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FROM PAGE ONE

Both fuel switches ‘cut off’

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1,100 hours, both of which were more than sufficient. The report said both pilots had adequate rest periods before the flight.

There were two pilots and 10 cabin crew on board, and 230 passengers. The accident killed 260 people—241 of the 242 people on board the aircraft and 19 on the ground. The aircraft was flying from Ahmedabad to London Gatwick. After a few seconds in the CUTOFF position, the switches for both engines on the aircraft transitioned from CUTOFF to RUN position—evidently an attempt by the pilots to recover thrust in the engines, but given the extremely low altitude of the aircraft, they did not have enough time for the engines to recover to a level that would have allowed them to climb to safety.

The 15-page report said the flight lasted around 30 seconds between lift-off and crash. At this stage, there are no recommended actions to operators of Boeing 787-8 aircraft and GE GENx-1B engines, it said.

In Visakhapatnam, Union Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu said it is immature to jump to conclusions since it is only the preliminary report. “So, let’s not jump to any conclusions at this stage. Let us wait for the final report. These are technical things and that is why we have these investigation agencies. Once they are clear... they are going to submit the final report. At this stage, it will be very immature for me to comment on it,” said Naidu.

In separate statements, Air India and Boeing said they will continue to support the investigation, but did not comment on the contents of the report.

“Air India stands in solidarity with the families and those affected by the AI171 accident. We continue to mourn the loss and are fully committed to providing

support during this difficult time. We acknowledge receipt of the preliminary report released by the AAI... Air India is working closely with stakeholders, including regulators. We continue to fully cooperate with the AAI and other authorities as their investigation progresses. Given the active nature of the investigation, we are unable to comment on specific details and refer all such enquiries to the AAI,” the airline said.

Boeing said: “Our thoughts remain with the loved ones of the passengers and crew on board Air India Flight 171, as well as every one affected on the ground in Ahmedabad. We continue to support the investigation and our customers. We will defer to the AAI to provide information about AI 171, in adherence with the United Nations International Civil Aviation Organization protocol known as Annex 13.”

According to airline pilots and experts, accidental movement of the fuel control switches—critical switches that allow and cut fuel flow to the plane’s engines—may not be possible since they have brackets on either side to protect them. In addition, there is a stop lock mechanism that requires pilots to lift the switch before moving it from either of its two positions—RUN and CUTOFF—to the other. The report did not mention whether the investigators have so far been able to ascertain if the switches were toggled by one of the pilots or not.

These switches are usually moved only when the aircraft is on ground—to start the engines before departure and to shut them down after landing. Movement of either of the switches during the flight would be required only in the event of the corresponding engine failing or suffering damage that would require shutting off fuel supply to

it to ensure flight safety. The pilots may also switch off fuel supply and then immediately switch it on if they believe the affected engine could be restarted safely.

The preliminary report is only an account of the initial findings of the investigation, and is subject to change on the basis of the progress of the probe over the coming months. Air crash accident investigations are extremely complex and time-consuming exercises, taking months and sometimes even years to conclusively identify the causes. The AAI is expected to release the final probe report within a year of the crash.

Naidu promised assistance to the AAI in submitting the final report. “We have to wait for something concrete to emerge. This is a preliminary report... from the ministry we are analysing the report but I think it would be better if we comment on it once the final report comes in,” he said.

There are multiple other things that also need to be looked into before preparing the final report, he said. For the first time, securing the black box and trying to decode its data was being done in India in the AAI’s Delhi lab. “So, I would like to appreciate all the efforts they put in...,” Naidu said.

Notably, the preliminary report mentioned that the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) had in 2018 issued a Special Airworthiness Information Bulletin (SAIB) regarding the “potential disengagement of the fuel control switch locking feature”. Air India, however, did not carry out the inspection as the SAIB was merely advisory and not mandatory. The scrutiny of maintenance records revealed that the cockpit’s throttle control module—which houses the fuel control switches among others—was replaced in 2019 and 2023, but the reason for replacement was not linked to the

fuel control switches, the report said, adding no defect was reported pertaining to the fuel control switch since 2023.

“All applicable Airworthiness Directives and Alert Service Bulletins were complied on the aircraft as well as engines,” the report said. It also stated that the flap position was at 5 degrees, which is consistent with take-off flap settings. There had been some speculation earlier that the aircraft’s flaps may not have been in the right configuration for take-off thereby not providing sufficient lift to the aircraft. Further, there were no weather-related issues with the flight and the aircraft’s take-off weight was well within permissible limits for the given conditions, the report said. It also said there were no ‘dangerous goods’ on board the plane.

On the probe status, the report said wreckage site activities including drone photography and videography were complete, wreckage moved to a secure area, engines quarantined at a hangar at the Ahmedabad airport, components of interest quarantined for further examination, black box data being analysed, statements of eyewitnesses and the lone survivor taken, and more details being gathered based on leads.

It said that only a limited amount of fuel samples could be retrieved from the aircraft, and will be tested at a suitable facility. Fuel samples taken from bowzers and tanks used to fuel the aircraft at the Ahmedabad airport were found to be satisfactory. Dual engine failure due to fuel contamination was another theory doing the rounds. “At this stage of investigation, there are no recommended actions to B787-8 and/or GE GENx-1B engine operators and manufacturers. Investigation is continuing and the investigation team will review and examine additional evidence, records and information... sought from the stakeholders,” the report said.

● ‘EC legal team will look at suggestions of SC’

How many of these are voters who gave or were not able to give one of the 11 mandated documents?

We have to work on the break-up of this number. The numbers I mention include all forms submitted — with or without one of the 11 documents.

What happens to those voters who have submitted forms without one of the 11 documents?

We took out advertisements in newspapers twice that voters can submit forms with or without one of 11 documents. There is no need to panic — documents can be submitted by August 30. A BLO (Booth Level Officer) will attach those documents with respective uploaded forms. We also know that there’s been a surge in domicile applications (one of the 11 documents) by voters. They can submit it to us by 30 August.

What if voters fail to arrange one of these 11 documents by that time?

An Electoral Registration

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Officer (ERO) who is, generally, Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM), Land Record Deputy Collector (LRDC); Additional District Magistrate (ADM) and or any other similar rank officer, will go as per provisions of Article 326 of RP Act. The ERO/SDM has the revenue record, record of development schemes; the BDO (block development officer) or CO (circle officer) has the history, geography... who all got Indira Awaas, who has what land record. An ERO has to be satisfied about veracity of a voter. If he is not satisfied, he will serve notice to an existing elector through BLO as part of the principle of natural justice.

But the onus should be on EC to prove one an elector, as was observed by the Supreme Court?

Of course. That’s why due process will be followed. One often complains about improper land record. But the older a land record, the better it is. If it is in name of your grandfather, it is good enough. An ERO will look

into all these things. Still, if one’s claim of being a voter is rejected, he or she can appeal before the District Magistrate. That is not very likely since most local officers will verify a voter at their end itself. During the phase of claims and objections (August 1-30), BLOs will collect documents from those who had not submitted it with their forms.

What about voters who voted in 2004 or in subsequent polls, even Lok Sabha 2024, but are not in the 2003 rolls?

All such voters will fall in the category of new voters, who can apply with form 6 after August 1, online or offline. We are ensuring new voters will be part of electoral roll for upcoming 2025 Assembly polls.

What’s your response to Supreme Court’s suggestions to consider Aadhar, voter ID and ration cards as well? Voter card is issued by your office.

