 10

Flood fury: A screengrab shows water flowing across a residential area and damaging a bridge near the Nepal-Tibet border. PTI

Modi offers all possible help to tragedy-hit Nepal

NEW DELHI
Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Nepal's Prime Minister Balendra Shah and offered "all possible assistance" to deal with Wednesday's devastating flash flood. The Indian Air Force will soon deploy two aircraft with relief material, sources said. » PAGE 10

Why was Acting CJ of Rajasthan HC not shifted, judge asks CJI

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

In three separate letters to Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant this month, Supreme Court judge Justice Sandeep Mehta asked why his "fervent appeals" for the transfer of Rajasthan High Court Acting Chief Justice (ACJ) Sanjeev Prakash Sharma have been "ignored" despite there being "clear evidence" of "favouritism".

The CJI responded to reports of the letter, emphasising in a statement issued by the Supreme Court on Wednesday night that he has already taken note of the concerns raised by the judge.

Describing the "grim and disturbing scenario" in his parent High Court in Rajasthan, Justice Mehta had said in his first letter on August 2 that the ACJ displayed a total lack of leadership qualities and exhibited conduct unbecoming of a leader of the institution on more than one occasion. "It is indeed ironical that on one hand, the Chief Justice of India is flagging corrupt practices by judges in the eve of their careers, and here we have an ACJ indulging in these very activities with impunity," one of the letters said.

> It is indeed ironical that on one hand, the CJI is flagging corrupt practices by judges in the eve of their careers, and here we have an ACJ indulging in these very activities
>
> **JUSTICE SANDEEP MEHTA**
> SC judge

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

Soul of a city

Shining night: A newly installed fountain lit up in Hyderabad on Wednesday. The large oyster-and-pearl structure, symbolising Hyderabad's identity as the 'city of pearls', has become a new attraction at Madina Centre in the old city area. NAGARA GOPAL

IN BRIEF

Police to bar CJP stir ahead of BRICS meet

NEW DELHI
Delhi Police will not allow the protest called by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) on September 5 in New Delhi, nearly a week before the BRICS meet, a senior officer said. » Page 3

Maharashtra PSC cancels hiring over paper leak

MUMBAI
The Maharashtra Public Service Commission cancelled the recruitment process for the post of Drug Inspector (Group-B) following a probe into paper leak allegations. » Page 10

Amit Shah to visit Manipur in first week of October, says CM

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will visit Manipur in the first week of October, Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh said on Wednesday.

The Chief Minister called on Mr. Shah at his official residence in New Delhi around 3 p.m. to update him on the law and order situation in ethnic violence-hit Manipur. "Amit Shah*ji* agreed to lay the foundation stone of a medical college in Senapati district and oversee other developmental projects in the State," the Chief Minister said, adding that the Union Home Minister has assured him that the Centre would fulfil the aspirations of the people of the State. "The Home Minister also lauded the State for resuming the Imphal-Dimapur-Guwahati bus services and ensuring free movement of all communities on National Highway 2," Mr. Singh said.

Mr. Shah last visited Manipur in April 2024 to campaign for the BJP during the Lok Sabha election.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah being felicitated by Manipur CM Yumnam Khemchand Singh in New Delhi on Wednesday. PTI

India, China agree to advance talks on boundary

Ananth Krishnan
BEIJING

India and China have agreed to advance discussions on "an early and substantial harvest of boundary delimitation", according to an eight-point outcome document released by both countries on Wednesday.

A day after the 25th round of talks between the Special Representatives (SR) held in Beijing, India and China have agreed to hold the next meeting of an expert-level mechanism on trans-border rivers, which India has been pushing for, in September, and to maintain communication on sharing hydrological data.

DETAILS ON
» PAGE 10

Bihar Police to conduct DNA test on buffalo to settle ownership dispute

Amarnath Tewary
PATNA

A senior Bihar police official has instructed the Gaya Superintendent of Police (Rural) to conduct a DNA test on a buffalo to determine the bovine's rightful owner. The move came following a dispute between two persons, each claiming to be the owner.

Inspector General of Police (Magadh range) Vikas Vaibhav instructed Gaya (Rural) SP Divyanjali Jaiswal to resolve the matter through a swift scientific investigation.

"There has been a dispute between two parties - Suraj Yadav and Prakash Manjhi - regarding the buffalo. Therefore, a DNA test will be conducted... What other options are left to determine its real owner?" IG Vaibhav said.

The Magadh IG said since one of the claimants said the mother of the buffalo is still in his village, the police decided to go for a DNA test

The dispute arose after the buffalo was allegedly stolen from Mr. Yadav's house in Sirh village of the district a few days ago. His long search for the stolen bovine ended at neighbouring Nauranga hamlet when someone informed him that the animal was seen tied to a pole at Mr. Manjhi's house. While Mr. Yadav reached Nauranga in no time and brought back the buffalo, it enraged Mr. Manjhi, who went to the Atri police station to claim that he was the rightful owner.

Station House Officer Ajay Kumar summoned Mr. Yadav with the buffalo to the Atri police station, where the animal was kept for two days. However, following a commotion by Mr. Yadav's supporters, the police eventually handed over the buffalo to him.

Mr. Manjhi, meanwhile, filed a complaint against Mr. Yadav under the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. The dispute escalated after local political leaders entered the scene. Opposition Rashtriya Janata Dal leader and former Atri MLA Ajay Kumar Yadav alias Ranjit Yadav approached the zonal IG and submitted a formal request for an impartial probe into the matter. "The manner in which a case was registered against Suraj Yadav is completely unjustifiable and needs proper inquiry into the role of the local police," the RJD leader said.

The Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular), an ally of the ruling National Democratic Alliance in Bihar, too got involved in the matter, with party's national spokesperson Shyam Sundar Manjhi saying that the senior officer has assured a thorough probe into the matter. "We all should wait for the police investigation to be completed," he said.

Now, the zonal IG has ordered a DNA test of both the mother buffalo, which Mr. Yadav claims is still in his village, and the animal in the eye of the dispute to ascertain the rightful owner. "Since [Suraj] Yadav claimed the mother of the buffalo is in his village, we decided to go for a DNA test," Mr. Vaibhav told *The Hindu*.

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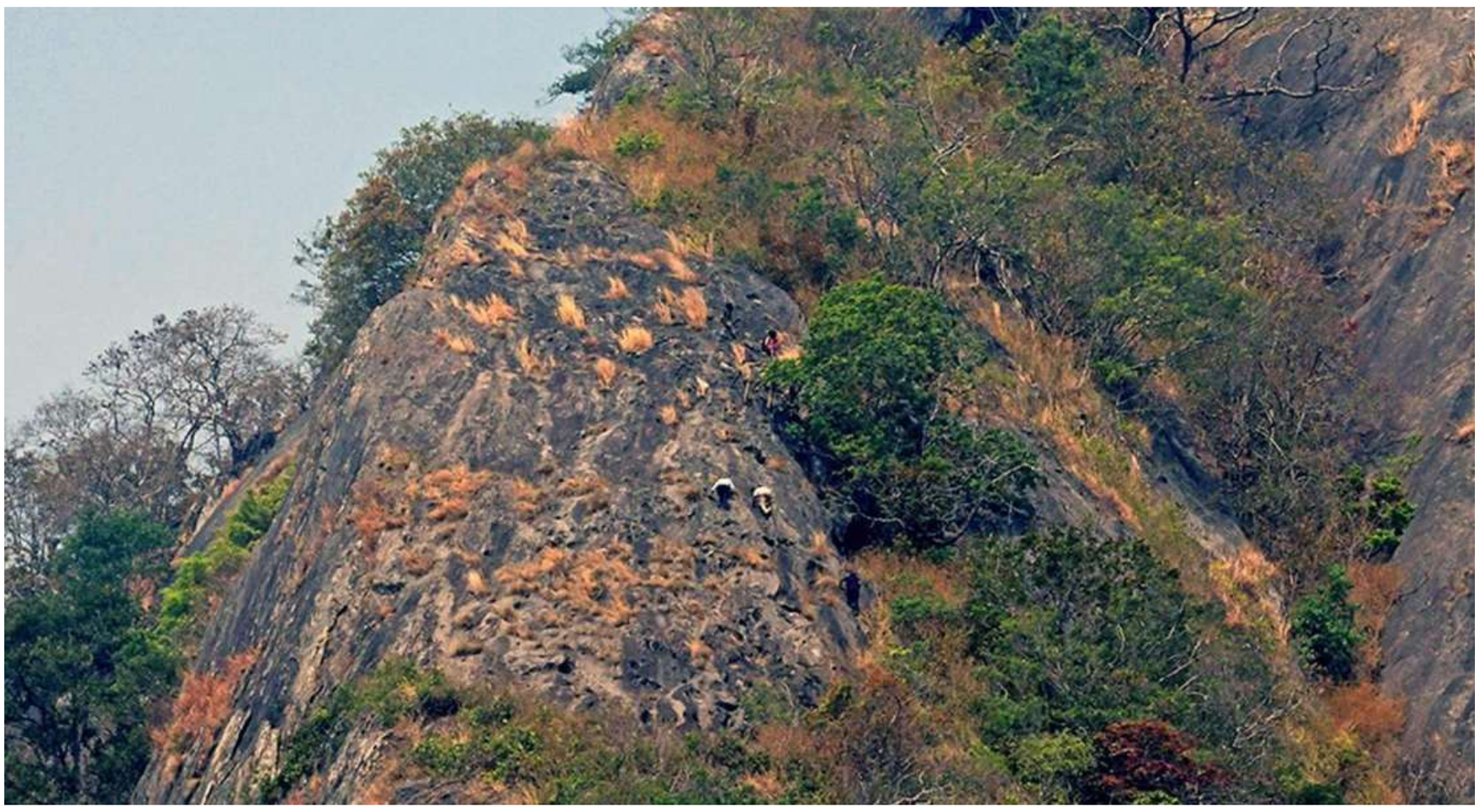
Perilous passions

Wannabe adventurists perform motorbike stunts on roads, venture into unknown forests, and step into unfamiliar waterbodies, posing risk to their lives as well as others'. **Aathira Haridas** tries to find out what goes through their minds and also elicits response from govt. authorities who usually bail out the adventure-seekers of distress



Uphill task: Rescue teams climb a hill to save a youth trapped on Kurumbachi hills at Malampuzha. Authorities are forced to spend much time and effort in such rescue efforts, which are also quite expensive. FILE PHOTO

On June 26, 2026, what would have been an otherwise ordinary day took an unsettling turn as dusk fell over Valook, a scenic village located about 85 km from Kozhikode town. Local residents were jolted to attention by loud calls that echoed and the flashlights that beamed across the hilly region that leads to Nadapuram Mudi, a nearby hillock.

The unusual movements, along with the sighting of two motorbikes parked some 200 metres off the hill, stirred alarm. The residents realised that a group of adventurers might be trapped on the hill, located within the forest. "Soon, a search party, including residents, was ready to move into the forest to track the missing persons," recalls Bipin Thomas, a resident.

T.P. Pavithran, a former local body head, remembers that the youngsters had pulled a dangerous stunt by venturing into the unfamiliar forest terrain in fading light.

"The lights and loud calls fell silent after a while as fear gripped the village. Wild animals, including elephants, roam the area. Apparently, three youngsters had entered the forest in the evening. Since one of them couldn't climb further, he decided to wait midway, while the others went ahead. On their return, the duo couldn't find their friend and started shouting and searching for him," recalls Pavithran.

Shortly, a 35-member-strong rescue team led by the officials of the Kerala Forest department ventured into the forest at night on a risky mission. The biggest challenge before the team was the absence of specific information about the location where the youth had gone missing and the heavy blanket of darkness that fell over the region.

Spotted and booked

After the tedious rescue mission that lasted several hours, the missing youth was spotted, frightened and exhausted. After rescuing him, the Forest officials dutifully booked all three for trespassing on the forest. Section 27 of the Kerala Forest Act, 1961, prescribes a punishment of five years for the offence, warn Forest officials.

The growing trend among youth to carry out impulsive adventurous acts and throw themselves into uncharted territories has been troubling authorities no end. Exploring forest terrains, copying risky social media trends, acting out stunt scenes or taking dangerous vehicle rides, and stepping into unknown waters have cost many their lives. Doing daring stunts on roads, usually performed by professionals with safety precautions, has left many a youth injured, while endangering the lives of others.

The recent 'trekking misadventure' of G.S. Saranya, a Nadapuram native, had pinned two neighbouring States, Kerala and Karnataka, in a state of concern for almost four days. Saranya, who got lost in the forest, was rescued in the Tadiandamol forests after a joint search operation.

> There is a disciplined way to experience the thrill and adrenaline of biking. Public spaces such as roads are not places to perform stunts
>
> **CALLMEVENOM,** a biker known for freestyle stunts

Weeks after her return, Saranya maintains that she didn't trespass on the forest and had followed all rules. "I got lost in the wild because I took a different trail. What I have learned from my experience is that when in doubt while trekking downhill, never descend. Instead, one should go uphill and find fellow trekkers," says Saranya. The incident prompted the Karnataka Forest department to release a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for trekking trails in the State.

People venturing into restricted forest areas and endangering themselves as well as the wildlife is a matter of concern for forest officials. "The three riders who got lost in Nadapuram Mudi had asked the residents of Valook for the route to climb the hill. The residents should have advised them that it was illegal to trek there and dissuaded them from entering the terrain," says M. Joshil, Kozhikode Divisional Forest Officer (DFO).

Pavithran notes that instances of unauthorised entry have increased in the region. "There is another hill called Koranappara, where people have gotten stranded and had to be rescued," he recalls.

"Trekking is regulated in Keralam forests, and the trekkers are always accompanied by trained guides," says Muhammed Anvar, Assistant Conservator of Forests (Biodiversity Cell). However, Keralam is yet to come up with a guideline or SOP for trekking in forest terrains. "Such a document will be helpful for trekkers," says Muhammed, considering the increasing fad among the youth for trekking.

A ₹78-lakh rescue effort

The rescue missions also come with a heavy price tag as mobilising teams with all the required equipment is expensive. Keralam had to shell out ₹78 lakh to rescue Babu, a youth who got stuck in a rock cleft after he slipped while trekking the Cherad hill in Malampuzha in 2022, according to officials involved in the operation.

He was stuck on the hill for nearly two days, putting the whole government machinery into a state of overdrive. After his rescue, several people attempted to climb the hill, adding to the Forest department's troubles, they say.

Rani B. Menon, a trekker for the past 20 years, once lost her way while trekking downhill after the Kailash Mansarovar trek. "It had started snowing, and I continued walking without noticing that my fellow trekkers had taken refuge from the snow. Suddenly, I realised that I was walking alone. Perhaps I was absent-minded. Realising the folly, I immediately walked back. Had I not, it could not have ended well. What one needs to understand is that these are not situations for you to become adventurous, but to go by the rule book," says Rani, retired scientific officer, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre.

Wheeling bikes, lifting the rear wheel off the ground, standing on the seat or gas tank with both arms extended and drifting the vehicle in circles with the rider leaning from it are some of the popular acts performed by both professionals as well as amateurs.

The daring acts performed by youths on roads and campuses, where they tend to turn the stretches into Le Mans circuits, have added to the workload of enforcement officials of the Road Transport department while exposing the performers to huge risks. "When youngsters attempt to modify their vehicles to a dangerous and unrecognisable extent, it endangers their lives as well as others'," notes Biju Isaac, Enforcement RTO, Ernakulam.

"It must be the adrenaline rush or the urge to get noticed that pushes the youth, mostly those between the ages of 18 and 22, into daring stunts. They would have just gotten their licence, and suddenly there is a yearning to prove something, get noticed. They are aware of the risks involved, yet they modify their motorbikes and do these stunts," notes Biju.

"There is a disciplined way to experience the thrill and adrenaline of biking," feels Callmevenom, a biker known for freestyle stunts. Performing stunts while dressed as the comic-book character Venom, Callmevenom says the rush of executing the manoeuvres is exhilarating. "One needs to know the techniques well and follow proper discipline and safety measures while performing stunts. Public spaces such as roads are not places to perform stunts," warns the biker, who performs at colleges and private events.

What eco-tourism is all about

Raju Francis, Managing Director, Kerala Forest Development Corporation, lays stress on keeping decorum following instructions issued by authorities while visiting eco-tourism centres. "Most people now travel to record reels, create online content, or to have a good time. However, eco-tourism is all about understanding the ecology and observing nature with minimum intervention. One should remember that a forest is an unpredictable terrain. So is the behaviour of a wild animal," cautions Raju, who had earlier headed the eco-tourism wing of the Kerala Forest department.

"Your rights are reserved and limited in a reserve forest. What is not prescribed cannot be done," he asserts.

Adventurous acts may give one an adrenaline rush, instant gratification. Yet, it pays to keep an eye open for their flip side too, say officials.

Brainstorming: Rescue officers prepare for a search operation in the forest areas of Koodaranji after a youth went missing during a trekking attempt. FILE PHOTO

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TENDER NOTICE No.108 to 113_DRM_W_HYB_26 dt.25/08/2026 PUB/606

On behalf of the President of India, Divisional Railway Manager/Works, Hyderabad Division, South Central Railway, Secunderabad invites Open Tenders for the following works through **e-procurement** up to 15.00 hours of **18/09/2026.**

Tender No. : 108_DRM_W_HYB_26 **Name of the work:** Hyderabad Division: Capacity Augmentation and Upgradation of Infrastructure Facilities at RRB/SC **Approx Value (₹):** 3,39,68,484 **EMD (₹):** 6,79,400

Tender No. : 109_DRM_W_HYB_26 **Name of the work:** HYB Divn: Construction of RSP stores at designated location in M&E stores with re-construction of workshop boundary wall with M&E stores **Approx Value (₹):** 8,41,32,196 **EMD (₹):** 16,82,700

Tender No. : 110_DRM_W_HYB_26 **Name of the work:** Hyderabad Division: Reconditioning of MCI inserts(of Points & Crossings Sleepers by using TERRA C-I-94-Electrodes of make L& T, Advani Oerlicon, Diffusion, SHARP-650 or Equivalent approved by RDSO for reconditioning of Cast iron alloys)(part of reconditioning of points and crossings works) **Approx Value (₹):** 66,57,250 **EMD (₹):** 1,33,200

Tender No. : 111_DRM_W_HYB_26 **Name of the work:** HYB Division:-Annual Zonal contract for bridge works in HYB Division for the year 2026-27 **Approx Value (₹):** 60,00,000 **EMD (₹):** 1,20,000

Tender No. : 112_DRM_W_HYB_26 **Name of the work:** HYB Divn: Extension of Traverser-I (22X10.5m) and Traverser-II (Size 22X7m) towards new admin Building side at CWS/LGDS **Approx Value (₹):** 71,12,718 **EMD (₹):** 1,42,300

Tender No. : 113_DRM_W_HYB_26 **Name of the work:** HYB Divn: Augmentation & Re-location of Bio-Tank Maintenance Shed at low lying area in CWS/LGD **Approx Value (₹):** 2,24,36,793 **EMD (₹):** 4,48,700

For further details visit the website **www.ireps.gov.in**

Divisional Railway Manager (Works), Hyderabad

Tender No. C_SG_36_619 Dt: 24.08.2026 PUB/607

On behalf of the President of India, Sr. Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer, Secunderabad Division, South Central Railway, Secunderabad invites open tenders for the following works through E-Procurement of the Tenders

S.No.: 01 **Tender No. & Date:** C_SG_36_619 Dt:24/08/2026 Closing dt:16/09/2026 **Name of the work:** 1. Signaling arrangements for Elimination of end cabins (A, B, and Goods) by integrating their operations with Ramagundam station and the Bypass cabin (PH: 1600, IRPSM ID: 11.05.16.25.3.17.022) 2. Signaling and Telecom arrangements for proposed new crossing station at Km No.8-9 between RDM-GDK line on deposit terms. (Deposit work). **Approx Advertised Value (₹):** 37,59,65,525.08 **Bid security/EMD (₹):** 75,19,300/-

For further details visit the website **www.ireps.gov.in**

Sr. Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer, Secunderabad
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NEET aspirant found dead in Kota; 8th death this year

Press Trust of India
KOTA

A 20-year-old NEET aspirant from Madhya Pradesh allegedly died by suicide at her rented apartment in Kota, police said on Wednesday.

Khooshbu Patel, who was preparing for the medical entrance examination for the second time, was found dead in her apartment after her younger sister, also a coaching student in Kota, returned from classes on Tuesday night.

Police said no suicide note was recovered and the exact reason behind the extreme step was yet to be ascertained.

This is the eighth reported case of death by suicide involving a coaching student in Kota since January this year.

(Those in distress can contact Tele MANAS at 14416 to seek help)

Police to bar CJP stir in New Delhi ahead of BRICS meet

AISA offers support to Sept. 5 protest march, called a week before two-day BRICS leaders' summit; several foreign dignitaries, including Russian President, expected at the international conference

Lavpreet Kaur
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police will not allow the protest march called by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) on September 5 in New Delhi, nearly a week before the two-day BRICS leaders' summit, a senior officer said on Wednesday.

The CJP had announced on August 24 a "peaceful march" from India Gate to Delhi Police headquarters against the Centre's "failure" to honour the assurances that had prompted the group to end its 36-day agitation at Jantar Mantar on July 25.

On Wednesday, the All India Students' Association (AISA) offered support to the proposed 3-km march and demanded withdrawal of FIRs against student protesters and a probe into allegations of police brutality at earlier protests.

CJP has called for a march against the Centre's 'failure' to fulfil its vows that had prompted the group to end its 36-day stir. FILE PHOTO

AISA president Neha Bora said issues that triggered the agitation at Jantar Mantar remain unresolved.

Prohibitory orders

"Section 163 of the BNSS is currently in force in the New Delhi district, prohibiting processions, demonstrations and assembly of five or more persons, except at designated protest sites," the officer said.

"So far, we have not received a request from the outfit. Even if we do, a protest march won't be allowed in New Delhi due to security concerns," said the officer, adding that they are likely to ask the organisers to seek permission for the event outside the New Delhi district.

Meanwhile, the police have stepped up security in the district for the international summit on September 12-13, which several dignitaries, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, are expected to attend.

Security stepped up

The force is chalking out deployment and accommodation arrangements for the visitors and finalising routes for the movement of their vehicles while trying to minimise disruption to regular traffic. Delhi Police's Special Branch, along with the New Delhi district unit, is assessing the likely turnout, possible mobilisation from other States, social media activity and the agenda of the proposed march called by the outfit next week.

PIL on flood damage: Gauhati HC issues notices to Assam, Nagaland

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

The Gauhati High Court has directed the Assam and Nagaland governments and other authorities concerned to submit detailed affidavits by November 3 on eastern Assam's devastating flood in response to an August 17 petition filed by Congress leader Debabrata Saikia.

Mr. Saikia is a former MLA from Nazira, one of the worst-affected Assembly constituencies in Sivasagar district. Flash floods caused by extremely heavy rain along the Assam-Nagaland border hit Sivasagar in July. Adjoining Charaideo and Jorhat districts also suffered extensive damage.

"Chief Justice Ashutosh Kumar observed that the concerns I had raised in the public interest litigation (PIL) were genuine and noted that I have been pursuing the issue of illegal mining in the Dikhow river over the past eight years," Mr. Saikia said on Wednesday.

Former Nazira MLA Debabrata Saikia. FILE PHOTO

Scrutiny of factors

His petition seeks judicial scrutiny into the factors that contributed to the floods, including alleged illegal mining in the Dikhow riverbed, activities in the Nagaland catchment areas, and the release of water from upstream dams.

Mr. Saikia alleged that the July flood, which claimed more than 80 lives and affected lakhs of people, were aggravated by prolonged administrative inaction despite earlier warnings and court directions.

He cited his PILs in 2018 and 2019 before the Gauhati HC, which raised an alarm over alleged illegal and unscientific sand and stone mining in the Dikhow river, particularly in areas along the Assam-Nagaland border.

Mr. Saikia said the High Court in 2019 sought measures to be undertaken against illegal mining and the constitution of a dedicated Mines and Minerals Task Force Battalion. The court repeated the directions in 2022.

"These directions were not effectively implemented, and illegal mining continued in the riverbed," he said, referring to a January 12 report of the State's Water Resources Department. This report had warned that continued excavation could alter the course of the river and lead to severe consequences.

Electrocution deaths: Tripura police accept complaint after IYC protests

Syed Sajjad Ali
AGARTALA

The Tripura police on Wednesday accepted a complaint for registration five days after the initial denial over the death of two men who were electrocuted by an illegally hooked wire in Melaghar area in Sepahijala district.

The police took the action after the Indian Youth Congress (IYC) members, led by State president Neel Kamal Saha, staged an hour-long dharna at the Melaghar police station.

Mr. Saha alleged that the police were reluctant to accept the complaint allegedly due to pressure from the local MLA and Higher Education Minister Kishor Barman. He claimed that the Minister even told the family of one of the deceased to "avoid legal formalities". "I want to ask Mr. Barman what his reaction would be if the same happened to his family," Mr. Saha said.

Hooda attacks BJP over Gurugram civic woes

The Hindu Bureau
GURUGRAM

Rohtak MP Deepender Hooda on Wednesday criticised the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government over Gurugram's recurring waterlogging, traffic congestion, sanitation and civic infrastructure problems, alleging that the city's rapid growth has not been matched by adequate public infrastructure.

Addressing a press conference at the Congress headquarters in Delhi, Mr. Hooda said Gurugram's problems are visible across the country and accused the BJP government of failing to address them despite being in power for 12 years. "If Gurugram develops, the burden on Delhi will decrease," he said, pointing to the thousands of people who travel daily from Delhi to Gurugram for work.

Rohtak MP Deepender Hooda (centre) at a press conference in New Delhi on Wednesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Mr. Hooda said Gurugram, once regarded as a preferred destination for businesses and global companies, is now struggling to attract fresh investment because of poor civic management.

Meanwhile, Gurugram MP Rao Inderjit Singh met Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini and discussed waterlogging and garbage collection issues in the city. He urged the CM to question officials over their pre-monsoon assurances that the city would remain free of waterlogging. He called for an impartial survey of natural drainage channels and strict action against encroachments.

Oppn. MPs seek fair share of funds from Fadnavis

Press Truct of India
MUMBAI

The Opposition MPs from Maharashtra met Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis here on Wednesday and raised a range of issues, including not getting a fair share of development funds for their respective constituencies. They also demanded that they get fund from the District Planning and Development Committee (DPDC).

Congress Lok Sabha member Chhatrapati Shahu said they told Mr. Fadnavis that the treatment given to Opposition MPs in comparison to those from the ruling parties in fund allocation was not fair. They (Opposition MPs) do not get a fair share of development funds, he claimed.

Timings
MUMBAI

THURSDAY, AUG. 27		
RISE	06:23	SET 18:58
RISE	18:30	SET 05:26
FRIDAY, AUG. 28		
RISE	06:23	SET 18:57
RISE	19:06	SET 06:18
SATURDAY, AUG. 29		
RISE	06:23	SET 18:56
RISE	19:41	SET 07:11

Mumbai Weather	max	min
Mumbai Airport	32	26
Pune	29	22
Mumbai City	32	29

Mumbai Today
31ºC The weather will be slight warm. Spell of light to moderate rain and thunder-shower will occur. Night will be comfortable.

Mumbai Tomorrow
32ºC The weather to remain little warm. Night will be comfortable. Spell of light rain and thundershower to occur.

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HIMACHAL PRADESH INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT BOARD (HPIDB)
New Himrus Building, Himland, Circular Road, Shimla – 171001
(on behalf of the Department of General Administration, Government of Himachal Pradesh)

SELECTION OF AN OPERATOR FOR OPERATION, MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF STATE GUEST HOUSE - "HIMACHAL NIKETAN" AT DWARKA, NEW DELHI

HPIDB, on behalf of the Department of General Administration, Government of Himachal Pradesh (the **"Authority"**), invites technical and financial bids online from eligible entities for out-sourcing the Operation, Maintenance and Management of "Himachal Niketan", the State Guest House of Himachal Pradesh at Sector-19, Pocket-1, Dwarka, New Delhi.

About the Property:
A newly developed hospitality and accommodation facility on a land parcel of approx. 1.6 acres with a built-up area of approx. 2.1lakh sq. ft., comprising 2 basement levels, 6 upper floors and a terrace, with 107 guest rooms (including 2 VVIP suites), student and drivers' dormitories, a restaurant (80 covers), a banquet hall (300 persons), 2 multi-purpose halls, souvenir shop, office areas and 123 car and 89 two-wheeler parking spaces.
The complete RFP Document may be downloaded from the e-Procurement Portal http://hptenders.gov.in
The Pre-Bid Conference is scheduled to be held on 05.09.2026 (11:30 AM) at HPIDB Office, New Himrus Building, Himland, Circular Road, Shimla-171001. The link to attend the meeting online shall be shared with the Prospective Bidders.

