

# THE WORLD

EUROPEAN ALLIES TO BUY PATRIOT MISSILES FOR KYIV

## Trump: Very severe tariffs on Russia if Ukraine war isn't resolved in 50 days

100% tariffs on Russian goods, sanctions on its buyers, says US

CHRIS MEGERIAN & ILLIA NOVIKOV  
WASHINGTON, JULY 14

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump on Monday threatened Russia with steep tariffs and announced a rejuvenated pipeline for American weapons to reach Ukraine, hardening his stance toward Moscow after months of frustration about unsuccessful negotiations for ending the war.

The latest steps reflect an evolving approach from the Republican president, who promised to swiftly resolve the war Russian President Vladimir Putin started when he invaded Ukraine three years ago. Trump has often criticized Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for allowing the war to happen but more recently has expressed growing irritation toward Putin.

"It just keeps going on and on and on," Trump said. "Every



President Donald Trump at the White House on Monday. AP

night, people are dying."

Trump said he would implement "severe tariffs" unless a peace deal is reached within 50 days. "We're going to be doing secondary tariffs," he said. "If we don't have a deal in 50 days, it's very simple, and they'll be at 100%."

A White House official said Trump was referring to 100% tariffs on Russian goods as well as secondary sanctions on other

countries that buy its exports.

"I use trade for a lot of things," Trump added. "But it's great for settling wars."

Trump also said that European allies would buy "billions and billions" of dollars of US military equipment to be transferred to Ukraine, replenishing the besieged country's supplies of weapons. He made the announcement in the Oval

EXPLAINED  
If sanctions roll out, India could be hit

WHILE THE West has cut off its ties with Moscow, it has held back from taking steps that would restrict Russia from selling its oil elsewhere, allowing it to earn its oil revenue from business with India and China. President Donald Trump's threat to impose so-called secondary sanctions on Russia — a dramatic shift in the sanctions policy — if carried out, might affect most or all of Russia's buyers.

Office alongside NATO

Secretary-General Mark Rutte. Included in the plan are Patriot air defense systems, a top priority for Ukraine as it fends off Russian drones and missiles. Doubts were recently raised about Trump's commitment to supply Ukraine when the Pentagon paused shipments over concerns that U.S. stockpiles were running low.

AP WITH REUTERS INPUTS

### Zelenskyy taps deputy PM Svyrydenko for Prime Minister

Kyiv: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy asked First Deputy Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko on Monday to lead a new government, setting the stage for a political reshuffle as prospects for an end to Ukraine's war with Russia grow dim.

The nomination, which requires parliamentary approval, comes as diplomatic efforts to end the war, now in its fourth year, have stalled and as Ukraine seeks to revive its cash-strapped economy and build up a domestic arms industry.

"We ... discussed concrete measures to boost Ukraine's economic potential, expand support programs for Ukrainians, and scale up our domestic weapons production," Zelenskyy wrote on X. "In pursuit of this goal, we are initiating a transformation of the executive branch in Ukraine," he said, adding he had proposed that Svyrydenko lead the government and "renew its work". REUTERS



At the funeral of Palestinians killed in morning Israeli strikes on tents at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, Monday. Reuters

## Plan for permanent displacement of Gazans threatens to derail truce talks

Experts: Israeli idea constitutes ethnic cleansing, breaches international law

PATRICK KINGSLEY & AARON BOXERMAN  
JERUSALEM, JULY 14

AN ISRAELI proposal to force much of Gaza's population into a small zone in the territory's south has threatened to derail the latest effort to achieve a truce between Israel and Hamas.

In recent weeks, Israeli officials have briefed journalists and foreign counterparts on a loose plan to force hundreds of thousands of Palestinian civilians into an area controlled by Israel's military close to the Gaza-Egypt border. Legal experts have warned that the plan would violate international law because the civilians would be barred from returning to their homes to the north, a restriction that would constitute a form of ethnic cleansing.

While the Israeli government has yet to formally announce or comment on the plan, the idea of a new encampment in southern Gaza was first proposed last week by Israel Katz, the Israeli defense minister. He discussed it at a briefing with Israeli correspondents who focus on military affairs, and The New York Times reviewed readouts of the briefing written by its attendees. Several attendees also wrote articles that attracted widespread attention among both Israelis and Palestinians.

A spokesman for Katz declined to comment on the reports, as did the office of Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister.

Now, Hamas has cited Katz's proposal as one of the latest obstacles to a new truce. During a cease-fire, in exchange for releasing roughly 25 hostages, Hamas wants Israeli troops to withdraw from much of Gaza. The new Israeli plan makes such an outcome far less likely, since it would ensure that Israeli troops remained in charge of a large area over which Hamas seeks to reestablish control.

Husam Badran, a senior member of Hamas, described the establishment of the encampment as a "deliberatively obstructive demand" that would complicate the fraught negotiations.

"This would be an isolated city that resembles a ghetto," Badran said on Monday in a text message. "This is utterly unacceptable, and no Palestinian would agree to this."

Hopes for an imminent truce rose last week after Netanyahu went to Washington for meetings with President Trump that many expected would result in an Israeli compromise. Instead, Netanyahu — who has previously slow-walked talks for personal and political reasons — returned to Israel without a breakthrough. NYT

### INDIAN EXPRESS UPSC IAS EDITION HD 15~07~2025 -:FOR UPSC IAS ASPIRANTS:-

#### "AVOID POLITICAL & IRRELEVANT ARTICLES"

#### Please Try To Read This Completely in 40 Minutes If You Can't So Then You Have To Increase Your Efforts

All the topics of this UPSC IAS Edition are directly or indirectly important for the prelims & main examination.  
There are some topics which can be coded in answer writing of other topics in the main exam.

### YEARS OF SAND STORMS, RISING SEAS, FLOODS AND WILDFIRES HAVE TURNED EUROPE'S BELOVED GETAWAYS INTO MISERABLE LOCALES

## Heat waves, climate change turn Europe into a summer paradise lost

JASON HOROWITZ  
BARCELONA, JULY 14

NOT SO long ago, families coming to the shore in Montgat, Spain, built sand castles, played paddle games and lounged around on the broad band of sand that was the picture of the European summer vacation. But now in some places, there is hardly enough room to put down a towel.

"From here to there," said Sofia Mella, 19, as she pointed far out to sea, "it was all sand."

Climate change is changing Europe into a summer paradise lost. Across Spain, Italy, Greece,

France and beyond, sand-devouring storms, rising seas, temperatures, deadly floods and horrific wildfires have year after year turned some of the continent's most desired getaways into miserable locales to get away from.

As southern Europeans dream of fjords, traditional hot spots and fixtures of travel agency package deals no longer seem so desirable. Even activists seeking to free their cities from the scourge of overtourism saw no silver lining to the brutal conditions.

"It's hell," said Daniel Pardo Rivacoba, who lives in Barcelona, and who spoke for a group fighting overtourism — and its climate-

change fueling flights. Last year, Pardo Rivacoba's group went viral by organizing demonstrations against overtourism that including spraying tourists with water guns. This year, he said, it was so hot that "we used the water guns on ourselves."

Across the continent, June was the cruelest month. So far. In Rome, tourists rotated around the city's sites as if spinning in an outdoor microwave. Opera singers in Verona passed out in their costumes.

But Spain has become the least fun-in-the-sun destination. Temperatures in the southwest-ern city of El Granado reached



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A beach in Barcelona earlier this week. NYT

nearly 115 degrees (46 degrees Celsius), a national record for June. And there were other grim metrics. Barcelona has reported losing 30,000 square meters of sand over the past five years.

"The main risk humankind faces today, undoubtedly, is climate change," said Sira Rego, a minister in the government led by Pedro Sánchez. She called responding to those changes a "priority in terms of security."

The government, proud of its well-performing economy, is working to attract hundreds of billions of euros in investments in sustainable energy. It seeks to invest in temperature prediction

systems to foresee heat waves, and to train health care workers.

At more local levels, cities including Barcelona are also trying to mitigate the damage wrought by a changing climate.

Laia Bonet, the city's first deputy mayor responsible for ecology and urban planning, said that Barcelona was "especially exposed to the effects of climate change," and that it was working to address the reality of a hotter city with higher sea levels and eroded beaches.

Instead of changing their behavior, many Southern Europeans suffering during the sweltering heat waves have re-

sorted to hatching escape plans.

In Barcelona, three older Spanish women sitting in the shade across from the city's cathedral fantasized about cloudy Galicia in the north. And Romans with healthy travel budgets have started looking longingly at damp, chilly, often overlooked nations.

"It could happen that if it gets too hot people could come to Belgium," said Ann Verdonck, 45, from near Antwerp, who was on vacation with her family in Barcelona, where she said last month's temperatures were untenable. "And then we will have too many people." NYT



# Enjoy free speech with self-restraint, not abuse, says SC, talks of guidelines

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JULY 14

SAYING THAT citizens must know the “value of freedom of speech and expression” and exercise “self-restraint” on social media, failing which the state would intervene, the Supreme Court on Monday considered framing guidelines to control “divisive tendencies” on virtual platforms.

Seeking the assistance of the counsel for the petitioner and the state “vis-a-vis the guidelines to be issued to citizens”, the court said it was not “speaking about censorship” but would look beyond the petition in the “interest of fraternity, secularism and dignity of individuals”.

The court was hearing a plea filed by a Kolkata resident, Wazahat Khan, seeking consolidation of FIRs registered against him in different states over his social media posts.

“If they (citizens) want to enjoy the fundamental right of speech and expression, it should

**EXPLAINED**  
**E** The horizontal approach

IN A 2023 verdict, the Supreme Court recognised a horizontal approach to the right to freedom of speech and expression, which means a citizen can invoke the right not just against the state but also against other citizens. Essentially, a citizen can sue another citizen for violating free speech.