EC’s legal team will looking at the suggestions of the Supreme Court. ECI goes per mandate of

Article 326. We are here to follow EC’s order. There are learned people in Honourable Supreme Court and ECI. Let them discuss and decide. Ayog ka mandate hai: sahi electors rahna chahiye, galat katna chahiye.

What about apprehensions that the SIR is NRC through the backdoor?

ECI has been going only as per its mandate under Article 326. We are here to follow the EC’s orders. We have been working hard at every level to complete the process. We have 24 per cent more forms to collect, we still have some time to do so.

What are you doing to ensure that the large number of people living temporarily out of Bihar are retained in voters’ list.

We have learnt that relatives of such people have been getting signed forms. Some people in rural areas have come back to villages as well. We are also devising an App in the coming two days to facilitate two stages: form submission and document upload through one’s mobile phone.

was admitted to a hospital by the police. “The police told me they have registered a case and arrested someone. My daughter said the police told her to say something during the medical exam; I have spoken to her. She said no one tortured her or misbehaved with her. My daughter is back and she is fine. She has no connection with the man who has been arrested... I have not been able to speak to her at length. She is sleeping. I will talk to her after she wakes up,” he claimed.

The mother of the accused, who reached Kolkata from Karnataka on Saturday, said, “He has come so far to study. He will never do such a thing.”

● Ranthambore

animals and the workers were safe,” said Pardeep Atri, regional officer of NHA at Jaipur.

The project also required stringent compliance with environmental regulations. Among these requirements was installing cameras every kilometre to monitor movement of animals.

While this particular stretch of the expressway was completed in December 2023, there are some other portions where work is still ongoing, he said. “We are planning to make the overpasses operational in around five months. Our target is to achieve one lakh Passenger Car Unit (PCU) on this section in the next 4-5 years,” the official said.

According to NHA, 82 per cent of the expressway is complete, with the project deadline now pushed back to October this year from March 2023.

● Tale of two switches

investigators have so far been able to ascertain if the switches were toggled by one of the pilots or not.

According to airline pilots and experts, accidental movements of the switches may not be possible since the spring-loaded switches have brackets on either side to protect them. Further, there is a stop lock mechanism that requires the pilots to lift the switch up before moving it from either of its two positions — RUN and CUTOFF — to the other.

These fuel switches are usually moved only when the aircraft is on ground — to start the engines before departure and to shut them down after the aircraft reaches the gate. Movement of either of the switches during the flight would be required only in the event of failing of the corresponding engine or suffering enough damage that would require shutting off its fuel supply to ensure flight safety. The pilots may also switch off the fuel supply and then immediately switch it on if they believe that the affected engine could be restarted safely.

Some other key points in the preliminary report are:

■ Co-pilot Clive Kunder was flying the aircraft, while commander Sumeet Sabharwal was the ‘pilot monitoring’ for this flight. Both had an adequate rest period and just before the flight, they had a breathalyser test at the airport, the report said. Aircraft maintenance checks were on schedule. It was a normal take-off till the aircraft reached an altitude of around 400 feet.

■ Incidentally, the preliminary report does mention that the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) had in 2018 issued a Special Airworthiness Information Bulletin (SAIB) regarding the “potential disengagement of the fuel control switch locking feature”. This was essentially for 737 fuel switches, which are the same de-

sign as the module housing the switches on the 787s. Air India, however, did not carry out the inspection as the SAIB was merely advisory and not mandatory.

■ According to the report, the scrutiny of maintenance records revealed that the cockpit’s throttle control module — which houses the fuel control switches among others — was replaced in 2019 and 2023, but the reason for replacement was not linked to the fuel control switches. It said no defect was reported pertaining to the fuel control switch since 2023 on the aircraft. “All applicable Airworthiness Directives and Alert Service Bulletins were complied on the aircraft as well as engines,” the report said.

■ The report notes that the Ram Air Turbine was deployed immediately after engine shutdown while the Auxiliary Power Unit automatically started after the control switches were transitioned back to RUN. Both the APU and RAT are emergency power sources on the aircraft. The RAT is essentially a wind turbine located just behind the landing gear console that deploys into the airstream to generate power only when primary and secondary power sources fail. The APU is a smaller turbine engine, typically located in the tail section of the aircraft, that provides electrical and pneumatic power for various on-board systems. Their deployment signifies a complete engine shutdown or flameout.

■ The report notes that there are no recommended actions to B787-8 and/or GE GENx-1B engine operators and manufacturers. This is a clear indication that investigators are sure there is no issue with the aircraft or engine. Pilot action is thereby a focus of the investigations to follow. The final report is likely to come out in about a year’s time, or even earlier.

● Assam eviction

With this, over 3,300 families — mostly Bengali-origin Muslims — have been displaced through eviction drives in multiple districts including Dhubri, Lakhimpur, Nalbari and Goalpara in just a month. The authorities have claimed that those evicted were encroaching on government/forest/panchayat land.

Like the previous exercises, Saturday’s eviction drive, too, was a large-scale affair. With the area divided into six blocks and six bulldozers in each block, a total of 36 bulldozers — and another four in reserve — were deployed. Security personnel, including armed police commandos, were spread across the area. Goalpara Superintendent of Police Nabaneet Mahanta said around 1,000 personnel, including forest protection forces, had been deployed on the ground.

Like Rokibul, the other affected families, too, had removed the tin roofs of their houses and taken away all their belongings in the days preceding the eviction. “We took away all our belongings yesterday, we have kept them at a relative’s house in Jambari (an adjoining settlement), but we spent the night here, with a tarpaulin sheet serving as the roof. Tonight, we will probably have to pitch a tarpaulin sheet somewhere on the road. Let’s see what the authorities will allow,” Rokibul said.

For nearly a month now, the residents of the area had been living under the shadow of eviction. Sheikh Raju Ahmed (23) said they were first told that they should leave by June 27. “From June 18, announcements telling us to leave were made on a loudspeaker 2-3 times everyday. For around 20 days, police and other forces have been doing the rounds here, and that increased in the last

week. Everyone emptied their houses in the last two days and just put their belongings wherever they could,” he said.

In the adjoining Jambari settlement, nearly every house is being used to store the belongings of evicted families. Samesh Ali (28) said that seven families had kept their belongings in his house. “They have kept their things but there is no room for them to stay here, so they will probably have to set up tents somewhere,” he said.

While residents of the affected area have claimed that their families bought the properties as ‘revenue land’ from earlier Garo inhabitants, they were unable to secure a stay on the eviction drive from the Gauhati High Court. On the other hand, forest authorities and the district administration say that the eviction is being carried out in compliance with HC’s instructions to clear forest land to minimise man-elephant conflict.

While there have been cases of evictions in Assam facing resistance — some people pelted stones at bulldozers and faced police batons in Dhubri earlier this week; two protesters were shot dead after clashing with police in Sonapur last year — there was only a resigned silence on Saturday. But there was panic and fear. A resident, Fauzul Hoque, was rushed for medical treatment after he was found trying to hang himself before his home was demolished.

“No one is going to fight here. Everyone is scared of what might happen. Even if you cry, it doesn’t mean that your house will be spared. And if you try to challenge, then you may pay with your life. We can’t do anything about it,” said Shah Jahan Ali.

While eviction drives have become commonplace in Assam in recent years — in the run-up to the 2021 elections, the ruling BJP

promised to free government land of “encroachers” and allot the areas to “indigenous landless people” — the exercise has intensified in the past month.