Site Visit:
Prospective Bidders may inspect the Property on any working day between 10:00 AM and 5:00 PM by prior email request to the Dy. Resident Commissioner-HP, New Delhi at rescm-hp@nic.in.
Bidders are advised to regularly visit the e-Procurement Portal for corrigenda/addenda, which shall form part of the RFP. HPIDB reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, or to annul the Bidding Process at any time, without assigning any reason and without incurring any liability to the bidders.

Chief General Manager
Himachal Pradesh Infrastructure Development Board, Shimla-171001,
Email: hpidb-hp@nic.in | Tel:0177-2626696

THE HINDU
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Jaysingpur Municipal Council, Jaysingpur (M.S.)
Municipal Office, Jaysingpur
E-Tender Notice 2026
JNP/C.D/E-Tender Notice/1647/2026 **Date - 25/08/2026**
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Sd/- Chief Officer, Jaysingpur Municipal Council
Sd/- President, Jaysingpur Municipal Council

THE HINDU
Surcharge:
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Sl. No	Tender No	Name of the Material proposed for Procurement	Quantity
1	MESCOM/2026-27/]ND0167	1.1 kV Polymeric Pin Insulators	1,00,000 No's

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The Future Doctor: Balancing Clinical Excellence with Technology

Panel Members

Prof. Dr R Jayanthi
Dean, SRM Medical College Hospital & Research Centre, Kattankulathur

Dr Vivek Narayanan
Dean (Dental), SRM Kattankulathur Dental College and Hospital

Ritubhan Gautam
Head - Global Health, DeepTek.ai

Dr K Ganapathy
Honorary Distinguished Professor, IIM Jammu, Distinguished Professor, The Tamilnadu Dr. M.G.R. Medical University, Emeritus Professor, National Academy of Medical Sciences

Geetha Srimathi S
Senior Reporter, The Hindu (Moderator)

To register, visit:
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INBRIEF

Amritpal wants to take Punjab back to 1980s, alleges Sukhbir

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal on Wednesday attacked jailed Khadoor Sahib MP Amritpal Singh, alleging that he wanted to take Punjab back to the 1980s when no one was safe. Mr. Badal was addressing the second phase of his party's 'Punjab Bachao' (Save Punjab) campaign in Malout. It was his first public address after he was attacked in Nanded in Maharashtra. On August 13, he sustained injuries to his right hand in a 'kirpan' (ceremonial dagger) attack by a member of the Nihang order inside a gurdwara on the outskirts of the Maharashtra town. The attacker was later arrested. PTI

Black-and-yellow taxis, autos to cost more in Mumbai

Commuting by CNG-run black-and-yellow cabs and auto rickshaws will be costlier for people in Mumbai from September 1 with the transport authority on Wednesday revising its fares, officials said. The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Transport Authority has approved a fare hike of ₹2 for black-and-yellow taxis and ₹1 for auto-rickshaws plying in the metropolitan region, an official of the Regional Transport Office said. After the revision, passengers will have to pay ₹33 instead of the existing ₹31 for the first 1.5 km in a taxi, while the minimum fare for an auto-rickshaw will increase to ₹27 from ₹26, he said. PTI

Meghalaya House passes resolution against mining and processing of uranium

Local communities in the State have been resisting the proposed exploration of the radioactive mineral in Domiasiat, Lostoin, Mawthabah, and Wahkaji areas of South West Khasi Hills district

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

The Meghalaya Assembly on Wednesday adopted a resolution opposing uranium mining and the establishment of any uranium ore-processing facility in the State.

Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma moved the resolution in the 60-member House and said the government was on the same page as communities living in the uranium-bearing areas of the West Khasi Hills district.

The resolution referred to the Supreme Court's 2019 order in the State of Meghalaya versus the All Dimasa Students' Union, which recognised the rights of private and community landowners over both the surface and the minerals beneath their land.

"Meghalaya is governed by a distinctive constitutional and customary framework under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, which protects community, clan, and individual ownership of land and resources," Mr. Sangma said.

A man checking for uranium deposits on the banks of the Wah Blei river in West Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya. FILE PHOTO

The Assembly resolution was intended to record Meghalaya's opposition to uranium extraction and processing, the CM said. "We will communicate the decision of the House to the Centre," he added.

The resolution, ahead of the Anti-Uranium Day observed in Meghalaya on October 28, seeks to provide a legislative shield to a decades-old public movement against the exploration of the radioactive mineral.

Anti-Uranium Day marks the death anniversary of Spility Lyngdoh Langrin, a matriarch who led the protest against uranium exploration in the Domiasiat, Lostoin, Mawthabah, and Wahkaji areas in the 1990s. She died at 95 in 2020.

She became a household name when she rejected a lucrative government offer to buy her land after the Atomic Minerals Directorate undertook exploratory drilling for uranium deposits in 1993. The protests she spearheaded forced the directorate to suspend operations a couple of years later.

Langrin led the second phase of the agitation in 2009 after the Meghalaya government granted permission to the Uranium Corporation of India Limited to undertake exploratory activities on 422 hectares in the district.

Relentless protests

Relentless protests by locals, educated about the effects of uranium mining in Jharkhand's Jaduguda, made the government revoke the permission in August 2016.

Meghalaya has one of the country's largest reserves of high-grade uranium in South West Khasi Hills. The estimated 9.22 million tonnes of uranium deposits in the State are 16% of the country's total reserves.

Cong. to hold march against Kaziranga ESZ reduction plan

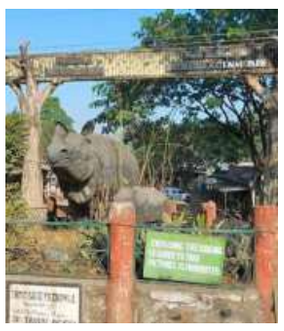
Press Trust of India
GUWAHATI

The Opposition Congress in Assam on Wednesday said it will organise a Statewide 'padayatra' on August 29 to protest the proposed reduction of the Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) around Kaziranga National Park. The party said the move posed a serious threat to wildlife, biodiversity and the fragile ecosystem of the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

In a circular, State Congress general secretary (organisation) Ramanna Baruah asked all district committee presidents to organise the padayatra and directed leaders and workers to participate actively and mobilise public opinion against the proposed reduction.

The controversy stems from the Assam government's plan to send a proposal to the Centre, seeking a reduction in the buffer area around Kaziranga from the default 10 km to between 1 km and 3 km.

Commercial activities within an ESZ, or buffer zone around a protected forest, are either prohibited, regulated or permitted under specified norms depending on the nature of the activity.



Environmentalists have warned that a narrower buffer zone could increase human-animal conflict. FILE PHOTO

Opposition parties and environmental activists have alleged that the proposed reduction is aimed at facilitating mining and tourism activities in and around the forest area and the Karbi Anglong hills, which also serve as an elephant corridor.

CM defends proposal

Environmentalists have warned that a narrower buffer zone could increase human-animal conflict.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, however, has strongly defended the proposal, saying the reduction is intended to protect villagers living within the ESZ and safeguard their livelihoods.

T.N. SC youth's death: 6 police officers named as accused

The Hindu Bureau
SIVAGANGA

The CB-CID chargesheet filed in the Scheduled Caste youth Akash Delison's custodial death case revealed that a murder case has been registered against six policemen, including a police inspector.

Delison, from Krishnarajapuram in Sivaganga district, was arrested on March 5 in connection with a case in which two people were hacked during a dispute in Manamadurai. Delison was admitted to the Madurai Government Rajaji Hospital with injuries, but he died at the hospital.

The police had claimed that he was injured after falling from a bridge while trying to escape arrest. However, alleging that he died due to police assault, his relatives had staged continuous protests.

Uttarakhand BJP chief defends 'purification' of Congress chief's Aug. 8 rally venue in Haldwani

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

Days after Union Minister and former BJP national president J.P. Nadda condemned the purification of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's rally venue in Haldwani, Uttarakhand BJP president Mahendra Bhatt on Wednesday defended the ritual, saying "the place was polluted with slogans".

Mr. Kharge addressed the *'Vijay Shankhnaad* rally at Haldwani's Ramlila ground on August 8. Two days later, members of the Shri Ram Sena reportedly performed a *shuddhikaran havan* (purification ritual) at the same site.

In the Rajya Sabha, earlier this month, Mr. Kharge demanded the arrest of those behind the 'purification', while the party's in-charge Kumari Selja and PCC chief Ganesh Godiyal accused the BJP of displaying an "anti-Dalit mindset". The Congress also alleged that those who performed the purification were associated with the BJP.

Uttarakhand BJP president Mahendra Bhatt.

Allegation rejected

Responding to Mr. Kharge in Parliament, Mr. Nadda rejected the allegation that the BJP had organised the ritual, saying the party did not support such activities. Mr. Nadda added that the matter would be looked into and expressed regret if Mr. Kharge's sentiments had been hurt.

Speaking to the media after an event in Mussoorie, Mr. Bhatt said criticism over the ritual was being exaggerated by the Opposition for political gain. He argued that the sanctity of a religious and cultural venue must be respected by everyone.

'Place was polluted'

"Those who have no real issues are the ones who raise matters that only damage and divide the society. Kharge*ji*'s rally held in Haldwani. The Ramlila ground there was defiled. At a place where there is a Ram temple, slogans were raised that should not have been raised. The place was polluted, and then it was purified," said Mr. Bhatt.

SP promises aid for women; to reopen 26,000 schools shut in U.P. if voted to power in 2027

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

The Samajwadi Party (SP) on Wednesday said it would implement a 'Stree Samman Samridhhi Yojana' in Uttar Pradesh under which each woman would receive ₹40,000 every year, if the party is voted to power in the 2027 poll.

Addressing a press conference alongside SP president Akhilesh Yadav, party MP Dimple Yadav said, "Women's power will develop not merely by talking about it, but by giving women true representation. Respect and prosperity of every woman included in the PDA as "Aadhi Abadi (half the population, or women) is our resolve," she said.

PDA is a political acronym coined by the party chief representing marginalised and backward communities.

SP chief Akhilesh Yadav with party MP Dimple Yadav during a press conference in Lucknow on Wednesday. PTI

The Mainpuri MP said the word 'stree' (woman) had been chosen as it represents the gender without restricting it to any particular age group. "Therefore, the scheme can apply to women of all ages to help them become economically stronger," she said, adding that it would be implemented in phases and its functioning would be assessed periodically.

The SP president announced that over 26,000 schools shut down across the State during the merger process will be reopened if the SP forms the government.

Laptops for students

"Over 26,000 primary schools that have been shut down will be reopened. Someone who is suffering, sad, and humiliated, is PDA. In the future, girls who pass intermediate will be given laptops and given the opportunity to move ahead," Mr. Yadav said.

Sukhu orders caste column removal from school forms

Press Trust of India
SHIMLA

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Wednesday ordered that the caste column be removed from admission forms in schools from the next academic session. He issued the direction while chairing the meeting of the Himachal Pradesh Scheduled Caste Welfare Board here.

Mr. Sukhu said his government is committed to eliminating caste-based discrimination in society and promoting fraternity and equality and the removal of the caste column would be a step in this direction.

According to a statement, the Chief Minister, however, insisted that the students of the scheduled caste community must continue to give their caste details when availing themselves of government schemes and benefits.

Parentless plight: Odisha panel orders probe into wrong parents' names in orphan's papers

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

What is harder in life - having no parents or having different names recorded as parents in official documents? Praveen (name changed), an orphan from Odisha, has learnt the answer the hard way.

Raised in childcare institutions, Praveen fought against the odds to make his way to Gangadhar Meher University, Sambalpur, one of Odisha's premier higher education institutions. But discrepancies in the names of his parents recorded in his certificates and Aadhaar card have deprived him of government assistance, casting a shadow over both his identity and education.

Taking note of his ordeal, the Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has directed the Sundargarh district administration to probe how the discrepancies arose and explore remedial measures to correct his records.

Discrepancies between his certificates and Aadhaar card deprived him of govt. assistance, said the orphan. PHOTO FOR REPRESENTATION

When Praveen was five, someone left him at the gate of Sarbabhoutik Shishu Seba Ashram in Rourkela. The childcare institution was closed in 2012 for reasons that remain unclear, following which he was shifted to Rourkela Sishu Bhavan.

"At Sishu Bhavan, the names Munna Ekka and Kan Ekka were recorded as my father and mother. But when my Aadhaar card was made, P.K. Senapati, the superintendent of the institution, was recorded as my father. My ordeal began there," Praveen recalled.

He alleged that the discrepancies between his certificates and Aadhaar card deprived him of government assistance meant for orphans and persons with disabilities. Praveen has a hearing disability.

Admission denied

After matriculation, he was denied admission when he sought to pursue Plus Two at Sundargarh Government College. The intervention of the Sundargarh District Collector eventually resolved the issue.

Praveen said he repeatedly approached the authorities, drawing attention to the discrepancies in his records, but no corrective action was taken.

ITA calls for targeted invention to safeguard 'troubled' Darjeeling and Dooars tea industry

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Seeking a revival and sustainable development of the tea industry in North Bengal, the Indian Tea Association (ITA) on Wednesday published two White Papers on Darjeeling and Dooars and Terai tea industry.

The Darjeeling White Paper, in particular, highlighted the sharp decline in production - from 14.49 million kg in 1990 to 5.6 million kg in 2025 - and called for urgent, targeted intervention to safeguard the globally recognised GI heritage of Darjeeling tea.

"The Darjeeling White Paper proposes an indicative annual financial support package of approximately ₹113 crore, covering areas such as orthodox tea production, working capital interest support, transport, mechanisation, social security support, rejuvenation and factory modernisation," a press statement by ITA said.

The Darjeeling White Paper highlighted sharp decline in production from 14.49 million kg in 1990 to 5.6 million kg in 2025. FILE PHOTO

The White Paper on Dooars and Terai tea industry pointed out a market asymmetry where small tea growers, who account for 68% of the State's production, operate without comparable statutory welfare obligations, while organised estates bear the full burden of housing, health care and compliance costs, creating a dual-cost environment that depresses auction prices and threatens the organised sector's survival.

Over the past few weeks, the representatives of ITA met State's Industry Minister Tapas Roy, Finance Minister Swapan Dasgupta and Subrata Gupta, adviser to Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari.

Restoration road map

"The White Papers comprehensively examine the structural, financial, climatic, labour and market-related challenges confronting these two iconic tea-growing areas and set out a roadmap of policy interventions aimed at restoring competitiveness, strengthening sustainability, protecting livelihoods and promoting long-term investment," the ITA statement said.

Published by Nirmala Lakshman at Kasturi Buildings, Jamshedji Tata Road, Mumbai-400020 and Printed by N. Vaidyanathan at Dangat Media Pvt. Ltd., No.22, Dighe Midc, Vishnu Nagar, TTC Industrial Area, Dighe, Navi Mumbai-400701, Maharashtra on behalf of THG Publishing Pvt. Ltd. Editor: Suresh Nambath Chandrasekar (Responsible for selection of news under PRP Act).
ISSN 0971 - 751X

INBRIEF

Naidu asks officials to roll out Sanjeevani project from Jan. 1

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has directed officials to roll out the Sanjeevani project, aimed at strengthening healthcare services through digital health records and Artificial Intelligence-based interventions, across Andhra Pradesh from January 1, 2027. Reviewing the project with the officials on Wednesday, Mr. Naidu said the initiative should be implemented effectively to bring about a major transformation in healthcare delivery.

Hyderabad firm gets ₹1,600 crore order from Rolls-Royce

Aerospace and defence components maker Sigma Advanced Systems, a Hyderabad-based company, said it has secured a nearly £125 million (around ₹1,600 crore) long-term contract from Rolls-Royce through its UK subsidiary Bromford Precision Solutions. Under the agreement, Bromford will manufacture various critical engine structures at Sigma's India and UK manufacturing facilities.

HC quashes charges against homestay owner in rape case

The Karnataka High Court has quashed criminal proceedings against the owner of a homestay in Kodagu, who was accused of failing to report to the police the alleged rape of a U.S. national at his property in April and not maintaining registration form about her stay. The court found that the petitioner was under no statutory obligation to report the alleged sexual assault, distinguishing the case from statutes like the POCSO, which expressly create such a duty on anyone who has the knowledge of such offences.

Minister accused of graft may quit Karnataka Cabinet

Opposition has been demanding his resignation over his alleged role in Valmiki scam; Governor has sought clarity on his continuation; issue to come up during CM's meet with Cong. top brass

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A day after the BJP and the JD(S) announced a *padayatra* from September 1, reports have emerged that Planning and Statistics Minister B. Nagendra is likely to resign from the Karnataka Cabinet.

The Opposition has been demanding Mr. Nagendra's resignation over his alleged role in the embezzlement of funds from the Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribe Development Corporation, an issue that dominated the recently concluded legislature session.

The possibility of Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot granting sanction for Mr. Nagendra's prosecution, following a plea by the CBI, is also believed to have prompted the Minister to consider stepping down. The Governor has reportedly written to the State Cabinet seeking clarity on Mr. Nagendra's continuation in the Ministry. The Enforcement Directorate has already filed a chargesheet in the alleged multi-crore scam in the Corporation.

BJP workers demanding the resignation of Minister B. Nagendra over his alleged involvement in the scam on Monday. FILE PHOTO

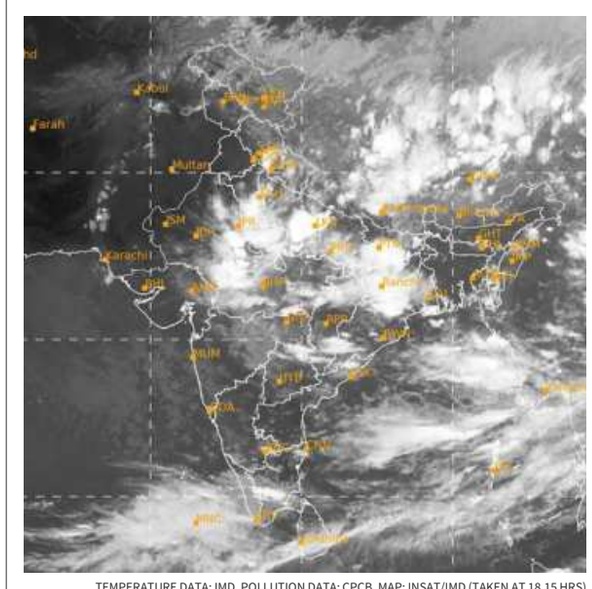
Sources in the Congress told *The Hindu* that Mr. Nagendra had spoken to Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar and expressed his desire to resign. To a question from presspersons on the possibility of Mr. Nagendra's resignation, Mr. Shivakumar said, "There is no such proposal at the moment. All party workers, MLAs and Ministers are disciplined soldiers of the party. We have faith in his leadership."

Mr. Shivakumar is scheduled to travel to Delhi on Thursday, where the issue of Mr. Nagendra's resignation is expected to figure in his discussions with top brass of the party including Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge.

He is also likely to seek approval for filling a vacant Cabinet position with a woman legislator.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.15 HRS)

Forecast for Thursday: Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Sikkim, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Mahe. Thunderstorm with lightning & gusty winds likely at isolated places over Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	0.2	36.0	26.4
Ahmedabad	—	34.1	26.6
Aizawl	—	32.9	23.9
Bengaluru	0.6	29.5	20.4
Bhopal	1	27.8	23.6
Bhubaneswar	52	33.0	26.2
Chandigarh	58.7	35.0	24.4
Chennai	—	36.7	27.0
Coimbatore	0.4	31.0	22.1
Dehradun	1.7	33.2	23.8
Gangtok	10.2	21.8	18.9
Goa	11	31.6	25.5
Guwahati	—	35.7	27.1
Hubballi	—	29.0	22.0
Hyderabad	7	30.9	23.0
Imphal	0.9	32.3	22.9
Jaipur	1.2	34.1	26.6
Kochi	5	28.2	24.8
Kohima	—	26.0	20.0
Kolkata	3.4	34.2	28.2
Kozhikode	6.4	28.2	24.8
Kurnool	0.2	35.2	25.9
Lucknow	27	32.1	27.0
Madurai	—	38.0	27.1
Mangaluru	8.9	29.0	24.6
Mumbai	—	32.2	26.9
Mysuru	—	29.8	19.8
New Delhi	8.8	33.8	26.5
Patna	0.5	32.8	28.8
Port Blair	9.3	28.5	25.6
Prayagraj	21.7	32.8	26.6
Puducherry	—	37.2	27.5
Pune	3.6	29.8	22.1
Raipur	6.2	32.0	25.5
Ranchi	1	29.6	23.0
Shillong	0.2	24.6	19.3
Shimla	10.8	26.6	20.0
Srinagar	—	32.7	17.6
Thiruvananthapuram	11.9	30.2	23.7
Tiruchirappalli	—	38.5	27.4
Vijayawada	—	35.6	27.2
Visakhapatnam	—	32.5	27.6

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	2	39	51	118	116	
Bengaluru	22	17	41	45	103	
Chennai	9	15	50	112	109	
Delhi	31	37	120	180	195	
Hyderabad	13	23	59	28	34	
Kolkata	5	27	42	65	94	
Lucknow	31	32	15	35	44	
Mumbai	5	38	39	27	59	
Pune	11	17	71	43	106	
Visakhapatnam	13	62	31	74	122	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Khairthal, Rajasthan recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 196 indicating a moderate level of pollution. In contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 14

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Six dead as bus rams truck in Telangana

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Six passengers were killed and 12 injured when a bus rammed into a container truck carrying electric poles near Kodad in Telangana early on Wednesday.

The accident occurred when the private bus, operated by Fresh Bus, was travelling from Hyderabad to Eluru via Vijayawada.

The bus rammed the rear of a truck, reportedly while speeding to overtake another vehicle.

The impact caused the poles from the truck to enter the bus, crushing the driver and a portion of the passenger compartment, the police said.

Expressing shock over the incident, Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy instructed officials to extend all necessary assistance to the victims.

Missing A.P. fishermen found in West Bengal

The Hindu Bureau
ODALAREVU

Seven fishermen from Andhra Pradesh, who went missing in the sea on August 7, were found near Shankarpur fishing harbour off the West Bengal coast on Wednesday.

Contact was lost with the fishermen on August 7 after they went deep-sea fishing off the Andhra Pradesh coast. Navy and Coast Guard had been conducting search operations since August 17.

On Wednesday, local fishermen found the missing fishermen and their boat near the Shankarpur fishing harbour. The missing fishermen said that they were stranded at sea after the engine of the boat developed a snag.

Officials are in touch with the Bengal authorities to ensure their safe return.

Telangana cyber bureau helps man get back ₹85 lakh lost in scam

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

The Telangana Cyber Security Bureau has successfully recovered the entire ₹85.20 lakh siphoned off from an 85-year-old retired bank employee who fell victim to an elaborate digital arrest scam.

According to the police, the victim was contacted by a caller posing as an officer of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on August 21. The fraudster, speaking in Telugu and appearing on a video call dressed in uniform, falsely claimed that the victim's Aadhaar details had been misused to open bank accounts and carry out fraudulent transactions.

'Threatened the victim'

The caller threatened the victim and warned him against speaking to anyone about the matter, saying that uniformed police officers would otherwise arrive at his home, causing social embarrassment and further legal trouble. The victim transferred ₹85,20,000 to a bank account specified by the fraudster, under the pretext that the money was needed for "RBI verification" .

The scam began to unravel when the caller demanded an additional ₹42 lakh, prompting the victim to grow suspicious. He promptly filed a complaint on the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal.

Acting swiftly, the TGCSB officers traced the money trail and froze the suspect account held with IDFC Bank's Coimbatore branch, securing the entire defrauded amount.

Onam vibe

In sync: Devotees perform Thiruvathira dance, also known as Kaikottikali, at the eastern entrance of Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple as part of the Thiruvonam celebrations, in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday. NIRMAL HARINDRAN

Tusker Abhimanyu bids adieu to Dasara duties

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

The iconic tusker Abhimanyu, who carried the golden howdah six times in a row during the Jamboo Savari and remained an integral part of Mysuru Dasara for over two decades, on Wednesday bid adieu to his Dasara responsibilities.

He was accorded a ceremonial send-off during the *Gajapayana* at Veeranahosahalli, on the outskirts of the Nagarahole Tiger Reserve. The Gajapayana marks the formal beginning of preparations for the Mysuru Dasara festivities.

Royal send off: Legendary elephant Abhimanyu receiving a ceremonial farewell in Karnataka on Wednesday. M.A. SRIRAM

Abhimanyu is regarded as one of the celebrated members of the Dasara jumbo squad and the Forest Department. Abhimanyu's mahout and kavadi, Vasanth and Karthik, also bid an emotional farewell to the tusker who will no longer be part of the Dasara festivities from this year.

In Telangana, it takes a village to save a beloved tree

Swathi Vadlamudi
HYDERABAD

In a world where trees are considered a hindrance to development, a village in Telangana is standing by the tree they loved and cherished for decades.

Residents of Pedda Thandrapadu, a village in Jogulamba Gadwal district, have forged a united front against attempts to pull down a peepal tree located inside the premises of a private property.

The villagers approached the authorities at the mandal level during the recently held *Prajavani* programme, and submitted a representation seeking protection of the peepal tree at the village centre, which they claimed was encroached upon by illegal structures.

"There was a cement platform raised around the tree earlier, where people used to relax and conduct village meetings. But the platform was demolished later, and a compound wall was constructed enclosing the tree," said a villager who did not wish to be named.

Residents have forged a united front against attempts to pull down a peepal tree located inside a private property. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Matters got worse when the property owner sought permission from the Forest Department to fell the tree, calling it a hazard.

Upon getting wind of the application, the villagers banded together to object to the move.

They made representations to the police, the Forest Range Officer, the Mandal Revenue Officer, the Mandal Parishad Development Officer, the District Collector and the National Green Tribunal, requesting them to stop the felling.

'Part of our lives'

"The tree is a part of our lives. For generations, we have been using its *Paala Komma* (sacred branch) in various rituals, such as weddings. We seek a comprehensive inquiry into how the tree was encroached upon," the petitioners said, demanding that the peepal be declared a 'heritage tree'.

Kurva China Ramudu, an 85-year-old villager, says he had witnessed the tree being planted during his childhood, which makes it easily about 70-75 years old.

Jangam Bhogeshwar Rao, the owner who submitted the felling application, said his parents bought the piece of land during the 1960s, which was later divided among the siblings.

"I got the platform demolished and constructed the wall around it because the platform was attracting drunkards and vagabonds. Villagers who are protesting now had helped me construct the wall. Now, an issue is being made out of it purely due to personal rivalries," he said.

He says he is ready to bear the cost of translocation if needed. However, the root mass of the tree would be so huge that it would pose a danger to the structural stability of the house if a translocation is attempted.

Forest Range Officer Parvez Ahmed said permission had not yet been granted for felling of the tree due to objections by the villagers.

Kerala HC issues norms for detention before formal arrest

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

The Kerala High Court recently held that detention for fact-finding or to aid an investigation does not amount to unlawful arrest in certain circumstances.

It found that the law recognised situations where a person could be detained without the procedural formality of arrest, provided that the detention was based on reasonable suspicion or credible information. In such cases, the mandatory requirement to produce the accused before a Magistrate within 24 hours would begin only once the arrest was formally recorded, it said.

The court also issued guidelines to ensure detention before formal arrest is enforced in accordance with constitutional rights. It stated that notice must be issued before any detention for investigation.

The investigating agency must record the precise time of initial detention and formal arrest. After detention, the accused should be produced before a Magistrate within 24 hours. The arrestee and a relative, friend, or nominated person must be informed of the grounds for arrest immediately upon detention.

It was hearing pleas where the accused had said that they were detained much before their formal arrest.

Drawing lines

India and China must be transparent about the talks on boundary dispute

Following Tuesday's talks between the Special Representatives (SRs) on the boundary question, India and China have agreed to substantial outcomes on managing the disputed border. According to an eight-point consensus released on Wednesday, both countries have agreed to advance discussions on "an early and substantial harvest of boundary delimitation". They have agreed to hold next month a meeting of an expert-level mechanism on trans-border rivers and to maintain communication on sharing hydrological data, which India has been pushing for. Two additional meeting points to hold talks between top military commanders will be set up, along with two new channels of hotlines in the Eastern and Middle Sectors. National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi reaffirmed the efforts taken over the past two years to keep the peace along the Line of Actual Control, and committed to continuing the on-going normalisation in relations. That the NSA's visit to Beijing took place before India hosts the BRICS Summit, on September 12, underlined both sides' keenness to continue with this process of re-engagement, with the expected visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping after a gap of seven years. An October 2024 meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mr. Xi kick-started this calibrated effort towards normalcy, and a 2025 meeting in Tianjin helped continue the momentum. It is apparent that both sides see continued engagement at the highest level as key to sustaining this process of normalisation.