INSIDE

**SC TERMS POST ON PM INFLAMMATORY**  
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be with the reasonable restrictions also. Apart from that, there

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External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing, Monday. *PTI*

## India-China ties have made good progress, border de-escalation is key, says Jaishankar

Says restrictive trade measures and roadblocks should be avoided

**SHUBHAJIT ROY**  
NEW DELHI, JULY 14

UNDERLINING THAT “differences should not become disputes” nor should “competition ever become conflict”, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar told Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Monday that while India and China have made good progress in the past nine months towards the normalisation of bilateral relations, they should work to address de-escalation on

the border.

This is Jaishankar’s first visit to China since the military stand-off along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh began in May 2020. Meeting Wang Yi ahead of the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) Foreign Ministers’ meeting in Tianjin on Tuesday, Jaishankar said that terrorism is a “shared concern” and India hopes that “zero tolerance for terrorism will be strongly upheld” at the meeting. He also said that “restrictive

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## Life sentence, Rs 10-lakh fine: Anti-sacrilege Bill across faiths in Punjab

**KANCHAN VASDEV**  
CHANDIGARH, JULY 14

THE AAP government in Punjab on Monday introduced a Bill in the Assembly which proposes punishment of up to life imprisonment and fine of up to Rs 10 lakh for acts of sacrilege against religious scriptures.

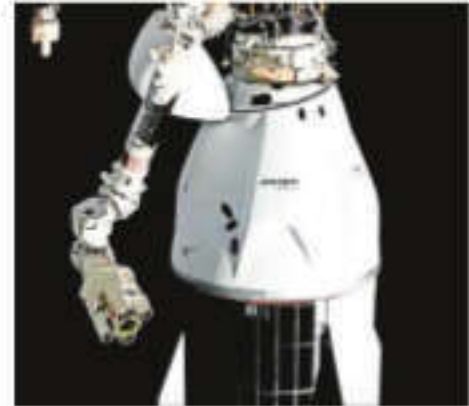
Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann introduced the Punjab Prevention of Offences Against Holy Scripture(s) Bill 2025 on the third day of the ongoing special

session. Speaker Kultar Singh Sandhwan deferred the discussion on the Bill for Tuesday after Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa, citing seriousness of the matter, sought time to study the proposed legislation.

Earlier in the day, a Cabinet meeting chaired by Mann cleared the Bill which proposes strict punishment for desecration of holy scriptures, including the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Bhagavad Gita, Bible and Quran.

According to the Bill, any

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Shukla's spacecraft just before undocking. *NASA*

## 18 days on space station, Shukla heads home, splashdown in Pacific today

**ANONNA DUTT**  
NEW DELHI, JULY 14

AFTER SPENDING 18 days on the International Space Station (ISS), during which he went around the Earth 288 times, Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla and his colleagues on the Axiom-4 mission began their 22-hour return journey to Earth on Monday afternoon.

Their spacecraft, named ‘Grace’, which undocked from the ISS at 4.45 pm India time on Monday, is scheduled to make a splashdown in the Pacific Ocean, off the coast of California in the United States, around 3 pm on Tuesday. From the sea, the space capsule would be lifted by a crane on to a boat specially designed for this purpose. The astronauts would then come out and be airlifted to the shore.

That will bring an end to the Axiom-4 mission that marked the return of three countries -- India, Poland and Hungary -- to human spaceflight after a gap of over four decades.

“Welcome back Shubhanshu! The entire nation eagerly awaits your arrival back home...as you begin your return journey,” said Science Minister Jitendra Singh after the spacecraft began the return journey.

After spending 433 hours at the ISS, the astronauts moved into their docked spacecraft around 2 pm India time. The preparations for the return journey took over two hours. The automatic undocking procedure that started at around 4.45 pm involved the spacecraft detaching the umbilical that connected

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



● Jaishankar

trade measures and roadblocks” should be avoided.

“Our bilateral relationship requires that we take a far-seeing approach to our ties. Since our leaders’ meeting in Kazan in October 2024, the India-China relationship has been gradually moving in a positive direction. Our responsibility is to maintain that momentum,” Jaishankar said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping met on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, on October 23 last year, after a border patrolling arrangement was announced on October 21. Since then, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval has travelled to China twice; Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri have also gone there for meetings.

“In recent times, the two of us have had several opportunities to meet at international events and carry out strategic communication. It is our expectation that this will now be regular and take place in each other’s countries,” Jaishankar said.

On the border situation, where an estimated 50,000-60,000 troops are still stationed, he said: “We have made good progress in the past nine months for the normalisation of our bilateral relations. It is a result of the resolution of friction along the border and our ability to maintain peace and tranquility there. This is the fundamental basis for mutual strategic trust and for smooth development of bilateral relations. It is now incumbent on us to address other aspects related to the border,”

● Punjab Bill

person found guilty of sacrilege may face minimum imprisonment of 10 years and minimum fine of Rs 5 lakh. Those attempting to commit the offence may face a jail term of three to five years, and shall also be liable to pay a fine which may extend up to Rs 3 lakh.

The offences under this law shall be cognizable, non-bailable, and non-compoundable, and such cases will be tried in a sessions court.

According to the Bill, the investigation shall be conducted by an officer not below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police.

The Bill defines offence as any sacrilege, damage, destruction, defacing, disfiguring, de-colouring, de-filling, decomposing, burning, breaking or tearing of any holy scripture or part thereof. The words and expressions used,

Join FREE Whatsapp Channel <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Van2VRb6RGJOKH6oBd0F> after the Pahalgam attack in April.

Last month, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh told his Chinese counterpart, Admiral Dong Jun, that there is a need for a “structured roadmap of permanent engagement and de-escalation”. Jaishankar’s reiteration of the need for “de-escalation” is an important signal to Beijing.

On the economic challenges in the relationship, Jaishankar said: “As neighbouring nations and major economies in the world today, there are various facets and dimensions of our ties. Measures towards normalising our people-to-people exchanges can certainly foster mutually beneficial cooperation. It is also essential in this context that restrictive trade measures and roadblocks are avoided.”

India has officially raised the issue of rare earth magnet supply, as Beijing has imposed restrictions on their export. China, which controls over 90 per cent of global processing capacity for the magnets used for automobiles, clean energy and home appliances, enacted restrictions in April requiring companies to obtain import permits from Beijing. India’s auto sector has been facing the brunt of these restrictions.

Jaishankar underlined that the SCO’s primary mandate is to combat terror, separatism and extremism. “This is a shared concern and India hopes that zero tolerance for terrorism will be strongly upheld,” he said, in a reference to Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in India.

Delhi has declared a doctrine of zero tolerance to terror, and launched Operation Sindoor to strike terror locations in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir

after the Pahalgam attack in April.

Framing the bilateral ties in the overall context, Jaishankar said: “Stable and constructive ties between India and China are not only to our benefit, but that of the world as well. This is best done by handling relations on the basis of mutual respect, mutual interest and mutual sensitivity. We have also earlier agreed that differences should not become disputes, nor should competition ever become conflict. On this foundation, we can now continue to develop our ties along a positive trajectory.”

Jaishankar conveyed wishes to the Chinese side for a “successful SCO presidency”, and said “India is committed to ensuring good outcomes and decisions”. Stating that the two sides are marking the 75th year of the establishment of diplomatic relations, he said: “We appreciate that the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra has also resumed after a gap of five years. I thank the Chinese side for their cooperation on this matter”.

Earlier in the day, Jaishankar met Chinese Vice President Han Zheng shortly after landing in Beijing from Singapore in the second leg of his two-nation trip. He underlined that continued normalisation of India-China ties can produce mutually beneficial outcomes and an open exchange of views between the two sides is “very important” considering the “complex” global scenario. “Our bilateral relationship, as you have pointed, has been steadily improving since the meeting between Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi and President Xi Jinping in Kazan last October,” Jaishankar said. “I am confident that my discussions in this visit will maintain

convicted of sacrilege against any holy granth,” the spokesperson said. Until now, no specific legislation existed that directly addressed offences against holy granths, often resulting in leniency or evasion of serious action by culprits, said the spokesperson, adding that the proposed legislation aims to fill that legal void by criminalising and prescribing punishment for acts of sacrilege across all sects and faiths. “With the enactment of this law, the state seeks to further strengthen the ethos of communal harmony, brotherhood, peace, and amity. It will also act as a strong deterrent against anti-social and anti-national activities...,” the spokesperson said.

Following the discussion, the Bill is expected to be sent to a select committee for taking the opinion of stakeholders. The government had called the special session after Mann met represen-

that positive trajectory,” he said.

“The resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra is also widely appreciated in India. Continued normalisation of our ties can produce mutually beneficial outcomes,” he said.

The Ministry of External Affairs said Jaishankar and Wang Yi reviewed the state of the bilateral relationship. “They took note of the recent progress made by the two sides to stabilise and rebuild ties, with priority on people-centric engagements, including activities to commemorate the 75th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations this year...”

Meanwhile, according to a Chinese readout, “Wang Yi said the current international pattern has profoundly evolved, and unilateral protectionism and powerful bullying have brought serious challenges to the world”.

The relationship between the two countries is “not aimed at third parties and should not be interfered with by third parties. Both sides should trust each other instead of being suspicious of each other, cooperate with each other rather than compete with each other,” Wang Yi said, according to the readout.

“As the two major neighbouring oriental civilisations and emerging economies, the essence of China-India relations is how to live in harmony,” it said. The two sides should have a long-term plan, adhere to the direction of good-neighbourliness and friendship, realise the “dance of dragons and elephants”, and find a way to respect and trust each other, co-exist peacefully and seek development together, it said.

tatives of Sarb Dharam Beadhi Rokko Kanoon Morcha, whose activist Gurjeet Singh Khalsa has been protesting atop a 400-foot tower for the last 275 days demanding an anti-sacrilege law.

This is not the first time that a Bill has been brought in for stricter punishment for sacrilegious acts.