With elections less than a year away, they have taken the form of a hotly contested political issue. While CM Himanta Biswa Sarma claimed earlier this week that the government has been “restoring the demography” in places where it is conducting evictions, in reference to Bengali-origin Muslims populations, Congress MP Rakibul Hussain has claimed that, if voted to power in the state, the Congress will provide compensation to all Indian citizens who have been evicted in such drives under the BJP government.

On Saturday, a delegation of MLAs from the AIUDF — which has its core support base among Bengali-origin Muslims — tried to visit the eviction site but were stopped by local authorities.

DELHI-NCR

Centre again relaxes SO2 emission norms for coal plants

Many plants completely exempted

NIKHIL GHANEKAR
NEW DELHI, JULY 12

THE UNION Environment Ministry on Saturday once again relaxed its deadline for coal plants around Delhi-NCR to meet its sulphur emission (SO2) norms introduced in 2015, while completely exempting several plants located in a 10-km radius of critically-polluted areas from meeting these norms.

The order, issued on Saturday, means that of the 600 coal plants that were directed to meet SO2 emissions, only 66 – located within a 10-km radius of Delhi-NCR – will have to comply. The compliance deadline for these plants will be December 31, 2027.

The order effectively exempts several coal plants from installing pollution-cutting flue-gas desulphurisation (FGD) technology, which reduces SO2 emissions from the plant's exhaust gases.

The government's latest order is the fifth deadline extension given to plant operators since the norms were notified in 2015.

Sulphur dioxide, a harmful pollutant, also aids formation of particulate matter that is lethal and can enter the bloodstream.

These 66 plants, termed as 'Category A' plants, are located within a 10-km radius of Delhi-NCR or cities with over a million population as per the 2011 Census.

There are 72 plants in 'Category B' – located within a 10-km radius of critically polluted areas or cities not in compliance with national air quality standards – on whom SO2 norms will be applicable on a “case to case” basis, the order said.

Meanwhile, over 450 'Category C' plants, which are neither near Delhi-NCR nor near critically polluted areas, have been completely exempted from meeting the sulphur emission norms.

However, they will have to adhere to the stack height criteria and timeline, as prescribed by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the order added.

The order came on the back of multiple studies, as well as recommendations made by a high-powered committee

chaired by Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) Ajay Kumar Sood. The committee had concluded that the installation of FGD was not necessary in all coal plants.

In a report, the National Institute of Advanced Studies submitted to the high-powered committee that Indian coal, used to generate 92% electricity produced by thermal plants, has a low average sulphur content. In fact, it said that FGD installation in all coal plants by 2030 will increase auxiliary power consumption and add more long-lived carbon dioxide emissions, while removing short-lived sulphur dioxide emissions.

All the studies considered by the office of the PSA had instead called for focussing efforts on cutting particulate matter pollution and installing electrostatic precipitators.

The order stated that the CPCB had submitted recommendations after detailed analysis and study of national ambient air quality standards of sulphur dioxide across most regions. It added that the pollution control measures were causing an increase in carbon dioxide emissions as well increasing footprint due to use of limestone, and its transportation.

The order further said that an explicit recommendation has been received from the Ministry of Power about relaxation in timelines to meet norms. “...several stakeholder consultations were done with Industry... Ministry of Power, Central Pollution Control Board, scientific institutions, and other stakeholders regarding these emission standards and their timeline,” it added.

The government had identified 537 coal plant units with a capacity of over 200 Gigawatts (GW) for FGD installation. Of these, the technology has already been installed in 49 units with a capacity of 25 GW, as per data provided by the government in Lok Sabha in March.

Contracts awarded for 211 units (90 GW) and 180 units (58 GW) were under various stages of the tendering process. About 97 units with a capacity of 27 GW were under the pre-tendering process, the government had said.

ROZGAR MELA: 51,000 JOB LETTERS GIVEN

World recognises 2 infinite powers of India — demography and democracy: PM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 12

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Saturday said India's two strengths are its demography and democracy, with the country being the most populous and the largest democracy in the world.

In a virtual address during Rozgar Mela, after distributing over 51,000 appointment letters to youths, the PM said his government's welfare schemes, be it building over four crore houses for the poor, distributing over 10 crore new LPG connections or the rooftop solar programme, have created lakhs of new employment opportunities, and so have a host of other initiatives that led to growth in manufacturing sector.

Exhorting the youth to work hard for the nation, he said the motto should be "citizens first", and underlined that their careers would be the most important phase of 'Amrit Kaal' for the country. "The world acknowledges today that India possesses two infinite powers. One is demography, the other is democracy. In other words, the largest youth population and the largest democracy," he said.

Asserting that the country has progressed in every field in the past 11 years, PM Modi said electronic manufacturing had risen over five times and mobile manufacturing units have increased to nearly 300 from two to four earlier.

Noting that over 25 crore



People listen to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's virtual address in Jammu on Saturday. ANI

people were lifted out of poverty in the past 10 years, the PM said it would not have happened but for the employment and sources of income generated for them.

Citing an International Labour Organization report, Modi said over 90 crore people were covered under the ambit of welfare schemes in the last decade. The worth of defence production has gone beyond ₹1.25 lakh crore, he said, adding that India is now on the way to becoming the third-largest economy. Defence manufacturing is being discussed proudly after Operation Sindoor, he said in an apparent reference to the display of India's indigenous military capability during the conflict with Pakistan.

The government, he said, was focusing on creating new employment opportunities through the Employment Linked Incentive Scheme, under which people in their first job in the private sector would be given ₹15,000 by the government. He added that this is expected to help create about 3.5 crore new jobs.

Screening does not stop after visa is issued, warns US

If visa holders do not follow US laws, they can be deported, says embassy

DIVYAA
NEW DELHI, JULY 12

THE UNITED States Embassy in India announced on Saturday that its visa screening process does not stop even after a visa has been issued. In fact, in a strongly worded warning, it added that if visa holders do not follow US laws, their visas can be revoked, and they can even be deported.

This comes just a day after the embassy issued another statement saying "falsifying or omitting information can lead to visa denial and future visa ineligibility". "US visa screening does not stop after a visa is issued. We continuously check visa holders to ensure they follow all U.S. laws and immigration rules – and we will revoke their visas and deport them if they don't," the embassy said in a post on X on Saturday.

On Friday, through a detailed video, it sought student and exchange programme applicants to list all social media handles used in the past five years on their DS-160 visa forms. "If you omit your social media information, it could lead to a visa denial, and you

might become ineligible for future visas," the video said.

The United States has just restarted scheduling student visa interviews in India, ahead of the Fall 2025 college intake. This move follows a suspension that lasted more than a month.

"Posts across mission India have resumed scheduling F, M, and J (student and exchange) non-immigrant visa applications," a US embassy spokesperson said earlier this week.

India continues to be the top source of international students in the US. Last year, close to 4.2 lakh Indian students were enrolled in American institutions, marking an 11.8 per cent increase over 2023.

The US mission in India had paused student visa appointments in late May due to updated rules involving social media scrutiny. On June 23, the embassy said on social media: "...all individuals applying for an F, M, or J non-immigrant visa are requested to adjust the privacy settings on all of their social media accounts to public to facilitate vetting necessary to establish their identity and admissibility to the US."

Why passage of ‘urban Naxal’ Bill puts MVA in dock

SHUBHANGI KHAPRE
MUMBAI, JULY 12

THE SMOOTH passage of the Maharashtra Special Public Security (MSPS) Bill in the state Legislative Assembly as well as the Council seems to have exposed the lack of coordination and political will among the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance against the Mahayuti government led by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.

