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TTP SUSPECTED

14 killed in suicide attack on peace rally in Pakistan

WORLD » PAGE 14

AGENCY AND VULNERABILITY

Analysing the SC's judgment on sex work

The need for guidelines, compliance, and training

OPINION » PAGE 7

SCRIPTING HISTORY

Tanvi is the youngest Taipei Open champ

SPORT » PAGE 16

Cauvery water from Kabini to reach Tamil Nadu today

The Hindu Bureau
SALEM

Water released from the Kabini Dam in Karnataka is expected to reach the Tamil Nadu boundary on Monday and flow into the Mettur Dam by Monday night or Tuesday, according to Water Resources Department (WRD) officials.

The Karnataka government, following heavy rainfall over the past few days, began releasing Cauvery water from the Kabini Dam on Saturday.

Officials had initially expected the water to reach Tamil Nadu by Sunday evening.

However, the flow has been delayed by the dry Cauvery riverbed, which has absorbed a significant amount of the released water, affecting its downstream movement.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

Cauvery situation slightly better, says Karnataka CM

Releasing limited quantity of water to T.N. for drinking purposes, says Shivakumar after all-party meet; he reiterates need for Mekedatu project, appeals to protesters to withdraw Aug. 13 bandh

Sharath S. Srivatsa
Laiqh A. Khan
BENGALURU/MYSURU

Stating that the water situation in the Cauvery was "slightly better" in view of the rain, Karnataka Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Sunday reiterated his appeal to the Kannada organisations to withdraw their State-wide bandh plan for August 13.

However, Kannada Chaluvali leader Vatal Nagaraj, who is leading the protest, said the bandh would be held as planned.

At an all-party meeting, the Chief Minister said Karnataka was carefully assessing the Cauvery situation, including a petition filed in the Supreme Court by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, the Opposition party in Tamil Nadu.

Karnataka CM D.K. Shivakumar with former CMs B.S. Yeddiyurappa and Siddaramaiah at an all-party meet. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

A limited quantity of water was being released from the reservoirs following rain, he said.

The meeting had been convened to address the concerns over the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA)'s directive to the State to abide by the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee's order to release 3,500 cusecs daily to Tamil Nadu for 15 days. The order set off protests in parts of Karnataka.

The data shared by the Water Resources Department show that Karnataka was releasing water at the rate of 25,000 cusecs from the Kabini reservoir and 1,819 cusecs from the Krishnaraja Sagar on Sunday to Tamil Nadu. "We are releasing a limited quantity of water through canals only to fill lakes and tanks meant for drinking water purposes, and not for irrigation," he said.

Reiterating that the proposed Mekedatu project on the Cauvery was the long-term solution to the problems faced by both States, he said: "Karnataka will respect the law and orders of the Supreme Court while protecting the State's interest". He said Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay had agreed to postpone his visit to Bengaluru to discuss the issue on the request of the Karnataka government.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10
EDITORIAL
» PAGE 6

IN BRIEF

Rain death toll in Kerala rises to 11; 7,600 in camps

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
The death toll in rain-related incidents in Kerala rose to 11 on Sunday, even as more than 7,600 people were evacuated to relief camps, said the government. Rain continued across most districts of the State during the day. » Page 3

Slipper hurled at Pappu Yadav; one taken into custody

NEW DELHI
Two men intruded into the residence of Purnea MP Pappu Yadav on Sunday and one of them, identified as Sumit, hurled a slipper at the lawmaker. Mr. Sumit was later taken into custody. » Page 11

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EDUCATIONPLUS » PAGE 5

PM launches drive to curb drug abuse among youth

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Stressing the need for sustained action and community participation to combat drug abuse, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday laid out a national vision for building a drugs-free youth population as the foundation of "Viksit Bharat" (developed India).

Launching the *Nasha Mukt Yuva* for Viksit Bharat *Sankalp Abhiyan* (Drug-Free Youth for Developed India Pledge Campaign), Mr. Modi said that today's youth would eventually enjoy the fruits of a developed India.

FULL REPORT ON
» PAGE 10

Fuming ferry

Tragic crossing: Smoke rising from a passenger ferry that caught fire off Indonesia's Madura island in East Java on Sunday. At least five persons were killed while efforts were on to find more than 40 missing people after many jumped overboard. REUTERS (REPORT: PAGE 14)

Deal close, U.S., Israel to hold off on Iran strike, says Trump

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump has said that he will order American forces to hold off on new strikes against Iran, claiming West Asia allies have reached the parameters of a deal to end the five-month war.

The emerging deal "would include the immediate, complete, and total" opening of the Strait of Hormuz and "an end to Iran's nuclear threat", Mr. Trump wrote in a social media post on Saturday evening. He said Israel is joining his commitment to end the war. Israel did not publicly comment on the announcement.

A regional official said the proposal calls for the U.S. and Iran to return to negotiations. The U.S., in exchange, will end its naval blockade on Iran, he said. No deal has been reached yet, but mediation efforts are under way, said the official, who is involved in mediation efforts and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Donald Trump

The U.S. was prepared to go against Iran "at levels of military terror, strength, and power" not seen since the Second World War, Mr. Trump said in his post, claiming that Iran asked the U.S. to hold off on any attack.

However, Iran's Mehr news agency denied Mr. Trump's claim that Tehran asked Washington to refrain from conducting new strikes, saying it was "nothing but a new lie".

Iran's Defence Ministry said that the country was "neither surprised nor passive" following the announcement, and added that Iran continued to remain alert in the face of concrete threats from the U.S.

Mr. Trump has announced halts to strikes in Iran on several occasions since the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran on February 28, only for things to unravel and fighting to resume.

Petrol, diesel consumption surges in July; LPG use down despite rollback of curbs

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

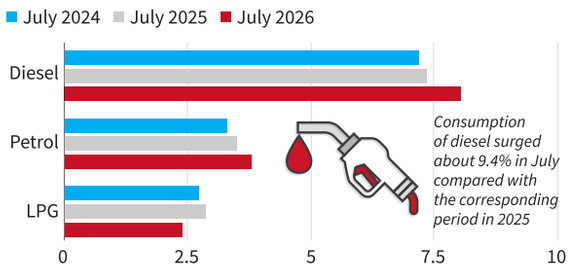
Consumption of diesel and petrol surged about 9.4% and 8.7% year-on-year respectively in July, primarily driven by a below-average monsoon that increased the demand for fuel among farmers to run irrigation machinery and tractors.

According to government data, diesel consumption in July touched about 8.05 million metric tonnes (MMT), higher than 7.356 MMT last July. Petrol consumption stood at 3.795 MMT as against 3.493 MMT in the comparable period last year.

Sale of diesel – which powers transport, agricultural equipment, and irrigation – is a key indicator of economic activity. Usually, fuel sales dip with the onset of monsoon amid reduced deployment of agricultural pumps and vehicular movement. But this year, the rain arrived late, and was uneven, due to which farmers deployed diesel-powered pumps to irrigate fields for the kharif season.

Surging volumes

The chart shows the consumption of diesel, petrol, and LPG for the month of July. Figures in MMT (million metric tonnes)



Note: Numbers are provisional. Propane and butane is included in LPG stream
Source: Petroleum Planning & Analysis Cell

LPG use falls

Consumption of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) declined 17.4% during the reported period to 2.373 MMT. The fall came despite the government restoring the supply of industrial and commercial LPG to pre-West Asia crisis levels and withdrawing sector-specific allocation caps on June 25.