The dual tracks of the SR meetings and the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on border affairs, a body comprising diplomats and military officials, have worked well towards keeping the borders generally stable over the past two years. The latest outcomes will certainly help in keeping the peace. Less clear is how both sides intend to take up the task of border delimitation. Neither side has explained which parts of the border they plan to delimit, or whether they are reconsidering the 2005 agreement on Political Parameters and Guiding Principles, under which the SRs were tasked with first agreeing a framework to settle the boundary. While both sides in Beijing reaffirmed the 2005 agreement, Article 10 of its text notes that it is only on the basis of the framework that both sides can delineate the boundary. Tangible progress on the border dispute must certainly be welcomed. However, agreements made without public visibility, notwithstanding their merit, may invite suspicion. As India and China continue negotiating their long-running boundary question, it is imperative that they bring their publics along.

Grounded

Chennai needs more runways, not just new terminals

The Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK)-led government, in dropping the ₹27,400-crore greenfield airport project at Parandur near Chennai, appears to have considered the opposition to the project without weighing the consequences. The decision follows an electoral promise made by Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay, who had visited the protesters in January 2025 to express his solidarity. The government says the move is aimed at protecting the interests of farmers and local residents. It has also cited the presence of waterbodies and has alleged commercial motives behind the site selection under the previous DMK government. Notwithstanding these official reasons, all valid to varying degrees, it became clear from the day Mr. Vijay became Chief Minister, on May 10, 2026, that the decision was merely a formality. In fact, much before the announcement, on August 24, work on the project had come to a halt. However, the move is likely to have adverse consequences for Tamil Nadu. The move risks creating a general perception that Tamil Nadu is unstable in its infrastructure policy, which the TVK government should have avoided, given its goal of making the State a $1.5 trillion economy by 2036.

While Mr. Vijay has spoken of identifying a new airport site, his proposal for a Terminal 5 at the existing airport is necessary and welcome. However, it is common knowledge that a greenfield airport will take years to materialise, even with unwavering government attention – the idea for a second airport had been under consideration for over 25 years. At one stage, the Union government had wanted it to be developed on a build, operate and transfer mode. Unfortunately, the project was caught in the game of political one-upmanship between the two Dravidian majors. Meanwhile, Bengaluru and Hyderabad have had new second airports since 2008, despite regime changes. Passenger traffic here has grown at Tamil Nadu's expense – at an annual average rate of 10% during 2016-26 compared with 2.4% in Chennai. Parandur received the Union government's final nod in July 2024, after much groundwork. When the State government is not the ultimate authority in airport site selection, it would not be appropriate to attribute motives to the DMK. Land for any mega project has always faced landowner resistance and the TVK regime may experience this while identifying a new site. No development project can take place without disturbing the environment and certain sections of society. Even Amsterdam's busy Schiphol airport sits over an area that was once a lake. At the existing airport in Chennai, a runway was affected by the severe floods in 2015. What policymakers should bear in mind is the need to balance development and climate change challenges. Chennai needs more runways, not just new terminals.

The high cost of India's private health-care boom

Chandrakant Lahariya

Practising physician specialising in preventive and cardio-metabolic medicine, whose upcoming book, 'Pill-Free: You Don't Need Everything You Have Been Prescribed', will be released in September 2026

For crores of Indian families, the financial shock of hospitalisation – especially in a private hospital – begins even before treatment is complete. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare, in its 176th Report tabled in Parliament on August 7, 2026, noted that the average cost of hospitalisation is ₹50,508 in a private facility, compared with ₹6,631 in a government facility. For childbirth, the average out-of-pocket medical expenditure in private facilities is ₹37,630, against ₹2,299 in public facilities.

Some of the contradictions

The committee has made 368 recommendations, including standardised package rates and mandatory pre-treatment cost estimates. Among the widely reported proposals is that basic room tariffs in metropolitan private hospitals should not exceed the average tariff of three-star hotels that are nearby. It has also suggested that large corporate hospitals earning from medical tourism, foreign patients and high-net-worth individuals should cross-subsidise poorer Indians and reserve beds for Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) beneficiaries at regulated rates. Yet, there is a contradiction. India wants more private and foreign capital in health care, particularly in Tier-2, Tier-3 and rural areas, while simultaneously asking the government to review foreign direct investment rules related to the acquisition and management of existing hospitals.

There is a strong case for continued investment in Indian health care. Hospitals require substantial capital. Land, equipment, intensive care units, digital systems, laboratories and trained personnel are expensive. Public hospitals cannot currently meet all demand for secondary and tertiary care. Private hospitals therefore fill an important gap. Foreign investors and private-equity funds can bring capital, managerial capacity, technology and the capacity to expand hospital networks. India also needs investment in pharmaceutical and medical-device manufacturing. If regulation becomes excessively restrictive or unpredictable, some investment may move elsewhere. This could slow capacity expansion and delay the development of better health-care infrastructure in cities and districts where need is genuine.

However, in all sectors, capital comes with expectations of returns. In health care, it creates a special concern because patients are not ordinary consumers. A patient rarely decides independently whether an MRI is required, whether hospital admission should continue for two more days, or whether a procedure is necessary. Health care is shaped by what economists call information asymmetry: the provider knows more than the patient. Therefore, when financial incentives become too strong, they can influence not just the price of care but also how much care is delivered.

> The country needs private capital to expand health care, but investment cannot be allowed to shape clinical decisions, pricing and access in ways that make care unaffordable or unnecessarily intensive

A closer look at private care

This is where the role of private equity and venture capital in health care deserves closer attention. Corporate hospital groups increasingly compete for well-known specialists, sophisticated technology and premium infrastructure. These can improve quality, but also create a high-cost ecosystem. Hospitals that pay very high salaries to senior specialists and super-specialists, acquire expensive equipment and operate under pressure to increase revenue must eventually recover these costs. Revenue targets, procedure-linked incentives, higher occupancy expectations and higher revenue per bed can gradually influence institutional behaviour. Most doctors act in patients' interests. Yet, systems shape behaviour. If hospitals and doctors are rewarded for doing more, the direction becomes predictable.

The result is not only higher cost but also a worrying medicalisation. Lab investigations may detect abnormalities that would never have caused harm. More screening can lead to unnecessary follow-up tests. A patient who could be managed as an outpatient may be admitted. Caesarean sections, angioplasties, intensive-care admissions, diagnostic packages and long lists of medicines must therefore be seen not only as individual clinical decisions but also within the incentive structure of the health system. This does not mean these interventions are usually unnecessary. It means that a system rewarding interventions and procedures needs strong safeguards against unnecessary prescriptions, surgeries, investigations and medications.

That is why a review of FDI in the acquisition of existing hospitals is justified. Domestic investors can be equally profit-oriented, while foreign investment can create valuable capacity. The more useful question is about what an investment does to the health system. Does it create new beds or simply acquire existing ones? Does it improve competition or lead to market concentration? Does it enter an underserved district or add another high-end facility in a metro? If an investor receives concessional land, tax benefits or other public support, are there enforceable obligations related to affordable beds or participation in public insurance schemes? India should encourage greenfield investment and manufacturing, while scrutinising acquisitions that reduce competition or raise the risk of excessive pricing.

Price regulation also needs to be approached carefully. The proposal to link hospital room charges to nearby three-star hotels is easy to understand, but cannot by itself solve the affordability problem. A hospital room includes nursing, infection-control and emergency support that a hotel room does not. More importantly, if one component of the bill is capped, hospitals may increase charges elsewhere. India's experience with coronary stent price regulation showed that government intervention can reduce excessive mark-ups. But hospital care is more complex; what matters is the total cost of an episode. Package rates, transparent estimates, billing standards and audit mechanisms are therefore more useful than isolated caps on individual components. There is also an established approach to such payments: Diagnosis-Related Groups (DRG). A DRG is a patient-classification system that standardised hospital reimbursement by paying a fixed, predetermined amount for an inpatient stay based on the diagnosis and procedures, rather than reimbursing each service separately.

Focus on public health

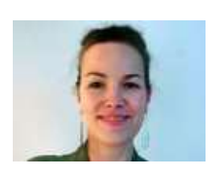
There is a larger policy question. India cannot regulate its way out of weak public health care. If government hospitals remain overcrowded, understaffed or difficult to access, citizens will continue to depend heavily on private providers. Experience from OECD countries has shown that one effective form of regulation is a strong public health system that provides a credible alternative.

Public hospitals must therefore become a genuine option, not merely the last resort for those who cannot afford private care. Primary health care needs strengthening so that disease is prevented, detected and treated early. Insurance systems, including AB-PMJAY, should reward appropriate care rather than simply higher volumes of procedures. Clinical audits, evidence-based treatment protocols and transparent billing can protect both patients and doctors from commercial pressures.

The Parliamentary Committee is right to focus attention on affordability and to question whether the current pattern of investment in private health care aligns with public interest. Price caps and an FDI review are reasonable starting points, but India needs a wider conversation about the kind of health-care system it is building. Private investment will remain essential, and profit by itself is not the problem.

The problem begins when the pursuit of returns starts a key influence. A health-care system should attract capital, but its clinical priorities must still be set by medical need. The true measure of India's health-care progress will not be how much money flows into hospitals or what is the annual compounded growth rate in medical tourism, but whether Indian citizens can enter them with confidence that they will receive what they need. No more, no less.

Making India's food system climate-proof cannot wait



Elisabeth Faure

Country Director, UN World Food Programme in India

Purvi Mehta

International expert on nutrition-sensitive agriculture, food systems and climate-resilient development

India's food security journey is undoubtedly one of the most significant agricultural transformations in the world. From dependence on food aid in the 1960s, the country has emerged as a major food producer, built substantial buffer stocks, and created a legal entitlement to subsidise foodgrains for around 800 million people through the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013. This achievement rests on decades of public investment in improved seeds, irrigation, procurement, storage, price support and public distribution. The task now is to protect and strengthen that achievement amid a changing climate and increasingly frequent extreme weather events.

Climate change threatens food security globally. For India, the policy challenge has evolved beyond producing enough food to ensuring affordable, nutritious supply for 1.4 billion people despite rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, extreme weather, and water scarcity affecting production, storage, transport, and consumption.

The advantages

India has the initial advantage to address this challenge. Foodgrain production reached more than 350 million tonnes in 2024-25, including record output of rice and wheat. The Public Distribution System (PDS), supported by digitisation and the One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC), has expanded the reach and portability of food entitlements. These foundations provide the production capacity and administrative depth and expertise needed to support the transition towards a climate-resilient food-security framework.

India's evolving food-systems approach recognises that climate risks span the entire value chain. Heat reduces wheat yields, erratic monsoons cause floods and droughts within seasons, groundwater depletion weakens irrigation buffers, and extreme weather damages storage and transport infrastructure. These cascading effects create market volatility and limit household access to nutritious foods.

> India has built food security; now it must climate-proof it for a secure food future

The rice-wheat system has served India well, but national procurement remains concentrated in a few crops and geographies. Several of these areas also face serious groundwater stress. This model emerged as a rational response to the production constraints of an earlier era. The opportunity now is to build on its achievements by progressively diversifying procurement across crops and regions, while making the system more responsive to climate and natural-resource considerations. The procurement may gradually expand across geographies and commodities, with price support aligned to encourage crops suited to local water and climate conditions. Millets, pulses, oilseeds and other nutri-cereals can reduce risk concentration while strengthening dietary diversity. Cereals such as rice and wheat will remain essential, but a broader procurement base can create a more resilient national portfolio.

Along with the procurement, the PDS can progressively reinforce a diversified food basket. A carefully designed inclusion of locally appropriate millets and pulses would strengthen the connect between food security with nutrition, water conservation and climate adaptation.

On climate information

Forecasts from the India Meteorological Department may be linked more directly with procurement, buffer-stock and contingency decisions. The NFSA's monitoring framework can also include indicators for heat, water stress, storage exposure and supply-chain resilience, alongside coverage and offtake. Farmers require practical tools for managing risk. Climate-resilient seed varieties, micro-irrigation, watershed development, precision farming, digital advisories and weather-indexed insurance may reduce variability and support better decisions. Public-private collaboration would also help accelerate research, certification and last-mile delivery, while public safety nets can ensure that smallholders and climate-exposed regions are not left behind.

Along the entire food supply chain, flood-resilient warehouses, storage systems suited to higher temperatures, expanded cold chains and more robust transport links are necessary for protecting grain and perishables. This is particularly important if the food basket becomes more diverse. Adaptation incentives and standards can therefore cover procurement, storage, logistics and market stabilisation, not production alone.

Down the line

Financing climate-resilient food systems requires green bonds, adaptation finance, insurance, and investment in resilient agricultural value chains. Integrating food systems into India's net-zero pathway – with measurable emission reductions, carbon sequestration, and resilience targets – enables coordinated action across agriculture, water, energy, transport, and nutrition, while unlocking climate finance for sustainable transformation.

India's traditional buffer stock offers a useful principle for this transition. The country can explore building a broader 'climate buffer', combining diversified crops and procurement regions, resilient infrastructure, climate information, insurance and improved water management. Just as grain reserves reduced the risk of poor harvests, this portfolio may reduce the systemic risks created by a less predictable climate.

Climate-resilient food and nutrition security is not a departure from India's established approach. In fact, it is its logical next phase, and India already possesses many of the institutions, capabilities and policy setup needed to advance it. This may include shifting the national framing from "food security" to "sustainable food security", embedding climate risk management as a first-order design parameter in NFSA planning and monitoring, rather than an externality managed after the fact. The existing long-term vision and institutional commitment can now ensure that India's food systems remain nutritious and sustainable in the decades ahead.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Border talks with China

A clearly demarcated and mutually recognised India-China boundary is indispensable for transforming a contested frontier into a zone of stability and predictability. Yet, cartographic negotiations must be accompanied by sustained diplomatic engagement, military confidence-building measures and strict adherence to previously negotiated agreements. India must remain vigilant against unilateral alterations of the status quo while demonstrating strategic patience and diplomatic dexterity. Beijing, too, must recognise that durable peace cannot be predicated on ambiguity or coercive posturing.

Nagarajamani M.V.,
Hyderabad

Rainwater management

India needs a new approach to managing rainwater — one that does not merely drain water, but captures, conserves and puts it to productive use. The installation of scientifically designed honeycomb sponge manholes along roads across the country could become an important component of such a national water-management strategy. Honeycomb sponge manholes can be designed to receive and temporarily store rainwater, allowing it to percolate into the ground in a controlled manner and contribute to groundwater recharge. This system could function as a decentralised rainwater-harvesting network beneath our streets. India should consider pilot projects in cities that regularly experience severe urban flooding.

Richard Hay,
Kochi, Keralam

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

Restoring lakes by going beyond quick fixes

Mohan Chandra Pargaien

Adviser to SCCL, Telangana and former Indian forest officer with over three decades of experience in natural resource management

Covering nearly 6% of the planet's surface, wetlands – including urban lakes – are among the most productive ecosystems on Earth. They store a disproportionately large share of the world's carbon, often outperforming terrestrial forests per unit area. Beyond carbon sequestration, they contribute immensely to biodiversity, climate regulation, and human well-being. Yet today, lakes are disappearing at an alarming pace. Many of our remaining urban wetlands are either biologically dead or heavily eutrophic. In losing them, cities are systematically eroding their natural defences against climate change, undermining public health, and threatening the very foundations of urban liveability.

The widespread destruction of water bodies is a direct consequence of rapid, unplanned urbanisation. As land pressure intensifies in crowded localities, developers and municipal bodies view these natural landscapes as vacant land rather than critical ecological infrastructure. This mindset makes lakes highly vulnerable to encroachment and systemic disappearance.

Compounding this physical destruction is a deep-rooted institutional and public apathy. Heavily polluted water bodies have become convenient spots for untreated sewage, industrial effluents, and municipal solid waste. This collective inaction reveals a grim truth: lakes are dying not only because they are encroached upon, but because they are taken for granted.

The sheer volume of data capturing this damage is overwhelming. Reports by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) have flagged large-scale shrinkage in J&K, including over 500 lakes since 1967. Down south, the crisis is equally acute. Hyderabad lost roughly 61% of its lake area since 1979, with 268 water bodies completely disappearing between 2002-2012 as detailed in one study. As cities grapple with intensifying heat islands and unpredictable urban flooding, there is a desperate need to treat these lifelines as 'urban climate buffers' and 'sponge systems' rather than as liabilities.

> In cities such as Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Mumbai, peri-urban land that once served as agricultural fields or natural lake catchments has mutated into prime real estate

Taken for granted

Half a century ago, land in Indian cities was relatively affordable, urban expansion was moderate, and lakes were respected for their functional civic assets. Today, land prices have multiplied manifold in the past five decades. In cities such as Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Mumbai, peri-urban land that once served as agricultural fields or natural lake catchments has mutated into prime real estate. This exponential spike has transformed lakes into a perceived "opportunity cost." Encroachment becomes economically incentivised, leading to wetlands being filled, fragmented, and repurposed for housing, highways, and commercial complexes.

India's recent achievement of expanding its tally of designated Ramsar sites reflects a formal, high-level recognition of wetland conservation. However, international designations must not be mistaken for local conservation success. On the ground, the reality remains fiercely complex, plagued by ambiguous boundaries, ongoing encroachment, and disrupted catchment areas. While initiatives such as the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation, the Jal Shakti Abhiyan, and Mission Amrit Sarovar provide useful policy skeletons, their on-the-ground impact is routinely diluted.

This failure stems from fragmented accountability, weak inter-departmental coordination, and a deeply flawed tendency to prioritise beautification over genuine ecological recovery. Municipal bodies often prioritise visible beautification over ecological repair – promenades, lighting, and fencing – while ignoring feeder channels, catchments, and water quality.

Real restoration demands raw institutional intent, as demonstrated by a recent Telangana initiative – the newly formed Hyderabad Disaster Response and Asset Protection Agency (HYDRAA). The agency has actively reclaimed encroached lakebeds, cleared illegal structures within Full Tank Level zones, and initiated restoration work across dozens of water bodies. Crucially, by desilting long-blocked feeder channels and restoring natural hydrological flows, the agency nearly doubled the water spread of the severely choked Nalla Cheruvu from 16 to 30 acres.

In parallel with State action, grassroots citizen movements have also shown exceptional results from community involvement. Passionate "lake champions" in Bengaluru and Hyderabad have successfully revived dying water bodies such as in Puttenahalli, Jakkur, and Kudikunta.

But these successes remain too isolated. Without institutionalised legal backing, sustained state funding, and unyielding statutory enforcement, local wins will remain exceptions rather than becoming a replicating model.

Beyond quick fixes

India's urban future is shaped by a complex crisis of land, law, and governance. Resolving this crisis requires deep structural reform over cosmetic fixes. First, water bodies must be formally integrated into city planning. Second, lake boundaries and catchments need absolute legal protection, with strict, consistent penalties for encroachments. Streamlining fragmented governance under unified, accountable authorities is vital. Finally, citizen engagement must be institutionalised within governance frameworks to ensure permanent local ownership. Cities that reduce lakes to landscaped backdrops will eventually pay the price in floods, heat stress, and water scarcity while those that restore them as living ecosystems will secure their resilience in a warming, water-stressed future.

Bengaluru's risk-averse force

Police have been cautious in their approach to protests, irrespective of who is in power

STATE OF PLAY

K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj

The Bengaluru City Police recently registered a *suo motu* FIR against a woman for holding a placard which read "Umar Khalid Zindabad", "Sharjeel Imam Zindabad" at a students' protest. Neha Bora, National President of the All India Students' Association, during her visit to Bengaluru last week, slammed the Congress government in Karnataka for its action and said that parties who claim to be against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) must lead by example rather than pay lip service.

This is not an isolated incident. Even as senior Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi have been vocal about Israel's war on Palestine, the Bengaluru Police booked three *suo motu* FIRs against pro-Palestine demonstrators. Two of these have been quashed by the High Court of Karnataka. Police even disrupted multiple indoor meetings where pro-Palestine films and issues were being discussed. While no police permission is needed for indoor meetings, the unwritten rule in Bengaluru seems to be that the local police need to be kept in the loop.

Extreme caution

Irrespective of the party in power, the Bengaluru City Police have been accused of being "risk averse" regarding protests and dissent. The police have often weaponised the Licensing and Regulation of Protests, Demonstrations and Protest Marches (Bengaluru City) Order, 2021, which mandates that all protests can be held only at Freedom Park.

The order came in response to a *suo motu* PIL taken

up by the High Court over protests causing traffic disruptions. Significantly, it also came close on the heels of protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, during the BJP's tenure, when the pavement outside a mosque called Bilal Bagh turned into a site of protest. Several activists argue that protests being restricted to Freedom Park are ghettoised and invisibilised. A campaign to reverse the 2021 order, after the Congress came to power in 2023, has not yielded any results.

The police argue that they did not allow pro-Palestine protests, for if they had, right-wing groups too would have held pro-Israel demonstrations and the situation may have escalated. Recently, stand-up comic Kunal Kamra had to shift his stand-up show at a venue in Whitefield, after a little-known Hindutva outfit opposed it. Earlier, shows by stand-up comic Munnawar Faruqui were cancelled twice during the BJP regime following a similar campaign.

Azim Premji University recently lodged a criminal complaint against its own students for holding a discussion on the 1991 Kunan Poshpora incident in Kashmir without prior approval from the administration, after activists from the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad barged in and vandalised the University's campus. Persistent campaigns by Hindutva groups prompting the police to either deny permission or try to make venues back out are not uncommon.

In a rare instance, recently, the police gave security for a discussion on Umar Khalid's book at the Bangalore International Centre, after the organisers refused to back down despite a campaign. However, the police registered a *suo motu* FIR against a woman for holding a placard hailing Umar Khalid, following a shrill campaign by Kannada television news media.

A slow approach

Despite the Congress coming to power with a thumping majority in 2023, a rare feat in Karnataka in decades, it has been slow in countering the Hindutva agenda, for fear of what has been called "playing into the hands of the BJP."

For instance, following the new Home Minister Priyank Kharge's face-off with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) over it not being registered and that it should take government's permission before using public spaces, the State Cabinet recently approved the Karnataka Regulation of Use of Government Premises and Public Property Bill, 2026. However, it was not tabled in the just-concluded legislature session. Even as Mr. Kharge insisted on the RSS taking permission for their Vijaydashmi route march in his constituency Chittapur in 2025, the RSS was allowed to hold route marches in 100 places to mark its centenary.

Neither has the Congress repealed the two "communal laws" – the Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Act, 2020, and the Karnataka Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion Act, 2022 – it promised to roll back in its 2023 manifesto.

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Deletions in recent SIRs suggest arbitrary application of reasons

In Karnataka and Telangana, the draft SIR rolls reveal that deletions for which reasons were marked as 'Shifted' and 'Absent' have been applied erratically

DATA POINT

Pon Vasanth B.A.

The draft electoral rolls released after the enumeration phase of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise in Telangana and Karnataka have not only raised concerns of aggressive deletions, but analysis indicates wide variations and arbitrariness in the reasons given for the deletion of names.

The two States have seen the highest share of deletions in the draft SIR rolls among the major States. Telangana and Karnataka, which had 3.38 crore and 5.54 crore electors before the SIR respectively, saw roughly one-fifth of their rolls getting culled. *The Hindu* has reported on the alarming levels of deletions in many of the constituencies in the two States.

A reason-wise analysis of the data showed extremes in the application of the four broad reasons cited for deletions – Shifted (or Permanently Shifted), Absent, Deceased, and Duplicate.

Before discussing the apparent arbitrariness of the application of these reasons, it is to be noted that the Election Commission (EC) has not offered clarity in any of its SIR-related notifications about when the officials – particularly the Booth-level Officers (BLOs) working on the ground – should mark an elector as 'Shifted' and when as 'Absent' . The EC's Manual on Electoral Rolls (2023), which is supposed to be the rule book to follow for all types of electoral roll revision, states that "an absentee voter is that person who is found to be absent for a limited period from place of his ordinary residence where he is enrolled as an elector. An absentee may be with family or without family. But his name cannot be deleted, as in the existing law, a person absenting himself temporarily from his place of ordinarily residence shall not, by reason thereof, cease to be ordinarily resident therein." This definition raises the question as to whether an elector found to be 'Absent' during enumeration should be deleted in the first place.

Interestingly, the EC has never officially made public the breakdown of 'Shifted' and 'Absent' in total deletions. It has combined the two categories and presented only the aggregate numbers for every State where the SIR has happened. The breakdown has been derived by journalists and members of the civil society by processing the thousands of lists containing details of deleted electors.

Table 1 and **Table 2** show a few constituencies from Telangana and Karnataka, which stand out as examples of the inexplicable application of reasons for deletions.

For instance, both Jubilee Hills and Nizamabad (Urban) are urban constituencies of comparable size in Telangana. Of the 1,79,510 names deleted in Jubilee Hills, 1,48,859 (83%) were marked as 'Shifted', but only 15,000 were found to be 'Absent'. In Nizamabad (Urban), however, of the 83,282 deletions, officials found 50,307 to be 'Absent'. The outlier case was the reserved constituency Nakrekal (SC), where 20,169 names were deleted, but not a single person was found to be 'Absent'.

In Karnataka, Hebbal saw 1.3 lakh deletions, of which an astounding 1.14 lakh (87%) were marked as 'Shifted', but only 287 were found to be 'Absent'. The Hubli-Dharwad-East constituency, in contrast recorded, roughly 25,000 of its 47,000 as 'Absent'. Bommanahalli saw 2.65 lakh deletions, which is 54.8% of its electorate. However, only about 9,700 were found to be deceased.

Table 3 and **Table 4** show the wide variations between different categories of reasons for every 1,000 electors deleted in the draft rolls. A coherent and uniform application of a well-defined enumeration exercise is unlikely to show such extremities.

Extremities in deletions

The tables capture the seeming arbitrariness in the reasons used for deletion of large number of electors in Telangana and Karnataka. The values in Tables 3 and 4 are reason-wise numbers, calculated as deletions per 1,000 electors in the rolls before SIR

TABLE 1: A few constituencies in **Telangana** that reveal implausible variations in the reasons for which electors were deleted

Constituency	Electors before SIR	Deletions (%)	Shifted (%)	Absent (%)	Deceased (%)	Duplicate (%)	Why is it odd?
Jubilee Hills	4.07 lakh	44.1	82.9	8.4	4.6	4.1	Of 1.78 lakh deletions, 829 per 1,000 were 'Shifted', but only 84 were 'Absent'
Nizamabad (Urban)	3.08 lakh	27.0	18.1	60.4	6.4	14.5	Inverse of Jubilee hills. Of the 83,000 deletions, 604 per 1,000 were marked as 'Absent', but only 181 as 'Shifted'
Nakrekal (SC)	2.59 lakh	7.8	58.0	0.0	32.3	9.6	20,169 deletions, but not a single one was found to be 'Absent'
Palakurthi	2.61 lakh	7.6	42.4	1.5	39.4	16.7	8,000 of roughly 20,000 deletions were 'Deceased' — highest in the State
Sanathnagar	2.54 lakh	44.9	82.7	9.8	3.7	3.8	Inverse of Palakurthi. Of the 1.14 lakh deletions, only 40 per 1,000 were 'Deceased'
Ramagundam	2.14 lakh	14.4	28.6	1.0	15.4	55.0	Highest proportion of 'Duplicates'. 550 per 1,000 deletions
Malkajgiri	5.13 lakh	37.6	77.3	12.9	8.3	1.4	Inverse of Ramagundam. Of the 1.93 lakh deletions, only 14 per 1,000 were 'Duplicates'

TABLE 2: A few constituencies in **Karnataka**, where similar patterns of drastic differences in the reasons could be observed

Constituency	Electors before SIR	Deletions (%)	Shifted (%)	Absent (%)	Deceased (%)	Duplicate (%)	Why is it odd?
Hebbal	3.02 lakh	43.2	87.2	0.2	8.7	3.8	1.3 lakh deleted. 870 per 1,000 marked as 'Shifted', but only 2 per 1,000 'Absent'
Hubli-Dharwad-East	2.28 lakh	20.6	15.4	53.3	20.4	10.9	Inverse of Hebbal. 533 per 1,000 marked as 'Absent', but only 154 per 1,000 as 'Shifted'
Arakalgud	2.37 lakh	9.7	40.1	3.3	46.3	10.3	Nearly half of roughly 22,000 deletions were marked as 'Deceased'
Bommanahalli	4.85 lakh	54.8	50.3	37.7	3.7	8.3	Inverse of Arakalgud. Saw 55% of its electoral rolls culled, but only 37 per 1,000 deletions were marked as 'Deceased'
Kanakagiri	2.32 lakh	10.2	46.9	0.7	20.6	31.7	7,500 of 23,000 deletions marked as 'Duplicates' – highest share of 'Duplicates'
Rajajinagar	2.1 lakh	47.9	82.2	7.3	8.3	2.2	Inverse of Kanakagiri. One lakh deletions, but only 2,200 marked as 'Duplicate'

TABLE 3: The reason-wise variations in deletions in **Telangana** between urban and rural constituencies

Urban (33 constituencies). Values per 1000 electors pre-SIR				
Reason	Average	Min	Max	Max / Min
Deceased	28.86	16.42	48.10	2.9
Duplicate	22.29	5.29	78.99	14.9
Shifted	239.04	41.17	371.59	9.0
Absent	67.82	1.38	163.20	118.0

Rural (86 constituencies). Values per 1000 electors pre-SIR				
Reason	Average	Min	Max	Max / Min
Deceased	27.09	14.72	44.26	3.0
Duplicate	19.18	5.03	44.24	8.8
Shifted	62.10	18.33	123.94	6.8
Absent	13.14	0.00	88.93	n/a (min = 0)

TABLE 4: The reason-wise variations in deletions in **Karnataka** between urban and rural constituencies

Urban (57 constituencies). Values per 1,000 electors pre-SIR				
Reason	Average	Min	Max	Max / Min
Deceased	32.90	14.02	57.46	4.1
Duplicate	30.07	5.07	92.80	18.3
Shifted	205.68	31.69	393.36	12.4
Absent	61.44	0.95	206.60	217.3

Rural (167 constituencies). Values per 1,000 electors pre-SIR				
Reason	Average	Min	Max	Max / Min
Deceased	28.46	14.55	52.44	3.6
Duplicate	14.39	4.09	36.04	8.8
Shifted	63.94	18.34	246.04	13.4
Absent	9.90	0.01	60.21	7450.0

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO AUGUST 27, 1976

Chances on life on Mars

Pasadena, California, August 26: America's Viking-I Mars probe has sent back another clear reading that there could be life in the Martian soil but space scientists said they were still sceptical about the results.