On Thursday, the MSPS Bill, which seeks “effective prevention of certain unlawful activities of Left-wing extremist organisations”, was passed in the Assembly by a voice vote. The Bill sailed through the Lower House amid the Opposition’s concerns over the definition and interpretation of some of its terms and clauses. The only dissenting note came from lone CPI(M) MLA Vinod Nikole.

With 235 MLAs in the 288-member Assembly, the BJP-led Mahayuti holds an absolute ma-

jority in the House. Yet, the 53 MLAs representing the MVA missed the opportunity to put up a spirited fight, failing to express their dissent in the Assembly during the passage of the Bill.

Twenty-four hours later, the Bill was also passed by the state Legislative Council amid an Opposition walkout. In what appeared to be a course correction, the Opposition in the Upper House submitted a note of dissent against the Bill to Chairperson Ram Shinde. But this exemplified the Opposition’s lack of a uniform strategy on a crucial legislation like this, which has been dubbed a Bill against “urban Naxalism”.

Fadnavis put forth his views in favour of the Bill in the Assembly. “The legislation is against those Left-wing extremist organisations, which are provoking people for armed revolt to demolish democracy, Parliament and institutions,” he said. “There are six such organisations that were banned in other states operating in Maharashtra. In to-

tal, there are 64 outfits... engaged in destructive and dangerous unlawful activities.”

With the Opposition failing to put the government under pressure over the MSPS Bill, what remains to be seen now is how the protest against the legislation would play out on the streets.



To begin with, a delegation of the Opposition leaders is planning to head to the Raj Bhavan to convey their concerns to Governor C P Radhakrishnan next week. The MVA’s constituents — the Congress, NCP (SP) and Shiv Sena (UBT) — also plan to reach out to various Left organisations and launch a statewide campaign against the government.

NCP (SP) leader Jayant Patil said, “We were members of the Joint Select Committee and strongly voiced our concerns... last meeting’s date change took us off guard. We had our scheduled programmes... Yet, we brought to their notice our concern.”

The Bill was referred to a Joint Select panel comprising members of the Mahayuti and MVA after it was introduced in the Assembly during last year’s monsoon session. Although the panel received 12,000 suggestions and objections, it finally recommended only three changes to the Bill.

In a candid admission, a senior Congress leader and former minister said, “There is no unity within the MVA... In the Assembly, had we collectively registered our dissent, it would have given us the moral standing to question the government’s intention behind such legislation.”

However, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray argued, “The battle is far from over. We support the government in the fight against Naxalism and terrorism. But if the government, through this legislation, is going to abuse power to harass opponents, it is unacceptable.”

As regards the MSPS Bill, the Opposition reckons that the legislation, when enforced, could lead to a “misuse of power

against political rivals”, and create a political environment in which anybody questioning the government could be tagged an “urban Naxal” and face action.

Uddhav said, “There is no mention of the words “Naxal” or “terror”... We are not against the fight against Naxal or terrorism, but if the government uses its majority rule to silence critics, we are not going to accept it.”

In the past, legislation like the MISA and TADA were misused by those in power to arrest and imprison political opponents. “Similarly, the Fadnavis government will misuse the MSPS legislation against its opponents,” the Sena (UBT) chief alleged.

Fadnavis, however, said the legislation is directed at tackling Left-wing extremist organisations and not intended to target the Left or political opponents.

It was also under Opposition pressure, primarily by Uddhav and his cousin Raj Thackeray’s MNS, that the government withdrew its government resolutions (GRs) inducting Hindi in primary schools.

7 EXPRESS NETWORK

8-year-old Namibian female cheetah dies from injuries at Kuno

Cheetah population now stands at 26

ANAND MOHAN J
BHOPAL, JULY 12

AN EIGHT-year-old Namibian female cheetah named Nabha died at Kuno National Park on Saturday, a week after sustaining severe injuries likely during a hunting attempt inside its soft release enclosure.

"Nabha got badly injured a week back, probably during a hunting attempt inside her soft release boma. She had fractures in both the ulna and fibula on the left side, along with other injuries. Despite a week-long treatment, she succumbed to her injuries today," said Uttam Sharma, the field director of the Cheetah Project.

Nabha was one of the cheetahs translocated from Namibia under Project Cheetah, the Government of India's flagship reintroduction initiative.

The cheetahs were brought to Kuno in two phases — the first

batch from Namibia in September 2022 and the second from South Africa in February 2023.

With Nabha's death, the cheetah population at Kuno now stands at 26, including nine adult cheetahs (six females and three males) and 17 cubs born in India. Officials said all the remaining cheetahs, including the two males kept at Gandhisagar, are in good health.

"Currently, 16 cheetahs are living in the wild at Kuno and have adapted well to their new habitat. They have learned to co-exist with co-predators and are regularly hunting," Sharma said, adding that a recent round of anti-parasitic treatment for all cheetahs has been completed successfully.

Two female cheetahs, Veera and Nirva, have also recently given birth and are reported to be doing well along with their cubs.

A post-mortem report is awaited to determine the exact cause of Nabha's death.

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Wildlife board panel to revisit guidelines on declaring ESZs around national parks

NIKHIL GHANEKAR
NEW DELHI, JULY 12

THE STANDING committee of the National Board for Wildlife (SC-NBWL), has decided to revisit the government's 2011 guidelines on declaration of eco-sensitive zones (ESZ) around national parks and wildlife sanctuaries to make them more site-specific and tuned to ecological and socio-economic realities of each region, as per the minutes of its June 26 meeting.

The meeting was chaired by Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav.

The committee also directed chief wildlife wardens of states to submit compliance reports on implementation of terms and conditions imposed while clearing mining, highways, railway sector projects by next meeting. It was discussed that if compliance reports were not submitted, the SC-NBWL should not consider proposals from those states.

The SC-NBWL decided that the Union Environment Ministry will prepare a note on ESZ issue

and carry out international consultations with the impact assessment, eco-sensitive zone, forest conservation, wetland and other relevant divisions. "Thereafter, a consultation meeting by the ESZ and WL (wildlife) division may be convened. The outcome of the exercise therefore may be submitted to the committee for further deliberation," the minutes of the SC-NBWL noted.

The 2011 guidelines have laid down an indicative framework on demarcation of ESZs ranging from identification of land use around parks, grouping of activities as permitted, regulated, prohibited and promoted.

States also ought to prepare a zonal master plan within two years of an ESZ notification.

'Blanket 10-km ESZ won't serve purpose'

Yadav suggested that a note must be prepared on revision of guidelines and circulated to various ministries and states to invite suggestions, as per the minutes. Yadav said extending a blanket 10-km ESZ to all protected areas, irrespective of local ecological and geographical conditions, will not

serve the intended purpose.

He cited the examples of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) in Mumbai and the Asola Bhatti wildlife sanctuary in Delhi, both located in urban areas, to underline his point. In hill states like Himachal Pradesh, Yadav said that around 65% of the area is already under forest or protected status and "further rigid imposition of ESZ norms could hinder local development without proportional ecological gains," he said.

"Therefore, ESZ rules should not be uniform across the country; instead, they must be adapted to reflect the specific ecological and socio-economic realities of each region," he added.

Chief wildlife wardens of Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu expressed different concerns on the issue. Amitabh Gautam, Chief Wildlife Warden, Himachal Pradesh, said that regulation and prohibition of activities, such as mining and other commercial activities, was affecting local residents.

Kerala Chief Wildlife Warden Pramod G Krishnan said that a proposal to declare areas around

the Silent Valley National Park as sanctuary was not recommended by the state wildlife board citing apprehensions that this would mean restrictions in the ESZ around the new sanctuary.