This also coincided with the increased adoption of piped natural gas by domestic and industrial consumers.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

With five gold medallists, Haryana town fuels India's best-ever CWG boxing haul

Ashok Kumar
GURUGRAM

For decades, the dusty town of Bhiwani, about 100 km from Delhi, has punched far above its weight in boxing rings around the world. On Saturday, its boxers scripted history for India at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games, powering the country to a haul of 10 medals, its best-ever performance in the sport at the Games. Of the seven gold medallists, five come from Bhiwani, which is often hailed as the "Mini Cuba" of India, a tribute to the Caribbean island nation that has produced a slew of famed boxers.

Priya Ghanghas, left, who won a gold medal, practising at a training centre in Bhiwani in April. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

India's first boxer to win an Olympic medal, Vijender Singh, shot the town into the global spotlight in 2008, winning a bronze at Beijing, and sparking a victorious streak for dozens of other boxers from Bhiwani.

On Saturday, four Bhiwani women climbed the podium in Glasgow – Sakshi Chaudhary (51 kg), Preeti Pawar (54 kg), Jaismine Lamboria (57kg), and Priya Ghanghas (60 kg) – along with one man, Sachin Siwach (60 kg).

Jagdish Singh, who heads the Bhiwani Boxing Club that has played a major role in scripting the town's dominance in the sport, credited the record haul to changes in the selection process for the 2026 Games.

The current transparent and trial-based selection process would also help India in the upcoming Asian Games and 2028 Olympics, he told *The Hindu*.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10
SATISFYING GLASGOW SHOW
» PAGE 15

INBRIEF

Transporters' union to march to Parliament over E20 fuel

The Delhi Taxi and Tourist Transporters' Association (DTTTA) on Sunday announced a march to Parliament on Tuesday over the E20 (petrol blended with 20% ethanol) issue. The march is set to begin from Jantar Mantar at 1 p.m. The association has also urged other motor unions to join the march. Among its demands, the DTTTA has called for a review of the E20 rollout and urged that consumers have the option of E0, E5 and E10 grades of petrol alongside E20 at all fuel stations. It also sought financial relief for transport operators affected by the transition to E20 fuel, and a compensation policy to offset mileage losses and higher maintenance costs.

Three, including 3-year-old, escape fire in Rajouri Garden

Three people, including a three-year-old girl, escaped from a four-storey residential building in west Delhi's Rajouri Garden on Sunday by using a sari as a rope after a fire broke out, a Delhi Fire Services (DFS) officer said. The DFS received a call at 4.10 p.m. about the blaze under the Hari Nagar police station limits. Five fire tenders were rushed to the spot, and the fire was brought under control by 4.40 p.m. The officer said the fire originated in a shaft on the ground floor where waste material had accumulated. The flames and smoke spread to parts of the upper floors before the blaze was brought under control. No injuries were reported. PTI

AAP alleges lapses in Vidya Vahini Yojana; charge baseless: BJP

Bharadwaj alleges '₹90-cr. scam' in purchase of 1.3 lakh bicycles for Class 9 girl students; allegations based solely on plaint filed by 1 firm: Khurana

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Girl students with the bicycles received under the Vidya Vahini Yojana in New Delhi last week. FILE PHOTO

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) traded charges on Sunday after the Opposition party alleged "irregularities" in the purchase of bicycles under the Vidya Vahini Yojana recently unveiled by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta.

The ruling BJP rubbished the allegations and accused AAP of trying to divert attention from the "school bag scam" and "exam paper leak cases" in AAP-ruled Punjab.

The Delhi government had launched the scheme, aimed at improving access to education, on July 31 and distributed bicycles to over 3,000 Class 9 girl students. The CM had allocated ₹90 crore in the budget to provide bicycles to 1.3 lakh Class 9 girl students in government schools.

'Exorbitant' rate

The war of words started with a press conference by AAP Delhi unit chief Saurabh Bharadwaj, where he alleged a "₹90-crore scam" in the purchase of 1.3 lakh bicycles, claiming that the BJP government bought the bicycles at an "exorbitant" rate through a "tailored" tender meant to benefit a particular company.

The former Health Minister claimed that the tailored tender mandated a turnover of ₹360 crore for firms interested in supplying 1.3 lakh bicycles, ensuring that only a few companies could participate.

He added that a bicycle-manufacturing company had raised these issues in its complaint to Lieutenant-Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu, Ms. Gupta, and officials in the Vigilance Department.

Mr. Bharadwaj said during the entire tender process, the government deliberately chose not to hold any pre-bid meeting.

'AAP shielding Mann'

Responding to the allegations, BJP MLA and Delhi government spokesperson Harish Khurana said Mr. Bharadwaj's allegations were based solely on a private firm's complaint.

He added that the "real objective" behind the allegations was to shield Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann.

"Bicycles are available in different models with different features and prices in the Delhi market generally range from ₹4,000-50,000," he said.

Kin of inmates dying unnaturally to get up to ₹7.5 lakh: CM

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

CM Rekha Gupta at a hospital in Delhi on Sunday. She said the scheme will boost transparency in prison administration. PTI

Family members of inmates who die in unnatural circumstances in Delhi's jails will be eligible for compensation of up to ₹7.5 lakh under a scheme notified by the Delhi government, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said on Sunday.

Ms. Gupta said the Payment of Compensation on Account of Death of Prisoners in Delhi Prison scheme, 2025, notified in accordance with the National Human Rights Commission guidelines, would ensure timely relief to affected families while strengthening administrative accountability.

The scheme provides for compensation of ₹7.5 lakh to the family of a prisoner whose death occurs due to clashes between inmates or alleged torture or assault by prison personnel, and ₹5 lakh in cases involving negligence by prison authorities or staff, negligence by medical or paramedical personnel, or suicide by a prisoner.

Under the scheme, the Jail Superintendent concerned will have to submit, in every case, the magisterial inquiry report, post-mortem report, final cause of death, the prisoner's medical history, and details of the treatment provided before death to the Director General (Prisons), Delhi. These cases will be reviewed by a committee headed by the Director General (Prisons).

Based on the committee's recommendation, a proposal seeking approval for the compensation will be placed before the Administrative Secretary of the Home Department.

The CM said her government is committed to upholding the rule of law, human dignity and constitutional values. "Our objective is to strengthen transparency, sensitivity, and accountability in prison administration while ensuring justice in every case in accordance with the law," she said.

6 Bangladeshi nationals sent to detention centre for visa violations

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Six Bangladeshi nationals have been shifted to a detention centre after being rounded up by the Delhi police for allegedly violating the conditions of their double-entry visas by staying beyond the permitted duration, officials said on Sunday.

The six were detained during an inspection of hotels and guest houses in central Delhi. According to the police, they were found staying at a hotel on Arakashan Road in the Nabi Karim area.

Overstaying

Verification of their visas and immigration records showed that while their visas remained valid, each visit permitted a maximum stay of 15 days, which they had exceeded, the police said. The six were produced before the Foreigners' Regional Registration Office, which issued restriction orders and directed that they be shifted to a detention centre pending deportation proceedings.

A senior police officer said no previous criminal involvement of any of the six had come to light.

Delhi govt. doubles salaries of DDMA personnel after 16 years

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has hiked the remuneration of Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) personnel by 100% with immediate effect, the Chief Minister's Office stated on Sunday. Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said the move was long overdue and aimed at delivering justice to officials who have served without any pay revision for 16 years.

The hike will benefit project officers, district project officers, and project coordinators across the national capital.