The then SAD-BJP government had in 2016 brought in the IPC (Punjab Amendment) Bill, 2016 and CrPC (Punjab Amendment) Bill, 2016 proposing life sentence for sacrilege against Guru Granth Sahib. The Centre later returned the Bill. In 2018, the then Congress government too had passed two Bills — the IPC (Punjab Amendment) Bill, 2018, and CrPC (Punjab Amendment) Bill 2018, which posposed life imprisonment for sacrilege to Guru Granth Sahib, Bhagavad Gita, Quran and the Bible. The President did not give assent to these two Bills.

● Free speech

must be self-restraint and regulation also, to enjoy the valuable freedom, not like this abuse,” said Justice B V Nagarathna.

“One of the fundamental duties is to uphold the unity and integrity of the country. That is being violated. ...all these divisive tendencies, at least on social media, must be curbed,” she said.

“But to what extent the state can curb? Instead, why can’t the citizens regulate themselves? Citizens must know the value of freedom of speech and expression. If they don’t, then the state will step in, and who wants the state to step in? Nobody wants the state to step in,” Justice Nagarathna said.

“Article 19 is against the state... verticality; what about horizontality,” she asked.

“We will ask learned senior counsel for the petitioner... and also the state, to assist vis-à-vis the guidelines to be issued to the citizens to comply,” said the bench, which included Justice K V Viswanathan.

“We are not speaking about censorship. But in the interest of fraternity, secularism and dignity of individuals...We will have to go into this beyond this petition,” Justice Nagarathna sought to clarify.

It was on Khan’s complaint that the Kolkata police arrested a law student, Sharmishta Panoli, from Haryana over her social media posts in May. She was later granted bail by the Calcutta High Court.

Later, FIRs were filed against Khan in Assam, Maharashtra, Delhi and Haryana for allegedly posting divisive content on social media. The West Bengal police registered two FIRs against him and arrested him. Khan then approached the SC which, on June 23, directed that no coercive action be taken against him in the FIRs filed against him in other states.

On Monday, Khan’s counsel, Senior Advocate Siddharth Agarwal, submitted that he was not defending the social media posts, but added that he had deleted them and apologised.

● Shukla’s return

it to the command, telemetry and power of the ISS. The spacecraft then released 12 hard capture hooks in two phases, which took around four minutes in total. After that, it moved away from the ISS using a series of engine burns.

Their journey back to Earth involves four thrusts by the on-board engines — a departure burn, a phasing burn to lower the orbit, another one to bring it to the required position for entering the Earth’s atmosphere, and then a de-orbit burn pushing the spacecraft into the Earth. After re-entry into the Earth’s atmosphere, the space capsule would be slowed down using parachutes to enable a controlled splashdown at the designated site in the Pacific Ocean.

After splashdown, Shukla and his crew mates will be removed from the spacecraft using a SpaceX recovery vehicle. On this recovery vehicle, they will undergo their first series of medical checks. The astronauts will then be flown to land on a helicopter, and then to Houston, Texas.

While on-board the ISS, Shukla successfully completed all seven microgravity experiments sent by India. “Experiments on

Justice Nagarathna said abuse of the freedom of speech can clog the legal system. “This is happening in the country. There is no restraint. Freedom of speech and expression is a very, very important freedom and a fundamental right. If there is abuse of that freedom leading to litigation and clogging of courts... There are other criminal cases the police can attend to instead of chasing these kinds of cases. What is the solution to this... we are not (asking) from the point of view of the state, we are asking from the point of view of citizens,” she said.

“Having an opinion is one thing but to say that in a particular way is an abuse. Sometimes, it will not come in the court in the context of hate speech,” she said.

Justice Nagarathna backed Justice Viswanathan’s remarks that fraternity among citizens would help bring down the hate. “My learned brother rightly said that there should be fraternity between the citizens, then all this hate will come down,” she remarked.

“When citizens react to this by not following... If less and less people follow these kinds of tweets... how do you create this awareness,” Justice Viswanathan said.

“The oxygen of such speech is that people react,” said Agarwal, adding that such awareness can be created by “starting a social movement in the context of identification of hate or other kinds of egregious speech and then doing that social boycott at the very beginning.”

Justice Viswanathan said this was “easier said than done”. “When will people start to find it jarring? All right-minded people. All citizens,” he said.

“It all boils down to awareness. It has already become jarring but people have to realise. That self-reflection has to come,” said the counsel appearing for West Bengal. He said self-regulation may be difficult as social media lacks any editorial oversight.

Posting the matter for hearing after four weeks, the court sought the assistance of the parties to examine the broader questions flagged by it.

Indian strain of tardigrades, myogenesis, sprouting of methi & moong seeds, cyanobacteria, microalgae, crop seeds and Voyager display have been completed as planned,” the Indian Space Research Organisation said in a statement. The Axiom-4 mission not only carried one of the largest number of scientific experiments — 60 experiments representing 31 countries — but it also represented the return of astronauts from three countries, India, Hungary and Poland, back in space after four decades. This is the reason the mission was themed “Realise the Return”.

In 1984, India’s Wing Commander Rakesh Sharma travelled to space on the then Soviet Union’s Soyuz T-11 spacecraft and spent about eight days in the Salyut 7. At the ISS farewell ceremony on Sunday, Shukla said: “41 years ago, an Indian came to space and he told us how India looks from up above. I think we all want to know how today’s India looks from space. I will tell you. Today’s India looks ambitious from space, today’s India looks fearless, today’s India looks confident, today’s India looks full of pride, and because of these reasons, I want to say again that today’s India still looks ‘saare jahan se achha’.”



## Delhi govt to host khadi fashion show, highlight ‘vedic culture’

GAYATHRI MANI  
NEW DELHI, JULY 14

THE DELHI government is planning to host a fashion show with “handloom” as its central theme, aimed at promoting the use of khadi, and handspun and handwoven fabrics.

Top fashion designers of the country and various states are likely to participate in this show, which will be held on August 6 — National Handloom Day.

Delhi Industries Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa said, “The main objective of this is to promote khadi cloth and the importance of Indian tradition... The event will not only showcase the timeless elegance of traditional Indian textiles but also highlight their deep-rooted connection to Vedic culture.”

By blending heritage with sustainability, the government hopes to inspire eco-conscious fashion choices and revive interest in indigenous craftsmanship, he said.



We want to tell people about the history of Khadi: Minister Sirsa. *Archive*

“The aim is to showcase how traditional textiles can be reimagined in trendy, sustainable styles that resonate with today’s youth — blending heritage with modern fashion sensibilities... Many think that khadi is just cotton and thread. So, this Handloom Day, we want to tell people about the history of khadi, how it has been used since the Vedic period and how it is part of our Indian culture...,” said Sirsa.

The minister said that for the fashion show, different states

will also be invited to showcase their culture, traditional fabrics, clothes and attire.

The Delhi Khadi and Village Industries Board will organise the event.

“The textile industry is one of the top polluting industries in the country as chemicals and paints are used... But, khadi is eco-friendly, dissolvable and does not cause pollution. Also, it has had a huge impact on our Indian tradition from ancient times to the Indus Civilisation and India’s freedom movement... Through this event, a message will be sent to the public on how khadi clothes are eco-friendly and can be synced with the current fashion,” said a senior official.

According to officials, at least 42 models will walk the ramp, wearing khadi and handwoven sarees and other attire.

The event is likely to be attended by L-G Vinai Kumar Saxena, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and Delhi ministers and central leaders, said officials.

# Haryana, Goa and Ladakh get new faces in Raj Bhavan



(From left) TDP's Ashok Gajapathi Raju (Goa Governor); Bengal BJP's Ashim Kumar Ghosh (Haryana Governor); former J&K Dy CM Kavinder Gupta (Ladakh L-G)

JATIN ANAND  
NEW DELHI, JULY 14

THE CENTRE on Monday effected a gubernatorial reshuffle, announcing the appointment of senior TDP leader Ashok Gajapathi Raju as the Governor of Goa, senior West Bengal BJP leader Ashim Kumar Ghosh as Governor of Haryana, and former Jammu & Kashmir deputy chief minister Kavinder Gupta as the Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh.

A senior BJP hand from J&K with early ties to the RSS, who served as Deputy CM during a three-month stint in 2018 as part of the PDP-BJP government, Gupta takes over from Brig (Dr) B D Mishra (retd). Gupta also headed the J&K unit of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha, the BJP's youth wing, from 1993-98.

With Ladakh becoming a Union territory after it was split from J&K as part of the August 2019 changes, Gupta is the third occupant of its Raj Bhavan.

Raju, a former Union Minister

of Civil Aviation, relieves senior Kerala BJP leader P S Sreedharan Pillai as Goa Governor. He is one of the senior-most leaders of N Chandrababu Naidu-led TDP, a key ally of the BJP-led NDA. He started his political innings in 1977 when he joined the Janata Party, on whose ticket he won from the Vizianagaram Assembly seat in the 1978 polls.

In Haryana, old BJP hand and the party's former West Bengal unit president Ashim Kumar Ghosh will take over as Governor from veteran BJP leader and former Minister of State for Labour and Employment Bandaru Dattatreya. Dattatreya has been serving as the Haryana Governor since July 2021.

A former professor of political science in Kolkata's Maharaja Srischandra College, Ghosh also served as the Bengal BJP president from 1999 to 2002.

Sources said Pillai and Dattatreya had completed their respective tenures as Governor and could be absorbed in organisational roles now.

# Next-gen bullet train to debut in India & Japan at same time: Rlys

DHEERAJ MISHRA  
NEW DELHI, JULY 14

THE MINISTRY of Railways Monday said that the next-generation Japanese bullet train — the E10 Shinkansen — will be introduced in India and Japan simultaneously.

The statement comes at a time when the questions are being raised over the delay in finalising the procurement deal for the E5 Shinkansen model which is supposed to run on India's ambitious Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail (MAHSR) corridor.