Meanwhile, then director of WII Virendra Tiwari pointed out that existing guidelines tuned towards land-based sanctuaries may not suit marine sanctuaries and their ecosystems. "...There may be specific regulatory principles tailored to unique ecological characteristics and conservation needs of marine ecosystems."

For protected areas where process of ESZ demarcation has not been undertaken, areas within a 10-km range of protected area boundary is considered as the default ESZ, based on the Supreme Court's directions. The ministry has published 347 final ESZ notifications, as per data submitted by the government in RS last year.

H S Singh, non-governmental member of SC-NBWL who raised the agenda in the meeting, said that certain activities that were once categorised as 'promoted', but if their scale was big, they could pose a threat to flora and fauna.



Akash Patil

Union Minister Piyush Goyal, BJP Mumbai president Ashish Shelar and others at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Park to celebrate the inclusion of 12 forts built by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in the UNESCO World Heritage List, Saturday.

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‘Shiv aarti’ to mark heritage site tag for 12 forts built by Shivaji Maharaj

Mumbai: To celebrate UNESCO awarding the 'Maratha Military Landscapes' World Heritage Site status on 12 forts built by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the founder of 'Hindavi Swarajya', the Mumbai BJP will organise 'Shiv aarti' and 'Shiv jallosi' at 106 locations in the city on Sunday.

The forts built by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj are not merely architectural marvels, they stand as enduring symbols of valour and vision that defined 'Hindavi Swarajya'. The celebrations kicked off Saturday at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Park in Dadar, where Minister for Cultural Affairs Ashish Shelar offered floral tributes at the statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj amid the sounds of dhol-tasha. **ENS**

EAM’s Singapore, China tour from today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 12

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister S Jaishankar will travel to Singapore and China from July 13 to 15, the Ministry of External Affairs said Saturday.

In Singapore, he will “meet his counterpart and the leadership of Singapore as part of the regular exchanges between our two countries,” the MEA said.

Thereafter, he will “visit the

People’s Republic of China to participate in the SCO Council of Foreign Ministers’ Meeting (CFM) being held in Tianjin. Jaishankar will also hold bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the Foreign Ministers’ Meeting, it said. The Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the SCO will be held in Tianjin on July 15.

At the invitation of the member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, for-

eign ministers of other SCO member states and heads of the bloc’s permanent bodies will attend the meeting, the statement said.

The ministers will exchange views on SCO cooperation in various fields and major international and regional issues, it said.

Wang may also visit India this month to hold talks with NSA Ajit Doval under the framework of Special Representatives dialogue on boundary dispute, it is learnt.

Road connectivity set to give tourism boost to ‘Valley of Flowers’ in J&K’s Doda

ARUN SHARMA
JAMMU, JULY 12

TOURISTS CAN now enjoy the picturesque meadows, crystal clear streams, flora and fauna at Bhal Padri in the hilly Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir, with the construction of a 10-km road from Padri to the ‘Valley of Flowers’.

Spread across 11 kms, this vast meadow at the higher reaches of Kailash range was so far accessible to either the nomads—Gujjars and Bakerwals had been trekking there along with livestock with the onset of summer—or the teams of botanists from the Institute of Mountaineering and Environment at Bhaderwah.

To woo tourists, the J&K Tourism Department in collabo-



Bhal Padri in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir

ration with the Doda district administration, Jammu Tourism department and Educational Environmental Social Sports and Cultural Society of Bhalessa is organising a festival at Bhal Padri,

which is situated at an altitude of 11,000 ft in Gandoh sub division, on July 20.

Surrounded by dense forest of pine, fir and the betula utilis trees, Bhal Padri, locally called the ‘Valley

of Flowers’, is connected by road from Padri, a tourist destination in Bhaderwah sub division, situated at an altitude of 10,000 ft.

Bal Padri is the second longest valley on the higher reaches of Pir Panjal after 30-km-long Seoj Dhar.

Doda Deputy Commissioner Harvinder Singh visited Bal Padri last week to review security measures following the reopening of the area for tourists two months after the Pahalgam terror attack in which 25 tourists and a local ponywala were killed by terrorists from Pakistan. According to Singh, the road from Padri to Bal Padri in Gandoh sub division has been completed and only its blacktopping has been left. Officials said that the blacktopping work will be taken up after August 15 when the monsoon season ends.

Trump announces 30% tariffs against EU and Mexico, starting August 1

AAMER MADHANI
NEW JERSEY, JULY 12



US President Donald Trump

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump on Saturday announced he's levying tariffs of 30% against the European Union and Mexico starting August 1.

Trump detailed the planned tariffs in letters posted to his social media account. They are part of an announcement blitz by Trump of new tariffs with allies and foes alike, a bedrock of his 2024 campaign that he said would set the foundation for reviving a US economy that he claims has been ripped off by other nations for decades.

In his letter to Mexico's leader, President Claudia Sheinbaum, Trump acknowledged that the country has been helpful in stemming the flow of undocumented migrants and fentanyl into the US. But he said the country has not done enough to stop North America from turning into a "Narco-Trafficking Playground."

EU, Mexico respond

European Union Commission President Ursula von der Leyen responded by noting the bloc's

"commitment to dialogue, stability, and a constructive transatlantic partnership."

"At the same time, we will take all necessary steps to safeguard EU interests, including the adoption of proportionate countermeasures if required," von der Leyen said in a statement.

Von de Leyen added that the EU remains committed to continuing negotiations with the US and coming to an agreement before Aug. 1. Trade ministers from EU countries are scheduled to meet Monday to discuss trade relations with the US, as well as with China.

The Mexican government said it was informed on Friday during high-level talks with U.S. State Department officials that the Trump letter was coming. **AP** Join FREE Telegram Channel <https://t.me/+jUYKq0AFHBAwMGQ1>

SOME OF THE ARTEFACTS FOUND IN THE TOMB CLOSELY RESEMBLE THOSE AT TWO OTHER CARACOL BURIALS, DATING AROUND 350 A.D.

Tomb of Maya ruler unearthed in Belize, with clues to his ancient world

ALAN YUHAS
JULY 12

THE ARCHAEOLOGISTS worked in the shadow of towering Maya ruins, piercing the floor of a structure they had searched years before.

Below, they found an even more ancient chamber, still holding a body and the treasures it was buried with: a rare mosaic death mask and jadeite jewelry, shells from the Pacific and elaborate designs on pottery and bone.

It was the 1,700-year-old tomb of a Maya ruler — the first ever found at Caracol, the largest Maya site in Belize — and it held clues to

a Mesoamerican world where cities contended with one another from hundreds of miles apart.

"They've found a very early ruler, so that's very important, and he's claimed to be the founder of a dynasty," said Gary Feinman, an archaeologist at Field Museum of Chicago who was not involved in the excavation. "That's a major find."

Arlen Chase, one of the archaeologists working at Caracol, was among the first to enter the tomb. "As soon as we saw the chamber, we knew we had something," he said.

From the style of ceramic vessels, he knew the tomb was exceptionally old. From the red

cinnabar all around, he knew it was for someone of very high status. But it was the mosaic mask, in pieces of jadeite off to the side, that made him realize just how unusual the tomb was. "Oh my God, this is much more important than I thought it was," he remembers thinking.

"I kept saying, 'Do you want me to come down?'" she said. "And he kept saying no. And then, eventually he said yes." (The Chases will celebrate 50 years of marriage in August.)