"Since 2009, their remuneration has remained unchanged despite rising inflation, expanding responsibilities, and increasing disaster management challenges," Ms. Gupta stated in a release.

"The Delhi government's objective is to build a stronger and more modern disaster management system," the Chief Minister added.

Cong. hits out at govt.'s water ATM proposal

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Delhi Congress president Devender Yadav on Sunday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party government of failing to provide piped water to every household and criticised its proposal to instal 250 water ATMs in areas without pipeline connectivity. He said the proposal did not address the underlying problem and was an attempt to divert attention from the government's "failure".

He sought a time-bound expansion of the water pipeline network, permanent water supply instead of temporary measures such as tankers and water ATMs, and an action plan for water-scarce areas.

Digital arrest victim moves HC for CBI probe; Delhi Police told to file status report in 2 weeks

Shrimansi Kaushik
NEW DELHI

Vibha*, a 75-year-old breast cancer survivor who was forced to sell her home in south Delhi's Vasant Kunj, pawn her gold jewellery and part with nearly ₹3 lakh in a digital arrest scam, has moved the Delhi High Court seeking a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe, alleging that the Delhi police have made "little meaningful progress" since the FIR was registered in April this year.

On July 30, Ms. Vibha and her daughter, Seema Chauhan*, filed the plea seeking the transfer of the investigation to the Central probe agency. The court issued notices to the police and the CBI seeking their response. It also asked the police to submit a status report within two weeks and posted the matter for hearing on August 13.

> The fraudsters are still at large and have been harassing my mother by calling her multiple times and sending messages and e-mails
>
> **SEEMA CHAUHAN***
> Victim's daughter

"This is a case where the fraudsters not only forced an elderly woman to be under continuous video surveillance but also showed up at her doorstep, thereby involving digital as well as physical extortion and harassment," said Kush Sharma, the advocate representing the petitioners.

Ms. Vibha was under digital arrest from April 6 to 27. Men claiming to be from the CBI told her to hand over all assets to avoid action from the Enforcement Directorate.

Her daughter, who lives in the Netherlands, returned to India as soon as she found out about the crime, after which an FIR was registered on April 27.

Since then, Ms. Chauhan said, the police have not updated them on the investigation. "Meanwhile, the fraudsters are still at large and have been harassing my mother by calling her multiple times and sending messages and e-mails," she added.

'Accounts identified'

When reached for comment, Investigating Officer Subhash Pokhriyal said the police have identified bank accounts to which the proceeds from the crime were diverted. "At least 10-12 bank accounts have been identified. We are interrogating the account holders," he said.

*(*Names changed on request)*

Over 1.45 lakh register for Lakshmi Yojana in a day

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

More than 1.45 lakh women registered for the Delhi Lakshmi Yojana a day after its launch, the government said on Sunday. According to an official statement, 1,47,215 registrations were completed and 10,286 applications submitted as of 10 p.m. on Sunday. Chief Minister Rekha Gupta had launched the portal on Saturday. Eligible women will receive monthly aid of ₹2,500.

Women in the 21-60 age group with annual family income of up to ₹2.5 lakh can apply. Those receiving other benefits, taxpayers, government employees, and families owning four-wheelers are ineligible.

The government has allocated ₹5,100 crore for it.

Gurugram Forest Dept. staff stage stir, seek pay parity

Press Trust of India
GURUGRAM

Employees of the Gurugram Forest Department staged a protest outside Haryana Cabinet Minister Rao Narbir Singh's residence in Civil Lines on Sunday demanding the regularisation of contractual workers, implementation of the "equal pay for equal work" principle, timely payment of salaries, and social security benefits. They also sought minimum wage of ₹26,000, reinstatement of employees who won court cases, and action against corrupt officials.

The police erected barricades and deployed additional personnel to maintain law and order.

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DELHI

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RISE	21:51	SET 09:54
TUESDAY, AUG. 04		
RISE	05:45	SET 19:10
RISE	22:23	SET 10:53
WEDNESDAY, AUG. 05		
RISE	05:45	SET 19:09
RISE	22:59	SET 11:56

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	36	26
Safdarjang	36	26
Palam	35	25

Delhi Palam Today
34°C The weather will be warm. Spell of moderate rain and thundershower with gusty winds to occur. Night will be comfortable.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
30°C The weather will be slight warm. Few spells of moderate to heavy rain and thundershower with gusty winds to occur.

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INBRIEF

A.P., Australia sign four MoUs on education, clean energy

Andhra Pradesh and Australia have signed four memoranda of understanding (MoUs) in the fields of clean energy, advanced manufacturing, inclusive education, student mental health, and skill development. The agreements were signed in the presence of Andhra Pradesh HRD Minister Nara Lokesh and Australia's Assistant Minister Julian Hill, a statement said. One of the MoUs propose to establish a Centre of Excellence for Solar Manufacturing at IIT-Tirupati.

Drunk man drives away bus in A.P., held after long chase

A man in an inebriated condition drove away a public transport bus from Kadiri in Sri Sathya Sai district to Madanapalle in Annamayya district, covering 80 km, on Friday night. This resulted in a police chase that ended several hours later with his arrest on Saturday. The accused, Siva Prasad, 45, arrived at the Kadiri RTC bus stand on Friday night, intending to travel to Madanapalle. As there was no bus available at night, he got into a parked APSRTC bus and drove away.

Container ship goes adrift while leaving Cochin Port

A container ship leaving the Cochin port in Kerala reportedly suffered an engine failure and went adrift on Saturday night, triggering a brief period of tension. Sources said that the vessel, *SSL Mumbai*, was brought to safety by two tugboats accompanying it. The vessel was proceeding to its designated anchorage area when it suffered the glitch about an hour after leaving the port. The ship has been moored at Ernakulam Wharf Q7.

Rain death toll rises to 11 in Kerala; 7,600 in relief camps

IMD places all 14 districts of the State on yellow alert today, no heavy rainfall alert for Tuesday and Wednesday; sanitation work launched in places where floodwaters have receded, says Satheesan

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The death toll in rain-related incidents in Kerala rose to 11 by Sunday, even as more than 7,600 people were evacuated to relief camps across the State, the government said.

Rain continued across most districts of Kerala on Sunday, though with reduced intensity, allowing authorities to step up relief operations. Four people have died so far in Malappuram district, two each in Thiruvananthapuram, Alappuzha and Idukki and one in Kozhikode, Revenue Minister A.P. Anilkumar said on Sunday.

Populated regions remained heavily waterlogged, disrupting normal life. Across the State, 7,674 people have been shifted to 273 camps, equipped with drinking water, food and medical facilities, Mr. Anilkumar said. Steps are being taken to prevent the outbreak of epidemics. . Thirty houses have been destroyed in the rain havoc so far while 293 have been reported damaged. All districts except Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam were on orange alert on Sunday.

Submerged home: A flooded house in Nedumpram village near Thiruvalla in Pathanamthitta district of Kerala. LEJU KAMAL

The India Meteorological Department has placed all 14 districts on yellow alert for isolated heavy rainfall on Monday. As a precaution, holiday has been declared for educational institutions in the districts of Kasaragod, Kannur, Kozhikode, Malappuram, Palakkad, Wayanad, Thrissur, Idukki, Kottayam and Pathanamthitta.

The IMD has not issued heavy rainfall alerts for Tuesday and Wednesday, but northern districts are likely to receive isolated heavy rainfall by Thursday. The Kerala State Disaster Management Authority directed the District Tourism Promotion Councils to regulate activities at waterfalls and high-range tourist spots.