"The Japanese Shinkansen [system] is currently running E5 trains. Next generation trains are E10. In the spirit of strategic partnership between Japan and India, the Japanese government has agreed to introduce E10 Shinkansen trains in the Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet train project. It is noteworthy that E10 will be introduced simultaneously in India and Japan," said the Ministry.

The Ministry claimed there was no delay in the project's execution and that trials would be conducted in 2026-27 as per schedule.

Meanwhile, Indian Railways' Integral Coach Factory in Chennai has awarded a tender to state-run BEMIL Ltd to manufacture two high-speed trainsets, with a test speed of 280 kmph, that will be somewhat similar to the Japanese bullet train.

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The Ministry said the entire 508-km corridor is being developed with Shinkansen technology. Out of the total length, 465.38 km is being built on viaducts — a bridge with a series of spans that is supported by piers or towers. On July 9, the first breakthrough was achieved in the 21-km tunnel which is being constructed between Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC) and Shilphata in Maharashtra, marking the successful completion of a 2.7-km section of the tunnel.

Five kilometres of the tunnel are being excavated using the New Austrian Tunnelling Method between Shilphata and Ghansoli, while the remaining 16-km will be excavated using Tunnel Boring Machines.

niles can be changed in such cases (of drug peddling) and can we lower the age by two years, on the lines of rape cases, (where the minor accused persons' age limit as a juvenile has been reduced from 18 to 16 and now

eral cases in which minors have been used to supply narcotics. "Even if minors are caught, they are sent to an observation home from where they are released on bail and again used in the drug trade," the official said.





# Two unequal



SURJIT S BHALLA

World Bank gets it wrong. India cannot have world's lowest consumption inequality and highest income inequality

THE FACTS ARE clear and unambiguous — consumption inequality in India, as measured by the Gini index, was the lowest (most equal) in the world in 2022-23. However, the debate on this is messy and bordering on sordid. What is interesting is that all the important participants in the discussion/debate (Government of India, World Bank, and Indian media) have got it wrong in one way or another. This is not idle armchair criticism, as I document below.

It all started with an essay published on the ORF website which says that, “contrary to popular narratives, India is not merely the world's fourth-largest economy; it is also the world's fourth most equal society”. Unfortunately, this is false on both counts. India will not be the fourth-largest economy at least until March 2027; and India today is the most equal society — not fourth most equal — but only in terms of consumption. Its rank in terms of an income Gini is not known since India, to date, has not conducted an official income distribution survey.

The government has endorsed these wrong “findings” through a PIB release; the BJP also wrongfully stated that India was the fourth most equal society — it only differed in stating that we ranked fourth in terms of social equality (whatever that index might be). The endorsers completely ignored the important, and correct, result that India was most equal only in terms of consumption inequality. Critics were quick to pounce, and correctly so, on the errors of interpretation. Which led to them compounding the error. And the debate goes on.

For example, Surbhi Kesar of SOAS has rightly claimed that the conclusion that India is amongst the most equal countries (as published in the GOI PIB report) was incorrect, since it compared apples with oranges or mixed consumption distributions with income distributions. “A fair comparison would either be to compare India's income inequality with other countries' income Ginis, or compare India's consumption inequality with other countries' consumption Ginis.”

This makes perfect sense. Unfortunately, after outlining the right procedure, Kesar

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makes the same mistake as others. She chooses to use a third source of data on distribution — not consumption, not income, but synthetic estimates of income distribution as published by the private-sector World Inequality Database (WID). WID constructs estimates by its own assumptions — a new literature has developed in leading American economic journals about the unrealistic and questionable nature of WID's synthetic estimates for the US.

Inequality has always been discussed in terms of either the distribution of consumption or of income. Everyone recognises — from survey organisations to policy makers to academicians — that the measurement of distributions is flawed, imperfect, imprecise. All recognise that household surveys are the best instrument for gauging inequality in a society.

Towards this end, the World Bank has laboured to construct the popular and respected Poverty Inequality Platform (PIP), which provides data for all the official consumption and income surveys in the world. PIP reports data on 167 countries, 2,258 distributions for years 1963 to 2024. These data are the only “official” source of comparable income and consumption distributions. “Official” because governments provide unit-level data to the World Bank for analysis by its army of researchers and analysts. There is only one exception to this rigid, and correct, World Bank requirement: China only provides summary ventile (5 percentile) distributions to the World Bank for analysis and subsequent publication. Perhaps BRICS can “influence” China to comply with the open-data requirements of international organisations!

The PIP data does not contain any information on income distribution for India or South Africa — for good reason, because no official income survey exists for either of these countries.

According to PIP, the most unequal (consumption) country in the world, at least for the last 25 years, is South Africa with a Gini of 63.0. The most equal is India with a Gini of 25.5 in 2022.

Notwithstanding its own findings, and the

lack of any official data, the World Bank felt compelled to gratuitously note in its April 2025 Poverty and Equity Brief for India: “India's consumption-based Gini index improved from 28.8 in 2011-12 to 25.5 in 2022-23, though inequality may be underestimated due to data limitations. In contrast, the World Inequality Database shows income inequality rising from a Gini of 52 in 2004 to 62 in 2023.” The briefs report summary data for 130 developing countries, but only for India does the World Bank quote WID synthetic results on income distribution. To add insult to statistical injury, the World Bank believes that official surveys have data limitations (yes they do), but WID synthetic distributions have no data limitations! In India, we call this kind of inference the advent of Kalyug, the “age of darkness”.

The World Bank has been a pioneer in the collection and verification of consumption and income distribution data since its creation. The PIP database is testimony to its intellectual honesty and expertise. However, the World Bank states that India has the lowest consumption inequality in the world; in the same breath (or paragraph) it states (via its endorsement of the WID synthetic results) that India has the highest income inequality. Such a paradoxical result has heretofore not been documented by any organisation in the world, let alone by a well-known and internationally renowned NGO. One of these estimates is clearly in huge error.

The memory banks of the World Bank will reveal that its own research (some 25 years ago) had documented that income Ginis were, on average, six Gini points higher than consumption Ginis. Would the World Bank care to explain how it finds credible an income WID Gini of 62 along with a consumption Gini of 26? What do these “facts” say about the World Bank's credibility? About WID's credibility? The whole world is watching, and awaiting, a meaningful response from sister organisations on this important credibility question.

*The writer is chairperson, Technical Expert Group for the first official Household Income Survey for India. Views are personal*

## A PROMISING DECLINE

Food inflation eases further. A good monsoon season will help sustain this trend

PRICE PRESSURES IN the Indian economy have receded further. On Monday, data released by the National Statistics Office showed that retail inflation, as measured by the consumer price index, had edged lower to 2.1 per cent in June, down from 2.82 per cent the month before. This is the fifth straight month that inflation has stayed lower than the RBI's target of 4 per cent. Taking this data into account, inflation has now averaged 2.7 per cent in the quarter, lower than the central bank's expectation of 2.9 per cent.

Much of the decline can be traced to the moderation in food prices, with the food and beverages segment witnessing a deflation of 0.2 per cent. Steep declines were also observed in vegetables and pulses. The outlook for food prices is also promising. During the southwest monsoon season, cumulative all-India rainfall has been 9.5 per cent above the long-period average as on July 14. The deficit in the first half of June has been covered. So far, the area sown under all *kharif* crops has been higher than last year. This will sustain the current disinflationary trend in food prices. Alongside, concerns over a surge in oil prices have receded, with oil prices moderating from levels seen during the Israel-Iran conflict. Brent crude oil is currently trading at around \$68, down from \$75 in June. According to analysts, core CPI, which excludes volatile food and fuel components, has edged upwards in June. But this rise was not broad-based. Price pressures remain muted in some non-food categories such as clothing and footwear, household goods and services, housing, recreation and amusement. However, in the personal care and effects and miscellaneous segments, inflation was high.

The latest data only affirms the decision of the Monetary Policy Committee to front-load the interest rate cuts in its last meeting in June by lowering the policy rate by 50 basis points to 5.5 per cent. But alongside, in this meeting, the committee had said that after reducing interest rates by 100 basis points since February 2025, “policy is left with very limited space to support growth”. The current trends in prices, however, raise the possibility of the RBI lowering its inflation projections for the year from 3.7 per cent currently. The committee is likely to opt for a pause when it meets next in August. Further policy action will depend on whether growth and inflation move in line with expectations.



KIRAN PARASHAR  
BENGALURU, JULY 14

“KAPPA, NIMAGEKE kodabeku kappa (Royalty, why should we pay the royalty)”, the iconic dialogue by actor B Saroja Devi, playing freedom fighter Kittur Chennamma in the 1961 film by the same name, established her as one of the biggest female stars of Kannada cinema. Only 23-year-old then, the actor went on to become a legend in not just Kannada, but also Tamil, Telugu and Hindi films.

B Saroja Devi, 87, died on Monday at her residence in Malleswaram, Bengaluru, following age-related illness.

The doe-eyed beauty with

over 200 films to her credit was one of the first Kannada actors to play lead roles in other language movies with biggest stars of that time. Saroja Devi was always up for learning new things, so much so that she opened her Instagram account at the age of 83 (in 2021). Following her death, who's who of the film industry and political world took to social media to convey their condolences.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi called her an exemplary icon of Indian cinema and culture. “Her diverse performances left an indelible mark across generations,” he posted on X.

Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah said her departure was a big loss to the Indian cinema. Superstars Rajinikanth, Kamal Haasan,

Khushbu Sundar and others remembered her as a great artist who lived beyond the boundaries of “language and region”.

Born in a Vokkaliga family with her roots in Mandya district, Saroja Devi was the daughter of a police officer, Bhairappa. In those days, when women were not encouraged to act in movies, Bhairappa supported Saroja Devi to make her debut at the age of 17 opposite Dr Rajkumar, who went on to become another Kannada superstar, in ‘Mahakavi Kalidasa’ (1955). Her screen presence captured the hearts of people and she started getting offers from other language films too.