Diane Chase hurried from their base at the University of Houston to take stock of the discoveries. The Maya ruler, they determined, had grown old for



Diane Chase, an archaeologist, in the recently excavated tomb. Caracol Archeological Project/University of Houston

his time, living long enough to lose all his teeth and for bone to grow over his jaw.

"We've never found anyone that we could identify as a ruler at Caracol before, so that in itself was amazing," Diane Chase said. And "double wow," she said, the ruler could be identified as the founder of a dynasty.

The ruler had been interred not just with the mask but three sets of jadeite ear flares, an extraordinary luxury for the Maya elite, and a variety of ceramic vessels. They showed the Maya god of traders, a hummingbird and a ruler holding a spear, with supplicants making offerings to him. Vessels depicted a monkey,

an owl, and the heads of coatimundi — mammals sometimes described as raccoons crossed with lemurs. "It's stuff that we've never seen before," Arlen Chase said of some of the designs.

Through hieroglyphics, the archaeologists identified the ruler as Te K'ab Chak, who took the throne in A.D. 331. He ruled Caracol as it was growing into a larger city, the Chases said, but centuries before its peak as a regional power with an estimated 100,000 people. Like other Maya cities, it had been abandoned by about A.D. 900.

The discovery "adds a whole new dimension" to the site, said Melissa Badillo, the director of

Belize's Institute of Archaeology, a longtime working partner of the Chases. "This is the first of its kind in that it's a ruler, a founder, somebody so old, and in so good a condition, to be honest, because the humidity doesn't lend itself well to preservation."

For the Chases, the discovery was thrilling also because of how the artifacts related to other finds over the years. "Without this tomb, we wouldn't have any idea as to how everything tied together," Arlen Chase said.

Some of the artefacts found in the tomb closely resemble those at two other Caracol burials, dating around A.D. 350, the Chases said. **NYT**

ECONOMY

Honeywell fuel control switches in crash report flagged earlier

AGGAM WALIA
NEW DELHI, JULY 12

WHILE THE preliminary report on the AI-171 crash has narrowed the likely cause to the aircraft's engine fuel control switches, it does not raise concerns about the equipment itself.

The switches, manufactured by US-based Honeywell, were previously flagged by the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in 2018 for a potential fault in the switch locking mechanism. Although the FAA had recommended certain inspections, they were not made mandatory due to "limited data" to warrant an airworthiness directive (AD) action.

The initial probe report released by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) revealed that the June 12 crash of the Boeing 787-8 aircraft occurred after both engine fuel control switches moved from 'RUN' to 'CUTOFF' position in quick succession shortly after takeoff.

"At this stage of investigation, there are no recommended actions to B787-8 and/or GE GENx-1B engine operators and manufacturers," the report said. The aircraft's GENx engine was manufactured by GE Aerospace.

Fuel control switches

The report identifies the part number of the fuel control switch as 4TL837-3D, which is manufactured by Honeywell, according to a Special Airworthiness Information Bulletin (SAIB) issued by the US FAA in 2018. The SAIB flagged potential disengagement of the fuel control switch locking feature on some Boeing aircraft,



Wreckage of Air India's Boeing 787-8 jet, a month after the tragedy, in Ahmedabad.

and is referenced in the AAIB report released earlier today.

"The fuel control switch design, including the locking feature, is similar on various Boeing airplane models including part number 4TL837-3D which is fitted in B787-8 aircraft VT-ANB (AI-171). As per the information from Air India, the suggested inspections were not carried out as the SAIB was advisory and not mandatory," the initial probe report said.

Honeywell is the manufacturer behind the engine fuel control switches for most Boeing models, including the 737, 747, 767, and the 787 Dreamliner involved in the Ahmedabad crash last month, according to the SAIB.

"If the locking feature is disengaged, the switch can be moved between the two positions without lifting the switch during transition, and the switch would be exposed to the potential of inadvertent operation. Inadvertent operation of the switch could result in an unintended consequence, such as an in-flight engine shutdown," the SAIB said.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

The fuel control switches that are now at the heart of the AI 171 crash probe

SUKALP SHARMA &
SOUMYARENDRA BARIK
NEW DELHI, JULY 12

THE PROBE into the June 12 crash of the ill-fated Air India flight AI 171, enroute from Ahmedabad to London Gatwick in a Boeing 787-8, has put the aircraft's engine fuel control switches at the centre of the investigations, according a preliminary report by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB). The tragic accident killed 260 people—241 of the 242 people on board the ill-fated aircraft and 19 on the ground.

As per the report, these switches transitioned from 'RUN' to 'CUTOFF' position within a second of each other moments after lift-off, leading to the worst aviation disaster involving an Indian airline in four decades.

According to the initial probe report, which was released early July 12 by the AAIB, one of the pilots can be heard on the cockpit voice recorder asking the other why he cut off the fuel, to which the other pilot responded by saying that he did not.

Inputs from the aircraft's flight data recorders (FDR) and

EXPLAINED How aircraft fuel switches work

FUEL SWITCHES regulate fuel flow to the jet's engine. Pilots and experts say, the movement of these critical switches have to be deliberate actions and their accidental movement is next to impossible. The switches have brackets on either side to protect them

cockpit voice recorders (CVR) will now be combed for other easing clues on the timings of the fuel switches movements and the possible reasons behind their transition to the cutoff position.

Fuel switches regulate fuel flow to the aircraft's engine. According to pilots and experts, the movement of these critical switches have to be deliberate actions and their accidental movement is next to impossible. The switches have brackets on either side to protect them. Additionally, there is a stop lock

mechanism that requires the pilots to lift the switch before moving it from either of its positions — RUN and CUTOFF — to the other. These switches are usually moved only when the aircraft is on ground — to start the engines before departure and to shut them down after landing. Movement of either of the switches during the flight would be required only in the event of the corresponding engine failing or suffering enough damage that would require shutting off fuel supply to it to ensure flight safety.

Can either switch be moved while airborne

This need would arise in the case of an engine failure or a major issue with the performance of an engine, or notable damage to the engine. In such eventualities, the pilots would act to shut down the problematic engine, which would require the fuel control switch corresponding to that engine being moved from RUN to CUTOFF. This would immediately cut fuel supply to the corresponding engine, resulting in an almost instant loss of thrust in it. The pilots may also switch off fuel supply and then immediately switch it on if they be-

lieve that the affected engine could be restarted safely.

It is important to note here that such an action would mostly involve moving just one fuel control switch, and not both. Modern dual engine aircraft can operate for hours on a single functional engine. One of the speculative theories, unsubstantiated by any official information, doing rounds about the AI 171 crash was that the aircraft might have possibly lost one engine upon take-off and the pilots mistakenly misidentified the problematic engine and instead shut down the working engine.

Pilots and aviation safety experts point out that the procedure for shutting down an engine during flight is a highly methodical and well-thought-out procedure, and has a checklist that the pilots are trained to go through. It is not something that is just done randomly by a pilot. It also must involve both pilots and is usually performed only after the plane has ascended to a safe altitude. However, a mistaken shutdown of the wrong engine has happened on rare occasions in the past.

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In digital age, stablecoins are new tools in fight for global currency domination

SIDDHARTH UPASANI
NEW DELHI, JULY 12

ON JUNE 24, the Switzerland-based Bank for International Settlements (BIS) sounded a stark warning for policymakers pushing forward with the adoption of stablecoins — the asset-backed cryptocurrencies fall short of being money and they could pose risks to financial stability if allowed to grow. However, 2025 has been a watershed year of sorts for stablecoins — essentially private cryptocurrencies linked to an actual asset, usually the US dollar.