Chief Minister V.D. Satheesan said that sanitation works have been launched in regions where the floodwaters have receded.

Couple, son killed in Karnataka landslip

The Hindu Bureau
TIRTHAHALLI

Three people were killed in a landslip in Tirthahalli town in Shivamogga district of Karnataka early on Saturday morning.

The deceased have been identified as Malikarjun, around 30, his wife Nagaveni, around 27, and their three-year-old son Santosh of Kakkargol in Koppal district of the State. They had come to Tirthahalli four days ago to work on plantations, leaving behind their two daughters at their village.

The family was living in a shed just beneath a hillock in the Gandhi Nagar locality of Tirthahalli town. Following heavy rain, landslips occurred around 3.30 a.m., trapping four residents under the debris.

One rescued

One of them was rescued by a Fire and Emergency Services team in the morning and has been admitted to hospital.

Later, the bodies of the couple and their child were retrieved from the debris with the help of earthmovers.

Every year, hundreds of people from several districts of north Karnataka migrate to the Malnad region in search of work, finding jobs on plantations and construction sites and in quarries.

The workers had been allotted vacant land at Gandhi Nagar, where they had put up sheds covered with zinc sheets, partitioned into compartments for each family with more sheets of zinc.

Workers shifted

The taluk administration has shifted all of them to a temporary care centre at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Bhavan in the town. Shivamogga Assistant Commissioner Satyanarayana, Tirthahalli tahsildar S. Ranjith, and senior police officers monitored the rescue operation. The process for granting compensation to the victims' family would begin shortly, the officials said.

U.P. activist seeks special monitoring cell on paper leaks

Prompt prosecution of culprits will restore public faith in exam process, states letter to CM

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Lucknow-based social activist Amitabh Thakur on Sunday demanded that the Uttar Pradesh government set up a State-level special monitoring cell on question paper leaks for time-bound investigation and prompt prosecution of culprits to restore public faith in the examination process and recruitment drives.

"I sent a letter to the Chief Minister and the Advocate General of Uttar Pradesh demanding the establishment of a State-level special monitoring cell and special public prosecutors for effective investigation, prosecution and judicial monitoring of all cases related to examination question paper leak in the State," Mr. Thakur told *The Hindu*.

He added that the frequent question paper leaks that have surfaced in recent years have raised serious questions about the future of millions of youth and the credibility of recruitment exams.

"Despite a stated 'zero tolerance' policy, many old cases remain pending for years," he said.

Mr. Thakur, a former 1992-batch Indian Police Service officer, mentioned pending cases, including the 2006 Railway Recruitment Examination question paper leak case allegedly involving two MLAs of the ruling National Democratic Alliance. "The affidavits submitted by the current MLAs, Bedi Ram and Vipul Dubey, before the Election Commission show that such serious cases can remain pending for almost two decades. I urged the State government to conduct a comprehensive review of all question paper leak cases, ensure special oversight from investigation to prosecution, and periodically make public the progress of these cases," said Mr. Thakur, who leads the Azad Adhikar Sena.

Demands White Paper

Meanwhile, the Congress demanded a White Paper on "irregular" recruitments and instances of paper leak in the State.

"There are many instances of paper leaks in Uttar Pradesh. Ruling party MLAs are accused in paper leak cases. The words of the Prime Minister will be taken seriously only when the BJP leadership takes action on alliance MLAs who are accused in such cases. We also demand a White Paper on the number of recruitment exams conducted in the last nine years, the instances of irregularities, paper leaks, and action taken," said Congress national secretary Shahnawaz Alam.

A.P. YSRCP legislator arrested over alleged attack on Dalit family

The Hindu Bureau
KURNOOL / VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) legislator from Alur B. Virupakshi and 14 of his followers were arrested in the early hours of Sunday for their alleged involvement in an attack on a Dalit family following a clash between the followers of the YSRCP and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) activists.

Tension prevailed at Sangala and Nemakallu villages of Chippagiri mandal following the clash and at the Chippagiri police station, where the YSRCP leaders demanded the MLA's release.

The clash reportedly stemmed from an argument between TDP and YSRCP activists and escalated after Mr. Virupakshi visited the village.

The TDP alleged that the MLA and his followers entered the house of a party SC activist, Nagaraju, and attacked him and his wife, tearing her clothes. The two groups later clashed, damaging vehicles belonging to Mr. Virupakshi and TDP mandal convener Purushotham.

Mr. Virupakshi's brother suffered an injury. The police later brought the situation under control and arrested Mr. Virupakshi and his son Chandrashekhar.

Festive frenzy

In devotion: Devotees carry traditional *bonams*, decorated brass vessels offered to Goddess Mahakali, during the annual Ujjaini Mahakali Bonalu (Lashkar Bonalu) celebrations in Secunderabad on Sunday. G. RAMAKRISHNA

Interest-free loans, price support for tobacco farmers

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Union Minister of State for Communications and Rural Development Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar on Sunday announced a relief package comprising credit and price support for tobacco farmers, following consultations involving the Tobacco Board, buyers and exporters. The measures will come into effect from Monday.

Addressing the press-persons in New Delhi, Mr. Chandra Sekhar said the Centre would provide interest-free loans of ₹50,000 each to about 45,000 tobacco farmers. The loans, repayable over two years, would involve an outlay of around ₹250 crore.

State's incentive

He said the Andhra Pradesh government would provide an incentive of ₹10 per kg for low and off-style varieties of tobacco, with the amount to be credited directly to the beneficiaries' bank accounts.

Mr. Chandra Sekhar said exporters had agreed to pay a minimum purchase price of ₹230 per kg for the bright variety, ₹190 per kg for the medium variety, ₹130 per kg for the off-style variety and ₹110 per kg for the low variety.

Tata Trusts will create institutions for healthcare, education: Chairman

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Noel Tata, Chairman of Tata Trusts, said on Sunday that the philanthropic arm of the Tata Group has decided to move beyond its traditional role of supporting non-governmental organisations and development programmes to create institutions capable of serving future generations.

Participating in a fireside chat at IIMBue 2026, an annual conclave hosted by old students of the Indian Institute of Management-Bangalore, Mr. Tata outlined the future direction of Tata Trusts, emphasising institution-building over project-based philanthropy and reaffirming a philosophy that has shaped the Tata Group for more than a century.

Noel Tata

He unveiled a new roadmap for one of India's largest philanthropic organisations, signalling a strategic shift toward building enduring institutions in healthcare and education, while calling for greater accountability in philanthropy. "The founders left their shares in the companies to the Trusts with one message: do good for India. They never said to become the biggest company. The companies exist to serve India and improve the quality of life," he said.

'Revives a legacy'

The new strategy revives a legacy that produced some of India's most respected public institutions, including the Indian Institute of Science, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research and Tata Memorial Hospital.

According to Mr. Noel, as part of this renewed focus, the trust will establish 40 to 50 not-for-profit general hospitals. The proposed hospitals will operate on a cross-subsidy model, where premium-paying patients help finance treatment for economically weaker sections without compromising the quality of doctors, medicines, or infrastructure.

Mr. Tata stated that education would be another major area of investment, describing the proposed undergraduate institution being developed in partnership with IIM Bangalore as an important beginning.

He said that philanthropy must become more accountable. Charitable organisations should move beyond broad claims of impact and instead demonstrate measurable outcomes, he said.