The Viking project biologist, Dr. Orman Horowitz, said the latest readings sent yesterday "certainly increase the chance" that there are microscopic forms of life in the red Mars soil.

According to results announced at a press conference here all three biological tests in the tiny Viking laboratory now show there could be life on the planet.

"I really don't understand it, but I'm overwhelmed," said the Viking project scientist, Dr. Geraid Soffen.

The latest experiment was a controlled test on a Martian soil sample which had already signalled it could contain as many living organisms as soil in the Antarctic region on earth. Under the test, the soil sample is cooked to a high temperature to kill any organisms in it.

If the sample is dead when it is retested – as happened with the controlled test announced on Tuesday – then the chances are that the initial readings were caused by biology and not by chemistry, scientists say. Dr. Horowitz said: "if we had observed these results in laboratories on earth we would have concluded that it was weak but definitely positive biological signal.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO AUGUST 27, 1926

Entrance into the Army

Simla, August 26: A communique stays: – With the object of obtaining some idea of what suitable material for the army is to be found in Indian universities, a sub-committee of the Indian Sandhurst Committee, consisting of Lieut-General Sir Andrew Skeen, Chairman, Dr. Ziauddin Ahmed and Captain Bala Sahib Dafle, recently made a tour of representative universities in all parts of India.

Bombay, Poona, Madras, Calcutta, Benares and Allahabad universities were visited.

The Punjab University could not be seen on this occasion as its vacation is now in progress.

During the course of this tour, it became apparent that the method of obtaining entrance to officer ranks was still comparatively little known in spite of the announcements on the subject which have appeared in the press from time to time.

Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Value of U.S. imports on which Canada has imposed tariffs

20 in $ billion. Canada hit back at the U.S. on Tuesday with retaliatory tariffs on about $20 billion worth of annual imports and rolled out aid for businesses and workers, matching the latest duties imposed by the Donald Trump administration dollar-for-dollar. REUTERS

Persons named by India for AFC U20 Asian Cup Qualifiers

23 India on Wednesday named a 23-member squad for the upcoming AFC U20 Asian Cup Qualifiers in Tashkent, after omitting eight players who were called for the national camp. The qualifying tournament will be held in the Uzbek capital from August 31 to September 6. PTI

Amount requested by Italy from EU's SAFE defence funds

8 in € billion. Italy has requested €8 billion from the European Union's SAFE funding programme, a source said on Wednesday, confirming earlier media reports. The SAFE instrument is a joint borrowing scheme backed by the EU aimed at boosting the bloc's defence capabilities. REUTERS

Private pharmacies under RGHS scheme facing action

215 Authorities have temporarily suspended 215 private pharmacies from processing transactions under the Rajasthan Government Health Scheme (RGHS) for alleged negligence and delays in dispensing medicines, officials said on Wednesday. PTI

Number of major South Delhi flyovers repaired by PWD

3 The Public Works Department (PWD) is planning to undertake repair and maintenance work on stretches of three major South Delhi flyovers, including Nehru Nagar, the AIIMS loops and Barapullah Phase 1, officials said on Wednesday. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Why was Parandur airport scrapped?

What were the main objections to the Parandur site? How much land had been acquired? What approvals had the plan secured? Why does Chennai need another airport? What will Terminal 5 add to Chennai airport's capacity? How soon can Chennai get a second airport?

EXPLAINER

Sunitha Sekar

The story so far:

Four years after it was announced, one of the most anticipated and controversial projects for Chennai city, the second airport proposed at Parandur, has now been scrapped by the Tamil Nadu government. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay announced in the State Assembly on August 24 that the government would drop the project and look for an alternative site to build Chennai's second airport.

Meanwhile, the Airports Authority of India will construct Terminal 5 in the northwestern area of the airport, which passengers will be able to access via an elevated corridor. The existing Chennai airport at Meenambakkam handles 30 million passengers a year. With the ongoing construction of Terminal 3, which will also handle international flights along with Terminal 2, the airport's capacity will increase to 35 million passengers a year. If Terminal 5 is also completed, the airport's capacity will rise further to 55 million passengers a year.

When did the search begin?

The plan for a second airport for Chennai dates back to 1998, when the Ministry of Civil Aviation announced that the project was under consideration. The then Chief Minister, M. Karunanidhi, wrote to Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, requesting him to expedite the project's clearance. A site 10 km south of Meenambakkam was earmarked for the airport, which was to be developed under the Build-Own-Operate-Transfer model.

A year later, the Centre gave its nod for the project, which was planned to come up on 3,000 acres at an estimated cost of ₹2,000 crore. However, the project did not take off. In 2007, the Tamil Nadu government announced yet again that a second airport would be built, this time over 4,820 acres at Sriperumbudur, with four runways. The site was emerging as a strong industrial and manufacturing corridor, and an airport there was seen as strategically important for the city's growth. But the project was embroiled in controversy, drawing fierce opposition from political parties and farmers who objected to their land being taken over for the project. The project too failed to progress, and the following decade saw only the existing airport at Meenambakkam undergo Phase I and Phase II modernisation.

The Tamil Nadu government revived the plan for a second airport in 2022 and announced that it would be built at Parandur in Kancheepuram district. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

The Tamil Nadu government revived the plan for a second airport in 2022 and announced that it would be built at Parandur in Kancheepuram district. Farmers in Ekanapuram, who faced relocation if the project became a reality, began staging protests.

In early 2025, a year after launching his party Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam, Mr. Vijay visited the project site at Parandur to show solidarity with the protesting farmers. Keeping his promise, he announced earlier this week that the government would no longer pursue the Parandur airport project.

Why did Parandur face opposition?

After the project was announced in 2022, landowners in several villages in and around Parandur opposed it, saying it would severely affect their livelihoods. Villagers in Ekanapuram also warned that the project could lead to an environmental disaster. Activists echoed these concerns, pointing out that the proposed site is interspersed with several water bodies. They said the construction of the airport could not only inundate nearby villages but also increase the risk of flooding in Chennai.

How far had the project progressed?

Over the last four years, the Tamil Nadu government secured some major approvals required to commence the project, including site clearance and in-principle approval from the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

Of the 5,846 acres required for the project, the government completed the acquisition of 1,802 acres. The State government, however, had not obtained environmental clearance or floated bids to find a private operator.

Why does Chennai need another airport?

Nearly a decade ago, Chennai was the third-busiest airport in the country, after New Delhi and Kolkata. However, privately managed airports in Bengaluru and Hyderabad have recorded significant growth over the past decade and have overtaken Chennai to become the country's third- and fourth-busiest airports, respectively.

Bengaluru, in particular, has raised the benchmark for passenger experience, while adding direct flights to Paris, Amsterdam, Munich, Vietnam, Tokyo and the Maldives. Chennai airport, however, has yet to secure direct flights to any of these destinations. Passengers have also raised several concerns about the airport in recent years, including delays in opening a second cab pick-up point and completing Terminal 3, among others.

Industry experts have repeatedly stressed that an airport should no longer be viewed merely as transport infrastructure, but as an economic engine that can draw investments, companies and employment for a city and the State.

With Tamil Nadu turning into a $1.5-trillion economy in the next 10 years, world-class airport infrastructure is the need of the hour, experts say.

What happens next?

With the Parandur airport project scrapped, the Tamil Nadu government is back to searching for an ideal site for Chennai's second airport. However, experts point out that finding a location without farmlands and water bodies in and around Chennai will be far from easy and that one must also look at the availability of airspace before arriving at a location.

Even if the process begins now, the earliest Chennai could get a second airport would be in five to seven years, depending on how quickly the clearances are granted by the Centre.

THE GIST

- Tamil Nadu has scrapped the Parandur airport plan after sustained opposition from farmers over land acquisition, livelihoods and the site's water bodies, and will look for an alternative location.
- Chennai's existing airport capacity is being expanded to 55 million passengers with Terminal 3 and the proposed Terminal 5, but experts say a second airport is crucial to support the city's economic growth.
- The government now faces the challenge of finding a site with minimal impact on farmlands and water bodies, with a new airport unlikely to be ready for at least five to seven years.

How can States use disaster funds for heatwaves?

Heatwave funding expands, but States must strengthen planning and implementation to use it effectively

Shravan Prabhu

On August 4, the Ministry of Home Affairs told the Lok Sabha that heatwaves and lightning had been added to India's list of notified natural calamities, taking the total list to 14.

The change follows a recommendation by the Sixteenth Finance Commission (FC-XVI) and operational guidelines issued on June 30. Along with the 2024 amendment to the Disaster Mitigation Fund guidelines, the update means heatwaves are now eligible for the full State Disaster Risk Management Fund pool.

Disaster finance in India

Under Article 280 of the Constitution, the Finance Commission recommends arrangements for disaster management funds. The FC-XVI recommended ₹2.04 lakh crore for State disaster funds in the five years between 2026-27 and 2030-31, nearly 28% more than the previous Commission's allocation.

Of the total fund, ₹1.6 lakh crore goes to the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) and the rest to the State Disaster Mitigation Fund (SDMF). The SDRF is meant for response, relief, and reconstruction immediately following a disaster; the SDMF is meant to fund interventions to reduce the risk of a climate event from turning into a disaster, in the longer term.

These funds are available to all States. The FC-XVI has determined the inter-State distribution using a formula comprising a disaster risk index, which takes into account the frequency and intensity of different hazards along with exposure and vulnerability and expenses incurred by States during the previous commission's tenure. The FC-XVI recommended ₹79,406 crore for national disaster funds over the same period and which States can seek when a disaster is severe enough to exceed their own resources, like Kerala did following the Wayanad landslides in 2024.

Heat has thus far occupied an awkward position in the disaster finance system. A State could notify a heatwave as a 'local disaster' and use the SDRF – but only up to 10% of its annual allocation and after setting separate norms such as the amount of compensation for loss of lives or damage to crops. Other notified disasters such as floods and cyclones faced no such ceiling. The new notification removes this asymmetry.

India's exposure to extreme heat is growing. The author used 35 indicators across climate change, exposure, and vulnerability to estimate that more than 57% of Indian districts, home to roughly three-fourths of the Indian population, face high- to very-high heat risk. The number of hot days per year has increased. The incidence of very warm nights and relative humidity has also risen, reducing the human body's ability to recover after hot days.

What States can fund

The National Disaster Management Authority has asked all States, districts, and cities to develop heat action plans (HAPs), which map heat risk and vulnerability and identify short-, medium-, and long-term interventions. Thus far, 300 cities and districts across 23 heatwave-prone States have HAPs.

Implementation, however, has lagged because of limited technical capacity, competing priorities, and inadequate funding. A 2023 review of HAPs also found that 79% of the plans asked city departments to self-allocate funds.

The new Central notification provides States with two clearer financing options. Under the SDRF, they can provide relief and compensation for heat-related losses. And through the SDMF, they can finance longer-term risk reduction such as cooling shelters and early-warning systems. The respective State Disaster Management Authorities and State Emergency Operations Centre will be the nodal agencies responsible for both funds' corpus.

Next steps

First, heat planning must expand. Twelve States have already notified heatwaves locally but only some 300 cities and districts have HAPs, leaving around 4,800 urban local bodies and 800 districts without them. Heat-specific SDMF guidelines are still awaited, but existing guidelines require risk and vulnerability assessments before any projects are proposed – precisely the groundwork HAPs are meant to provide.

Second, plans must become fundable projects. States need model mitigation proposals suited to local climate and geography. Many local bodies lack the technical capacity to prepare such proposals. Research institutions, NGOs, and philanthropy could provide technical support and risk capital to help convert plans into appraisable projects.

Third, health surveillance must improve. Relief payouts will now depend on accurate loss-and-damage data. The Health Ministry's current surveillance system covers over 51,000 reporting units and recorded 4,853 heatstroke cases and 20 confirmed heatstroke deaths between March 1 and July 26. But it misses the wider burden from heart, lung, and kidney conditions worsened by heat.

Fourth, States should link heat solutions to other government development schemes by identifying convergence, and use fast, pre-agreed tools like parametric insurance, which pays out automatically once a set temperature threshold is crossed. Similar tools already operate for other hazards; Nagaland, for example, has rainfall insurance that pays out when rainfall levels cross a set threshold.

(Shravan Prabhu is Programme Lead at Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) and Coordinator of the GHHIN South Asia Heat & Health Hub)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GETTY IMAGES

How India's scam towns built a thriving industry around fraud

Three books trace the journey of India's cyber fraud industry, from Jamtara and the Mewat belt to global scam operations in Southeast Asia; they examine how cheap mobile data, penury, greed, rapid digitisation and weak law enforcement have allowed the industry to grow and adapt

Aroon Deep

Many people, especially in urban areas, have realised the perils of picking up calls from strangers and giving them their bank account or other personal details after being lured by tempting offers or frightened by threats. Responding to this surge in cybercrime, the government mandated telecom operators to replace caller tunes with public service announcements warning us all to be on guard. A 2020 Netflix series set in Jamtara in Jharkhand had some success; now, we have the first of what is likely to be a subgenre of books studying these scammers' techniques.

While the scams have caused great distress to those who have lost their hard-earned savings, they have enriched groups of youth beyond their wildest dreams in many villages, from Jamtara to the Mewat belt spanning Rajasthan, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh. In hitherto forgotten areas, where generations have lived in squalor, palatial houses have cropped up where roads barely reach, and the land isn't arable.

Motorcycle showrooms with thick order books have emerged, selling models that would otherwise only sell more than once a week in tier-1 showrooms. And it did not take Chitradeep Chakraborty, author of *Jamtara Calling* (Rupa Publications), more than an hour to find someone who was willing to describe the entire ecosystem that allows fraudsters to con unsuspecting victims and make them part with their savings.

The art of adapting

The book is a good entry point into the way 'scamming towns' work. Much of it is about an extended field trip in Jamtara, with a cab driver turning fixer. Chakraborty sparks up lengthy conversations with key operators, while pretending to be an executive from a telecom operator (he doesn't say which one, but it isn't hard to hazard a guess). The days-long outing, which he chronicles in this slim volume, sketches a town where desperate circumstances and sudden digitisation gave birth to a cottage industry that operates with impunity. So much impunity, in fact, that nearly every operator he recalls meeting spills out the secrets of his tradecraft – it is usually a man – after a little more than a friendly introduction and a cup of tea.

What Chakraborty finds is that "cybers," the shorthand that scammers have adopted in this region, constantly adapt to changing circumstances. Scams take place in phases, since awareness about them is spreading fast. In response, their techniques get more sophisticated. When scammers realise that their method of tricking people to give up their one-time passcodes has stopped working, they move on to convincing people, using an ingenious math-based exploit, to give up their ATM cards' PIN instead. And when that stops working as well, they pretend to be retired Army personnel and start hawking non-existent furniture and bikes on platforms such as OLX and Quikr. He finds that the local police are happy to turn a blind eye to the whole sordid business as long as they get a share in the profits. But that isn't the case when scammers make the mistake of fooling a Member of Parliament or a senior bureaucrat; in those cases, the police storm the town and arrest the odd lynchpin. But cases hardly stick, given the clogged criminal justice system and the ability of the nouveau riche scammers to hire expensive legal representation.

Beyond call scams

In *Bharat Bluff* (Roli Books), another breezy read, Soumya Gupta takes a macro view of the economic and legal conditions that permit the industrialisation of scams. For instance, India still does not have a stringent data privacy law in force (the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 comes into force next year). She also examines the broader sweep of dishonesty on the Indian internet, from fake identities on Instagram targeting well-off liberals to Chinese loan apps charging usurious interest (if at all the loans are legitimate to begin with).

Snigdha Poonam's *Scamlands* (Penguin Viking) widens the scope of studying this fraud. She applies a quasi-pop anthropological lens on the hustlers of Jamtara and elsewhere, refining an approach that she had used with great success in her 2018 book, *Dreamers*. *Scamlands* takes an expansive and meditative approach, trying to probe into the inner lives of the newly rich and their devastated victims alike. The book also takes the reader around the world through the globalised pig-butchering industries – large-scale, tech-enabled financial fraud operations – in Southeast Asian countries such as Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos, and their victims in the U.S.

The "cybers" in all three books cause tremendous damage. In one instance, they leave two members of a family dead and one aimlessly exploring Jamtara in search of answers. The books' response to the question of motive boils down to opportunity (enabled by cheap mobile data), penury, and greed. While Chakraborty attributes some of their eventual capture to unlucky encounters with powerful victims, Poonam's reporting suggests that successfully duping the rich and famous became a coveted status symbol.

There are enough explanations to go around for how the scam industry grew so massive – on the victims' end, an unfamiliarity with the rapidly evolving internet; on the perpetrators' end, entire villages left behind with little by way of social mobility; and a weak rule of law that makes it difficult to dismantle the industry and deter would-be cybercriminals.

While the books, particularly Gupta's and Chakraborty's, offer in-depth advice on how to avoid falling prey to scams, perhaps the best way to do so is to understand how the ecosystem came about and persists. After all, learning about fraud is in and of itself a cautionary tale.

THE DAILY QUIZ

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

On August 27, 410 CE, the three-day sack of Rome by the Visigoths came to an end, shocking the ancient world; how much do you know about the sack and its significance?

Prathmesh Kher

QUESTION 1
Who led the Visigoths who sacked Rome in 410 CE?

QUESTION 2
For approximately how long had Rome avoided being sacked by a foreign enemy before 410 CE?

QUESTION 3
Which Roman emperor was ruling the Western Roman Empire when Rome was sacked?

QUESTION 4
Which city served as the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire at the time?

QUESTION 5
Which Christian theologian wrote The City of God in the aftermath of the sack of Rome, addressing arguments that the rise of Christianity had contributed to Rome's troubles?

Visual Question:
Identify the Roman writer who described the catastrophe with the words, "The City which had taken the whole world was itself taken." PUBLIC DOMAIN

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. In which year was it held? **Ans: 1881**
2. Out of the four, how many Grand Slam tournaments were not affected by cancellation due to World War I and World War II, nor interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020? **Ans: U.S. Open**
3. The U.S. Open became the first Grand Slam tournament to award equal prize money to men and women, with that year's singles champions. In which year did this happen? **Ans: 1973**
4. In 2006, the U.S. Open introduced instant replay reviews of line calls, using the Hawk-Eye computer system. It was the first Grand Slam tournament to use the system. The Open felt the need to implement the system because of the controversial quarterfinal match at the 2004 U.S. Open between which players? **Ans: Serena Williams and Jennifer Capriati**
5. Who are the current men's singles and women's singles champions? **Ans: Carlos Alcaraz and Aryna Sabalenka**
Visual: Identify this U.S. Open record holder. What record has she held? **Ans: Molla Mallory; she is the record holder in women's singles**
Early Birds: Tamal Biswas | Sukdev Shet | Tito Shiladitya | Lalchand Bhutani | Sitaram Saharay

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

"Hi, come on in. Nice pair of jeans. Where did you buy them?"

"At Jeansworld. And they cost me only Rs. 150."

"Is there a sale going on?"

"No, no sale. I exchanged my old pair of jeans with this new pair."

"For a new pair."

"What?"

"You don't exchange something 'with' something. You usually exchange something 'for' something."

"My father is planning to exchange his old scooter for a new one. How does that sound?"

"The example is an excellent one. But do you seriously think someone will pay money for that rusty old thing?"

"Well, I'm not really sure."

"I have a feeling that your father will have to pay money to get rid of it!"

"My mother would agree with you. She's been asking him to get rid of the old scooter for about ten years now. But he keeps telling her that he can't. Apparently it was a gift from his father. Anyway, how about this example? The old farmer exchanged his wheat for oil."

"Good! Now then, how about...."

".... listen, does this mean it's wrong to say 'exchange with'?"

"Of course not. You can use both 'exchange with' and 'exchange for'. What you have to remember is you 'exchange something for something' and you 'exchange something with someone'."

"In other words, you use 'exchange with' to indicate trading between people, not between things."

"Here's an example. The two students exchanged coats with each other."

"Sujatha exchanges books with many of her friends. How does that sound?"

"Fine. I exchange greetings with Ajit on 1st January. That's the only time I ring him up."

"That's understandable."

"There are lots of people who want to talk to him. Many people think he's very intelligent."

"Those people must be crazy. You know, sometimes I think people are not really interested.... That reminds me, what is the difference between 'some time' and 'sometime'?"

"Well, 'some time' is normally used to indicate some amount of time. The duration could be very short or long. It could be five minutes or ten years. For example, I need some time to finish writing this letter."

"Karthick always makes it a point to spend some time with his grandparents during the summer."

"As a child, Padma spent quite some time in Gwalior. Her Hindi is excellent."

"In all these examples, would it be wrong to use 'sometime'?"

"Yes, it would. 'Sometime' is normally used to refer to indefinite time in the future or the past. For example, 'Pramod will be arriving sometime next month'."

"So, what you are saying is that Pramod will be arriving next month, but you don't know when. That is, you don't know the date and the time."

"That's right. The sentence gives you a general idea as to when Promod is arriving, but it does not specify when exactly. Would it be possible for me to come and see you sometime tomorrow?"

"The Guptas have been married for 25 years. They have been married for quite some time."

"I hope to get married sometime next year."

"No girl in her right mind would marry you."

Published in The Hindu on October 9, 2001

Word of the day

Rebarbative:
serving or tending to repel

Synonyms: irritating, annoying, disturbing, aggravating

Usage: *His rebarbative manner annoyed everyone.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/rebarbative

International Phonetic Alphabet: /rɪbɑːbətɪv/

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

From Page One

95 killed in Nepal flash flood, hundreds missing

Nepal's Prime Minister Balendra Shah said in a social media post that he was left with a "heavy heart". "The entire nation has been left shocked and deeply saddened by the loss of life and damage to property," he added, describing the disaster as "sudden" and "massive". Stating that the government immediately mobilised all its resources for rescue operations, he vowed that rescue operations would continue through the night.

"Saving the lives of the injured, searching for those missing and protecting affected people is our first priority," he said.

As authorities in Nepal stepped up rescue operations, officials and experts sought to establish what triggered the sudden flood.

Earlier, Foreign Minister Shishir Khanal told Parliament that preliminary information suggested an earthquake around 8.37 a.m. triggered an ice avalanche, which was followed by the flood around 8.40 a.m. "The information needed further verification," he said.

Officials at the Flood Forecasting Division had separately said they received information that a landslide may have blocked a river in Tibet before water burst through. In an update at 1.35 p.m., the division said, citing information from the Chinese side, that the blocked river had yet to fully open.

The Bhotekoshi River, which originates in Tibet, flows into Nepal's Trishuli River and eventually enters India as the Gandak River.

Mr. Khanal told Parliament that the flood had caused extensive damage in Timure and Syafrubesi in Rasuwa, and in Betravati, Trishuli, Battar and Devighat in neighbouring Nuwakot. Roads, bridges, hydropower and communications infrastructure were among those damaged.

According to Nepali authorities, there had been no rain in the region before the flood hit, while rainfall was recorded on the Tibetan side. In July last year, flash floods in the same Bhotekoshi River, which also occurred without rain, killed nine people and washed away the Miteri Pul (Friendship Bridge) linking Nepal and China.

A Cabinet meeting on Wednesday afternoon directed authorities to urgently restore roads, electricity and telecommunications in the affected areas and to mobilise resources to rebuild damaged public infrastructure.

It also decided to declare the affected local governments in Rasuwa, Nuwakot, and Dhading as disaster-crisis areas for three months.

Why was Acting CJ of HC not shifted: judge

In the press statement released by the Supreme Court, CJI Kant, who is currently abroad on an official tour, stressed that "allegations against a sitting judge must be dealt with strictly through the established institutional mechanism".

He maintained that the contents of the letters cannot be adjudicated in the public domain and that the judge concerned must be given a fair opportunity to place his response before any conclusion was reached.

"The fact that allegations have been made, therefore, cannot by itself be treated as a finding against the judge. The matter, he added, is being examined at the appropriate level and the process will take into account the material placed by Justice Mehta as well as the response of Justice Sharma. Any decision regarding the continuation, transfer or other administrative action concerning the acting Chief Justice would be taken by the competent institutional authority after due consideration of the material," the statement read.

Justice Mehta had reminded the CJI in his letter that he had been making repeated requests for the appointment of a regular Chief Justice to the Rajasthan High Court since the beginning of 2026. The ACJ is due to retire on September 26.

Justice Mehta noted that there was maladministration and malpractices on both the judicial and administrative side of the Rajasthan High Court.

"However, till date, the request to have a Chief Justice from another State in my parent High Court has met with no positive response," Justice Mehta wrote in the August 2 letter.

Cases were suddenly withdrawn and moved to the Bench of the Acting Chief Justice (ACJ) without any justifiable cause, Justice Mehta alleged. He said he was initially asked by the CJI to provide a list of these cases in writing, but was immediately thereafter assured that there was no need to place anything in writing and that suitable action would be taken.

The next letter, on August 10, noted that the CJI had asked Justice Sharma to respond to the shifting of cases, but said that no specific information was further available on the reply or facts of these cases.

Justice Mehta wrote that he had "positive information" that Justice Sharma called and humiliated judicial officers in Rajasthan to satisfy a "personal vendetta". A full court meeting was organised to designate a "large number of favoured advocates as seniors", that too, on a working day, he said. He wrote that he had been "informed" of the preparation of a "fanciful plan" for a multi-storied tower with almost 100 rooms to function as a guest house for the High Court, calling it a "sheer waste of public money".

Justice Mehta also wrote that anguished judges of the High Court have said they were "frequently threatened" with retributive action, including transfer, by the ACJ, who claimed "closeness" with the CJI.

In his last letter on August 17, Justice Mehta used terms such as "rampant nepotism and favouritism" to describe the ACJ's actions.

India, China agree to advance boundary delimitation talks

After 25th round of talks, the countries agree on trans-border river mechanism meeting in Sept., hydrological data sharing, new military meeting points, and setting up 2 additional border hotlines

Ananth Krishnan
BEIJING

India and China have agreed to advance discussions on "an early and substantial harvest of boundary delimitation", according to an eight-point outcome document released by both countries on Wednesday.

A day after the 25th round of talks between the Special Representatives (SR) held in Beijing, India and China have agreed to hold the next meeting of an expert-level mechanism on trans-border rivers, which India has been pushing for, in September, and to maintain communication on sharing hydrological data.

To improve border management, India and China have also agreed on an additional two meeting points to hold the General Level or Senior Highest Military Commander meetings.

Two additional channels of border military hotlines in the Eastern and Middle Sectors of the border were also agreed upon.

These were among substantial outcomes announced by both sides following Tuesday's talks in Beijing between National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister and Politburo member Wang Yi.