In 1958, Saroja Devi played the female lead in ‘Nadodi Mannan’ opposite Tamil cinema legend M

GRamachandran (MGR) and later went on to give more than 20 back to back Tamil hits. It was not just MGR, she was cast with several other reigning superstars of the time, including Sivaji Ganesan, Gemini Ganesan, Dr Rajkumar and NT Rama Rao (NTR).

She became the face of ‘Kittur Chennamma’ in 1961 with her powerful dialogues as the queen of Kittur fighting the British against royalty collection from princely states. In those days, it is said, when children were asked who Kittur Rani Chennamma was, they would immediately reply “Saroja Devi”.

Hindi film, ‘Paigham’ (1959), starring Dilip Kumar and Vyjayanthimala in lead roles, was a blockbuster hit and Saroja



B SAROJA DEVI  
1938-2025

Devi, despite her “small role”, managed to impress the audience and directors with her crackling screen presence.

She went on to act in films like ‘Sasural’ (1961) with Rajendra Kumar, ‘Beti Bete’ (1964) with Sunil Dutt and ‘Pyaar Kiya To Darna Kya’ (1963) with Shammi Kapoor.

She also acted in a few scenes with Raj Kapoor in ‘Nazrana’, but was later replaced by Vyjayanthimala reportedly over strict instructions by her mother, Rudramma, not to wear sleeveless dresses and swimwear on screen.

After her marriage to Sri Harsha, an engineer, Saroja Devi’s appearance in movies declined in the 1970s. Her acting career took a massive hit in 1986, after her husband fell ill while she

was shooting a Kannada movie — ‘Ladies Hostel’. People known to her say she did not meet guests for nearly one year after the death of her husband as she did not want to show her face without vermilion on her forehead.

She was the first vice-president of Kannada film artists’ association when Dr Rajkumar was its president. Despite working with many superstars in south India and Hindi movies, Saroja Devi kept a low profile. She was given several offers to join political parties, but she chose to stay away. Then Karnataka CM Gundu Rao made her an offer to contest from Malleswaram Assembly constituency on a Congress ticket but she declined.

Recognising her contribution

to Indian cinema, the Centre awarded her the Padma Shri in 1969, Padma Bhushan in 1992 and Lifetime Achievement Award during India’s 60th Independence Day celebrations in 2008.

Umesh Banakar, president of the Kannada Film Producers Association, recalled Saroja Devi as an extremely disciplined and no-nonsense superstar. “Be it a superstar or a commoner, no one could meet her without an appointment. She always arrived on time for any event. Some superstars used to turn up late but she never stayed back,” he said.

In 2019, Saroja Devi appeared for the last time in late Puneeth Raj Kumar-starrer ‘Natasaarva-bhowma’, a horror film by actor-producer Rockline Venkatesh.

# Indians lost ₹7,000 crore to cyber frauds from Jan to May: MHA data

MAHENDER SINGH  
MANRAL  
NEW DELHI, JULY 14

INDIANS LOST around ₹7,000 crore to online scams in the first five months of this year, averaging more than ₹1,000 crore a month, according to estimates of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). And more than half of the amount was lost to scamsters operating out of Cambodia and other Southeast Asian countries such as Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos and Thailand.

These scams are often run from high-security locations, believed to be controlled by Chinese operators, where trafficked people, including Indians, are forced to work, according to officials, who cited data compiled by the Indian Cyber Crime Join FREE Telegram Channel <https://t.me/+jUYKq0AFHBaWMGQ1>

Coordination Centre (I4C), a unit under the MHA.

“In January, Rs 1,192 crore was lost to scamsters based in Southeast Asian countries, ₹951 crore in February, ₹1,000 crore in March, ₹731 crore in April and ₹999 crore in May,” an official said, citing data from the Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting and Management System (CFCFRMS), I4C’s facility to help citizens report and manage financial cyber fraud incidents.

The data was compiled from crimes that were reported and the amount lost could be much higher, according to officials.

A senior official told The Indian Express that senior officials from Cambodia recently met Indian officials in Delhi and discussed an action plan. At the meeting, which was organised by the Ministry of External

Affairs (MEA) and attended by officials of Central investigation agencies, the Cambodian officials requested to share the exact geographical coordinates of these scam centres so that they can take action.

“With the help of intelligence agencies and testimonies of rescued people, the Indian government has identified at least 45 such scam compounds in Cambodia, five in Laos, and one in Myanmar. It also came to the fore that, apart from Indians, people from African countries, East Asian countries, Southeast Asian countries, Central Asia, West Asia, Europe/North America and South America were also identified in these scam compounds,” the official said.

A government probe has found three types of major cyber frauds operating from Southeast Join FREE Whatsapp Channel <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Van2VRb6RGJOKH6oBd0F>

Asia: stock trading/investment scams, digital arrest, and task- and investment-based scams.

The government has also tracked several agents recruiting Indians for these operations, with the most operating out of Maharashtra (59), followed by Tamil Nadu (51), Jammu and Kashmir (46), Uttar Pradesh (41) and Delhi (38). “Agents’ data shows that they are hiring people the most for Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia,” the official said.

*The Indian Express* first reported that more than 5,000 Indians were suspected to be trapped in Cambodia after being allegedly held and forced to carry out cyber fraud.

The Centre set up an inter-ministerial panel to look into the issue of cyber frauds and identify the loopholes. After the panel identified gaps in banking, im-

migration, and telecom sectors, the CBI registered an FIR against point of sale agents based in various states for allegedly issuing ghost SIM cards.

After recording statements of those who were rescued and returned, the government tracked down their route of travel to Cambodia. “It has been found that agents are sending people to first Dubai, then China and then finally Cambodia. Other routes are Tamil Nadu to Cambodia; Maharashtra to Thailand and Cambodia; Jaipur to Thailand and Cambodia; Jaipur to Vietnam to Bangkok and Cambodia; Delhi to Bangkok and Cambodia; Lucknow to Bangkok and Cambodia; Kerala to Vietnam and Cambodia; Kerala to Singapore and Cambodia; and Kolkata to Vietnam and Cambodia,” an official said.

SETS ASIDE PUNJAB & HARYANA HC ORDER

## SC: Conversations of spouses recorded secretly can be used in matrimonial cases

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JULY 14

SPOUSES SNOOPING on each other “is in itself a symptom of a broken relationship and denotes a lack of trust between them”, the Supreme Court said Monday as it set aside a Punjab and Haryana High Court order held that secretly recorded telephonic conversations of parties in a marriage cannot be admitted as evidence in divorce proceedings.

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and S C Sharma rejected the argument by amicus curiae Advocate Vrinda Grover “that permitting such an evidence would jeopardise domestic harmony and matrimonial relationship inasmuch as it would encourage snooping on the spouse, thereby fracturing the very objective of Section 122 of the Evidence Act”.

Writing for the bench, Justice Nagarathna said, “We do not think such an argument is tenable. If the marriage has reached a stage where spouses are actively snooping on each other, that is in itself a symptom of a broken relationship and denotes a lack of trust between them. The said snooping cannot be said to be a consequence of the Court admitting the evidence obtained by snooping. In fact, snooping between partners is an effect and not a cause of marital disharmony.”

Section 122 bars disclosure of marital communications without consent, except in legal proceedings between the spouses or where one is prosecuted for a crime against the other.

The judgment said that while the “privacy of communication exists between spouses, as has been recognised by Section 122, but the said right of privacy cannot be absolute and has to be read also in light of the exception provided.”

Discussing the admissibility of electronic evidence vis-a-vis right to privacy, the court also touched on the keep up with the

advancements in technology and said “now, in today’s day and age, when the technological advancement has made it easier to record and recreate moments of past and present for reference in future, then to say that such better forms of evidence and material would not be admissible on the ground of they being in violation of the right to privacy would amount to defeating the very object of the Evidence Act.”

It said that “before a Court of law, a relevant piece of conversation available on an electronic device should not be allowed to be shut out when it is the best evidence available for deciding the dispute. The erstwhile Evidence Act is a legislation that was more than a century old and therefore obviously could not encapsulate all the technologically varied challenges which the modern technology poses before us. Yet, what the said legislation remarkably conveys is that the purpose of the law of evidence is not to create barriers but to break them to ensure that a clearer picture is created in the mind of the judge so as to decide a dispute before it. This is why when the evidence is not direct, the legislation allows a judge to rely on circumstantial evidence; it allows presumptions of fact and law and adverse inferences to be drawn from the conduct of parties and witnesses so that a fair and reasonable conclusion can be reached from the material on record.”

The ruling said, “that was the reason for the Parliament to amend the Evidence Act by incorporating Section 65B which specifically deals with electronic evidence.”

The Bathinda Family Court allowed the husband to place reliance on recorded telephone calls with his wife to prove allegations of cruelty. The wife challenged this before the high court, arguing that their conversations were recorded without her consent, and allowing it to be used as evidence would breach her fundamental right to privacy.



# 12 EXPRESS NETWORK

## Environment Ministry defends revised framework for thermal plants to meet SO2 emission norms

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JULY 14

THE UNION Environment Ministry Monday defended its July 11 order which introduced a revised framework for thermal power plants to meet sulphur dioxide (SO2) emission norms and said that contrary to “claims of regulatory dilution”, the decision was based on evidence, sectoral emission trends and sustainability imperatives.

The ministry’s revised compliance framework exempted a large number of coal- and lignite-based plants from the mandate of retro-fitting plants with flue gas desulphurization devices. The ministry said there was no no-

table difference in ambient SO2 concentrations between cities where plants had fitted the technology versus those that had not.

SO2 is a harmful gas and is emitted when coal is burned in energy production. It also aids formation of secondary pollutants.