Kerala to identify forest locations illegally geo-tagged on online maps

Aathira Haridas
KOCHI

The Kerala Forest Department has decided to take stock of all locations in the State's forests that have been illegally geo-tagged by individuals on online map platforms. The department's IT wing is collating a list of these locations, which will then be forwarded to the Forest Management Wing.

It is learnt that the department will submit the final list to online map agencies and platforms seeking the removal of these locations from the maps. Moreover, the department plans to identify the individuals who uploaded these locations within the reserve and protected forest areas and initiate legal action.

Geo-tagging sensitive locations has led to unlawful entry into reserve forests, officials say. REPRESENTATIVE PICTURE

Geo-tagging these sensitive locations on web mapping and navigation platforms had led to unlawful entry into reserve forests, said a forest official. "Even trekking trails used by forest staff inside protected forest patches in Silent Valley have been made available on online maps. These are sensitive locations... We believe these could have been put up by volunteers who had assisted us in wildlife census programmes," said the official.

Endangering lives

Since the move endangers humans as well as wildlife, strict action will be taken against those involved, the official added. "Forests are not places you can randomly picnic at. These are the homes of wild animals and they need to be respected," the official added.

Earlier, Kozhikode Divisional Forest Officer M. Joshil had sought the removal of Google Maps listings inside reserve forests in the district. Noting that these were encouraging illegal entry, he had taken up the issue with the department's IT wing.

INBRIEF

Exam 'irregularities': students continue to protest in Ranchi

Hundreds of students continued their protest for the fifth consecutive day in Ranchi on Sunday over alleged irregularities in the 14th Jharkhand Public Service Commission (JPSC) examination and other recruitment tests, demanding a CBI probe and reforms in the recruitment agencies. "Paper leaks in JPSC have happened several times. This time, OMR sheets of candidates have been leaked. Chief Minister Hemant Soren has ordered a CID probe, but we are not satisfied," JPSC aspirant Rahul Kumar Kranti said. PTI

BSP expels former MP, party coordinator for 'indiscipline'

BSP president Mayawati on Sunday announced the expulsion of former Rajya Sabha member Ashok Siddarth and party coordinator Randhir Singh Beniwal for repeated "indiscipline" and "violation" of organisational directives. In a post on X, Ms. Mayawati said Mr. Siddarth, who is the father-in-law of her nephew Akash Anand, had earlier been expelled over "indiscipline" during the 2024 Maharashtra Assembly election, particularly over the issue of coordination with the party's State unit in ticket distribution. PTI

Punjab poll: BJP vows to procure all crops at MSP; Cong. infighting continues

BJP will work to make our farmers strong, says Saini; Channi supporters raise slogans at Congress event attended by Baghel; Oppn. likely to target AAP govt. during Assembly session starting today

Press Trust of India
CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Sunday said the BJP will come to power in Punjab after next year's Assembly election and procure all crops from the farmers at minimum support price (MSP).

Mr. Saini was addressing an event in Punjab's Kotkapura as part of the nationwide 'Nasha Mukt Yuva for Viksit Bharat Sankalp Abhiyaan' launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday.

Exuding confidence that the BJP will form the government in Punjab, he said, "Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the BJP will work in Punjab just like in Haryana to make our farmers strong and prosperous." Before the 2024 Haryana poll, the BJP had promised to procure all crops from farmers at MSP, which it fulfilled after retaining power in the State, he said.

Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini participating in the 'Vimukt Jati Samaj Sammelan' in Faridkot, Punjab, on Sunday. X/@NAYABSAINIBJP

New BJP district chiefs

During the day, Punjab BJP chief Kewal Singh Dhillon announced the appointment of new office-bearers of the State unit. The party announced 12 vice-presidents, five general secretaries, 12 State secretaries, and six new district chiefs. It also appointed State cell coordinators, the IT convener, and the treasurer.

Meanwhile, the internal rift in the Punjab Congress showed no signs of abating, with supporters of former Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi raising slogans at a programme in Barnala in the presence of Bhupesh Baghel, party general secretary in-charge for the State, on Sunday.

State Congress chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring urged them to let the meeting continue. "No *nara* (slogan)," he told them. He called upon party workers to come together with discipline and dedication.

During his address, Mr. Baghel asserted that Congress is the only party in the country with internal democracy and takes decisions with consensus.

The Opposition is expected to corner the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government over issues such as law and order, outstanding debt, and alleged paper leaks during the Monsoon session of the Assembly beginning on Monday. The session, which will continue till August 10, is likely to be a stormy affair with the anti-sacrilege law issue also likely to be raised.

BJP misusing talent of vulnerable artistes, says Akhilesh Yadav

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of misusing the talent of helpless and vulnerable artistes to further its own political interests in Uttar Pradesh.

The BJP fears expression of creativity as it will further strengthen the "anti-establishment wave", Mr. Yadav said after making an "offering" of ₹51,000 each to two Ramlila artistes, who play Lord Krishna and Lord Hanuman. The ruling BJP stands for "*bhrasht* (corrupt)", "*julm* (oppression)", and "*paap* (sin)", the SP president said. All major problems in U.P. would end only after the BJP is voted out of power, he said.

Mr. Yadav was referring to an incident that occurred a few days ago during the arrival of BJP national president Nitin Nabin in Lucknow, in which an artiste dressed as Lord Hanuman was made to dance in front of Mr. Nabin's chariot. "This has caused deep resentment among devotees of Bajrangbali (Lord Hanuman) worldwide to this day," he said in a post on X.

SP chief Akhilesh Yadav making an 'offering' of ₹51,000 each to two Ramlila artistes who play Lord Krishna and Lord Hanuman in Lucknow on Sunday. PTI

Addressing creative professionals, he said, "Dear artistes and creators, the way the Bharatiya Janata Party misused the talent of a helpless and vulnerable artiste to further its own political interests is highly condemnable."

Meanwhile, Leader of the Opposition Mata Prasad Pandey on Sunday said issues such as the alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya will be discussed in the Monsoon Session beginning on Monday.

Census self-enumeration begins in Assam barring 2 flood-hit districts

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Barring two flood-hit districts, self-enumeration for Census 2027 began in Assam on Sunday.

Officials said Census preparatory work has been suspended in Sivasagar and Charaideo districts, which are yet to recover from the floods in July, among the worst the State has witnessed. Most of the 82 people who died in the floods this year were from these two districts.

"The self-enumeration, which began today (Sunday), marks an important step towards making Census 2027 more participatory and citizen-centric," Biswajit Pegu, Director of Census Operations, told journalists. He urged the people of Assam to use the online facility and participate in the Census process.

People urged to participate using the online facility that will remain active until August 16

He said that the facility on *se.census.gov.in* would remain active until August 16, ahead of the commencement of the house-listing operation and housing census on August 17.

Mr. Pegu said the facility had been introduced to enable citizens to furnish their household information conveniently.

After self-enumeration, trained enumerators would visit households to collect or confirm the requisite details.

Privacy safeguards

He also highlighted the safeguards under the Census Act, 1948 to protect the confidentiality of information furnished by citizens.

Narsing Pawar, Commissioner, General Administration Department, said the government would extend all necessary support for the successful conduct of Census 2027.

T.N. govt. to withdraw cases lodged against student protesters

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu government will withdraw all cases registered against students who had protested over the alleged NEET paper leak row, Minister for School Education Rajmohan said on Sunday.

In a post on X, he said following the directions of Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay, all the cases would be withdrawn. He said the government would announce further details soon.