Days earlier, on June 17, the US Senate passed the Guiding and Establishing National

Innovation for US Stablecoins Act (GENIUS Act). A week prior to that, the Digital Asset Basic Act bill was introduced in South Korea's National Assembly. Under this bill, domestic firms can issue their own stablecoins pegged to the South Korean won.

In May, Hong Kong's Legislative Council passed a legislation to establish a licensing regime for local 'fiat-referenced stablecoins' issuers.

To be sure, new laws backing stablecoins underscore the need to ensure the protection of the general public and compliance with anti-money laundering requirements, among others.

According to Eddie Yue, chief executive of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, "a robust

NEW LAWS BACKING STABLECOINS



Stablecoins, unlike bitcoins, are crypto tokens indexed to assets.

Join FREE Telegram Channel <https://t.me/+jUYKq0AFHBAwMGQ1> and fit-for-purpose regulatory environment would provide favourable conditions to support

ON JUNE 17, the US Senate passed the Guiding and Establishing National Innovation for US Stablecoins Act. A WEEK prior, the Digital Asset Basic Act bill was introduced in South Korea. In May, Hong Kong's Legislative Council passed a law to establish a licensing regime for local 'fiat-referenced stablecoins' issuers

Join FREE Whatsapp Channel <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Van2VRb6RGJOKH6oBd0F> broader digital asset ecosystem."

But who needs stablecoins anyway?

Limited use case

While being pegged to a currency such as the US dollar can reduce the volatility in the value of a stablecoin, experts are unsure about what the cryptocurrency has to offer.

Consider the case of South Korea, where there seems to be little reason for stablecoins backed by the won. "Given the limited global role of the KRW (Korean won) and the strength of existing domestic payment infrastructure, the immediate justification for the issuance of KRW stablecoins appears limited," Dong Beom Choi, Associate

Professor of Finance at Seoul National University, told Nomura last week.

According to the BIS, while stablecoins display "some attributes of money", they were "...unsound money, with real societal costs... that fail the triple test of singleness, elasticity and integrity." The BIS also has a more fundamental problem with stablecoins.

It pointed out that there is an "inherent tension between stablecoin issuers' ability to fully uphold their promise of stability and their pursuit of a profitable business model."

De-dollarisation angle

Despite the warnings, lawmakers in the West as well as the

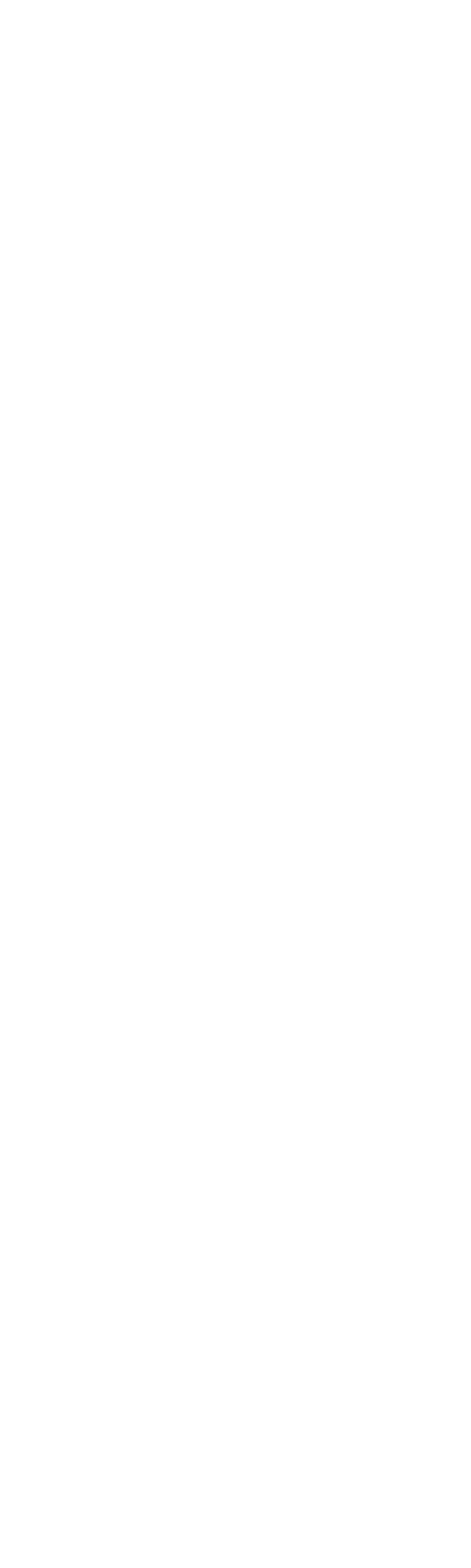
East are moving ahead with frameworks for the issuance of private stablecoins.

However, their objective may not necessarily be so much about boosting crypto and digital ecosystems.

Instead, they may be looking to push demand for their respective national currencies, such as the Korean won and the Chinese yuan.

In late June, Song Ke, executive VP at the Renmin University's Shenzhen Research Institute, identified the reason behind Hong Kong's stablecoin push as an "effort to elevate the global status of the Chinese renminbi in the digital era."

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IN ELITE CLUB

After non-stop play-travel, Harikrishnan becomes India’s 87th GM

AMIT KAMATH
MUMBAI, JULY 12

FOR A man chasing a grandmaster title since 2018, the final two steps were taken in the span of a few days. Harikrishnan A Ra became India's 87th grandmaster after a draw with P Iniyan in the final game of the La Plagne International Chess Festival in France. After getting his first GM norm a few years ago, the Chennai-based player gained the next two he needed in two tournaments — gaining his second one at Andujar Open in Spain before earning the third in France — to get the highest title the sport has to offer. Harikrishnan smiles as he talks about his 'quite crazy months', as he has played seven tournaments outside India in a row now and will only return home after playing three more. He started this 10-tournament stretch at Dubai in the middle of May, then went to

Croatia for a couple of events, before flying to Russia for the Asian League Teams Championship where he helped the Airports Authority of India Team claim bronze. Then there was a pitstop in Spain for another tournament where he earned his second norm, before earning this third norm at La Plagne in France. His travels are far from over: he is already on his way to Spain for another tournament before going to Portugal.

Jet-setting run

While most other players take breaks between foreign trips to refresh themselves and regain mental strength, Harikrishnan prefers to go on a jet-setting tear of 9-10 tournaments at a stretch. "This method doesn't work for many people. But if I plan to play in just two or three tournaments, usually it's going to be bad. Last year too, I played nine tournaments in a row. After four tournaments, I was not doing well.



Harikrishnan A Ra has played seven overseas tournaments in a row. Join FREE Whatsapp Channel <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Van2VRb6RGJOKH6oBd0F>

Join FREE Telegram Channel <https://t.me/+jUYKq0AFHBawMGQ1> Then, in the final five, I improved my Elo rating to 2500. So bunching together tournaments usually works for me. For some reason, I get into my flow after four tournaments. This year too, after four tournaments, I got my two norms back-to-back," Harikrishnan tells *The Indian Express*. When he earned this third norm on Friday, one of the first calls Harikrishnan made was to his coach, GM Shyamsundar Mohanraj, who runs Chess Thulir in Chennai, and was also responsible for India getting its 86th GM, Srihari LR. Usually, every time Harikrishnan sets off to play in a series of tournaments, he spells out a goal to his coach. It could be 'I'll only return after becoming a grandmaster' or 'I'll return with a 2600 rating'. So now that a seven-year-wait has ended, Shyamsundar wanted to know his ward's plan. He was wondering if Harikrishnan would like to come home. Instead, the 24-year-old mentioned the next three tournaments he was preparing for. "That made me very proud. He's 24. Other players in his shoes might have felt that they have finally become a GM. Chalo, ho gaya. Now time for a party." But not him. In fact, his next event starts in two days," Shyamsundar told The Indian Express. He paints a portrait of a guy who's completely devoted to his craft, to the point that he swore off social media recently. "He doesn't have too many distractions. He doesn't get carried away. So if we're doing 10 to 12 camps of his rating level in a year, he used to be there in at least 90 percent of them," the coach says. Now that the final GM norm is achieved, the two have a new objective for the next three tournaments. "I told him since you've become a GM, now you should try experimenting a little bit (with playing styles etc) and see how it goes," said Shyamsundar.