“The norms of Sulphur Dioxide emissions from Thermal Power Plants notified on 11th July is based on extensive consultations with stakeholders and research institutions regarding the effectiveness and rationale behind stack emission standards for SO2 on 537 TPPs throughout the country, and its role in overall ambient air pollution of the region,” a ministry statement said.

“Further, the norms were based on detailed scientific studies which were carried out by premier institutions such as IIT Delhi, National Institute of Advanced Studies as well as by the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute... besides scientific examination by the Central Pollution Control Board,” it added.

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categories, based on the location of the plants. In the July 11 notification, the ministry said the compliance deadline for Category A plants, located within a 10-km radius of the Delhi-NCR or cities with a population of more than one million, remains December 2027.

Category B plants, located within 10 km of critically polluted areas or cities not in compliance with national ambient air quality standards, will be assessed on a case to case basis based on recommendations of an expert appraisal committee. Category C plants, located outside of these two areas, will be completely exempted from meeting the SO2 norms. However, they will have to comply with stack height criteria.

The ministry said: “Current exposure levels provide no credible evidence to suggest that SO2, under prevailing ambient conditions, is a major public health concern. Moreover, sulfate (sic) aerosols formed from SO2 constitute a relatively small fraction of PM (particulate matter) 2.5.”

The SO2 emission norms for coal and lignite power plants were first introduced in 2015. Later, the compliance timelines for plants were divided into three

The ministry notification said that thermal power plants due to retire before December 2030 shall not be required to meet the SO2 emission norms, provided they submit an undertaking for exemption. A compensation at the rate of Rs 0.40 per unit of electricity generated would be levied if they continue to operate beyond the 2030 timeline.

Out of the 600 units of coal fired power plants, 537 were identified for installation of flue-gas desulphurization (FGD) technology, to curb SO2 emissions.

The ministry said in a detailed note as per rough estimates, ₹2.54 lakh crore would be needed for nationwide retrofitting of coal-based capacity with FGD devices to meet SO2 emission norms.



# 13 ECONOMY

SENSEX: 82,253.46 ▼ 247.01 (0.30%) NIFTY: 25,082.30 ▼ 67.55 (0.27%) NIKKEI: 39,459.62 ▼ 110.06 HANG SENG: 24,203.10 ▼ 100.00 (0.41%)

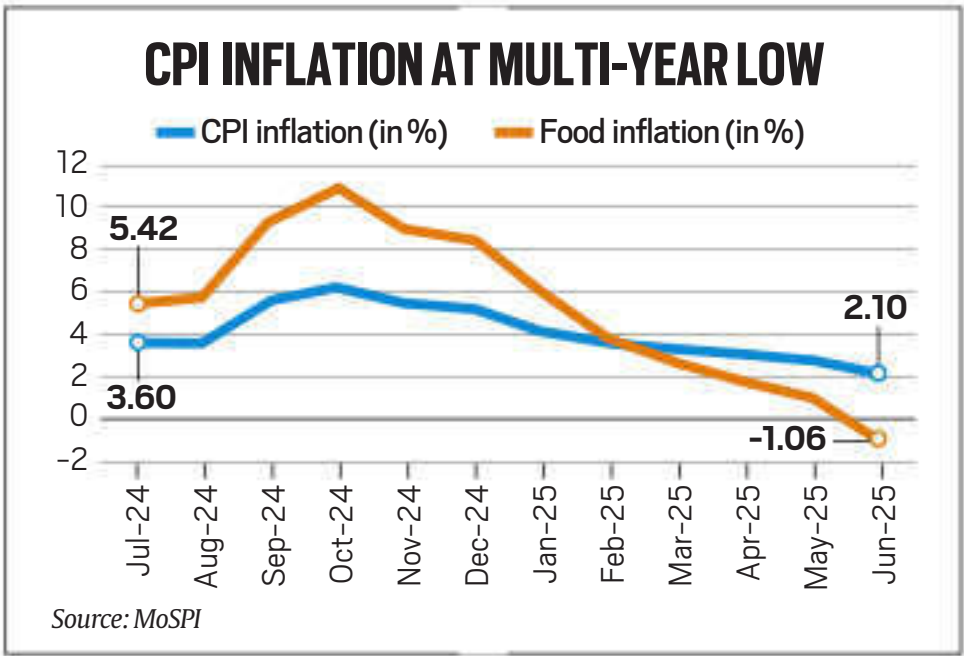
## JUNE CONSUMER PRICE INDEX-BASED INFLATION LOWEST IN 77 MONTHS

# Retail inflation eases to 2.1% in June, opens room for more RBI rate cuts

SIDDHARTH UPASANI  
NEW DELHI, JULY 14

INDIA'S HEADLINE retail inflation rate slowed more than expected to a 77-month low of 2.1 per cent in June from 2.82 per cent in May as food prices fell 1.06 per cent from a year ago, aided by a favourable base effect, data released on Monday by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) showed.

The fall in inflation based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the eighth consecutive month potentially opens up room for further rate cuts by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in the coming months. So far in 2025, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has reduced the policy repo rate by 100 basis points (bps) to 5.5 per cent, although it tightened its stance to 'neutral' in June and said monetary policy is



left with "very limited space to support growth".

However, with CPI inflation extending its run below the RBI's medium-term target of 4 per cent to a fifth consecutive month, economists think average inflation for 2025-26 is likely to be much lower than the central bank's forecast of 3.7 per cent.

"We continue to expect the RBI to pause in the August policy as it watches the monsoon out-turn to ascertain durability of food inflation trends. While earlier we were seeing room for a cut in the December policy, the June CPI print has increased the probability of RBI reducing repo rate by 25 bps in the October policy," Suvodeep

Rakshit, chief economist at Kotak Institutional Equities, said.

Data also released on Monday by the commerce ministry showed wholesale prices fell in June compared to a year ago, with the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) based inflation rate, at -0.13 per cent, dropping into the deflationary zone. This was the first time in 20 months that wholesale inflation had fallen below zero.

On the retail price front, June saw food prices fall for the first time since February 2019 on a year-on-year (YoY) basis thanks to a favourable base effect even as prices rose last month on a sequential basis. "The prices of vegetables were down 19 per cent YoY, the sharpest pace of decline since December 2022. In addition, prices of pulses were down 11.8 per cent YoY in the same period, fastest fall in prices in over seven years. The meat & fish segment also witnessed a fall in prices in

June 2025, for the third straight month. Even the cereals inflation was down to a 41-month low of 3.7 per cent due to better production," Paras Jasrai, associate director and economist, India Ratings and Research, said.

"Mandi prices so far are suggesting manageable July perishable food price pressures, with July month tracking 1.7-1.8 per cent as of now," Madhavi Arora, chief economist at Emkay Global Financial Services, said. CPI inflation for rural areas has already fallen below 2 per cent - which is the lower bound of the RBI's flexible inflation target of 2-6 per cent - to 1.72 per cent in June from 2.59 per cent in May. Urban retail inflation also declined to 2.56 per cent from 3.12 per cent.

Meanwhile, core inflation - or inflation excluding food and fuel - edged up to 4.4 per cent in June.

**FULL REPORT ON**  
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## India begins crucial week-long trade negotiations with US

RAVIDUTTAMISHRA  
NEW DELHI, JULY 14

DAYS AFTER US President Donald Trump announced fresh reciprocal tariff rates of up to 50 per cent for scores of countries, including the European Union, Canada, Brazil and ASEAN among others, Indian negotiators have begun a fresh round of talks in Washington to clinch a deal before August 1.

"India's aim is to sign a bilateral trade deal by the end of the year. The week-long negotiations have begun and the interim trade deal will depend on the willingness of both sides. If substantial agreement is reached, an interim agreement can be reached," a senior government official said on Monday. Another official, seeking anonymity, said that India is in an advantageous position compared to other countries, particularly its Asian peers, and that the likelihood of India reaching a trade deal with the US is high.

The ongoing round of negotiation comes less than 10 days after Indian officials, led by Special Secretary Rajesh Agarwal, returned from Washington on July 4. *The Indian Express* had reported that agriculture has been a major sticking point in the negotiations, particularly because India has adopted an unwavering stance on this sector. The US maintains that the August 1 cut-off date is not a

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### Goyal: Talks on at a very fast pace

*New Delhi:* The negotiations between India and the US for a proposed trade agreement are going at a fast pace, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has said. "Negotiations are going on at a very fast pace and in the spirit of mutual cooperation so that we can come out with a win-win trade complementing agreement...," Goyal said. **PTI**

new deadline but an outer limit for countries to "speed things up", and that this strategy has helped bring trading partners such as the European Union on board.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, when asked in a TV interview if there was a playbook for the US tariffs actions, said: "The playbook is to apply maximum pressure. You know, we saw that the EU was very slow in coming to the table. Three weeks ago, on a Friday morning, President Trump threatened 50 per cent tariffs. And within a few hours, five of the European national leaders had called him. Ursula von der Leyen, the head of the EU, was on the phone and the EU is making very good progress. They were off to a slow start."

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## Employment by GCCs in India expected to go up to 2.8 million by 2030, says FM

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, JULY 14

APPROXIMATELY HALF of Fortune 500 companies have set up their Global Capability Centres (GCCs) in India, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Monday, adding that GCCs currently employ nearly 2.16 million professionals and the number is expected to go up to 2.80 million by 2030.