Boosting ties: Ajit Doval and Wang Yi at the 25th meeting of Special Representatives held in Beijing on Tuesday. ANI

The outcome document said the Expert Group on Boundary Delimitation, which both sides had agreed to set up at last year's SR talks, and a Working Group on Border Management under the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on border affairs, would "advance discussions on an Early and Substantial Harvest of boundary delimitation and Border Management". The first task for both these groups, it noted, would be to agree on their respective terms of reference.

"The two sides reaffirmed their commitment to uphold the guidance received from the leaders of the two countries, maintain peace and tranquillity at the border and create an atmosphere for healthy and steady development of bilateral relations," the joint statement said.

The boundary question

It said both sides also underlined their commitment to advancing negotiations on a framework for the settlement of the boundary question, in accordance with the Agreement on Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question signed in 2005.

On managing the border, both sides agreed that "any situation on the ground would be addressed promptly through existing diplomatic and military channels, including the WMCC, local commander-level meetings and other agreed mechanisms, to resolve outstanding issues and avoid misunderstanding and miscalculation along the LAC."

"The two sides discussed ways to improve understanding of LAC in appropriate areas, for better border management," the statement said.

Both sides also noted recent progress on trans-border cooperation, including the reopening of three designated border trading points and an increase in the number of batches for the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra.

The statement said both had agreed to strengthen exchanges and cooperation in border trade, pilgrimage and other areas.

Modi offers Nepal all possible help after flash flood

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday called Nepal Prime Minister Balendra Shah and offered "all possible humanitarian assistance" to the country as it deals with a devastating flash flood that started at the Nepal-China border and went on to affect townships and tourism spots downstream of the Bhote Koshi river, including Rasuwa and Chitwan.

"Spoke to Prime Minister Balendra Shah and conveyed condolences on the loss of lives due to the floods in Nepal. The people of India stand in solidarity with their sisters and brothers in Nepal at this difficult time. India is ready to provide all possible humanitarian assistance to Nepal. Our teams are coordinating closely on rescue and relief efforts," said Mr. Modi on X.

The Indian Air Force has deployed a C-130J aircraft carrying 10 tonnes of essential relief materials and medical supplies to Nepal. The aircraft took off from the Hindon airbase.

Additional air effort by C-17 and C-130 aircraft will transport further relief supplies, with helicopters earmarked for rescue and evacuation operations.

The Indian Embassy in Kathmandu is coordinating rescue efforts that will reach Nepal in the coming days. In a press note, the embassy said, "The Embassy of India has remained engaged with the relevant authorities of Government of Nepal for early rescue and relief for Indian nationals affected by the flash floods that took place in Nepal today..."

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi condoled the loss of lives in Nepal. "I urge the Government of India to make every possible effort, in close coordination with the Nepalese authorities, to locate the missing Indian citizens and ensure their safe return," he said in a statement.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge also said that India should "extend every possible humanitarian assistance to Nepal in this difficult hour". He added, "The Indian National Congress stands in solidarity with the people of Nepal and prays for the safety of all those affected."

'Centre closely monitoring Nepal flood, reservoirs'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Centre is closely monitoring the situation arising from a flash flood in Nepal, amid concerns that rising water levels could affect areas along the India-Nepal border, particularly in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said on Wednesday.

Home Minister Amit Shah spoke with Chief Ministers of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to review preparedness in areas that could potentially be affected.

As per the Central Water Commission, water levels in reservoirs on the Nepal side are receding and the situation remains under control, the MHA said.

Western disturbance linked to Nepal flood

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

A western disturbance that brought rain to parts of northern India, and subsequently moved eastwards towards the Himalayas, may have contributed to the weather conditions preceding the devastating flash floods in Nepal on Wednesday, according to a senior India Meteorological Department official.

Nepal authorities are also investigating whether an earthquake triggered a landslide or avalanche that caused the sudden surge of water. "The interaction between the systems, along with the hilly terrain, might have played a role," D.S. Pai, Director, Regional Meteorological Centre, Chennai, told *The Hindu*.

"The same western disturbance system was moving eastwards, bringing increased rainfall activity towards the northeast and the Himalayan region."

Rescuers try to reach submerged houses after flash floods along the Trishuli river in Nepal's Nuwakot district on Wednesday. AP

There was not enough information to establish that a cloudburst had occurred in the affected area, he cautioned, adding that rainfall measurements from Nepal would be needed to determine whether exceptionally large amounts of precipitation were recorded.

"The western disturbance should be understood as a possible contributor to the broader rainfall environment rather than as an established direct cause of the flash flood. The immediate mechanism behind the sudden release of water remains under investigation," Mr. Pai said. Nepal and India have mechanisms to share hydrological as well as forecast information. The western disturbance persists as a cyclonic circulation over north Haryana on Wednesday.

Preliminary information indicated that an earthquake occurred in the area shortly before the flooding, and may have triggered an avalanche or landslide that caused the flood, Nepal's Foreign Minister Shishir Khanal said, according to Nepali media reports.

Ice avalanche

Nepal and China were investigating the sequence of events. A preliminary assessment suggested that an ice avalanche may have blocked a river, allowing water to accumulate before a sudden release downstream. The weather conditions, however, point to sustained rainfall across a wider Himalayan region.

The World Meteorological Centre, Beijing, said in a report Wednesday that Nepal had experienced persistent rainfall for about 10 days along the southern Himalayan foothills.

It said accumulated rainfall between August 16 and 25 had reached heavy to intense levels at some locations, while southern Tibet, upstream of Nepal had also received moderate to heavy rain, with localised, intense downpours.

The combination of local and upstream rainfall contributed to flash floods and debris flows in northern Nepal on Wednesday, the Beijing centre said. A monsoon depression over northern India would continue to bring moderate to heavy rain to Nepal over the next three days, the Centre noted.

Maharashtra PSC cancels recruitment over paper leak

Question paper of test for Drug Inspector, Group-B posts were leaked, finds police probe

Yohaan Varghese
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Public Service Commission (MPSC) cancelled the recruitment process for Drug Inspector, Group-B posts in the Food and Drug Administration Department, on Wednesday after an inquiry by the Mumbai Police found that the question paper of the screening test held on March 22 had been leaked.

Between July 22 and 26, some candidates told MPSC that they had received the question paper before the examination began, others said that they got the question paper through social media.

MPSC filed a complaint with the Mumbai Commissioner of Police on July 27.

The preliminary report submitted by the Mumbai Police Crime Branch found that *prima facie*, one candidate received the question paper and benefited from the paper leak.

MPSC had issued the initial notification for the post on July 29, 2025, and the examination was held offline on March 22 at centres in six divisional headquarters of the State. The result was declared on June 12, and 506 candidates were found eligible for interview. In them, 488 cleared the round between July 1 and July 22. A provisional general merit list of 488 candidates was released and 485 candidates were considered eligible.

MPSC said it would conduct a re-examination.

NCP (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar said the MPSC chairman should take responsibility and resign.

Amend Aadhaar Act to help trace, deport foreigners living illegally in India: Bombay HC

Chinmay Gaikwad
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court has directed the Union government and the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) to consider amending the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016, to enable prompt tracing and deportation of foreign nationals living illegally in India.

A Division Bench of Justices Ajay Gadkari and Kamal Khata on July 27 issued the order, which was made available on Tuesday.

The Bench noted that multiple cases had come before the court of foreign nationals illegally entering India and fraudulently obtaining basic documents. The court said probe agencies had reported that such persons engaged in anti-national activities after securing these fraudulent documents.

The Bench opined that a concerted effort was needed by all State and Central agencies to trace and deport such foreign nationals on a priority basis.

Mumbai Police plea

The observations were made while dealing with a plea filed by the Crime Intelligence Unit of the Mumbai Police through the State. The plea sought a direction to the UIDAI to disclose the documents used by one Majid Khan Shah Hajrat Shah to obtain an Aadhaar card. The State alleged that Shah was an Afghan national who entered India on a visa valid up to 2018 and overstayed thereafter.

The State petitioned the High Court to seek details of the documents he used to obtain an Aadhaar card. The UIDAI cited Section 29 of the Aadhaar Act, which prohibits disclosure of details regarding an individual's Aadhaar card or documents. The UIDAI contended that such details could be provided to the investigating agency only upon a court order.

Taking note of this gap, the Bench observed that it was imperative for the UIDAI to take steps to carve out exceptions or incorporate separate procedures to deal with issues such as human trafficking and border infiltration.

The Bench also directed the Centre to consider effecting necessary amendments to the Act to assist investigating agencies in promptly tracing, deporting, and preventing the re-entry of such persons.

Jharkhand govt. to move SC against amended mines Act

Press Trust of India
RANCHI

Jharkhand Finance Minister Radhakrishna Kishore on Wednesday said the State government will move the Supreme Court against the amended MMDR Act, alleging it would cause a major revenue loss to the State exchequer.

Mr. Kishore claimed the amendment would result in a revenue loss of around ₹14,000 crore to the State, affecting various social welfare schemes, particularly the women-centric 'Maiyan Samman Yojana'.

"We have decided to move the Supreme Court regarding the issue. The Chief Minister has issued an order in this regard," Mr. Kishore told reporters here. "Jharkhand's mineral wealth forms a crucial foundation for the State's economic strength.y," he said.

Bihar govt. is using police to avoid accountability: Rahul

It should understand questions do not stop with batons, Cong. leader says amid controversy over 6-year-old being taken away by police during protest; he says students will keep asking questions

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Wednesday, accused the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Bihar government of using the police to suppress student protests, instead of addressing allegations of irregularities in recruitment examinations.

The Congress leader's remarks came amid a controversy over a viral video of a six-year-old boy who was taken away by the police during a student protest in Patna.

Though social media posts claimed that the child had been "arrested" for participating in the protest, the police said he had been taken to the police station for his "own safety" and was later handed over to his mother.

In a post on the social media platform X, Mr. Gandhi said students in Bihar were asking simple questions – why were there irregularities in recruitment examinations, why has no action been taken on the allegations of paper leaks, and how long would the government continue to "tamper with the future" of the youth.

Police deployment during a protest march by students demanding the cancellation of 70th BPSC examination in Patna on Tuesday. ANI

"The controversy over BPSC (Bihar Public Service Commission) examinations is not new. Students have been protesting for a long time over the recruitment process, examination pattern, delays and transparency. But instead of answering, what is the government doing? It is using batons and water cannons and taking students into custody," he said.

Referring to an incident in Siwan earlier, Mr. Gandhi alleged that even an AK-47 rifle was used against protesters.

"This is not merely a question of police action; it is a question of the mindset of the BJP government, which has no answers. That is why it is turning the police into a weapon to evade accountability," he said.

The government should understand that "questions do not stop with batons", he said.

"You cannot snatch away someone's future by instilling fear. The students of Bihar will keep asking questions. And now, they do not just want answers; they demand accountability," he said.

The remarks came a day after thousands of students clashed with the Bihar Police in Patna after being stopped from marching to the Chief Minister's residence.

Most of the protesters were aspirants for the Teachers' Recruitment Examination to be conducted by the BPSC in September. They are demanding that the written examination be conducted in a single stage rather than in two stages – Preliminary and Mains.

(With inputs from PTI)

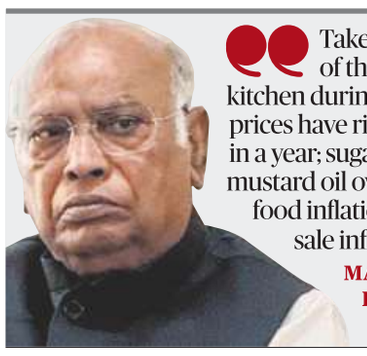
'Achche din' promised by BJP has wrecked common man's budget, says Kharge

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday targeted the Narendra Modi government over the rising prices of essential commodities, saying the "*achche din*" (good times) promised by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had instead left the common person's household budget battered by food inflation.

In a post on X, Mr. Kharge said the BJP was attempting to evade accountability through "distracting stunts and nonsensical talk", but the Congress and the public would continue to raise questions over inflation.

"Take a look at the state of the common man's kitchen during festivals – onion prices have risen by up to 59% in a year, ₹50-₹60 a kg in many cities; sugar ₹60-70 a kg, up to ₹72 a kg in some places; mustard oil over ₹200 a litre; food inflation 5.52%; wholesale inflation 9.78%," Mr. Kharge said.


Take a look at the state of the common man's kitchen during festivals — onion prices have risen by up to 59% in a year; sugar ₹60-70 a kg; mustard oil over ₹200 a litre; food inflation 5.52%; wholesale inflation 9.78%
MALLIKARJUN KHARGE
Congress president

He said that after 12 years of BJP rule, "sometimes lentils, sometimes vegetables, sometimes oil, sometimes sugar" continued to put pressure on household budgets.

The Congress chief cited a comparison of retail prices in May 2013 and August 2026, based on figures attributed to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation and newspaper reports.

The comparison showed steep increases across several kitchen staples. Tomatoes recorded the sharpest rise, from ₹17.50 a kg in May 2013 to ₹120 now – an increase of 585.71%. Onion prices rose from ₹23 to ₹73 a kg, or 217.39%, while atta increased from ₹21 to ₹69 a kg, a rise of 228.57%.

Mustard oil rose from ₹102 to ₹263 a kg, while groundnut oil increased from ₹165 to ₹286. Milk prices rose from ₹36 to ₹85 a litre.

'Over 100% rise'

The Congress said prices of several essential commodities had thus increased by more than 100% over the period. The comparison comes amid the party's continuing attack on the government over inflation and the cost of living.

Cong. slams M.P. govt. for shielding Minister

Mehul Malpani
BHOPAL

The Madhya Pradesh Congress attacked the BJP government in the State on Wednesday over reports claiming that the Cabinet had refused to allow the prosecution of Minister Vijay Shah for his derogatory remarks against Army Colonel Sofia Qureshi last May, days after Operation Sindoor.

State Congress chief Jitu Patwari has written to President Droupadi Murmu, urging her to dismiss the State government for allegedly blocking the judicial process and shielding Mr. Shah from accountability.

"The government's decision not to grant sanction for prosecution against Vijay Shah, while also providing political protection, raises questions about the system in which the ruling party is standing as a wall in the way of the judicial process to shield its political figures from accountability. The stance raises a constitutional question: Are those in power above the law?" he wrote.

LS Secretariat issues notices to 20 MPs who switched from Trinamool to NCPI

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha Secretariat on Tuesday issued notices to 20 MPs who had switched from the Trinamool Congress to the Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI). The notices were issued more than a month after Trinamool national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee wrote to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla urging him to disqualify the legislators.

The development came on the same day that a Supreme Court Bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohana agreed to hear Mr. Banerjee's plea seeking an expeditious decision on the disqualification petitions.

Mr. Banerjee had filed disqualification petitions against the MPs on June 19 under Rule 6 of the Members of Lok Sabha (Disqualification on Ground of Defection) Rules, 1985.

Mahua Moitra

Mahua alleges cover-up

Reacting to the development, Trinamool MP Mahua Moitra alleged on X on Wednesday that there had been a cover-up regarding the timing of the notices issued by the Lok Sabha Secretariat. She pointed out that the party had filed 20 disqualification petitions on June 19 and then shared an image of the notice issued to the rebel MPs.

"Speaker LS did nothing except give them better seats at our expense. [Solicitor General] SG Tushar Mehta in Court said the Speaker had issued notices. Notice dated Aug. 25th - exact date of hearing!" she wrote on X.

While issuing notice to the 20 rebel MPs, the Supreme Court declined to issue any notice to the offices of the Lok Sabha Speaker and the Secretary-General of the House after Mr. Mehta informed the court that he was representing them.

During the hearing, the court observed: "It is not a question of issuing notices; it is a question of concluding the proceedings within a time frame."

Mr. Banerjee had earlier submitted separate disqualification petitions against the 20 MPs and subsequently sought their expeditious disposal. He also met the Lok Sabha Speaker on August 12 about the issue, after sending a written reminder on July 27.

BJP accuses Rahul of hypocrisy over 'smash patriarchy' remark

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Wednesday accused Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and the Congress of hypocrisy over women's empowerment, citing what it described as inappropriate remarks by several Congress leaders.

At a press conference, BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj accused Mr. Gandhi of "misogyny" and referred to a recent Congress event.

"Ten days ago, Mr. Gandhi himself participated with Sandeep Dikshit in a very cheap joke targeting a woman Prime Minister, and that too the Prime Minister of our friendly country, Italy, Ms. Meloni. It was almost like you were overhearing boys talking in a local room....," she said, alleging that Mr. Gandhi's "smash the patriarchy" remarks in Pune were an attempt to divert attention from the controversy.

Bansuri Swaraj

"You want to smash the patriarchy? I am very comfortable singing Christmas carols on Christmas, singing *Vande Mataram* in its entirety, and reciting the *Shiv Tandav*. I challenge you: If you want to actually smash the patriarchy, then sing *Vande Mataram* in its entirety...," Ms. Swaraj said.

She said that had Mr. Gandhi truly wanted to act on women's empowerment, he would not have strongly opposed the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam.

She asked why there was no woman Minister in the Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh Cabinets.

Need Kargil-style review of Operation Sindoor after ex-CDS's remarks: Ramesh

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

A day after former Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan (retd) made fresh remarks on Operation Sindoor, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Wednesday called for a comprehensive official review of the military operation on the lines of the Kargil Review Committee.

Mr. Ramesh, Congress general secretary (communications), said Gen. Chauhan's latest remarks, coupled with his earlier revelations, had raised understandable concern and warranted a structured review of the operation.

Vital revelations

"In a media interview given in Singapore on May 30th, 2025, the-then Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan had made some very significant revelations on Operation Sindoor. Just yesterday Gen. Chauhan has again made some very important revelations that have raised understandable concern," Mr. Ramesh said in a post on X.

Headline-grabbing revelations being made from time to time in interviews and lectures are no substitute for a comprehensive review exercise like what the Subrahmanyam committee had carried out
JAIRAM RAMESH
Congress leader

He recalled that four days after the Kargil War ended, the then Atal Bihari Vajpayee government had, on July 29, 1999, constituted the Kargil Review Committee under the chairmanship of top security analyst K. Subrahmanyam. The committee's report was tabled in Parliament on February 23, 2000.

"Headline-grabbing revelations being made from time to time in interviews and lectures, whether part of a deliberate strategy or not, are no substitute for a structured and comprehensive review exercise like what the Subrahmanyam committee had carried out," Mr. Ramesh said.

The demand came after Gen. Chauhan, speaking at the 'VIMARSH' event on Operation Sindoor and its aftermath at the Vivekananda International Foundation on Tuesday, said a loitering munition deployed during the operation may have struck the Kirana Hills area near Sargodha in Pakistan, where nuclear-related facilities are located.

Home Ministry to set up integrated command centres in border areas to boost threat response

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry is developing a technology-driven command-and-control system for India's land borders that will integrate surveillance inputs from the field through a network of command centres stretching from forward areas to New Delhi, according to a senior government official.

The initiative, part of a new border management policy, is aimed at strengthening monitoring and response capabilities in border regions where physical fencing is not feasible, such as the 3,488-km border with China, which remains un-demarcated at several points from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh. A pilot project will start soon from the Pakistan border, the official added.

The initiative is aimed at strengthening monitoring and response capabilities in border areas where physical fencing is not feasible. REUTERS

Home Minister Amit Shah had earlier announced a four-pronged border security strategy, which involves border guarding forces, local population, State police and technological solutions.

"There will be several small command centres along the land borders that will be linked to the field headquarters and further to Delhi headquarters. The live feed will help the border guarding forces to monitor and also save the resources, reducing the need for physical patrolling," said the official.

Faster responses

The "smart border" architecture for all of India's land frontiers would integrate artificial intelligence, sensors, surveillance systems and unified command-and-control centres to strengthen border security and enable faster responses to threats, the official said. India shares 15,106.7 km land border with seven countries.

"The proposed framework is designed to bring together surveillance inputs from multiple technologies, including cameras, sensors, image-processing tools, drones and other monitoring systems, to create a common operational picture for agencies deployed along India's borders," said the official.

The system was envisaged as an integrated platform where information gathered on the ground could be transmitted quickly to command-and-control centres, allowing authorities to respond more effectively to infiltration attempts, smuggling networks and other security challenges, said the official.

Addressing the growing threat from drones, particularly for smuggling and reconnaissance, has emerged as a major focus area, particularly along the Pakistan border.

According to the official, border-management technologies would be tailored to local conditions rather than deployed uniformly. India's land borders traverse deserts, mountains, riverine stretches, forests and densely populated areas, requiring customised solutions for different terrains and operational requirements, the official added.

"No two borders are the same. Just like the China border, which cannot be fenced, there are riverine stretches along the Bangladesh border, which are flood-prone. No fence can be put there. We are moving towards a concept where physical presence is not always required," said the official.

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited
Regd. Office: PSEB head office, The Mall Patiala- 147001
Corporate Identity No. U40109PB2010SGC033813 Website: www.pspcl.in
(Contact No. 96461-01116)

Tender Enquiry No. 38/GCD/LDH/TS/PSPCL/2026 — Dated: 27.08.2026

ASE/Grid Construction, opp. PAU Gate No.1, PSPCL, Ludhiana invites Short Term e-Tender for Outsourcing of 1 no. New 66 KV Substation Tapprian Khurd with 12.5 MVA PTF works on partial turnkey mode under Grid Construction Division, Ludhiana under Grid Construction Circle, Ludhiana.
For detailed NIT & Tender Specifications please refer to **http://eproc.punjab.gov.in** from 27.08.2026, (01:00 PM onwards).
Note: Corrigendum and amendments, if any, will be published online at **http://eproc.punjab.gov.in.**

C 827/26 — 1079/12/2026-27/14612

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Form of Contract : Lumpsum (TWO COVER SYSTEM)
E-Tender Notice No.2 / TVM – CLE / 2026 – 2027 / Dated. 25 .08.2026.

For and on behalf of Governor of Tamil Nadu E-Tenders are invited by the Superintending Engineer, PWD., Buildings (Construction and Maintenance) Circle, Tiruvannamalai-4, for the following work from the eligible Contractors registered in Public works Department of Government of Tamil Nadu, **upto 3.00 pm** as per server clock on **28.09.2026** under two cover system (Pre qualification and Price E-tender). The last date and time for submission of E-Tender Documents upto 3.00 pm as per Server Clock on **28.09.2026.** The E-tender schedule can be downloaded at free of cost from the Govt designated web site (viz) https://tntenders.gov.in. from **28.08.2026 to 28.09.2026 upto 3.00 PM** and to be submitted through online only. The Prequalification cover (Cover I) alone will be opened on **28.09.2026 at 4.00 PM** by the Superintending Engineer, PWD., Buildings (C&M) Circle, Tiruvannamalai – 4, through online.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Approximate value of work including GST (Rs.in lakh)	Amount of Earnest Money Deposit (in Rupees)	Period of Completion (including monsoon period)
1.	Construction of 50 Bedded Critical Care Block in Government Medical College and Hospital Campus at Siruvangur in Kallakurichi District.	1945.20	Rs. 9,83,000/-	15 Months

Eligible Class of Contractor : Class - I and above.

The Earnest Money Deposit should be paid only through online. The date and Time of opening of Price E-tender will be intimated to the Prequalified contractors through online.
Further Details can be had from the above web site **https://tntenders.gov.in**

DIPR/2663/Tender/2026
Superintending Engineer, PWD.,
Buildings (C & M) Circle, Tiruvannamalai- 4.

INBRIEF

Sonya Gill, AIDWA leader and PARI co-founder, passes away

Sonya Gill, women's rights activist and former Maharashtra Secretary of All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), died on Tuesday at the age of 70 in Mumbai after a prolonged illness. She was the co-founder and trustee of PARI (People's Archive of Rural India). She is survived by her husband and renowned journalist P. Sainath, who was with her when she collapsed during her evening walk on Tuesday in Mumbai. Her colleagues at PARI remembered her fondly for being an inspiration for her courage and work ethic."It is extremely shocking and distressing to know that our dearest comrade, Sonya Gill, is no more. It is unbelievable," said Mariam Dhawale, vice president of AIDWA.

Another member of Jadavpur University inquiry panel quits

Another member of the inquiry panel of Jadavpur University, which was formed to probe the violent clash that erupted between supporters of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) and Left-backed student organisations on August 20, quit on Wednesday. The Vice-Chancellor of Babasaheb Ambedkar Education University, Arunasis Goswami, submitted his resignation from the panel to Jadavpur University Vice-Chancellor Chiranjib Bhattacharya on Wednesday. Earlier, the Vice-Chancellor of Netaji Subhas Open University, Subha Shankar Sarkar, who was appointed chairman of the committee, also stepped down. The ABVP held a protest rally right opposite Gate No. 2 of the university.

U.P. launches free bus travel for elderly women

Press Trust of India
LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday launched a scheme to provide free bus travel to elderly women in Uttar Pradesh and said it was aimed at facilitating mobility and greater independence for women aged 60 and above.

The Chief Minister launched the 'Lokmata Ahilyabai Matrushakti Yatra' scheme at the Indira Gandhi Pratishthan here and flagged off special buses deployed under the initiative. He also interacted with several women beneficiaries during the programme, according to a statement.

Mr. Adityanath said women aged 60 and above would now be able to travel free of cost on Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation buses under the scheme. He underlined that the government had linked women's welfare with support at different stages of life through schemes covering education, marriage, housing, nutrition and pensions.

The Chief Minister also announced that 50,000 girl students pursuing undergraduate courses would be provided scooters in October-November as part of the government's efforts to promote women's education and mobility.

New LPG connections still on hold amid West Asia tensions

This is a 'temporary measure' due to the 'geopolitical situation', says the Petroleum Ministry; distributors are pushing the 5-kg free-trade cylinders and the 10-kg composites as alternatives

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Consumers across the country continue to wait for new cylinder connections of liquified petroleum gas (LPG) as supplies remain uncertain due to the episodic flare-ups in the West Asia conflict.

Distributors in New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, and Chennai said they have not issued any new connections for the 14.2 kg cylinders meant for domestic consumers since mid-March.

The Hindu had earlier reported that applications seeking new LPG connections were still on hold, months after other curbs introduced at the peak of the West Asia crisis were lifted.

Temporary measure

In a social media response addressing the concern, the Union Petroleum Ministry's grievance redressal platform said, "Due to the prevailing geopolitical situation, issuance of new LPG connections is temporarily on hold. At present, distributors are prioritizing refill supplies for existing consumers to ensure uninterrupted essential services."

Desperate measures: At present, distributors are prioritising refill supplies for existing consumers over new applications. ANI

It added that this was a "temporary measure", with new connections expected to resume once the "situation stabilises".

Pawan Soni, general secretary of the Federation of LPG Distributors of India (FLDI), told *The Hindu* that the supply situation is comfortable at present, although it is difficult to predict whether it will remain so over the longer term.

"Nobody knows how many ships carrying LPG the [oil marketing companies] OMCs will be able to procure, as the situation in West Asia remains uncertain. Moreover, storage capacity will also have to be managed efficiently in line with demand," he said.

According to Bijan Behari Biswas, vice president of the West Bengal unit of the All-India LPG Distributors' Federation, there are an average of 100 to 120 applications for new connections pending with individual distributors across the State.

"However, what we have noticed is that most of these applicants prefer to wait for a new domestic connection instead of getting a free-trade LPG cylinder for a temporary period," he said.

Alternative options

Several distributors across the country have suggested that waiting consumers avail the free trade five-kg (FTL) cylinders and the 10-kg composite cylinders as a temporary measure. The demand for these smaller cylinders varies across the five metro cities.

"Naturally, there has been an increase in sales as new connections are not being issued," a distributor in Delhi said.

An oil-marketing company official in Chennai, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said, "We have told distributors to issue a 5-kg FTL connection to anyone seeking a new connection," the official said. "While the 10-kg cylinders are available, not all distributors may have them."

Distributors in Mumbai and Delhi reported a spike in the sale of 5-kg FTL cylinders. Distributors in Kolkata said demand is not particularly high. Before the conflict, India imported 60% of its LPG requirement, of which 90% came through the Strait of Hormuz. Amid the disruption, India augmented its domestic production to offset the impact of lower imports.

(With inputs from Saptaparno Ghosh, Lalatendu Mishra, Senjuti Sengupta, and Balasubramanyam C.P.)

India rejects rights abuses allegations of UN committee

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

India rejected a report issued by a UN body on Wednesday that alleged various ethnic and religious groups in the country faced discrimination.

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination flagged concerns over human rights violations against Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and Rohingya refugees. It also called for action against those involved in "hate crimes" in India.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India rejects "any politically motivated highly malicious references in the report".

"During the review, we highlighted India's constitutional safeguards, robust legal framework, pluralism, and sustained efforts to protect disadvantaged communities. While we will respond to the committee's observations through the established procedure, the inter-ministerial delegation, which was led by the Solicitor General of India, Tushar Mehta, had already rejected the sweeping generalisations, unsubstantiated allegations, and the tendency to exceed the Convention's mandate during the meeting," he said.