Thousands of students staged a protest at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi last month demanding the resignation of former Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

Protests were also held in Tamil Nadu, which included flash demonstrations and a continuous protest at Balan Illam, the State headquarters of the Communist Party of India in Chennai. At a few places, the police detained students for blocking roads.

The Tamil Nadu government's decision is in line with those taken by a few other States to withdraw cases registered against students who took part in the protests.

After days of deliberations, Cabinet expansion in Karnataka likely today

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The much-awaited Karnataka Cabinet expansion is likely to take place on Monday evening with the Congress government learnt to have informally sought time from Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot for the swearing-in at Lok Bhavan.

While the list containing the names of the legislators to be sworn in is expected to reach Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Monday morning from the Congress central leadership, party sources said many of the chosen MLAs could be intimated after the list arrives.

Sources said though the central leadership had preferred Saturday for the swearing-in with the list being ready, it was postponed for an "astrologically favourable day", which happens to be Monday.

Congress is walking a tightrope with over 50 legislators aspiring to be Ministers. FILE PHOTO

On Sunday, when pressmen asked Mr. Shivakumar about the absence of the Governor in Bengaluru, he said Mr. Gehlot will be returning on Monday.

Sources said speculation about who would enter the Cabinet has been doing the rounds, but party leaders are tight-lipped. "The lists carried by Mr. Shivakumar and former CM Siddaramaiah are believed to have undergone changes as the party is looking to bring in a balance," a source said.

Key factors

The party is walking a tightrope with over 50 legislators aspiring to be Ministers and its decision has to take into account regional, caste, and community equations. "Important criteria include winnability factor and influence to help party candidates win in the 2028 poll," a source said.

SPOTLIGHT

New project, old battles

For farmers in Maharashtra's Raigad district, the Third Mumbai project is not an isolated development plan but the latest chapter in a four-decade history of land acquisition, delayed justice, and unfulfilled promises

Snehal Mutha

A bead of sweat snakes down 44-year-old Rupesh Patil's creased forehead as he scans a Maharashtra government notification.

"*Ha navin prayatna ahe amchya jameeni hadapnyacha ani udyaopatinchya ghashyat ghalnyacha. Kay garaj ahe, jameen ghenya aiwaji* development *karana. Malki amchich rahudya* (This is the third attempt at grabbing all our lands at meagre prices and putting them in the laps of big conglomerates, contractors, and agents who are manipulating farmers to sell them)," says Rupesh, a resident of Chirner, one of the 124 villages on the outskirts of Maharashtra's capital earmarked for the Third Mumbai project.

Expected to drive rapid urban growth, the project aims to decongest nearly 45% of the State's urban population concentrated in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), which comprises Mumbai City district, Mumbai Suburban district, and parts of Thane and Raigad districts.

Rupesh re-examines the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority's (MMRDA) notification from October 2024. It announces the appointment of the New Town Development Authority (NTDA) as the special planning authority for the 323-square-kilometre project.

Also known as the Karnala-Sai-Chirner Navanagar (KSC New Town) project, it is spread across Pen, Panvel, and Uran talukas of Raigad district.

Estimated at ₹4,000 crore, the project sits within a 20-km radius of three major economic gateways. With direct road access to south Mumbai, it is about 10-15 km from the Atal Setu (Mumbai Trans Harbour Link), 15-20 km from the Navi Mumbai International Airport, and 12-18 km from the Jawaharlal Nehru Port.

This January, on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said: "Third Mumbai is an opportunity to create an urban agglomeration; it has 60% data centre capacity. It will be a hub for new technology-enabling growth engines. With connectivity, it will bring Mumbai closer."

"We are building connectivity. We can create a huge city, like Dubai, here. We have assessed the MMR's growth potential. It can alone become a $1.5-trillion economy," he said.

On June 7, hundreds of people gathered in Chirner, which falls in Uran taluka, to protest and amplify their demand for fair compensation. Three days earlier, the State government had approved the appointment of urban planning consultancy Surbana Jurong Group, owned by the Singapore government, to prepare a master plan for the project.

People from villages across Maharashtra's Raigad district attending a meeting at Chirner village in Uran taluka on June 7 to oppose the Third Mumbai project and demand fair compensation. SNEHAL MUTHA

According to the affected villagers, their worry has roots in the Maharashtra government's four-decade pattern of expanding Mumbai's urban territory. The government, however, hails the Third Mumbai project as the next frontier of urban expansion.

Opposing expectations

The villagers want to ensure that their agricultural land is not acquired for a fraction of its worth. The government is offering the ready reckoner rate, used to calculate property registration and stamp duty, but the villagers want the market rate, citing the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013.

Atul Mhatre, an architect from Dadargaon in Pen taluka who owns three acres, says: "As per the ready reckoner, I will get ₹1 lakh per *gunta*. The market price is ₹5 lakh per *gunta*."

In Maharashtra, 40 *guntas* make one acre.

Nearly 60 metres from the Chirner Lake, 28-year-old Amey Pitale walks briskly towards the 17th-century Maha Ganpati Temple and sits on its steps. From his file, he pulls out a dog-eared notification issued by the Urban Development Department (UDD) in 2019. It outlines the changed boundaries of the MMR, extended to the three talukas of Raigad. Pitale's father owns two acres that are likely to be acquired under the Third Mumbai project.

"We are not against development if it is for us, the people of this land. MMR, including Raigad, has a history of development at the cost of locals," he says.

Another villager, Nilesh Patil, 40, joins Pitale at the temple. A chartered accountant, Nilesh has been keeping track of the infrastructure projects in Navi Mumbai. "Why does the government only believe in acquiring land? Why not bring on farmers as partners in the project?" he says.

However, MMRDA Commissioner Sanjay Mukherjee says the development authority has given landowners "multiple choices for compensation, including under the 2013 Act".

Trust issues

The trust deficit pertaining to the project took root in 2024, when the MMRDA began consultations with residents. Farmers in Raigad say they submitted 17,171 objections in an appeal. These pertained to land acquisition, compensation, and infrastructure development. However, according to a document from the Konkan division's Town Planning and Valuation Department, the MMRDA forwarded only 42 objections to the UDD.

Responding to objections, the MMRDA said the Atal Setu would spur regional development, justifying a new city in public interest. On objections, citing past experiences, it said these did not concern the NTDA's appointment.

"Hearing is not required as written objections were taken and they have been responded to adequately," Mukherjee says.

Past forward

The mention of urban development reminds people of their earliest memories of expansion. Landowners recall the angst of losing farms to successive urban development projects.

The Navi Mumbai-Raigad region's transformation began in 1970 when the City and Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO) was set up to decongest Mumbai.

CIDCO acquired land from 95 villages, triggering protests led by farmer leader Dinkar Balu Patil. Acquisitions continued through the 1980s, including for Uran's Dronagiri node, while the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority was commissioned in 1989.

In the early 2000s, the Navi Mumbai Special Economic Zone proposed acquiring land across 45 villages, but the idea was scrapped after a five-year agitation led by social worker Ulka Mahajan and a referendum in 22 villages, where all 6,151 voters opposed the move.

In 2011, CIDCO acquired 1,160 hectares across 10 villages for the Navi Mumbai International Airport.

Meanwhile, the MMRDA has opened its portal for landowners to submit consent forms and supporting documents for acquisition by the NTDA. But Rupesh and the villagers say they have no intention of giving in. "Raigad and Chirner have a legacy of satyagraha," Rupesh says.