"All the GCCs in India employ nearly 2.16 million professionals. The CAGR at which it has grown is 11 per cent over the last five years. And this number of 2.16 million is

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**Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at the CII Global Capability Centre Summit, in New Delhi.**

ANI

expected to go to 2.80 million by 2030. This is a very conservative number," she said at Confederation of Indian Industry's (CII's) event named 'The GCC Opportunity in India'. Over 32 per cent of global GCC talent is currently based in India, she said adding that the country's GCC sector contributes \$68 billion as direct gross value addition (GVA), that is, around 1.6 per cent of the national GDP. "By 2030, the gross value addition from GCCs could potentially range between \$150 billion to \$200 billion. That is the scope we have before us and the potential we can see," she said. The setup rate of engineering research & development GCCs has

grown 1.3 times faster than the overall GCC setup over the last 5 years, indicating a clear shift towards high-value-added work in India, the minister said. "...they are not just for product development, it is not services in operation and it is not just delivery, complex work that requires a significant understanding of the business context and the imperatives. The setup rate, and this is again one interesting detail - the setup rate of engineering research and development, the GCCs have grown 1.3 times faster than the overall GCC setup over the last five years," she said.

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## ‘After obesity, GLP-1 research focused on Alzheimer’s... hypothesis centres on its ability to reduce inflammation in brain... this is different from current approaches’

Danish scientist Lotte Bjerre Knudsen is co-inventor of the first long-acting GLP-1 receptor agonist approved for the treatment of type 2 diabetes and obesity. Last year, she, along with Joel Habener of Harvard Medical School and Rockefeller University biochemist Svetlana Mojsos, received the prestigious Lasker-DeBakey Clinical Medical Research Award for the discovery and development of GLP-1-based drugs, which have revolutionised the treatment of obesity. Knudsen spoke to **KAUNAIN SHERIFF M** about her three-decade journey of research, and what lies ahead for GLP-1 drugs

### EXPLAINED INTERVIEW



LOTTE BJERRE KNUDSEN

**What is GLP-1? What does it do in the body, and why has it become such a powerful tool in treating diabetes and obesity?**

GLP-1 is both an incretin hormone and a neurotransmitter. In physiology, it is secreted from the small intestine and from the hind-brain after we eat a meal. It travels to the pancreas, where it helps to regulate our blood sugar by increasing insulin and decreasing glucagon. This is what we call the incretin effect. This effect is blood glucose-dependent, meaning it is only if the blood glucose is elevated that it has an effect here.

GLP-1 also impacts centres in the brain associated with control of hunger and satiety, to effectively tell us that we have had enough to eat and need to stop eating.

There are receptors that GLP-1 binds to in many organs in the body, and GLP-1 also has beneficial effects in many of these organs, such as the kidney, liver, and cardiovascular system. GLP-1's effects in the pancreas and brain are the important ones to help control blood glucose and body weight.

**When did the idea first come up that GLP-1 could actually be turned into a drug? Was there a moment, in the lab, or in a conversation, that made you think this could really work?**

The biology of GLP-1 was always a good one. It might have started with the knowledge around its potential in diabetes — not just through incretin effects, but also involving glucagon and the fact that it's glucose-dependent.

Almost at the same time — going back around 1990 — there was a growing realisation that GLP-1 had significant activity in the brain as well. So, the early thinking around GLP-1's potential in obesity actually emerged around that time.

Fast forward a few years, and we also began to understand its effects on the cardiovascular system. The biology was there — and it kept unfolding into more and more interesting areas. But the real challenge in the early years was druggability (the ability of a protein to bind a modulator and produce a desired therapeutic effect).

When I started working on GLP-1 in the early 1990s, I actually worked on three projects that failed before landing on the one that finally succeeded. We went through a lot of learning and had three different projects before the one that turned out to work.

Eventually, I started looking around — in our environment, in ongoing company efforts — and got this idea around using fatty acids. That approach was being explored in the company, but it was completely unproven at the time. Still, I decided to give it a try.

That led to the first molecule we got registered — for the treatment of diabetes in 2009, and for obesity in 2014. From there, we kept refining the approach and developing better molecules. It's been a 25-year journey

— translating from lab to clinic, going back to the lab, then forward again — to get where we are today.

The big “hurray” moment came when we finally solved the biggest problem with GLP-1: in its natural form, it's incredibly short-acting — just about two minutes. And now, we've been able to extend that to up to 160 hours.

**You mentioned that the idea of using fatty acids was unproven at the time but ended up being a breakthrough. Why fatty acids, specifically? What made you think they could solve the druggability challenge with GLP-1?**

The reason natural GLP-1 is so short-lived is that it is chopped up by metabolic enzymes known as DPP-4 and cleared by the kidneys.

The technique we use is called fatty acid acylation. We have pioneered that, but nowadays it is much more widely used.

The basic concept is that you attach a fatty acid to your drug molecule, in this case, GLP-1. That will allow the drug to bind to a natural protein called albumin via the fatty acid. Albumin is a protein that plays a crucial role in transporting various substances throughout the body, including fatty acids.

By attaching to albumin, you protect the drug from degradation, from being cleared by the kidneys, and ensure that it reaches the GLP-1 receptors that are present in various organs throughout the body. We already had some experience with exploring this fatty-acid acylation technology, and I felt confident that we could also leverage the technology to solve the druggability problem of GLP-1.

**Extending GLP-1 activity from just two minutes to up to 160 hours is a huge leap — what does that mean in**

**terms of how the drug works in the body and its impact on patients?**

A lot of things need to happen after we eat. Something needs to happen in our pancreas to help regulate blood sugar, something needs to happen in our brain to tell us to stop eating, and so on. GLP-1 plays an important role in that, although it is not the only hormone involved in those processes.

But in physiology, GLP-1 works for just a few minutes, so after you eat a meal and GLP-1 is secreted naturally, it gives an immediate effect that lasts maybe 30 minutes.

By creating a GLP-1 analogue that works for 24 hours a day, whether it is given once daily or once weekly, we ensure that there is a sustained effect.

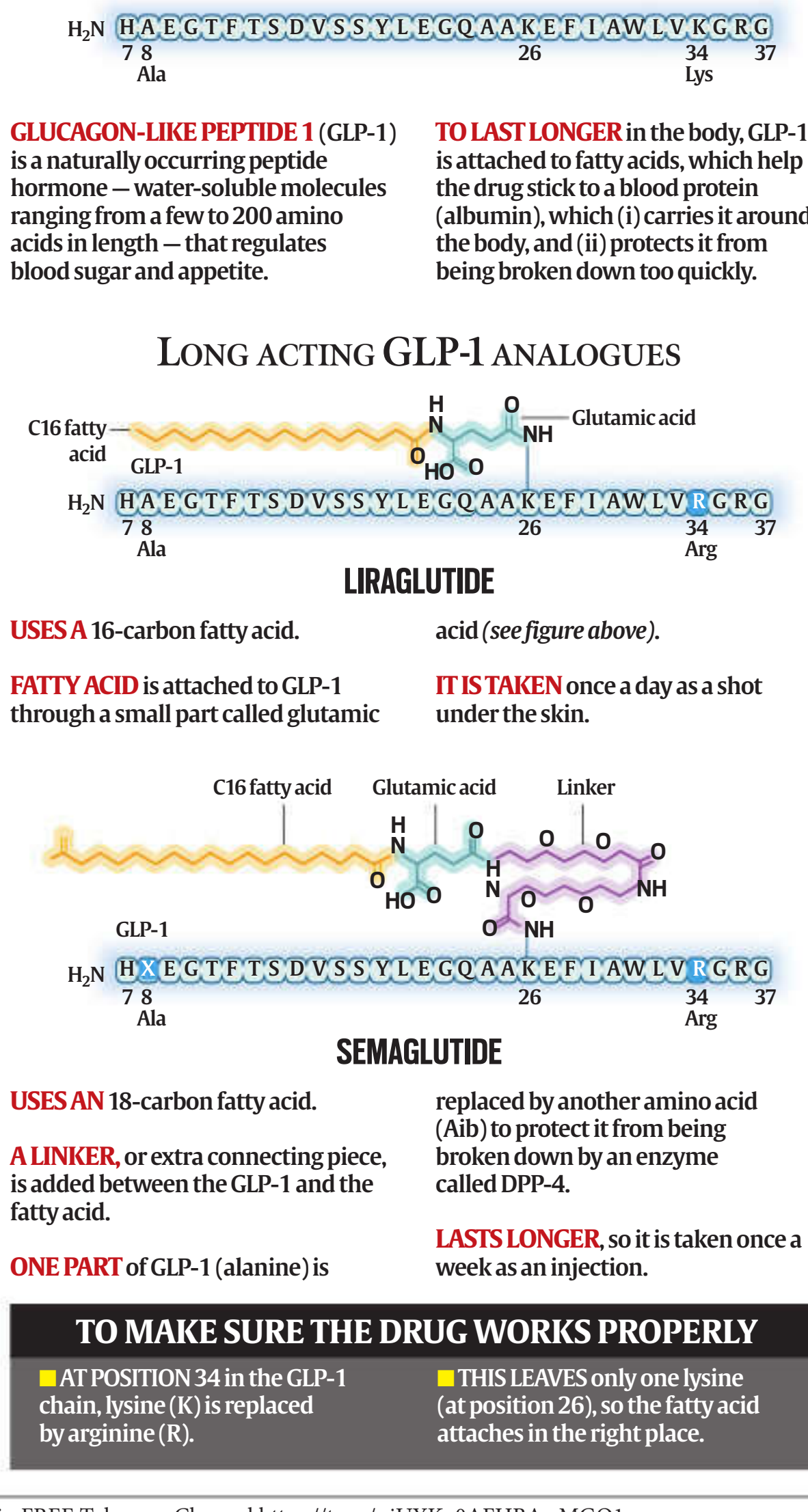
So, if you have type 2 diabetes, it helps you to regulate your blood sugar 24 hours a day. If you have obesity, it helps you to control your hunger and what you eat throughout the day. If you are at risk of cardiovascular disease, it consistently helps dampen inflammation, and lowers blood pressure and some blood lipids.

And these diseases often overlap, so for many people several of the effects of GLP-1 will be beneficial.