Six dead as vehicle falls into ditch in J&K's Poonch

Press Trust of India
JAMMU

Six people, including two women, were killed, and three others injured, when a vehicle veered off the road and fell into a ditch in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday (August 26, 2026), officials said.

The vehicle, a Maruti Eeco, was heading for Seri Chouhana village when its driver lost control and the vehicle fell into a roadside ditch around 5.30 p.m., resulting in the death of the six persons. The accident took place at Seri Chouhana village in Sheldhar area of Surankote.

The condition of one of the injured, a child, was stated to be critical, the officials said.

Only 2,790 students enrolled against a target of 10,500 for govt.'s free coaching programme

Maitri Porecha
NEW DELHI

The Centre has not been able to effectively implement the scheme of providing free coaching to economically disadvantaged students appearing for competitive exams, a parliamentary Standing Committee report has noted.

Of the targeted 10,500 candidates to be enrolled for free coaching, the Union government could enrol only 2,790 students (26%) over the past three years.

In a report tabled in Parliament on August 10, the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment noted that the target fixed by the Ministry of Social Justice of annually extending free coaching to 3,500 students could not be achieved.

For 2026-27, the target for the free coaching scheme is set at 7,000 beneficiaries.

The road map of the "free online coaching" plan has not yet been made public.

Poor uptake

The report noted that while in 2023-24, only 223 students were given free coaching, this service was extended to 2,136 students in 2024-25 and only 431 students could avail the benefits of free coaching in 2025-26.

The Standing Committee, in its report, noted that out of a budget estimate of ₹47 crore in 2023-24, actual expenditure towards the free coaching scheme was only ₹7.76 crore. Subsequently, the budget estimate was reduced to ₹35 crore in 2024-25 and the actual expenditure was ₹17.68 crore only, the report noted. While the committee has stated that in 2025-26, the budget estimate was further downgraded to ₹20 crore and the actual expenditure was only ₹7.11 crore. In its action-taken reply, the Ministry has stated that the actual expenditure during 2025-26 was ₹9.86 crore.

Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), Staff Selection Commission (SSC), and Railway Recruitment tests, entrance tests such as IIT-JEE and NEET, and eligibility exams such as SAT and GRE are among those covered for free coaching. The scheme covers free coaching for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and beneficiaries under PM CARES for Children Scheme.

In 2026-27, the Ministry of Social Justice has fixed a target of enrolling 7,000 candidates for free coaching.

The report notes: "The committee does not understand the reason for fixing a target of 7,000, which is double the previous target, particularly when the target fixed earlier has not been achieved."

'Revise income ceiling'

The Standing Committee report noted that one of the major hurdles preventing candidates from availing the scheme is fixing a ceiling of annual family income at ₹8 lakh.

The committee had recommended that the family income ceiling should be re-examined, so that a large number of candidates can avail the facility.

In its reply to the panel's observations, the Ministry of Social Justice said the target of 7,000 slots has been proposed to expand the reach of the scheme.

Empanelled Central universities select eligible SC and OBC students through their own screening process.

Minister seeks report on 10 infant deaths at Bengal govt. hospital

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

The death of 10 infants at Malda Medical College and Hospital in West Bengal on August 12 has sparked concern, with the West Bengal Health Department seeking a report on the deaths.

West Bengal Health Minister Sharadwat Mukherjee confirmed the development, and said hospital authorities had been asked to submit a report.

"The infant mortality rate has increased in Malda. We have asked for a report. We have asked for details on why it happened, what caused it," Dr. Mukherjee said.

The Health Minister said the hospital is infested with rodents.

Prosenjit Bar, superintendent of Malda Medical College and Hospital, said that of the 10 infants who died in a single day, eight were born elsewhere and referred to the hospital, while two were born inside the hospital. "There are several reasons for deaths like low birth rate, asphyxia, jaundice and heart related diseases. We have sent a primary report to the Health Department. The Health Minister has sought a report which we will send," he said.

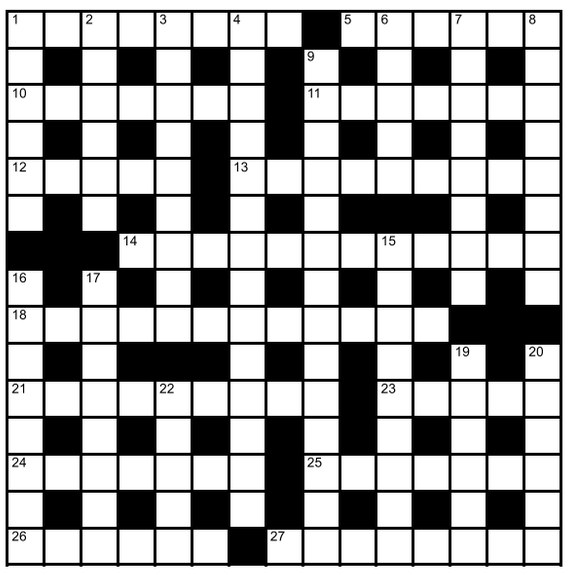
According to State Health Department sources, of the 60 infants who died in the hospital in August , 44 were born at different health facilities and referred to the hospital. The remaining 16 children died after delivery at the hospital.

TH CROSSWORD + 14883

(set by Dr. X)

Solve this puzzle online and access more puzzles at *https://thehindu.com/crosswords*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Relaxes in bed after having sex with primarily sexy blonde (4,4)
5 Outspoken, dynamic and idealistic hosts (6)
10 Misdeed by champion in posh hotel around Taiwanese city (7)
11 Torments British university lecturer with untruths (7)
12 *See 9 Down*
13 Ride at wet ground in ebbing and flowing liquid (9)
14 Infringement by merchant, one craftily smuggling cocaine (12)
18 Unexpected upset! Side in state of shock (12)
21 Asian pianist artfully entertaining a thousand (9)
23 Old British nobleman close to Jeffrey (5)
24 One with most lavish houses, beginning to become abrasive (7)
25 Frivolous sportsman at centre, one crushed by opponent (7)
26 A little toddler and semiaquatic mammal in reel (6)
27 Extremely remarkable model dating big star (3,5)

Down

1 Seem worried about China's ploy (6)
2 Make a mistake in revolting place, cuddling disreputable person (4,2)
3 Drunken female reveller in taxi, turning to sing and cheer heartily (9)
4 Neutralise Cuban cartel, one going berserk (14)
6 Tolerate American leader, primarily mean (5)
7 I trained vigorously to become more trim (8)
8 Princess on small Greek island is unattached (8)
9/12 Strong feeling of disgust caused by poor dental hygiene? (1,3,5,2,3,5)
15 Hanging around oafishly at opening, eating greedily (9)
16 Injured Pathan's holding long walking stick made from a sapling (3-5)
17 Most cool and enjoyable, flying kites (8)
19 Iran slyly beginning to construct atomic plant (6)
20 Slippery person crosses yard, starts to escape through small hole (6)
22 Transaction involving billions for expensive fur (5)

SUDOKU

		3	7		1			9
		7				8		
8	9		3					
		8					4	2
9			5	1	2			8
3	5					7		
					6		8	4
		6				9		
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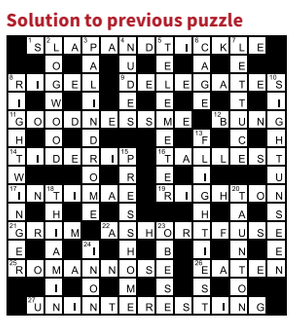
No.SS6985 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Ramayana, the *adi kavya*

Rama avatara is the only one which is dealt with in a literary work, namely Valmiki Ramayana. There are many works about Krishna avatara, but these are not exclusively about Krishna, said M.A. Venkatakrishnan in a discourse. Srimad Bhagavatam deals with many things, and only the tenth *skanda* is about Krishna. Vishnu Purana also talks about Krishna avatara, but only the fifth *amsa* (section) is about Krishna. Valmiki's work is called *adi kavya*, because it is the first work to have been written in kavya style. The Vedas do not have an author. Ramayana is the first work to come after the Vedas and that is why it is called *adi kavya*. The first four chapters are like an introduction. Only in the fifth chapter, we learn about Ayodhya and its king Dasaratha.

Valmiki performed rigorous penance. There are eight stages in penance. These stages involve control of the senses, control of the mind, breath control, meditation, and remaining seated continuously, without getting up for any reason. Valmiki went through all these stages and because he never moved, a termite hill came up around him. When his *tapas* ended, he broke the hill to come out. Valmika means termite hill. Because the sage came out of a termite hill, he came to be known as Valmiki. He began writing his story when Rama was ruling as king of Ayodhya and before Sita was banished by Rama. Valmiki had already met Rama, and knew about Him. But when Narada visits him, he asks the latter who is the ideal man alive at that time, who has 16 great qualities. Valmiki knows that only Rama possesses these qualities, and that Narada is going to tell him so.

India improvising on the fly as Strait of Hormuz waters remain still

NEWS ANALYSIS

M. Kalyanaraman
CHENNAI

Iran and Oman officials and ministers continue to meet to come up with a framework to administer the Strait of Hormuz so traffic can restart. The two countries seem to have buried their differences that cropped up end of June when Iran vehemently opposed an additional route hugging Oman's coast that would allow ship transit. But Washington has been unwilling to give Iran much leverage on the strait, leave alone let Iran charge a toll.

So, six months after the war began, the strait remains practically closed.

With little strategic storage, India has been improvising on the fly, managing to keep things going.

A gamechanger would be if China starts competing for Russian oil in a big way with India.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE have sought land-route alternatives to Yanbu and Fujairah ports, but only for crude oil, not for petroleum products, LPG or LNG. Some 5 million barrels, roughly a third of pre-war crude flows, are still moving out of the region, though Houthi attacks have cut that by nearly 1 million barrels on some days. Some high-risk shippers still operate vessels including LNG and LPG carriers across the Strait for a premium, often slipping through at night with electronic identification switched off. Average Strait of Hormuz flows now stand at close to 0.25 million barrels a day, against 15 million before the war, estimates Pankaj Srivastava, SVP at Rystad Energy.

China has so far largely sidestepped the crisis through deep strategic reserves, pipeline alternatives, and a pivot to electric vehicles and renewables.

India, with minimal strategic petroleum reserves and almost no strategic gas reserves, has instead scrambled to build alternative supplies – chiefly Russian crude and U.S. LPG – while leaning on demand destruction and refinery expansion, even as it continues occasional Hormuz transits.

Chinese checkers: A gamechanger would be if China starts competing for Russian oil in a big way with India. REUTERS

"India's strategic oil storage of 5.33 million tonnes will last just nine days, but commercial stocks at refineries can provide a cushion of a month or slightly more," Mr. Srivastava says.

India has walked a delicate line: leveraging ties with Iran for ship transit, working with Oman and UAE to keep supplies flowing, and avoiding antagonising the U.S. ADNOC LNG ships have continued docking in India through the war, though the Iranian attack on Al Rekayyat in early July acted as a dampener.

Prashant Vasisht, SVP at ICRA, says China, until now more reliant on its own strategic reserves, has now started chasing Russian oil and competing with India for it. "What is providing some cushion for Brent is the IEA's 400-million-barrel strategic reserve release, of which some 290 million have already been consumed," he says, warning of the consequences of its depletion.

In the war's early days, India had some 22 Indian-flagged vessels in the Gulf, along with many ships carrying energy cargo bound for the country. As of last week, six Indian-flagged and eight foreign-flagged vessels of Indian interest remained west of the strait, carrying 171 Indian seafarers.

Vessel movement

Some 63 India-bound cargo vessels have transited the strait since the war began, against an estimated 950-1,000 vessels that have left the strait overall, per Lloyd's List. Of the 63, 24 were Indian-flagged and 39 foreign-flagged: 29 bulk carriers, many carrying fertilisers or fertiliser inputs, 14 LPG carriers, 12 crude carriers, two LNG carriers and so on. Eight fertiliser-carrying ships for India remain west of the strait, still awaited.

India's LPG delivery runs on a just-in-time system built around Indian tonnage sufficient for the four-to-seven-day Gulf voyage. As India pivots to the U.S. – Kpler estimates America supplied some 60% of India's LPG imports in May – ships have been rerouted accordingly. India lacks enough vessels to be self-reliant on the six-week U.S. route, forcing it to buy relentlessly from other carriers even while pushing domestic production 30% above pre-war levels. Longer voyages, higher prices, and freight inflation have taken their toll: LPG under-recoveries per cylinder have tripled for oil companies, with a modest price hike doing little to help. "Barmer refinery starting up is a welcome relief," adds Mr. Srivastava.

Gross FDI hit 15-year high of $30.7 billion in April-June 2026

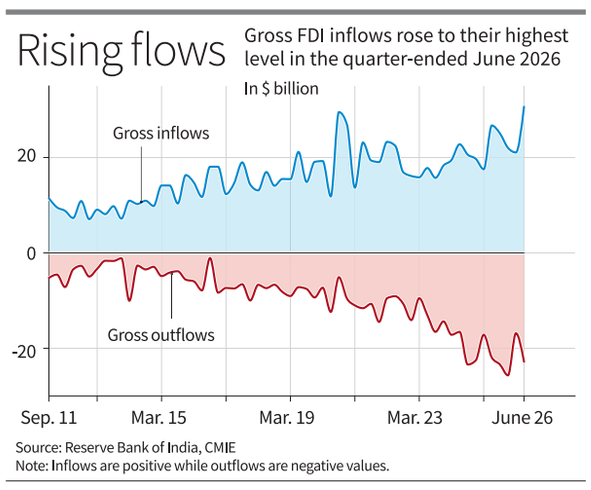
An analysis of latest RBI data shows net FDI turned positive again in June 2026, with inflows exceeding outflows by $1.3 billion that month

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

India attracted a total of $30.7 billion as gross foreign direct investment in the April-June 2026 quarter, the highest level in at least 15 years. This strong inward flow overshadowed outflows, resulting in net FDI in the quarter rising to its highest level since June 2022.

An analysis of the latest data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) shows that net FDI turned positive again in June 2026, with inflows exceeding outflows by $1.3 billion that month, driven by an increase in investment entering the country and a fall in outward investment by Indian companies.

A longer-term analysis also shows that inflows are starting to outpace outflows on a more regular basis. For instance, while net FDI was negative in six out of the last 12 months, it was negative in only one of the last six months.



Source: Reserve Bank of India, CMIE
Note: Inflows are positive while outflows are negative values.

Strong inflows

Gross inflows in June 2026, or the total amount of direct investment that entered the country that month, stood at $9.3 billion. This was 53% higher than in May, but just a little lower than the $9.6 billion that entered the country in June last year. According to the RBI, Singapore, the Netherlands, the U.S., and Canada accounted for around 74% of the inflows. The manufacturing sector received the highest share of inflows, followed by electricity generation, computer, and communication services.

On a quarterly basis, gross inflows stood at $30.7 billion in April-June 2026, which was nearly 46% higher than in the quarter ended March 2026 and about 15% higher than June 2025 quarter.

This was also the highest inflow recorded in the accessible data, which goes back 60 quarters or 15 years to the September 2011 quarter. According to the RBI, this underscores the "continued interest of global investors in India".

Total outflows of direct investment stood at $7.9 billion in June 2026, which was nearly 30% higher than in May, and 8.6% higher than in June of last year. On a quarterly basis, total outflows stood at $22.8 billion. As a result, net FDI stood at $1.3 billion in June 2026 and $7.8 billion in the April-June 2026 quarter. Within outflows, repatriation and disinvestment by foreign companies operating in India grew to $5.8 billion in June 2026, 57% higher than in May, and 36% higher than in June last year.

Outward FDI by Indian firms, on the other hand, fell to $2.1 billion during this period, down 13% over May 2026 and 30% lower than in June 2025.

JSW Group in talks with SAIC of China to increase stake in JV

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

The Sajjan Jindal-led JSW Group is in talks with China's SAIC Motor to increase its stake in their joint venture, JSW MG Motor India, as the group looks to expand its presence in the Indian automobile sector.

"We are talking to them, so it's between shareholders right now. Again, I won't comment on how much because it's all under discussion at this stage," JSW MG Motor India Director Parth Jindal told journalists in Mumbai on Wednesday.

According to reports, JSW Group is seeking to increase its stake in the joint venture by about 10%. JSW currently holds 35%, while SAIC Motor owns 49%. The remaining stake is held by Indian institutional investors, employees of JSW MG Motor India and the company's dealers.

Apart from JSW MG Motor India, the group is setting up a separate automobile company, JSW Motor Ltd., which will focus on manufacturing electric vehicles. JSW Group is also in discussions with Skoda Auto Volkswagen India for a potential acquisition of a majority stake.

If the proposed transactions materialise, JSW Group would emerge as a significant player in India's automotive industry, with investments across three entities and a portfolio spanning multiple brands.

Retail sugar prices stabilise, likely to see drop in coming days

The Hindu Bureau
COIMBATORE

Retail sugar prices in most of the markets across the country continued to hover between ₹65 and ₹70 a kg with a section of traders expecting the prices to drop in the coming days.

In Uttar Pradesh, which is one of the main sugar producing States, retail sugar prices ranged between ₹50 and ₹65 per kg in the midst of fears in the market of shortage. "The price has risen by over ₹10 in the last 15 days," said Vikas Gautam, a customer based in Lucknow.

In Mumbai, the prices were ₹77-80 a kg. However, bulk buyers said they had adequate stocks. In Hyderabad, some of the outlets have restricted the quantity that can be purchased.

In Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, the retail price is ₹69-70 a kg, while restaurant and sweet and savoury outlets were getting sugar from wholesale dealers at ₹67-70 a kg.

"We have a six-month contract with our supplier. He is asking for a revision of the contract now as the prices are increasing," said one of the large-scale restaurant owners in Coimbatore.

In Uttar Pradesh, retail sugar prices ranged between ₹50 and ₹65 per kg.

According to C. Dorairaj, president of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Coimbatore, retail prices have stabilised in the last couple of days and some of the wholesale markets have seen a slight drop in prices too.

The Uttar Pradesh government has intensified action against hoarding and said there is no shortage in availability of sugar.

According to Vishal Nirani, MD of Nirani Sugars, Karnataka expected sugar production of 6.5 million tonnes in the current season. Due to erratic climatic conditions, the actual production is 5.7 MT.

INBRIEF

ICAT issues first compliance certificate for multi-axle bus

The International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT) has issued its first compliance certificate for a 15-metre multi-axle sleeper bus, marking a significant step in the certification of longer and more complex passenger vehicles for India's inter-city transport sector. The certificate has been awarded to Synaty Automotive Pvt. Ltd.'s bus, certified under AIS-119 and AIS-153 in accordance with the applicable provisions of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules. The certification comes amid heightened scrutiny of sleeper bus safety following series of fatal fires and accidents.

JSW Group puts battery plant on hold over tech constraints

The JSW Group has put its proposed battery manufacturing plant in Odisha on hold as it continues to look for a technology partner for lithium iron phosphate (LFP) battery cells, Parth Jindal, Director of JSW MG Motor India and Managing Director of JSW Cement and JSW Paints, said on Wednesday. "We are very keen to make cells in India. But the LFP technology currently is not available for us. The hunt is on for a technology tie-up. We have not yet secured a technology tie-up, and hence, that project currently is on hold," Mr. Jindal said in Mumbai.

STATE BOARD OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING
TELANGANA:: HYDERABAD
Tender Notification
The State Board of Technical Education and Training (SBTET), Telangana, Hyderabad, intends to engage a Confidential Printer to compose the Question Papers and compose, print & supply the Question Paper Booklets of Entrance Examinations conducted by SBTET, Telangana, Hyderabad.

Sl.No.	Particulars	Date	Time
1.	Date of Commencement of Tender Application Submission	28-08-2026	10.30 AM
2.	Last Date for Submission of Tender Application	17-09-2026	03.00 PM

Interested firms can download the detailed Tender Document from **sbtet.telangana.gov.in** ⟶ More ⟶ Tenders.
DIPR R.O.NO. 461-PP/CL-AGENCY/ADVT/2026-27 Dt: 25-08-2026
Sd/- SECRETARY

Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation Limited
(CIN : U40109KA1999SGC025521)
BRIEF TENDER NOTIFICATION
(THROUGH KARNATAKA PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PORTAL ONLY)
No. CEE/T&P/SEE-1/2/2026-27/5471-94 **Date: 24.08.2026**
KPTCL invites Bids on electronic mode for the following works against following enquiry numbers on **Partial Turnkey Basis.**

Sl. No.	Enquiry Nos. and Name of the works
1	**KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT4086** Establishing 2X20MVA, 66/11kV sub-station at **Neralekere** in Magadi Taluk, Bengaluru South District with construction of associated 66kV Transmission line and Terminal Bays for a distance of 6.806kms.
2	**KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT4088** Establishing 2X20MVA, 66/11kV sub-station at **Hunasekatte** village in Bhadravathi Taluk, Shivamogga District with construction of associated 66kV 630sqmm UG Cable LILO for a distance of 0.597kms and Overhead Transmission line for a distance of 0.811kms.
3	**KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT4094** Establishing 2x20MVA, 110/11kV sub-station at **Navage** in Belagavi Taluk & District by constructing 110kV LILO Line from existing 110kV Belagavi (220kV)-Mache line to proposed 110/11kV Navage sub-station for a distance of 3.52kms using 110kV 630sqmm UG cable.

The bids will be received through electronic tendering mode only. The details regarding participation in the e-tendering process can be obtained by logging on to KPTCL website: **https://kptcl.karnataka.gov.in** with hyperlink **"E Procurement KPTCL"** or **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** on or after **03.09.2026 @ 15:00hrs. Last date & time for receipt of Bids and any extension of Due date for Bid submission will be intimated in the KPP Portal.** Any details required in this regard can also be had from the office of the undersigned during office hours.
All Corrigendum/Addendums shall be noticed by the bidders before the last date of submission of the Bids.
Sd/- Chief Engineer (Electy.,), Tendering & Procurement, 9th Floor, Indhana Bhavan, KPTCL, A.R. Circle, Bengaluru – 560 009.

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY
e-TENDER CALL NOTICE
No. EM/WSD-II/TECH-04/2025/1314, Date: 20.08.2026
e-TCN No. EM/WS-23/2026
Name of the work : "Hiring of 01 no. new Truck Mounted Conveyorised Mechanical Road Sweeping Machine for cleaning of roads inside Port area for a period of 05 (03+02) years".
Estimated Cost : Rs.6,34,80,000/- excluding GST and cost of Diesel.
Last Date & time of submission of bid : dt.12.09.2026 up to 1800 Hrs.
Refer our website for details : https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app.
Executive Engineer (M),
Workshop Division-II, Paradip Port Authority
PPA/PR/22/2026-2027, dt.26/08/2026

Jaysingpur Municipal Council, Jaysingpur (M.S.)
Municipal Office, Jaysingpur
E-Tender Notice 2026
JNP/C.D/E-Tender Notice/1641/2026 **Date - 25/08/2026**
Jaysingpur Municipal Council invites E-Tender for construction of roads & civil work at Jaysingpur for Jaysingpur Municipal Council, Jaysingpur, Tal - Shirol, Dist - Kolhapur, State - Maharashtra. For more details kindly visit **http://mahatenders.gov.in** from **Date - 27/08/2026, 11.00 A.M. upto Date 03/09/2026, 4.00 P.M.**
Sd/- Chief Officer, Jaysingpur Municipal Council
Sd/- President, Jaysingpur Municipal Council

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD
INVITATION FOR TENDER
(Only Through KPP Portal)
BWSSB invites Tenders in Two Stage Tender System from registered Contractors for the following works.
Office of the Engineer in Chief , 2nd Floor, Cauvery Bhavana, KG Road, Bengaluru- 560 009.

Sl No.	Name of the Works	Amount put to Tender / EMD Amount
No:BWSSB/EIC/ACE(CS&DCW)/2723/2026-27		Dated:25.08.2026
1.	Estimate for the work of O&M & Upgradation & repair of D2A of Bulk Flow meters coming under AEE(UFW) sub division. **(2nd Call)**	₹ 397.51 Lakhs / ₹ 5.96 Lakhs
No:BWSSB/EIC/ACE(CS&DCW)/2727/2026-27		Dated:25.08.2026
2.	Estimate for the work of O&M & Upgradation & repair of D2B of Bulk Flow meters coming under AEE(UFW) sub division. **(2nd Call)**	₹ 397.63 Lakhs / ₹ 5.96 Lakhs
No:BWSSB/EIC/ACE(CS&DCW)/2725/2026-27		Dated:25.08.2026
3.	Estimate for the work of O&M of Stage 1,2,3 network flow meters coming under AEE(UFW) sub division. **(2nd Call)**	₹ 399.63 Lakhs / ₹ 5.99 Lakhs
No:BWSSB/EIC/ACE(CS&DCW)/TA/2729/2026-27		Dated:25.08.2026
4.	Work of Modernization & Remodeling of Water Supply System and reduction in UFW in Bank Colony area of Hanumanathnagar DMA of existing DMA of existing SW3DMA09 DMA coming under AEESW-3 sub division limit of BWSSB, Bengaluru	₹ 382.46 Lakhs / ₹ 6.76 Lakhs

For all the above works Last date and time for Receipt of tenders is on **10.09.2026** upto **16:00** hours. The bids will be opened on **11.09.2026** at **16:30** hours.
Sd/- Engineer-in-Chief
The details regarding participation in the e-procurement portal process can be obtained by logging on to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** For further details contact the above signed office during working hours.
DIPR/CP/2430/CCL/2026-27

MAHATRANSCO
Maharashtra State Electricity Transmission Co. Ltd.
SRM E-Tender Notice (4th Call)
Maharashtra State Electricity Transmission Company Ltd, EHV PC O&M Zone Vashi invites bids through SRM e-Tender in two bid system (Techno-commercial Bid & Price Bid) from the eligible registered bidders for following works;

RFx No./ Tender No.	Particulars	Estimated Cost
7000041331 T-07/ 2026-27 (4th Call)	Work of EHV Bays strengthening for capacity enhancement of: i) 220kV Navi Mumbai PG I & II Line bays, 2Nos of TBC bays & Auxiliary bus at 220kV Apta substation ii) 220kV PG & Panchanand Line Bays, 1No of TBC Bay and Auxiliary bus at 220kV Taloja Substation iii) 220kV Cable replacement work of 220kV Taloja & Kalwa Line Bays at 220kV Panchanand substation under EHV (O&M) Division Panvel	Rs. 1540.76 Lakhs excl. GST; Rs. 1818.10 Lakhs incl. GST

E.M.D. in Rs 15,40,767/-, **Tender Fees:** Rs 29,500/- including GST, **Sale period:** 26.08.2026 to 07.09.2026, **Last Date of Submission:** 07.09.2026 up to 15:00 Hrs, **Date of opening (Tech. bid):** 07.09.2026 at 15:30 Hrs(if possible). **Contact person:** Executive Engineer, EHV PC O&M Zone, Vashi. Phone No. (022) 27666010 (P) / 27665994. For further details please visit to **https://srmetender.mahatransco.in**
Note: The pre-bid meeting scheduled on 01.09.2026 @ 13:00 Hrs at MSETCL Zone Vashi
Chief Engineer, EHV PC (O&M), Zone, MSETCL, Vashi

SYDNEY

'Five Eyes' security talks discuss how to use AI to deal with threats

REUTERS

The "Five Eyes" intelligence-sharing group of Britain, the U.S., Australia, Canada and New Zealand held talks on Wednesday in Sydney on using artificial intelligence to combat terrorism and organised crime. The group discussed how to use AI "through all the different threat areas we deal with," Australia's Minister said. AFP

SEOUL

South Korea says Russian military planes entered its air defence zone

REUTERS

South Korea said on Wednesday it had scrambled fighter jets in response to Russian military aircraft entering its air defence zone, the second such incursion in weeks. Seoul's Defence Ministry said multiple Russian aircraft had entered and then left its air defence identification zone over the East Sea. AFP

KYIV

Ukraine awards Musk top honour as it seeks to use Starlink more

AP

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has bestowed one of Ukraine's top state honours on SpaceX owner Elon Musk as Kyiv seeks to expand use of the company's Starlink terminals, which provide battlefield communications for Ukrainian forces. Mr. Musk was awarded the Order of Freedom, under a presidential decree. REUTERS

PARIS

French flight attendant wins landmark breast cancer ruling

GETTY IMAGES

A flight attendant in France has succeeded in having her breast cancer recognised as an occupational disease, a first for country's aviation industry, her lawyer said. The ruling recognised that Sophie Lainault, a former flight attendant for Air France, had frequently worked at night and been exposed to passive smoking. AFP

U.S. will achieve nothing with its sanctions campaign: Pezeshkian

Israel's Netanyahu dismisses the possibility of a deal, referring to Iran's leaders as 'savages'; Oman and Iran are negotiating a transit corridor through Hormuz, with IRGC saying that the two nations agreed to share revenues from managing the strait

Agence France-Presse
TEHRAN

Iran's President insisted on Wednesday that the United States will achieve nothing with its sanctions campaign after Washington laid out plans to collapse the country's economy.