It is a legacy the village wears with pride. On September 25, 1930, Chirner became the site of the 'Jungle Satyagraha', when hundreds of villagers defied British laws by entering forests to collect firewood. The colonial police opened fire, killing eight satyagrahis. The legal battle that followed was fought by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

Nearly a century later, the fight for many in Chirner is once again about land, rights, and dignity.

"We will keep fighting," Rupesh says.

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EDUCATIONPLUS

Accreditation or academic illusion?

Nearly two decades into the accreditation and ranking systems for higher education, questions about their real impact continue

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Sanil Raj Johnson

In February 2025, members of a peer-review team of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), including its chairman, were arrested by the CBI for allegedly accepting bribes to grant a top 'A++' grade to an institution. If accreditation, the very system meant to certify quality, can be compromised, then what are we truly measuring: institutional merit or institutional performance in staging merit?

What was once a quality assurance measure has, over time, developed into a kind of industry. Institutions now build dedicated teams – sometimes only for accreditation cycles – whose main job is to prepare for inspections, carefully organising activities to meet expected standards. Whether programmes are truly meaningful becomes less important. What matters is whether they can be documented, formatted, and presented convincingly. This process favours those who excel at presenting well over those who maintain genuine academic depth.

Too much documentation

At the heart of this transformation is the overwhelming dominance of documentation. The NAAC framework, with its multiple criteria – curriculum, teaching-learning, research, infrastructure, governance, and institutional values – requires extensive supporting documents. Faculty members are increasingly burdened with preparing reports, uploading evidence, and maintaining records.

A well-documented activity becomes more valid than a meaningful but undocumented academic endeavour. This is in contrast to practices at institutions like the University of Michigan, the U.S., where the focus is on what students have learned, not on how much institutions can project.

The issue worsens when accreditation influences rankings like those in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), which depend heavily upon data provided by institutions themselves. Although verification systems exist, the recent scandal highlights their loopholes. If peer review can be manipulated, the trustworthiness of the entire ranking system is compromised.

Institutions, in turn, use accreditation and rankings as marketing tools by prominently showcasing grades and positions to attract students. In this process, the line between authentic academic quality and strategic self-presentation becomes increasingly blurred.

International systems offer an entirely different approach. In the U.K., universities are assessed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), which whether institutional activities genuinely promote student learning.

Similarly, in Australia, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) uses a risk-based approach.

Impact on faculty

As teachers become more engaged in documentation and compliance, their interaction with students declines. Ongoing assessment, mentoring, and intellectual exchange are overshadowed by administrative tasks. This distortion is especially severe in India's uneven educational landscape. Rural and under-resourced institutions, lacking basic infrastructure, are assessed using the same criteria as well-funded urban counterparts. Accreditation, instead of reducing inequality, often worsens it by favouring visibility and resources over context and effort.

Nearly two decades into operating accreditation and ranking systems, it is worth questioning their real impact. Has academic quality truly improved? Could students experience meaningful learning? Or have institutions just become better at self-promotion?

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 proposes a restructured accreditation framework that emphasises transparency, technology, and continuous evaluation. While these reforms are mandatory, they will fail if they simply digitise an existing over-bureaucratised system.

Accreditation must return to its core purpose: improving educational quality. This requires a clear shift from focusing on documentation to emphasising results, from valuing performance to emphasising substance, and from mere compliance to promoting creativity. Faculty should be liberated from excessive bureaucratic burdens and reconnected with their primary role as educators. Evaluation must become sensitive to context, acknowledging institutional differences along with providing fair and supportive measures.

Last year's scandal exposes a deeper systemic problem. When achievements can be staged, recorded, and even bought, accreditation becomes a false facade. For Indian higher education to regain its credibility, it must dismantle this illusion and create a system rooted in honesty, trust, and genuine learning.

Views expressed are personal

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Distress and dispute

Karnataka and Tamil Nadu should evolve a distress-sharing formula

With the southwest monsoon playing truant in its first half, a familiar distress situation has developed in the Cauvery basin. The principal riparian States – Karnataka upstream and Tamil Nadu downstream – have made little progress in evolving a distress-sharing formula in the vexed dispute. Once again, heavy rain in the Cauvery catchment has come to the aid of both States. Whether this will douse the embers or fan parochial flames remains to be seen. Political tensions are rising, with pro-Kannada groups calling for a Karnataka bandh on August 13 and the DMK planning a stir in Thanjavur on August 3, coinciding with the Aadi Perukku festival on the Cauvery's banks. Despite a surge in inflows into four major Karnataka reservoirs in the Cauvery basin, it is too early to conclude that the water shortage affecting farmers in both States is over. The decision of the Congress government in Karnataka not to release irrigation water adds to the crisis, though such refusals over scheduled water deliveries are not new. Consequently, Billigundulu, the inter-State border measuring point, realised barely one thousand million cubic feet (tmc ft) against the stipulated 31 tmc ft in July, the wettest month.

Perhaps guided by forecasts of a deficient monsoon, Karnataka's Chief Minister chose to err on the side of caution, anticipating an acute drinking water shortage ahead. However, this has proved costly for Tamil Nadu, which realised only about 3.6 tmc ft from June 1 to July-end, barely 10% of the 40-odd tmc ft prescribed by the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal and the Supreme Court. The Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA), at its July 30 meeting, ratified the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC)'s directive that Karnataka release 3,500 cusecs to Billigundulu daily for 15 days from July 29. Although this quantum would not have met irrigation needs in Tamil Nadu's Cauvery delta, it would have provided some support to the ecosystem. The CWMA's decision has upset farmers in Karnataka and the political class but nature has intervened in a limited way. If Karnataka finds the existing mechanisms – the CWMA and CWRC – inadequate, it can suggest alternatives, but must first abide by the decisions of these institutions, which safeguard riparian States' interests in line with Tribunal and Supreme Court verdicts. Unlike his predecessors, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay reached out to his Karnataka counterpart, D.K. Shivakumar – but Mr. Shivakumar has asked Mr. Vijay to defer his August 3 Bengaluru visit. However, this episode should not deter the two States from making a renewed bid to work out a distress-sharing formula, the last of which was attempted nearly 25 years ago. Mr. Vijay should also take a cue from his counterpart in handling the Cauvery issue, by bringing together other political players in the State.

Falling walls

India's buildings need widespread rehabilitation work

In September 2020, the Bhiwandi Municipal Corporation in Maharashtra placed the Kohinoor building on its 'danger' list around the same time the Jilani building collapsed a few kilometres away, killing 41. Six years on, and hours after officials declared the Kohinoor to be unsafe again and evacuated around 40 residents, it collapsed, killing 10. In the half decade in between, the owners had refused to vacate or redevelop the property and instead undertook unauthorised repairs. While the fall of the Jilani building, which was old but not on a 'dangerous' list, was a failure of anticipation, that of the Kohinoor building, on such a list and which fell mid-repairs, implies a failure of enforcement. Yet, the State responded similarly in both instances, by suspending officials in 2020 and filing a criminal case against the contractor now. Bhiwandi, one of India's largest powerloom hubs, has a large low-income migrant population living in small houses in densely packed neighbourhoods. With hundreds of buildings on the 'danger' list and no transit camps or temporary housing, residents often choose unsafe homes over homelessness, while owners continue collecting rent. Evacuation orders are also hard to enforce without police support, while allowing the corporation to claim that legal liability has been discharged on paper; demolitions are politically fraught. That both buildings collapsed during the monsoons is also not coincidental.