“Honestly, I didn't even dream, because it felt too far. I feel like I am an experienced player after having won Slams before, but I never expected this.”

IGA SWIATEK, AFTER WINNING HER FIRST WIMBLEDON TITLE

6-0 One-sided final

Swiatek bulldozed her way to sixth major title, defeating Anisimova in the final on Saturday

VINAYAKK MOHANARANGAN
JULY 12

FOR ONLY the second time in the Open Era, and first time at Wimbledon, a women's singles final ended 6-0 6-0. If anyone was going to achieve the feat, it was destined to be Iga Swiatek, who has a habit of winning sets 6-0 or 6-1: a bagel or a bread-stick, as it is known in tennis, is her bread and butter, prompting the coining of the term Iga's Bakery.

But that she did it in her first Wimbledon final, on a surface where she has had little success in the years past, made it one of the most extraordinary results in recent years in women's tennis. Amanda Anisimova simply didn't have the answers against the relentless Polish superstar.

After 38 years, when Steffi Graf won the French Open in 1988 by the same scoreline, Swiatek punched her way into the record books. It wasn't just a story of the two 6-0s she served out on Center Court, she also made it 6-0 in Grand Slam finals in her career, winning her sixth Major in her sixth title clash.

If Anisimova had an actual nightmare before the final, one doubts it would have been worse than the reality that unfolded in front of her eyes. Right from the pre-match walk onto the Center Court, where Swiatek strode out with her headphones on (possibly listening to some AC/DC) much ahead of her American opponent, the former world No 1 looked dialled in.

It might have been the first Wimbledon final for both players, but Swiatek is significantly more experienced at the big stages than Anisimova, while the American was playing a final of this magnitude for the first time in her career. It showed in the opening game right away as Anisimova appeared to be a bundle of nerves.

Swiatek had three break points at 0-40 and converted the second to take the lead and never looked back. Anisimova managed to win just two points in the first two games.

The third game saw

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Iga Swiatek took 57 minutes to demolish Amanda Anisimova's challenge in the Wimbledon final . AP

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Anisimova struggle to close out from 40-15, letting Swiatek push her around the court, and dropping her serve for the second time after a double fault to trail 0-3. A brief window opened for the 13th seed to break in the fourth game at 15-30, but this time her groundstrokes let her down.

On the other side of the net, there was no letdown of intensity from Swiatek as she crunched some deep forehands to draw out more errors from her opponent. The bad start for Anisimova quickly turned into her worst nightmare, getting broken at love to go down 0-5.

At 5-0, 30-0, Anisimova would have wondered if it wasn't just meant to be, as Swiatek scrambled around to win a point she had no business winning. And it set up three set points that the Pole quickly

FLAWLESS RECORD

6 WITH 6-0, 6-0 win, Swiatek has a 6-0 record in Grand Slam finals. She is the third women in the Open Era to do so after Margaret Court & Monica Seles.

converted. Anisimova won just 9 points in the first set. As per Opta, Swiatek became only the fourth player in the Open Era to win the opening set with a 6-0 scoreline at the women's singles final in Wimbledon after Billie Jean King (1973, 1975), Chris Evert (1974) and Martina Navratilova (1983).

At the start of the second set, at 0-30, the crowd tried to rally behind Anisimova, and she re-

sponded with a roar too after making it 30-30. That was, however, quickly followed by two cries of frustration and a helpless stare towards the team in her box. Swiatek broke serve again to start the second set on the front foot.

The crowd once again turned up the volume when Anisimova was down 15-30 on serve, and it went up a few decibels as the American crunched a forehand winner.

Down a breakpoint again, she hit another winner to force deuce. But it was only a flash in the pan. There was to be no turnaround and Swiatek swiftly closed the match out and fell on her back on the hallowed grass.

For Anisimova, the result unfortunately bookended what was otherwise a memorable fortnight in London. Her tournament began with a 6-0 6-0

thrashing of Yulia Putintseva (who had coincidentally beaten Swiatek in last year's quarterfinal) and ended in tears with the scoreline being reversed.

For Swiatek, Wimbledon 2025 will hold a special place in her career. After all, even she never quite believed she'd come this far on grass, having never reached the semifinal before. In her post-match speech, she was asked how long she had dreamt about holding the famous Venus Rosewater Dish.

She smiled. "Honestly, I didn't even dream, because it felt too far. I feel like I am an experienced player after having won Slams before, but I never expected this one."

Sometimes, when you put your head down (after listening to some rock music) and work hard, even undreamt dreams come true.

Archery WC: Jyothi wins three medals

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
JULY 12

A WEEK that started with Jyothi Surekha Vennam setting a new World Record in mixed team along with Rishabh Yadav, finished with her standing on the podium in all three possible events she could medal in at the fourth stage of the 2025 Archery World Cup being held in Madrid. Earlier in the day, the supremely consistent women's compound team won silver. Then Jyothi shot to silver in the women's compound individual event, losing a super close final against Great Britain's Ella Gibson 148-147.

The trio of Jyothi, Parneet Kaur and 16-year-old debutant Prithika Pradeep, who had topped the qualification round with a total of 2116 points, looked well on course for gold and justify their top-billing when they led 170-169 after the third end. However, they eventually went down 225-227 to Chinese Taipei, a 7 by Parneet in the fourth end proving very costly in the final equation.

In the mixed team event, Rishabh and Jyothi – who lost to eventual champions Netherlands in the semifinals – beat 10th-seeded El Salvador duo of Paola Corado and Douglas Vladimir Nolasco 156-153 to claim bronze. On Friday, they to 12th-seeded Netherlands 152-155. In the bronze playoff, the scores were tied 39-39 after the first end, but Jyothi and Rishabh pulled ahead by two points after the second and maintained their lead till the end to seal victory.

In the qualification round, Jyothi and Rishabh's combined score of 1431 was the 144-arrow mixed team world record. Rishabh topped the men's qualifi-

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Jyothi Surekha Vennam in action. World Archery Media

cation charts with 716 while Jyothi did the same in the women's section with a score of 715.

Rishabh, according to World Archery, led the men's compound qualification round from start to finish at Vallehermoso Stadium and could have challenged the individual record too, currently held by Braden Gellenthien (718) but finished on 716, which is a new personal best and his highest score on the international circuit. Jyothi and Rishabh's combined 1431 beat the previous mixed team world record of 1429, held by Denmark's Tanja Gellenthien and Mathias Fullerton since the Krakow-Malopolska 2023 European Games. It is another encouraging early sign for India for LA 2028, with compound mixed team event added to the Olympic Games roster.

"It's special because the [compound] mixed team is newly added to the Olympics, and we've been having such small achievements over time," Rishabh, who also won mixed team gold with Jyothi at the season opener in Central Florida, had told World Archery.

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