Almost six months into their war, the two sides are locked in a stalemate, with Iran keeping the key Strait of Hormuz shut and Washington persisting with a naval counter-blockade of Iran.

Under political pressure at home over the impacts of the conflict, U.S. President Donald Trump has pivoted away from military action to economic levers, expanding sanctions and warning of consequences for countries that do not join.

Masoud Pezeshkian holds a document showing the memorandum of understanding he signed to end the West Asia war. AFP

Iran's army said on Wednesday it had rebuilt or replaced all weapons systems damaged during the fighting.

"America will not achieve anything with economic pressure at this stage, just as it was unable to achieve anything in the war," Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Wednesday, according to the country's *ISNA* news agency.

"We will stand firm against economic pressures, as we have done so far and will continue to do."

Mr. Trump had frequently claimed a deal was close, but has since backed away from diplomacy, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday dismissed any prospect of a deal, calling Iran's leaders "savages".

"I tell you – an agreement cannot be reached," Mr. Netanyahu said, adding that he had discussed the issue with Mr. Trump at a recent meeting.

"I doubt, however, that an agreement can be reached with that group there, with those savages."

Oman, which sits on the other side of Hormuz, has been discussing with Iran a temporary transit corridor. On Wednesday, Iran's Revolutionary Guards, the ideological arm of the nation's military, said the talks with Oman included the two countries agreeing to share revenues received for management of the strait.

Hospital nursery fire kills 14 newborns in Pakistan

Associated Press
ISLAMABAD

A fire killed 14 newborns in a nursery at a major government hospital in Pakistan's capital early Wednesday, according to hospital officials and the government, which already has launched an investigation.

The Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences in Islamabad housed at least 15 newborns in the nursery and at least one baby was rescued from the fire that began about 6.45 a.m. after an air-conditioning unit compressor exploded inside the nursery on the third floor, hospital and rescue officials said.

The fire was confined to the nursery in the gynaecology ward, while the rest of the hospital remained unaffected and there were no other injuries reported, according to hospital officials and witnesses. Television footage showed rescue workers using ladders to reach the area through broken windows.

A man carries the body of a newborn child who died following a fire at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences Hospital. AFP

"One baby was rescued by a doctor," said Dr. Aneeza Jalil, a hospital spokesperson. She said the bodies of six babies had been handed over to their families, while the remaining bodies would be released soon.

Wednesday's fire was among Pakistan's deadliest recent tragedies involving children. In June, 14 schoolchildren were killed when the roof of a tutoring centre under construction collapsed in Lahore.

Taiwan President pushes $6.6 billion military drone Bill

Reuters
TAIPEI

Taiwan must demonstrate its resolve to defend itself and pass a six-year, T$210 billion ($6.6 billion) special Budget to buy military drones, President Lai Ching-te said on Wednesday ahead of a crucial vote in the Opposition-controlled Parliament.

Taiwan's government says the plans to buy some 210,000 new military drones cannot wait, given the wars in Ukraine and the West Asia have shown the importance of uncrewed weapons in modern warfare.

But the Opposition, which controls Parliament, has put forward its own proposals to cap spending each year at T$40 billion, drawn from the annual Budget and overseen by the Economy, not Defence, Ministry.

The government says with the threat from China, which views the democratically governed island as its own territory, the drones are urgently needed to turn any conflict zone into a "hellscape" for the Chinese military.

"This is not only a matter of national defence buildup, but also an important step for Taiwan to demonstrate its determination for self-defence," he told a meeting of his Democratic Progressive Party.

Flattening infrastructure

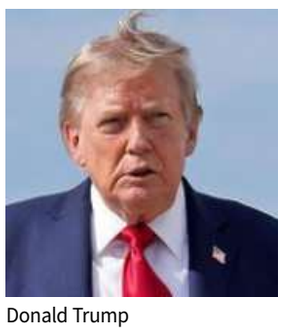
Palestinians inspect the Abu Salim Mosque a day after it was hit by an Israeli air strike, in Deir al-Balah, central Gaza Strip, on Tuesday. AP

Trump submits civil nuclear agreement with Saudi for review

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump has submitted to Congress for review an agreement with Saudi Arabia aimed at bolstering the kingdom's civilian nuclear programme, but continues to insist that it won't move forward if Saudi Arabia doesn't normalise relations with Israel, according to a Trump administration official.

The classified document was submitted to Capitol Hill on Monday as required by the Atomic Energy Act, according to the administration official, a congressional aide, and two others familiar with the matter, who spoke on condition of anonymity.



Donald Trump

Under law, Congress has 90 days while in session to review the agreement. Unless Congress passes a joint resolution rejecting the deal during the review period, the agreement can take effect without a vote by either chamber.

U.S. government pauses immigrant visa appointments for applicants worldwide

Reuters
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration has issued a pause on immigrant visa appointments for applicants around the world during an ongoing immigration crackdown by the U.S. government in the Republican leader's second term in the White House.

A U.S. State Department spokesperson said on Tuesday that it launched a global training initiative at all U.S. embassies and consulates worldwide and that appointments for visa services will be adjusted to accommodate the training. Mr. Trump has pursued an aggressive deportation drive and immigration crackdown that includes revocations of visas and green cards and rejection of applications over a range of reasons like political opinions and pro-Palestinian protests against U.S. ally Israel's assault on Gaza.

Trump's immigration crackdown has been condemned by rights groups as being discriminatory

He says the crackdown aims to improve domestic security. The crackdown has faced some legal setbacks. A U.S. judge on Friday struck down a Trump administration policy suspending the issuance of immigrant visas to applicants from 75 countries, saying that the policy exceeded Secretary of State Marco Rubio's statutory authority.

The State Department did not specify details on the training and its timeline, beyond saying the training aimed to help consular officers screen out applicants deemed likely to become dependent on U.S. public benefits and to ensure evaluation of visa applicants "comprehensively and consistently".

The pause on visa appointments was reported earlier by the *Financial Times*, which said immigrant visa applicants with scheduled interviews at U.S. embassies and consulates have received emails that their appointments were being rescheduled and that they would receive notice of a new date.

Trump's immigration crackdown has been widely condemned by human rights groups as being discriminatory and in violation of free speech and due process rights. Rights groups also say the crackdown has created an unsafe environment in the U.S., especially for ethnic minorities who have raised concerns about racial profiling. While Mr. Trump campaigned in 2024 on a platform of stopping illegal immigration, his administration has also made legal immigration more difficult.

Meta reaches $17-bn settlement with U.S. in trial over social media addiction

Associated Press
OAKLAND

Meta has agreed to pay $17 billion and add child-safety measures to its Facebook and Instagram platforms to end a landmark trial over teen social media addiction and settle claims filed by 47 U.S. states, state attorneys-general announced on Wednesday.

California, Colorado, Kentucky and New Jersey were among 29 states that sued the tech giant in 2023, but the deal cuts short the trial, which was expected to see CEO Mark Zuckerberg take the stand before a jury in federal court in California.

The agreement is worth $353 million in Virginia alone and is one of the biggest in state consumer protection history, Attorney-General Jay Jones said in a statement.

A protestor holds a banner with the names of nearly 400 young people who allegedly died from the impacts of social media. AFP

Meta said in a blog post that it was "building on our longstanding efforts to empower parents and support teens".

"Ensuring teens have a safe and productive experience on our platforms is an absolute imperative for Meta," the company said. "We want to get this right for parents and teens, and that's why we partnered with state attorneys-general to set a new industry standard."

The company urged its rivals to adopt similar safety measures.

The lawsuit accused Meta of contributing to the youth mental health crisis by deliberately designing features that addict children to its platforms and hiding them from the public. It also argued that Meta violated federal laws by routinely collecting data on children under 13 without their parents' consent.

Even though Meta has since added a host of safety features to Instagram, child safety experts have long contended that the features are little more than window dressing.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Bahutule effusive in praise of debutant Saransh's efforts

PTI

Debutant off-spinner Saransh Jain's effort was lauded by Indian spin-bowling coach Sairaj Bahutule. "He toiled in domestic cricket and got his due. Making a Test debut is special and there were nerves. He showed a lot of character despite certain decisions not going his way, and was consistent in his line and length."

STILL HUNGRY

Dinusha pleased with first innings hundred, wants to score more

PTI

Sonal Dinusha, centurion in the first innings and keeping vigil in the second, has resisted India in the second Test. He is hoping to extend his stay. "We need to get as many runs as possible and bat well. Very pleased with the hundred, been working hard and am very happy. Hopefully I can contribute to the team's score again."

TIMELY ASCENT

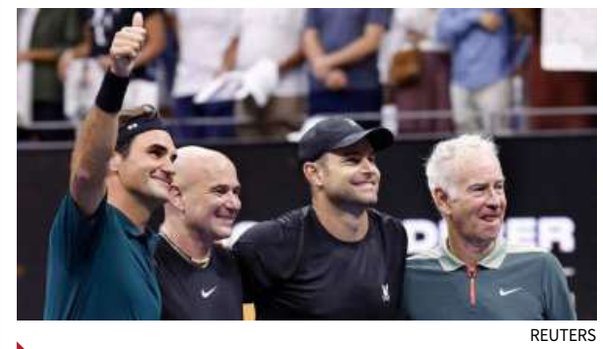
Starc replaces Bumrah as the top-ranked bowler in Tests

AP

Australia fast bowler Mitchell Starc has reached the No. 1 position in the ICC Test rankings for the first time in his career after his 10-wicket haul in Mackay helped his team win the second Test against Bangladesh. The 36-year-old left-armer took over from Jasprit Bumrah.

SWISS DELIGHT

Federer celebrated upon his return to the US Open



REUTERS

Roger Federer made a memorable return to the US Open on Tuesday, delighting a packed Arthur Ashe Stadium as he joined John McEnroe, Andre Agassi and Andy Roddick in an exhibition night billed 'An Icon Returns to New York'. Federer beat Roddick 6-3 before partnering McEnroe to defeat Agassi and Roddick 7-5.

Sooriyabandara and Kamindu shine as Sri Lanka lives to fight another day

The two add 115 for the third wicket before a slip up in the final session allows Gill & Co. to close in on a series sweep; the host is just 16 runs ahead with four wickets in hand; Prasidh and Suthar scalp three each in the first innings to force a follow-on despite Dinusha's century

Delight and despair: Sooriyabandara unfurled a range of strokes to keep India at bay before giving Suthar the charge and getting stumped by Pant for 92. ANI & PTI

INDIA IN SRI LANKA

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
COLOMBO

Dark clouds hung like cotton candy and beneath them on the turf, Sri Lanka battled hard. Wednesday was about the ebb and flow of cricket's longest format, as India pushed for a triumph against a resilient host at the Sinhalese Sports Club Ground.

The second Test's fourth day found a rain-induced closure, and at that moist time, Sri Lanka, following-on in its second innings, posted 229 for six, and nursed a meagre 16-run lead.

After being bowled out for 290 in the first outing, Sri Lanka was asked to follow-on as Shubman Gill was anxious about inclement weather reducing time available in the remainder of the clash. The Sri Lankan second innings, expected to be an exercise in stonewalling, turned out to be a brisk affair as the home batters rushed to erase the deficit.

The risky approach was evident when Lahiru Udara miscued a pull off Mohammed Siraj. When left-arm spinner Manav Suthar stepped in, the host batters targetted him. Southpaw Kamil Mishara on-drove, Pasindu Sooriyabandara whipped and the latter also tested the catching ability of Siraj and Prasidh Krishna, with both pacers tumbling down and failing to hold on.

Shifting gears

Meanwhile, Ravindra Jadeja dismissed Mishara, playing the sweep and getting pads ruffled. Sri Lanka moved to 83 for two at lunch, still very much in the woods. On resumption, the fifth-gear was employed as Sooriyabandara reverse-hit Jadeja and Kamindu Mendis hoisted two sixes off Suthar.

The big hits became regular as Sooriyabandara toyed with Prasidh and Suthar. Prasidh, who packed the on-side and unleashed a short-ball barrage, found his reward when Kamindu spooned one and an on-the-run Gill picked a fine diving catch.

The conclusion of the 115-run third-wicket partnership left Sri Lanka on the cusp of gaining a lead at tea.

In the last session, skipper Dhananjaya de Silva smote a six off Suthar and then was caught in the close-in cordon. Sooriyabandara (92) survived an lbw appeal from Suthar, but undid it by giving the charge off the very next ball and was left stranded.

Next-man Niroshan Dickwella's streaky four helped Sri Lanka move ahead but when he too retreated with a mark on his pads, the home unit was down for the count.

Earlier, resuming at 265 for eight, Sri Lanka's quest was centred on the collective goal, avoiding the follow-on, and the individual aim, a probable hundred from Sonal Dinusha. The first was missed, the second was achieved.

Valiant effort

Dinusha survived an lbw appeal from Saransh Jain. Instantly the southpaw shifted gears with a 2, 6, 4 sequence. He pulled Prasidh for four to reach his second hundred of the series.

A cheeky grin, eyes briefly shut, and a raised bat, revealed his sense of satisfaction.

Instantly his partner Lahiru Kumara perished and Dinusha (103) edged one to K.L. Rahul at first slip. Both wickets were prised out by debutant off-spinner Saransh.

Trailing by 213 runs, Sri Lanka faced another uphill climb, one that has now spilled over into the final day.

SCOREBOARD

INDIA — 1ST INNINGS
503 for nine decl. in 138 overs

SRI LANKA — 1ST INNINGS
Lahiru Udara c Jaiswal b Prasidh 1 *(6b)*, Kamil Mishara c Jurel b Prasidh 19 *(25b, 3x4)*, Prabath Jayasuriya lbw b Suthar 2 *(7b)*, Pasindu Sooriyabandara b Jadeja 80 *(133b, 9x4)*, Kamindu Mendis c Jadeja b Prasidh 32 *(58b, 3x4, 1x6)*, Dhananjaya de Silva c Rahul b Suthar 8 *(14b, 2x4)*, Sonal Dinusha c Rahul b Saransh 103 *(162b, 8x4, 3x6)*, Niroshan Dickwella c Jurel b Siraj 0 *(3b)*, Keshara Nuwantha c Saransh b Suthar 18 *(74b, 2x4, 1x6)*, Lahiru Kumara c Jurel b Saransh 12 *(58b, 2x4)*, Asitha Fernando (not out) 1 *(4b)*; Extras (lb-6, nb-6, w-2): 14; Total (in 89.4 overs): 290.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-1 (Udara, 1.2 overs), 2-8 (Prabath, 2.6), 3-35 (Mishara, 9.3), 4-122 (Kamindu, 29.6), 5-137 (Dhananjaya, 34.5), 6-171 (Sooriyabandara, 44.6), 7-173 (Dickwella, 45.3), 8-230 (Nuwantha, 68.2), 9-288 (Kumara, 86.5).

INDIA BOWLING
Siraj 11-0-33-1, Prasidh 16-2-52-3, Suthar 22-1-85-3, Saransh 20.4-5-69-2, Jadeja 20-4-45-1.

SRI LANKA — 2nd INNINGS
Udara c Saransh b Siraj 3 *(15b)*, Mishara lbw b Jadeja 32 *(39b, 3x4, 1x6)*, Sooriyabandara st. Pant b Suthar 92 *(173b, 10x4, 1x6)*, Kamindu c Gill b Prasidh 55 *(92b, 2x4, 3x6)*, Dhananjaya c Padikkal b Suthar 23 *(44b, 1x4, 1x6)*, Dinusha (batting) 7 *(37b)*, Dickwella lbw b Saransh 6 *(12b, 1x4)*, Nuwantha (batting) 3 *(29b)*; Extras (b-3, nb-5): 8; Total (for six wkts. in 72.4 overs): 229.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-5 (Udara, 3.3), 2-63 (Mishara, 14.5), 3-178 (Kamindu, 43.1), 4-209 (Dhananjaya, 58.5), 5-212 (Sooriyabandara, 60.3), 6-218 (Dickwella, 64.2).

INDIA BOWLING
Prasidh 10-1-31-1, Siraj 9-4-11-1, Suthar 18-2-81-2, Saransh 17.4-3-55-1, Jadeja 18-2-48-1.

Wrong 'un: Off-spinner Saransh has overstepped seven times in the Colombo Test so far. PTI

Spinners bowling no-balls a concern, says Bahutule

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
COLOMBO

There is an old video that floats on YouTube. It has a snatch of the stump microphone catching Rohit Sharma's remark about Ravindra Jadeja. In that, the then Indian captain says: "Jaddu, what are you bowling? In the IPL you don't bowl no-balls, and here you are..."

Cut to the second Test in progress against Sri Lanka at the Sinhalese Sports Club Ground, among India's no-balls, 10 were bowled by spinners with Saransh Jain and Jadeja being guilty of this mistake. It was no surprise that spin-bowling coach Sairaj Bahutule was asked about this malaise in the media interaction on Wednesday.

Reacting to this, Bahutule said: "It is something we have been working on. It is a concern but generally when the bowler is putting in that effort, trying to see how he can create that opportunity and get a wicket in situations where wickets are not coming, he has a tendency to push himself. But this is not an excuse. A lot of work has been put in with Jadeja, and with Saransh, about where the take-off point is."

Asked if this bad habit seeps in from net sessions, Bahutule countered: "Reminders are given during nets also. It is similar to a match situation. We take every session seriously, it is monitored from the side view. It is monitored generally. Sometimes, I stand as an umpire and other coaches do too."

Later tongue-in-cheek Bahutule said that perhaps a penalty (like a free-hit in limited-overs cricket) could reduce this error in Tests.

Terming Sonal Dinusha as a thorn in India's flesh, Bahutule stressed that despite the aggressive manner in which the Sri Lankans batted, the spinners did well to rein them in.

"Each one played their role. Saransh was defensive, Manav Suthar played his role and Jadeja was tight."

Abid spins North into the semifinals

DULEEP TROPHY

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

It took North Zone all of 28 minutes to wrap up a 52-run victory over West Zone and enter the 2026-27 Duleep Trophy semifinal at the BCCI Centre of Excellence here on Wednesday.

Chasing 287, West needed 67 runs on the final morning with three wickets remaining. But just like it had towards the end of the penultimate day, it lost wickets in a heap and missed the opportunity to spar with South Zone in the last-four clash starting this Sunday.

First to go was Tanush Kotian, as left-arm spinner Abid Mushtaq hoodwinked him with a delivery that kept its line after pitching and rearranged his stumps.

With another left-arm tweaker, Nishant Sindhu, operating with Abid in tandem, West opted to send southpaw Tushar Deshpande ahead of Shardul Thakur to disrupt the rhythm.

That's middle! Kotian is castled by an Abid special. K. MURALI KUMAR

Rush of blood

The Mumbai pacer managed to stay put for 17 deliveries, but a rush of blood led to his downfall as he stepped out of the crease and tried to hoick Abid (four for 60) only for a thick edge to travel to the slip fielder.

Specialist batter Urvil Patel (25, 35b, 4x4) was joined by Shardul but the duo's association lasted just three balls as the former missed a slog sweep off Nishant and was adjudged leg-before.

Boom to bust

In just one hour of cricket, spread across day three and day four, North had gone from boom to bust, from 195 for three to 234 all out.

India cricketer Arshdeep Singh admitted after the match that it was an unlikely win and that he was already planning his next travel when Musheer Khan (96) and Ruturaj Gaikwad (66) were batting confidently.

"I was thinking about Sher-E-Punjab, back home, and what time I should get my ticket booked," Arshdeep said with a smile.

Staying in the moment

"But we just stayed in the moment and we always knew that whenever the partnership breaks, there is a chance.

"The run-out we got [of Ruturaj]... credit goes to Kanhaiya [Wadhawan] for that.

"That wicket came, and after that it changed."

The scores:
North Zone 251 & 222 bt West Zone 187 & 234 in 57.3 overs (Musheer Khan 96, Ruturaj Gaikwad 66, Abid Mushtaq 4/60).

Svitolina-Monfils pair on a good run; Serena and Alcaraz out

US OPEN

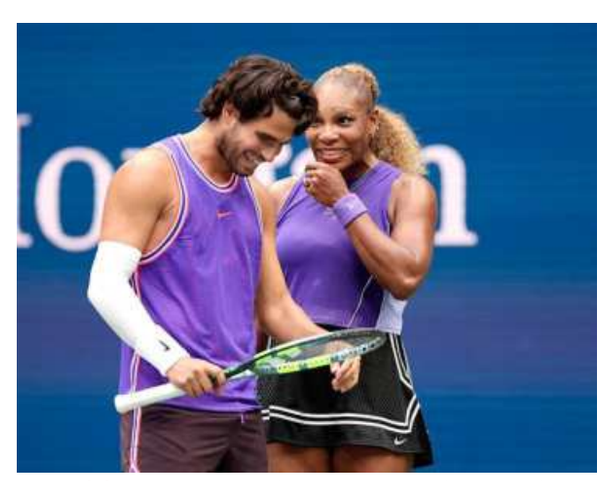
Associated Press
NEW YORK

Elina Svitolina and Gael Monfils have both gone far but never all the way to the US Open title. Maybe the married couple can finally win a trophy together. The spouses made quite a pair on the court on Tuesday, becoming the first team into the mixed doubles semifinals by edging Katerina Siniakova and Henry Patten 5-4(6), 4-5(3), [10-8].

Serena Williams and Carlos Alcaraz won their first-round match but were then ousted after a 5-4(4), 4-1 loss to Belinda Bencic and Flavio Cobolli.

Earlier, Serena, who will play women's doubles with sister Venus, and Alcaraz rebounded from a slow start to defeat Erin Routliffe and Lloyd Glasspool 5-3, 4-1 in the first round, much to the delight of fans inside Arthur Ashe Stadium who were clearly on their side. It was Serena's first US Open match since 2022 and Alcaraz's first of any kind since April 14.

Svitolina and Monfils will face Bencic and Cobolli in one semifinal with Mirra Andreeva and Andrey Rublev meeting Karolina Muchova and Jakub Mensik in the other.



Entertaining fare: Serena and Alcaraz delighted the New York crowd before bowing out. AFP

The results (quarterfinal):
Monfils (Fra) & Svitolina (Ukr) bt Siniakova (Cze) & Patten (GBr) 5-4(6), 4-5(3), [10-8]; Muchova & Mensik (Cze) bt Paul & Navarro (USA) 4-1, 5-3; Rublev & Andreeva bt Ruud (Nor) & Shnaider (Rus) 4-1, 4-5(9), [10-5]; Bencic (Sui) & Cobolli (Ita) bt Serena (USA) & Alcaraz (Esp) 5-4(4), 4-1.

INBRIEF

Chotrani, Senthilkumar in Budapest squash quarters

Veer Chotrani, in pic, and Velavan Senthilkumar advanced to the quarterfinals of the Budapest Open, a $43,500 PSA copper event. Chotrani, the third seed, beat Rui Soares of Portugal 13-11,12-14, 11-9, 12-10 in the pre-quarterfinals following a first-round bye in the new season. Senthilkumar, the eighth seed, defeated German fifth seed Raphael Kandra 11-9, 6-11, 11-7, 11-2 in the pre-quarterfinals after putting it past Briton Will Salter 11-9, 11-6, 11-5 in the opening round.

Andrews named asst. coach of U-17 women's football team

The All India Football Federation has appointed Anthony Andrews as the U17 women's national team's assistant coach under head coach Joakim Alexandersson. Andrews, who also serves as head coach of East Bengal FC, will take up the role on a dual basis with the club and country.

India names squad for AFC U-20 Asian Cup Qualifiers

India on Wednesday named a 23-member squad for the upcoming AFC U-20 Asian Cup Qualifiers in Tashkent. The qualifying tournament will be held in the Uzbek capital from August 31 to September 6 and the main tournament will be held in China next year. The Blue Colts will face Syria on Aug. 31, host Uzbekistan on Sept. 3 and Bangladesh on Sept. 6. The group winners and the seven best runners-up across all eight groups will qualify for AFC U-20 Asian Cup China 2027.

The squad: Goalkeepers: Jaskaran Dub, Pranav Sundarraman, Suraj Singh Aheibam; **Defenders:** Asher Rebello, Bungson Singh Takhellambam, Karish Soram, Malemngamba Singh Thokchom, Sumit Sharma Brahmacharimayum, Yaipharemba Chingakham. **Midfielders:** Aniket Yadav, Danny Meitei Laishram, Md. Arbash, Rishi Singh Ningthoukhongjam, Rishikanta Meitei Laishram, Samson Ahongshangbam, Shami Singamayum; **Forwards:** Daniyal Makakmayum, Gunleiba Wangkheirakpam, Hateem Ali, Omang Dodum, Prashan Jajo, Rohen Singh Chaphamayum, Vishal Yadav.

Teenager Bouaddi joins Man City for record £85.6m

Morocco midfielder Ayyoub Bouaddi has become the most expensive teenager in Premier League history after joining Manchester City from Lille in a five-year deal the French club said Wednesday was worth £85.6 million. The fee surpasses Manchester United's £58.9 million deal for Leny Yoro, also signed from Lille, in 2024.

Fernandes and Shaw voted PFA players of the year

Bruno Fernandes was voted the men's player of the year in English football for last season at the Professional Footballers' Association awards on Tuesday. Khadija "Bunny" Shaw got the women's accolade. The Manchester United captain and Manchester City forward were selected for the honour by their fellow players.

LIVE TELECAST

Sri Lanka vs India: Second Test, Day 5, Sony Sports Ten 1 & LIV, 9.45 a.m.

Hockey World Cup (Women): Star Sports First & JioHotstar, 1 p.m. 2.30, 4, 5.30, India vs Germany, 6.30 p.m. 8.30, 9.30 p.m. & 12 a.m. (Friday)

England vs Pakistan: Second Test, Day 1, Sony Sports Ten 2 & LIV, 3.30 p.m.

US Open: SS Select 1, 2 & JioHotstar, 8.30 p.m. & 4.30 a.m. (Friday)

LaLiga: FanCode, 12.30 a.m. (Friday)

Sweating it out: Babar had a long batting session at the nets ahead of his impending return. AP

England eyes series sweep, Babar returns for Pakistan

The hosts would hope to bring their A-game and keep the white noise away; the visitors seek all-round improvement after Headingley horror

CRICKET

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

England will aim to put its latest drinking drama behind it when it faces Pakistan in the second Test at Lord's starting on Thursday.

Root spent much of a pre-match press conference talking about Brydon Carse, dropped from the squad and now under investigation by the Cricket Regulator after videos on social media showed the fast bowler being led away by police in handcuffs following an incident at a Derby nightclub on Saturday.

England, with seamers Ollie Robinson and Josh Tongue taking eight wickets apiece, skittled out Pakistan for just 171 and 135 in the first Test while posting 409 itself, even though none of its four batsmen who reached fifty, a quartet including Root, went on to a century.

All-round deficiency

By contrast, Pakistan was deficient in all departments with its inadequate batting compounded by an inaccurate and largely unthreatening pace attack.

Pakistan captain Babar Azam has said he is "90 per cent fit" as he returns to lead his country in the second Test against England.

"I've had a couple of practice sessions again and I'm 90% fit for the match tomorrow. Always when you lead Pakistan, especially at this ground, it is an honour for me and I will do my best," he said.

The teams: (from):

England: Joe Root (Capt.), Harry Brook, Jordan Cox, Ben Duckett, Emilio Gay, Dan Lawrence, Ollie Pope, Jamie Smith (wk), Jofra Archer, Gus Atkinson, Sonny Baker, Sam Cook, Matthew Fisher, Ollie Robinson, Shoaib Bashir and Josh Tongue.

Pakistan: Babar Azam (Capt.), Abdullah Shafique, Awais Zafar, Azan Awais, Ghazi Ghori (wk), Imam-ul-Haq, Mohammad Rizwan (wk), Saud Shakeel, Shan Masood, Salman Agha, Aamer Jamal, Ali Usman, Khurram Shahzad, Mohammad Abbas, Mohammad Ali, Sajid Khan and Ubaid Shah.

We keep making stupid mistakes away from the game: Root

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

Joe Root expressed his frustration that a winning return as England Test captain has been overshadowed by another off-field incident that saw Brydon Carse dropped for the second Test against Pakistan.

Carse has been referred to the Cricket Regulator after videos on social media appeared to show the fast bowler being led away by police in handcuffs following an incident at a nightclub in Derby on Saturday.