**What were some of the toughest moments of the 25-year journey? Was there a day, a result, or a conversation when it really hit you — that you'd done it?**

Not really — because there was always a way forward. When you make medicines, it takes time. You have to solve a lot of prob-

### How GLP-1 Drugs Work



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There are multiple tasks: there's the invention, there's the specific molecule, then you have to figure out how to manufacture it, how to design a clinical program, a toxicology program. You might encounter unexpected issues, and you have to solve them.

So, I don't recall [any] single day where I thought, “oh my God, we've done it”. Of course, the process comes with a lot of challenges, but that's just how it is when you're making medicines — especially when you're proposing something entirely new. Naturally, there are going to be even more hurdles.

We were the first ones to solve the druggability problem for GLP-1. We were the first to have it approved for obesity in 2014 — at a time when no one else was working on that. We were also the first to apply for a cardiovascular indication for GLP-1 in 2016, and we are still the only ones to have conducted a kidney outcome trial. We were the first to explore liver outcomes, and we're currently the only ones testing GLP-1 in Alzheimer's disease.

**Semaglutide was designed for type 2**

So it's not true that semaglutide was developed primarily for diabetes. It is true that it was first approved for diabetes, but the obesity trials followed just a few years behind.

And because of that early focus — and the 20 years we've spent talking with physicians about obesity — we were in a position to design the SELECT trial as far back as 2015. That was when we started recognizing the independent effects of GLP-1 on inflammation, which is a key mechanism in cardiovascular disease.

This trial is truly a landmark. No one had ever shown that pharmacologically induced weight loss could also deliver a cardiovascular benefit — and that has only been demonstrated with semaglutide.

**Why is this a landmark?**

It is a landmark because it was completely novel. It's also a landmark because it has changed the way we view the treatment of obesity. It's not just about weight loss — it's about cardiovascular benefits. The fact that fewer people are actually dying, fewer people are having heart attacks, and fewer people are experiencing strokes makes a profound difference.

It has also changed the perception of the disease itself. Now we know that you can not only lower a person's body weight, but you can do it in a way that is fundamentally different from what we had before — where many older obesity medications actually increased cardiovascular risk or carried psychiatric or suicidal side effects.

That's why it's a landmark trial.

**The emergence of GLP-1 has shown that the brain and gut are intertwined. In fact, we hear that “the gut is the new brain”. Your thoughts?**

I would phrase it a bit differently, because I'm a pharmacologist. People often talk about the gut-brain axis, and I see that more as a physiological concept. For me, GLP-1 has effects on many different organs.

In physiology, GLP-1 is secreted from the gut or the hindbrain. In that context, you see small peaks in GLP-1. What we do in pharmacology is create steady-state, high levels of GLP-1 — and that affects various organs. It works on the pancreas to treat diabetes; it acts on the brain to help people feel more satiated, less hungry, and change how they eat; it works on the gut to reduce inflammation; it also has effects on the heart, kidneys, and other areas of the brain.

So, I see it more as a multi-organ effect — not just a gut-brain connection. We now understand how it impacts various organs in healthy, beneficial ways.

**Where does the GLP-1 research go from here? Especially with respect to Alzheimer's?**

With GLP-1, the current focus is on Alzheimer's disease. Our realisation, after thinking about this for quite some years, was that we needed to conduct large trials in order to prove whether it actually works. That's what we're doing now, and we should have those results in the second half of this year.

Until then, it's really difficult to say anything definitive because doing trials in Alzheimer's disease is extremely challenging. There has been very little progress for decades, so this is a completely new concept

in Alzheimer's research.

We have to be patient for a little longer to see if it actually works. Our hypothesis centres around some of the other effects GLP-1 has on the brain, particularly its ability to reduce inflammation. That's a mechanism that hasn't been fully explored in Alzheimer's. It's very different from the traditional approaches of targeting amyloid (proteins that form plaques in the brain and affect neuron function and lead to cognitive decline) and tau (protein that disrupts the neuron's internal transport system and impacts communication between cells). What we're doing is exploring the metabolic impact of GLP-1 in people with Alzheimer's.

**What is the scientific hypothesis behind GLP-1's role in brain diseases? How might it actually be working in the brain?**

The central hypothesis is inflammation in the brain. Inflammation is one of the earliest processes involved in many diseases. At the tissue level, things begin to change, triggered by different pathological stimuli — whether from genetics, the environment, or other factors. It's often one of the first signs that cells are sensing something is wrong.

You see similar patterns in other conditions. In diabetes, for example, the pancreas doesn't function properly. In people with obesity, certain neurons become imbalanced, which can affect behaviour, like eating more or making less healthy food choices. In neurological diseases, inflammation in brain cells leads to imbalances in how those cells function.

That's where GLP-1 comes in. The idea is to see whether GLP-1 can help correct that imbalance. It acts on many different pathways, and we know there are GLP-1 receptors

throughout the brain. These receptors — which are the molecular targets GLP-1 binds to — give us a way to influence brain function at a cellular level.

**At this juncture, what do we know — and don't know — about the long-term side effects of GLP-1 treatments?**

It is important to say that there can be side effects with all medicines. This is prescription-only medicine, and the decision to start using a prescription medicine should always be made in close consultation with your doctor.

For all GLP-1 receptor agonists, the most common adverse events are gastrointestinal, and usually mild to moderate and transient in nature.

But GLP-1 is a very well-described class of medicine. GLP-1 medicines have been used to treat type 2 diabetes for about 20 years, and for the treatment of obesity for about 10 years. Our first GLP-1 receptor agonist for type 2 diabetes was launched 15 years ago.

Semaglutide has been studied in robust clinical development programs where more than 52,000 people have received it, and millions of people have used these products in the real world.

**Lotte Bjerre Knudsen** is Chief Scientific Adviser for Research at Danish pharma giant Novo Nordisk, and the driving force behind the company's research and development in the GLP-1 receptor agonist space for more than 30 years. **Kaunain Sheriff M** is National Health Editor at The Indian Express

### EXPLAINED LAW

## How Denmark plans to use copyright law to protect against deepfakes

AMAAL SHEIKH

NEW DELHI, JULY 14

IN WHAT is a pioneering effort to tackle the rise of deepfake content, now ubiquitous across the Internet, Denmark has proposed extending copyright protections to individuals' facial features, appearance, and voice.

The proposed amendment to Denmark's copyright law will effectively make it illegal to share deepfake content of another person without their consent, empowering individuals to get such forgeries taken down from online platforms, and seek compensation for their publication — similar to how copyright laws traditionally protect creative works.

### Rise of deepfakes

Deepfakes are a form of synthetic media which depict believable and realistic videos, pictures, or audio of events that never happened — they show real people doing or saying things that they never did or said.

While media has long been manipulated for nefarious purposes, artificial intelligence

has made such manipulation easier and more sophisticated than ever before. The volume of deepfake content online has risen dramatically in recent years, and deepfakes have become increasingly difficult to spot.

Authorities around the world have struggled to catch up with the technology which has been used to create pornographic content, spread misinformation, and pull off sophisticated con jobs.

Most existing laws dealing with deepfakes criminalise specific harms arising out of the technology, such as deepfake porn or the publication of manipulated media during elections. The Danish Bill, introduced last month and currently in the consultation stage, is harm-agnostic in that it directly addresses the publication of deepfakes and not specific harms they may cause.

Danish culture minister Jakob Engel-Schmid said the Bill gives people “the right to your own voice, your own facial features, and no one can copy that without your consent”.

### What the Bill proposes

The Bill introduces three new forms of

protection against deepfakes:

- **Imitation protection**, which bars others from publicly sharing realistic digital recreations of a person's physical traits, like facial features and voice;
- **Performance protection**, that covers artistic performances such as non-verbal or improvised acts that may not meet the usual copyright thresholds; and
- **Protection for performing artists**, specifically targeting digital mimicry of musicians, actors, performers, etc.

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The most notable here is the protection extended to ordinary individuals. The proposed Section 73(a) makes it illegal to share realistic deepfakes mimicking a person's appearance, voice, or characteristics for up to 50 years after their death.

The operative word here is “realistic”. The Bill does not bother about intent — any deepfake can be taken down as long as it looks real and creates confusion. At the same time, content that is clearly stylised is not protected.

The Bill proposes a kind of consent-based

protection: deepfake content can only be shared with the permission of the individual impersonated in it. It is the responsibility of the person sharing the content to prove that consent was obtained, and this consent can also be withdrawn at any time.

The Bill also makes online platforms responsible for taking down deep fakes, and proposes heavy penalties if they fail to do so.

### Caveats & limitations

Protections offered by the Bill only extended to content in the public sphere: the Bill does not make it illegal to generate deepfakes but simply bars their publication.

Certain forms of expressions, such as satire or parody, remain outside the Bill's protections, although the Bill does not grant blanket exemptions. Civil courts will decide what content to take down on a case-to-case basis, based on protections for free expressions provided in the European Convention of Human Rights.

While ambitious and potentially agenda-setting, especially in the light of Denmark's presidency of the European Union, critics say implementing such a law will be challenging.

The law's mandate is restricted to Danish territory, making it impossible to prosecute wrongdoers operating elsewhere in the world.

“Denmark may be granting a new right, but if the mechanisms to enforce it are slow, burdensome or inconsistent, the real-world impact could be minimal,” Francesco Cavalli, chief operating officer of Sensity AI, a company that offers deepfake detection tools, told *The NYT*. “Regulation without enforcement is a signal, not a shield,” he said.

At the same time, many are looking at the Danish example as a blueprint for other countries, many of which do not have stand-alone legislation to address digital impersonation at the moment.

Indian courts have thus far resorted to concepts of privacy, defamation, and publicity rights when dealing with deepfakes. Notably, the Delhi High Court extended protections against unauthorised use of their likenesses to actors Amitabh Bachchan in 2022 and Anil Kapoor in 2023. The rulings however looked at these figures specifically as celebrities.

The Danish Bill extends similar protections to ordinary citizens.



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