It is the latest in a series of alcohol-fuelled controversies that have dogged England since a disastrous tour of New Zealand and Australia at the end of last year.

Honest

"If I'm being brutally honest, I'm really hacked off. I'm really disappointed that, after last week's performance, we're sat here and we're talking about something that is not related to it at all," Root told a press conference on Tuesday.

"It's not the isolated incident itself, it's the fact we continuously keep making stupid mistakes away from the game and it's detracting from what we are doing on the field."

"I still don't believe that's the way to go. It's important we create something bigger than that, it's about having something long lasting that we can be proud of," he added.

"Clearly we are not portraying ourselves how we want to and I think we have an opportunity to build a culture that is very strong, that we can be proud of, that is player driven and of course that isn't going to happen overnight.

"We have already had conversations as a team on what is expected from this group of players, what it means to play for England, what it takes to play for England.

"We want to create something that we can be proud of, that people who follow us can be proud of."

Frustrated: Root is at a loss for words while trying to fathom recent off-field incidents. GETTY IMAGES

Syndrela.
SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

Syndrela and Payas in TOPS Development Scheme

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Asian Games-bound young table tennis players Syndrela Das and Payas Jain have been included in the Sports Ministry's Target Olympic Podium Scheme's (TOPS) Development group, while Manika Batra's request for funding to participate in international events next month has also been approved.

The 17-year-old Syndrela bagged a silver in girls' doubles and a bronze in singles at the Asian Youth Championships in Thailand earlier this year. Syndrela also won three national-ranking age-group titles (U-15, -17 and -19 singles) in 2023.

Manika will receive funding from MOC for taking part in the WTT Contender tournaments in Bulgaria and Kazakhstan, scheduled for September.

India's 10-member Asian Games squad includes Syndrela, Sreeja Akula, Diya Chitale, Yashaswini Ghorpade, Sutirtha Mukherjee, G. Sathiyan, Manush Shah, Manav Thakkar, Harmeet Desai and Payas.

India has the wherewithal to come up trumps in women's T20 Asia Cup: Raman

S. Dipak Ragav
CHENNAI

As India looks to regain the women's T20 Asia Cup, former head coach W.V. Raman backed the Harmanpreet Kaur-led side to triumph in the continental event that starts in the UAE on Friday.

India had a disappointing campaign in the ICC T20 World Cup earlier this year, crashing out in the group stage.

"I think that will spur them on to try and regain the Asia Cup because they are smarting from a performance that was unexpected given the squad and the expectations that everybody had," said Raman.

Raman. FILE PHOTO

"I think this is a tournament that they will win because they have the wherewithal.

"This will also be a chance for them to start preparations for the next T20 World Cup."

On the squad, the former India opener reckoned that the batting looks slightly weak compared to the World Cup squad in the absence of Jemimah Rodrigues.

"Maybe they could have thought of bringing in a couple of new medium-pacers, but that hasn't happened.

"They've gone in heavily with spinners. You have Bharti Fulmali coming back, and she's yet to prove her credentials, even though she's got the reputation of being a big hitter of a cricket ball," he added.

While India won the ODI World Cup last year, the team has been inconsistent in T20Is, and the 61-year-old felt that it hasn't clicked as a unit.

"I have felt that Deepti Sharma has to deliver more as a batter because she's got the ability. She does that in other leagues across the world.

"Also, maybe Harmanpreet can bat at No. 3. If she can get more time, it will help her pace her innings better. It's just a question of them succeeding as a unit. I think that's what has not, perhaps, happened," said Raman.

(Watch Women's Asia Cup 2026 live on Sony Sports Ten 1 SD & HD and Sony LIV).

India will win gold at Asian Games: Neha

Big lessons: Sunelita believes the World Cup experience will stand her in good stead. AFP

HOCKEY

Aashin Prasad
AMSTELVEEN

Sunelita Toppo had a sleepless night after India narrowly crashed out of the World Cup. A goalless draw against Australia in Pool E of the second round pushed India to the third spot and its semifinal dream came crashing.

"We came so close and worked so hard to come here, but we couldn't achieve it. I know we finished the match in a draw, but our thinking was that we have to reach the semifinals," Sunelita, one of the youngest members of the team, playing her maiden World Cup, told *the Hindu*.

For senior midfielder Neha, participating in her third World Cup, the result brought back painful memories of previous setbacks – loss in the bronze medal game at 2020 Olympics and defeat to Australia in the 2022 Commonwealth Games semifinal.

"The same thing happened here... everyone was very sad, crying and concerned that we had come so close and missed an [opportunity to fight for a] medal. It's very difficult, but the team is coming out of it," said Neha, as the team targets a rare fifth place finish in the classification game against Germany here on Thursday.

"Everyone is saying that we have created history [finish in the top six]. But a medal is a medal, so that sadness will always be there."

Sunelita, 19, believes the high-level tournament experience will stand her in good stead.

"I got a lot of learning points. There is not much pressure in a normal tournament. But in the World Cup, there was a lot of pressure. They [seniors] helped me to cope with it, which I will be able to use in the future," said the midfielder.

Neha hailed the current crop, calling it the 'the best combination'.

If India beats Germany, it will be able to ride the momentum into the Asian Games next month, where the team is chasing its first gold in 48 years. "I think we will carry this team to the Asian Games. We will try to give our best. But we have to win the gold medal. No matter what happens, we will give our best. We will win the gold medal," said Neha.

Total Chess World Championship Tour muscles its way into the calendar

P.K. Ajith Kumar

The chess calendar is crowded. Top players rarely get to take a breather these days with so many big events, across formats, taking place across the globe. And it is going to get even more crowded with the newly launched Total Chess World Championship Tour.

Its pilot will be held at Budapest from November 10 to 21. Lined up for the event are many of the biggest names in chess, headlined by World No. 1 Magnus Carlsen.

There are three Indians in the fray – Arjun Erigaisi and the Chennai siblings R. Praggnanandhaa and R. Vaishali. Arjun is one of the eight players from the top-10 who will compete in Budapest.

Ready for it: Pragg and Arjun will headline the Indian challenge in the newly launched tournament. FILE PHOTO

The presence of men like Fabiano Caruana (World No. 2), Vincent Keymer (No. 5) and Wesley So (No. 6) ensures it would be a stiffly contested event, which will feature 24 players in all.

The first full tour will begin next year with four legs to be played in cities across the world. Conceived by Norway Chess, with blessings of the world governing body FIDE, the new tour combines different formats – classical, rapid and blitz.

There are, of course, separate World championships for all those categories, and the classical format Total World Chess Championship is not quite classical in fact: the time control is 45 minutes with an increment of 30 seconds per move.

That may look more rapid than classical, for which the time control is usually 90 minutes for the first 40 moves and then 30 minutes for the rest of the game with increment.

Total Chess, to be fair, isn't calling its format classical, but fast classical. That makes sense. For, classical chess needs to retain its prime place. The Total Chess Championship Tour, though, is a welcome addition. The more the merrier.

Norris paints Dutch GP papaya orange in Zandvoort's F1 swansong

While fans hoped for a Verstappen special to close out the Dutch GP's six-year run on the F1 calendar, it was the reigning World champion who shone in one of the best drives of his career; the Red Bull driver crashed out on the opening lap in his final home race

R.K. Arjun

GETTY IMAGES

The dunes have never seen anything like it. For five years, Zandvoort's banked corners and towering grandstands turned orange every August as hundreds of thousands of fans willed Max Verstappen to another home win. This time, the party was supposed to be a farewell. Instead, Zandvoort said goodbye to Formula 1 the way it said hello: with chaos, rain, a home hero in the wall, and a Brit lifting the trophy.

By the time the chequered flag fell on Sunday, August 23, Lando Norris had claimed his second consecutive victory, and denied an entire nation the ending it had scripted in its head.

Zandvoort's farewell weekend didn't wait until Sunday to get interesting. The Sprint format's return brought two extra sessions of jeopardy. The paddock had already been buzzing before any engines were fired up as Verstappen's future was dominating headlines after news broke of his new Red Bull deal, giving the weekend an added layer of sentiment before a single lap counted.

George Russell set the early tone, taking Sprint Qualifying pole ahead of Norris, while his Mercedes teammate Andrea Kimi Antonelli admitted to a mistake in that session that left his Mercedes battling floor damage. When the Sprint itself got underway on Saturday, it was Russell who converted pole into victory, but the story of the race belonged to Charles Leclerc, who produced one of the strongest drives of the weekend to scythe past Norris late on and finish second. It was an early hint that Ferrari, so often undone by a lack of raw pace on low-downforce, straight-heavy tracks, might have found genuine race-day speed on the twisting, banked layout on the coast of the Netherlands.

Slender margin

Saturday afternoon's qualifying session for the Grand Prix itself was tighter still. As the first spots of rain began to fall, drivers scrambled back onto the circuit earlier than planned for their final runs. Antonelli briefly grabbed provisional pole before the reigning World champion snatched it back, and Russell then split the pair, finishing just over a tenth off the McLaren. Remarkably, only four hundredths of a second covered second, third and fourth on the timesheet. The width of a coat of paint separated the two Mercedes and Oscar Piastri.

Ferrari's pair rounded out row three, unable to match the ultimate pace despite their evident race-day potential. Verstappen and Liam Lawson lined up on row four for Red Bull.

It was Norris's second consecutive pole of the season and the 18th of his career and, tellingly, history was on his side. Every Dutch GP winner since Formula 1 returned to Zandvoort in 2021 had started from the front of the grid. Overtaking here is notoriously difficult; track position, everyone knew, would be everything.

If Zandvoort wanted a dramatic send-off, the weather obliged. Saturday's track action had been run in the dry, but as Sunday approached, heavy rain swept in over the dunes. Drivers heading out for their reconnaissance laps found the circuit properly wet, some running through standing water, Lawson even sliding briefly through the gravel en route to the grid.

Then, as quickly as it had arrived, the deluge eased. With roughly 25 minutes to lights-out, the rain stopped, and just enough of the surface dried for every driver to gamble on slicks – albeit with damp patches still lurking in places. The FIA, wary of the conditions, sent the field around behind the Safety Car for the formation lap to assess grip before committing to a standing start, with the top four all rolling out on medium tyres.

Clean getaway

Norris made a clean getaway from pole, but it was Antonelli who produced the launch of the race, sweeping past Russell into second at Turn 1 while Ferrari's starboy jumped Oscar Piastri off the line. Behind them, the two Red Bulls, Verstappen and Lawson, went wheel to wheel in a fight that felt, for a fleeting moment, like the Zandvoort of old.

Then it went wrong. On the sport's biggest stage, on the day his home fans needed him most, Verstappen clipped the white line on the pit straight, lost the rear of his Red Bull, and speared into the wall at high speed. Debris scattered across the track. The red flags came out barely a lap into the final Dutch Grand Prix. Verstappen, shaken but unhurt,

confirmed over the radio that he was okay, a small mercy for a crowd that had gone silent in an instant. Amid the chaos, Gabriel Bortoleto also spun through 360 degrees but somehow kept going, dropping to 18th while teammate Nico Hulkenberg swerved clear.

With the order reset to the end of Lap 1, the race resumed as a standing start, delayed further when Ollie Bearman's Haas stopped on the way to the grid. When the lights finally went out again, Antonelli was imperious, sweeping past Norris to seize the lead. At the same time, Piastri pulled off a similarly bold move on Russell for third – dropping the Mercedes man straight into Leclerc's crosshairs.

Mid-race chess match

What followed was a mid-race chess match. Antonelli eked his advantage over Norris out to over a second, denying the McLaren driver the use of his overtake-assist mode, while behind them Leclerc hunted down Russell and eventually got the move done. Norris, meanwhile, was blunt about his tyres over the radio: "I'm pace zero – I've got nothing else." It didn't sound like a man about to win.

As the first round of stops unfolded, hard tyres became the tool of choice, with slow stops for both Piastri and Antonelli costing crucial tenths. Hamilton, canny as ever, stayed out and inherited the lead, telling his engineer his tyres were "still okay" even as the pressure built. He eventually pitted on Lap 26, rejoining sixth.

The midfield had its own soap opera. A Gasly lock-up let Lindblad through, Hulkenberg picked off both, and Tsunoda muscled past the former in a scrappy multi-car scrap that would repeat itself in various forms all afternoon.

By the race's halfway point, Antonelli still led the pack and Ferrari's frustration was bubbling. Ordered to let Hamilton by, the Monegasque initially ignored the call before conceding a lap later, prompting a sarcastic radio message from his teammate: "Great waste of time there, guys."

This is where the afternoon turned. Norris, seemingly out of answers a few laps earlier, found his rhythm again, chipping away at Antonelli's lead. A second round of stops on Lap 48 briefly dropped him to third, over five seconds off the lead but with a seven-lap tyre offset. However, within three laps that gap was down to 1.4 seconds. By Lap 52, the Brit was all over Antonelli, who in his last race as a teenager pushed himself to his limits to keep the reigning world champion behind.

It didn't matter, however, as Norris swept around the outside into Turn 1 to reclaim the lead and, moments later, picked off Hamilton too, completing a stunning double move that had the McLaren pit wall on its feet. A Virtual Safety Car, triggered by Esteban Ocon's stricken Haas, briefly reshuffled the field as several cars dived for fresh soft tyres. When racing resumed with ten laps to go, Norris led Russell by 6.8 seconds, with Antonelli a further 5.6 seconds back after taking a cheap pit stop to go to the soft tyres.

Grandstand finish

With Antonelli closing on his own teammate, Mercedes made the call: Russell, unimpressed but compliant, let his younger teammate through on Lap 65, grumbling that the team may have "lost a double podium." Hamilton had used the opportunity to close right onto Russell's gearbox, setting up a grandstand finish for the final spot on the podium.

The chaos wasn't quite finished. With three laps remaining, a coming-together between the two Williams of Carlos Sainz and Alex Albon triggered a second Virtual Safety Car, handing Russell a brief reprieve from Hamilton's chase. Sainz was later penalised 10 seconds for causing the collision.

Out front, none of it touched Norris. He crossed the line 11.536 seconds clear of Antonelli to seal his second win in a row, with Russell just holding off Hamilton by a fraction of a second for third, and Leclerc completing the top five half a second further back.

"Amazing. A tough race," Norris said afterwards. "Probably one of my better wins; we had to fight for it well, but the pace was strong... Nice to win the final race here in Zandvoort"

As Formula 1 fans look back on the last five years at this incredible circuit, a few moments immediately come to mind. It began in 2021, the fairytale return to the calendar after 36 years of exile, with their very own Flying Dutchman speeding past Valtteri Bottas to hand the Netherlands a home winner on its first weekend back on the F1 map. Verstappen followed up his win in 2021 with two more victories, each one turning the dunes into a sea of orange smoke, and each one cementing Zandvoort's reputation as the most partisan crowd in the sport.

There was 2024, when Norris ended Verstappen's unbeaten home record and, on crossing the line, borrowed his rival's own catchphrase over team radio: "Simply lovely, huh?" a cheeky nod that became one of the season's most talked-about moments.

Last year, it was yet again McLaren which crossed the chequered flag first; however, they had an Australian at the helm this time. Piastri delivered a complete masterclass that weekend – pole position, every lap led, fastest lap of the race – sealing his first career Grand Slam in the process.

Thank you, Zandvoort. For five years of orange smoke and banked corners, for turning a farewell tour into one last classic, and for never once making it easy right up to the final lap. Formula One will be back on many circuits in the years to come, but few will be missed quite like this one.

THE GIST

- The Sprint format's return brought two extra sessions of jeopardy, and the paddock had already been buzzing before any engines were fired up, Verstappen's future was dominating headlines after news broke of his new Red Bull deal, giving the weekend an added layer of sentiment before a single lap counted
- Norris, seemingly out of answers a few laps earlier, found his rhythm again, chipping away at Antonelli's lead. A second round of stops on Lap 48 briefly dropped him to third, over five seconds off the lead. However, within three laps that gap was down to 1.4 seconds. By Lap 52, the Brit was all over Antonelli
- As Formula 1 fans look back on the last five years at the incredible Zandvoort circuit, a few moments immediately come to mind. It began in 2021, the fairytale return to the calendar after 36 years of exile

Why India's R&D system needs a map of where funds really go

India does not have a system that can tell funders, researchers, or the public details like who is being funded, by whom, for what, and whether that funding has already been given elsewhere; while the NITI Aayog has proposed a unified streamlining system, it still fails to address a key problem

Moumita Koley

A recent report by the NITI Aayog, about 'Ease of Doing R&D in India' revealed some uncomfortable truths about the research and development ecosystem in the country. Together with a companion survey with inputs from more than 400 institutional leaders and 850 scientists, the report said that close to 80% of funding under the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) – the flagship research funding body – is concentrated in the IITs. This is despite the ANRF's mandate to support a wider base of universities and research bodies than the traditional funding model has managed.

There are also concerns that multiple Central agencies are possibly funding similar research areas, resulting in overlap and what the report calls "inefficient" use of public money.

These findings point to a common underlying gap: India does not have a system that can tell funders, researchers, or the public who is being funded, by whom, for what, and whether that funding has already been given elsewhere.

The NITI Aayog's response to this gap is the Unified Project Management System (UPMS) – a system to streamline the planning, funding, monitoring, and evaluation of public R&D projects across Ministries and Departments.

This proposed solution sounds good; however, it does not directly address an important problem.

Currently, information about the use of public funding for research lies scattered across dozens of separate agency databases, in inconsistent formats, and often as free text rather than structured data. Representative image. TALHA HASSAN/UNSPLASH

PIDs and metadata

The technical term for what is missing is 'PIDs and metadata infrastructure'. In plain language, it means every research grant in India will need a permanent, unique, machine-readable identifier called a persistent digital identifier (PID). This is like how a PAN number identifies a taxpayer or an IMEI number identifies a mobile phone.

Each PID should then be attached to a standard set of details called the metadata: which agency gave the money, to which institution, to which named researcher, what amount, over what period, and in which field. Finally, there is a linking system that will allow officials to track these details using the PID.

So every time a scientist publishes a paper and includes the PID in it, the system can track and evaluate the outcome of public funding. At least this is the idea.

Right now, a lot of this information exists within Indian funding agencies – but it is scattered across dozens of separate agency databases, in inconsistent formats, and often as free text rather than structured data. A researcher's name might appear one way in a Department of Science and Technology (DST) record and slightly differently in a Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) database – and this difference can be enough for an automated system to not tell that they are the same person. An institution might be listed as "IISc, Bangalore" in one dataset and "Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru" in another, leading to a similar problem.

Multiply such inconsistencies across thousands of grants a year and one can see that the result is an information that does not provide a reliable picture of how research funding is being used.

Other countries' solutions

This is not a new problem and India does not have to solve it from scratch. A global, non-profit infrastructure setup called the Grant Linking System already exists to do exactly this. It was built by the open digital infrastructure organisation Crossref. Its registry is called 'Research Organisation Registry' (ROR), built by a different organisation.

The system works through a small number of PIDs, each solving one piece of the puzzle. First, a funder ID identifies the funding agency in detail – the division, department, and even ministry if required. A similar ROR ID identifies the institution receiving the funding. Finally, an 'ORCID' identifier – familiar to Indian researchers today since most scientific journals today ask for it – identifies the individual researcher, so that funding data can be aggregated per person.

Since 2020, Crossref has also extended its system to include a grant DOI: a permanent identifier for the grant itself, which can be linked to whatever comes out of it – papers, patents, data.

Taken together, these four identifiers plus the metadata allow a funder or an independent analyst to ask questions that are nearly impossible to answer in India today. For example, how many different agencies have funded near-identical proposals? Which fields are receiving disproportionate investments relative to the national priorities? Does a small number of institutions or researchers account for a large share of the total funding? This is why many research funders have adopted this system, with more than 2 lakh grants registered on it worldwide. The scale of the underlying problem this system solves is also well-documented. One 2013 analysis of U.S. funders used automated text-matching software to scan several lakh federal grant applications and estimated that duplicate or substantially overlapping funding may have cost the U.S. nearly $70 million. In a more recent analysis, in 2020, analysts checked nearly 20,000 competitive grants in Denmark and found that funds were getting concentrated among a small group of individual researchers and a narrow set of research topics.

This is similar to the pattern the NITI Aayog report flagged for Indian funding agencies – and painstakingly so.

Two ways forward

Policymakers considering how to act on NITI Aayog's findings face two broad options. One is to build an entirely new, India-specific system from the ground up – a sovereign national grant registry, developed and maintained independently. This has the appeal of full control: India will own the infrastructure outright and could tailor it precisely to its own agencies and federal structure, including State research schemes that a global system might not naturally prioritise. The second option is to plug into the existing global non-profit infrastructure, requiring India's funding agencies to become members of – and consistently deposit data with – the Crossref ecosystem that many research funders already use worldwide. This can be implemented faster since the technical standards and governance already exist, and are maintained by an international community rather than by a single Indian agency operating alone. It would also make India's publicly funded research immediately visible and comparable within the same global dataset used to study research funding everywhere.

There is also a practical middle path: using the technical infrastructure of PID generators and funders' own governance structure. Specifically, we can learn from systems that have worked elsewhere, such as the U.K. 'Gateway to Research' portal and the European Union's Community Research and Development Information Service (CORDIS) and Open Access Infrastructure for Research in Europe (OpenAIRE). They run their own government-owned portals as the single point of entry for funding agencies, and the portals generate identifiers fully compatible with the global Crossref/ROR/ORCID standards.

This gives national governments political ownership and the ability to require all domestic agencies to comply – while also ensuring that the resulting data speaks the same language as the rest of the world's research infrastructure.

For India, this hybrid model would mean a single national portal – one that the NITI Aayog has already proposed, called UPMS, and which Central and State funding agencies must use. The UPMS system can internally mint Crossref-compatible grant DOIs and link every record to ROR and ORCID identifiers. Then, it will be much easier to check for duplicate records, fund concentration, and so on.

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For centuries, the Arctic cold has kept plant life small, with the extreme environment giving researchers a unique perspective. AFP

Arctic 'jungles' offer critical insights into climate studies

Associated Press

With no tall trees reaching to the sky, Alaska's North Slope tundra can look desolate – especially to outsiders who are used to in-your-face greenery.

But up close, "the tundra's kind of like the jungle," says Adam Bloom, a Florida Atlantic University plant biology student. Except this lush Arctic jungle tops out at about 25 centimeters.

For centuries, the Arctic cold has kept plant life small, a sort of dollhouse of the earth's miniatures. The extreme environment has long given researchers a unique perspective on what makes plants grow, insight that would be hard to obtain elsewhere. Now it offers them one of the world's most useful windows on how climate change affects plant life, with the Arctic warming four times faster than the rest of the earth, especially in the winter. For example, researchers at the Toolik Field Station, 320 kilometers north of the Arctic Circle, are studying whether plants facing these harsh conditions evolve to compete or cooperate with one another.

Studies show that the colder and further north in the Arctic, the smaller the plant life. There are several reasons, but the main one is that life is rough in the winter. Anything that protrudes above the shallow, insulating snow cover is more prone to being damaged by the cold and wind or eaten by wildlife, says plant ecologist Anne Bjorkman of the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. Plus the frozen permafrost does not allow roots to grow too deep, she adds.

But the cold is weakening and the miniatures are stretching. This part of Alaska is about 2.7 degrees Celsius warmer than it was 40 years ago mostly because of the burning of coal, oil, and gas. "Plants that are already there are growing taller," Ms. Bjorkman says, adding that they are likely to grow even taller in the future. And they are getting greener. Some of the long-term studies here are "trying to understand what controls how much plants grow, what controls how green it is," and how all that is changing, says Columbia University ecologist Duncan Menge.

Meanwhile, taller plants that previously could not survive the cold are moving in, Ms. Bjorkman says. This process, called shrubification, can accelerate warming because of how the plants trap heat, says University of Colorado plant ecologist Sarah Elmendorf. Canopies of the taller, darker shrubs stick out of the snow and absorb more energy from the sun than the blanket of white snow, which reflects heat back.

"It is certainly a major fingerprint of change that we can see," she says.

Darker tundra absorbing more radiation is "one of the main reasons for what we call arctic amplification, which causes climate change to accelerate" especially in the Arctic, says Mr. Menge.

The shrubs also trap more snow. That snow warms the ground below and allows microbes during the winter to release more of the heat-trapping gas methane, Ms. Elmendorf notes. The added greenery from the taller plants and shrubs could compensate somewhat by absorbing more carbon dioxide.

Expanding stands of willows seem to be providing more shade to streams and changing the ecology of fish, insects and birds, according to Chris Neill and Linda Deegan of the Woodwell Climate Research Center. They are conducting a multiyear study to see if an ecosystem adapts and even genetically evolves to handle the stress of climate change. If that is happening, it offers hope for the survival of some of the most fragile Arctic ecosystems, Ms. Deegan said.

Amid the stresses of the Arctic, scientists are rethinking the idea that all life is a cutthroat competition with winners and losers. It might be more about mutualism, with plant species cooperating so that everybody survives, says Jake Francis, a professor at the Florida Atlantic University.

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

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

167 years since the world's first commercially successful oil well...

Vasudevan Mukunth

QUESTION 1

The U.S. businessman _____ _____ drilled the world's first commercial oil well in Pennsylvania in 1859. While the oil was barely deep by today's standards, at just under 70 feet, it proved that oil didn't have to be collected only from the surface. The drill sparked the country's oil boom and the world's energy transformation. Fill in the blanks.

QUESTION 2

Most oil wells yield _____ ___ along with crude oil. For many decades, operators would simply flare this substance off or burn it as waste, since it had no commercial value. But today, companies worldwide capture and use this byproduct carefully, both to reduce emissions and for its applications in producing electricity. Fill in the blanks.

QUESTION 3

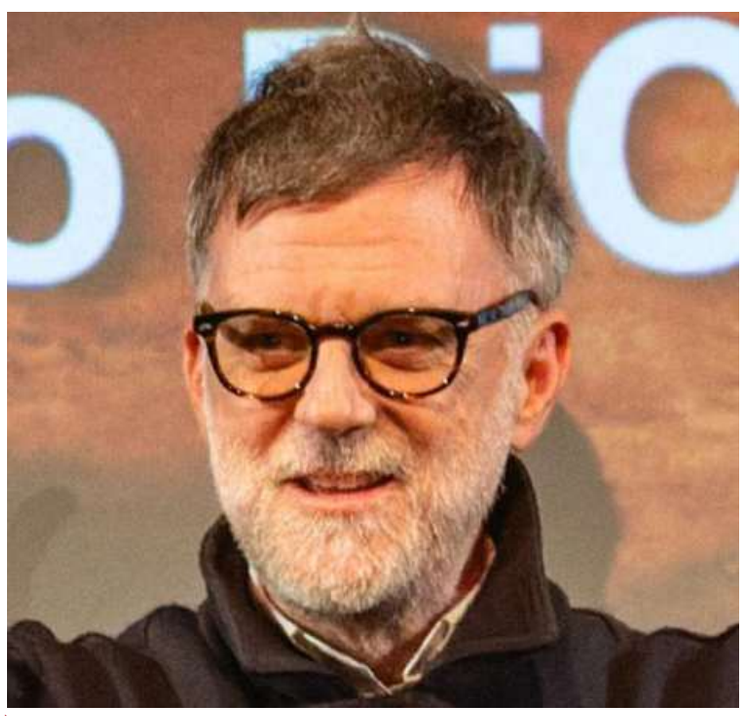
Operators sometimes use hydraulic fracturing fluid under high pressure to crack rock formations — and contrary to popular perception, this fluid is typically more than 99% X and Y. The remaining fraction includes chemical additives to reduce friction and corrosion and to limit the growth of bacteria. Name X and Y.

QUESTION 4

In the early years of drilling for oil, uncontrolled gushing of oil from wells was a common sight, and often deadly too. Engineers subsequently prevented large valve systems that could seal wells off when the pressure within surged, considerably improving safety. What are these systems called?

QUESTION #5

The ____ ____ is a common sight in oil fields, with its rhythmically bobbing motion earning it the affectionate monickers "nodding donkey" and "grasshopper". These machines mechanically lift oil from wells where the natural pressure is too low. Fill in the blanks.



Visual: Who is this man and what is his public connection with oil wells? RAPH_PH

Answers to August 25 quiz:

1. What Galileo argued in 1618 were optical illusions – **Ans: Comets**
2. Planet that Galileo had mistaken for a star in 1612-1613 – **Ans: Neptune**
3. Maria Celeste's relationship with Galileo – **Ans: Daughter**
4. Person whom Galileo flattered by naming moons after him – **Ans: Cosimo II de' Medici**
5. Fictitious structure whose size Galileo estimated in 1588 – **Ans: Dante's Inferno**

Visual: **Simon Marius**

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For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to **science@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Daily page'