India treats infrastructure as an asset with a one-time investment. The post-2000s construction boom only outpaced maintenance work and administrative oversight, with the latter having fragmented further since. In mid-2024, roofs/canopies collapsed at airports in Delhi, Jabalpur, and Rajkot while Bihar had a spate of collapsing bridges in 2024-26. Roads have frequently caved in and basements have flooded in tier-I cities, including in the Rajinder Nagar tragedy. This year, similar collapses have also been reported in Kolkata and Pune. Despite the availability of technologies to continuously monitor structures and issue early warnings, urbanisation has outrun municipal capacity, with most of the resulting failures involving a known hazard. The apparent rise in the frequency of these incidents indicates a lack of attention to construction quality as much as greater media coverage and there being more infrastructure to fail. But in place of the state's almost instinctive responses in the form of legal and disciplinary action, inquiries and promises of audits, and victim compensation, India's buildings need widespread rehabilitation work. Nothing short of an urban renewal would do.

The state against its students, lessons to remember

Shashank Pandey

Lawyer based in New Delhi and former Legislative Assistant to Member of Parliament (LAMP) Fellow

On July 26, 1876, 150 years ago almost to the day, Surendranath Banerjee founded the Indian Association in Calcutta. Its first great agitation was, at its core, a student grievance. The colonial government had lowered the maximum age for the Indian Civil Service examination from 21 to 19, a change that quietly shut young Indians out of the highest offices open to them. The state treated the complaint as an administrative footnote. Banerjee treated it as a constitutional question, toured the country, and turned the anger of examination-going youth into the first genuinely pan-Indian political mobilisation. The Raj never recovered the loyalty of the generation it dismissed.

Fifty years ago, in the winter and monsoon of 1976, two states on two continents were teaching the opposite lesson in real time. On June 16, schoolchildren in Soweto, South Africa, who marched against the imposition of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction were met with live ammunition; hundreds died in the weeks that followed. In India, the Emergency had already emptied the campuses by other means: student unions stood suspended, and activists of every persuasion sat in jail under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA). Pretoria used bullets, New Delhi used preventive detention, and both were confident they had restored order. Within a decade and a half, the generation of Soweto had made apartheid ungovernable, and the generation of the Emergency had produced much of India's post-1977 political leadership. Order purchased through the suppression of the young turned out to be the most expensive commodity either state ever bought.

The pattern repeats again

This July, the streets around Parliament and Jantar Mantar have supplied the third panel of the triptych. What began as an online satire has become one of the largest student mobilisations in years, built on grievances that are neither manufactured nor abstract: a leaked National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (Undergraduate), or NEET-UG, paper that forced the cancellation of an undergraduate medical examination taken by over 20 lakh aspirants, and an on-screen marking controversy that left thousands of school students in limbo. So far, the state's response has followed the familiar pattern of barricades, tear gas, a baton charge that injured more than 100 students during the march on Parliament, and rhetoric from the highest levels of the establishment comparing protesters to vermin.

> From 1876 to 2026, student grievances expose failures of governance

History suggests three lessons that the state would do well to learn before the pattern completes itself. Lesson one: force does not disperse a genuine grievance, it organises it. The Soweto uprising did not begin as a revolution. It began as a march by schoolchildren over the language of instruction. It was the shooting that made it a revolution. Every image of a fallen student became a recruitment poster, exile camps filled with teenagers who had left the country in the months after June 1976. The regime's own commission later conceded that the police response, not the original grievance, had transformed a protest into an insurrection.

The mechanism is not South African, it is universal. When the state answers a specific, bounded demand with generalised violence, it converts a policy dispute into a question of dignity, and dignity disputes do not settle. The students who returned to Jantar Mantar the morning after the lathi charge, and said so to every camera available, were following a script written in Soweto and in a hundred places since. A government that reads their return as defiance to be broken, rather than as evidence that force has already failed, is preparing its own sequel.

The politics of disrespect

Lesson two: contempt delegitimises the state faster than it delegitimises the students. The colonial government's error in 1876 was not primarily one of policy. It was one of register. By treating the civil service age question as beneath serious engagement, it told an entire educated generation that their aspirations had no standing before the state. Banerjee understood that the insult was more mobilising than the injury, and the Indian Association was built on that understanding.

The instinct to belittle is alive today. When constitutional functionaries such as the Chief Justice of India reach for the vocabulary of pest control to describe a section of youth, they repeat the Raj's mistake with less excuse. Dehumanising language aimed at the young does not shrink a movement but hands the movement its identity, its symbols and its moral high ground in a single gesture. The protesters outside Parliament this week did not have to manufacture the charge that the state holds them in contempt. The state made the charge for them, on the record. A government serious about de-escalation would begin not with concessions but with a change of register by acknowledging, plainly and publicly, that the integrity of public examinations is a legitimate constitutional concern of every citizen who sits for one, and that those raising it are stakeholders, not enemies.

Lesson three: protest is the symptom; blocked accountability is the disease. Students do not camp on pavements because they enjoy tear gas. They do so when every institutional channel for redress has been tried and found closed. The 1876 agitation arose because Indians had no representative forum in which the civil service rules could even be debated and the Association became the forum the constitution did not provide. The Emergency-era campuses went silent because the ordinary machinery of accountability, the courts, the press, the legislature, had been suspended; when it was restored in 1977, the verdict was unambiguous.

The Gen Z-led education reform movement has been explicit that it wants action rather than assurances: credible investigations, examination reform, and accountability for the institutional failures that preceded the leak. These are demands that a functioning system of parliamentary and regulatory oversight should have been capable of processing without a single barricade. The durable answer to this protest is therefore not a better crowd-control strategy but a stronger accountability architecture, wherein an examination authority enjoys genuine independence, evaluation and revaluation are subject to statutory transparency, parliamentary committee scrutiny produces published findings, and consequences attach to officials rather than only to invigilators and middlemen. A state that builds those channels makes the street redundant. A state that refuses to build them makes the street inevitable.

Ensure genuine accountability

It is an accident of the calendar, but a useful one, that the July 2026 crackdown falls in the same week as the sesquicentenary of the Indian Association. The men who governed India in 1876 could not have imagined that a students' grievance about an examination would seed the movement that ended their rule. Public officials who governed India and South Africa in 1976 could not have imagined that the teenagers they jailed and shot would inherit their states. No government ever believes the pattern applies to itself. That is precisely how the pattern survives.

The young people at Jantar Mantar were not asking the state to surrender. They were asking it to be worthy of the examinations it conducts. On the evidence of a century and a half, the governments that listen to that request are the ones that last.

Strong health systems for all with better public spending

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The discourse on building strong public health systems tends to start with financing. Indeed, according to the World Bank, the per capita public spending on universal health coverage in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) – including government expenditure and off-budget development assistance – is about half of the minimum benchmarks. As a share of gross domestic product (GDP), the health expenditure gap between LMICs and high-income countries narrowed from 2.05 percentage points in 2000 to 1.68 percentage points in 2023. While it may seem that LMICs are "catching up", recent World Health Organization data show that in per capita terms the gap has in fact expanded more than three-fold during this period.

Health aid under pressure

Over the years, "development assistance for health" (DAH) has played a critical role in supplementing national budgets in LMICs with the amount of such aid peaking in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the trend of increasing DAH reversed sharply post the pandemic. Further, in early 2025, the United States, a country that has historically contributed over a third of all DAH globally per year, announced cuts to the tune of 67% to its foreign assistance programme. The United Kingdom, France, and Germany followed suit, with cuts of 39%, 35%, and 12%, respectively. As per the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), health funding could drop by up to 60% from its 2022 peak.

At the same time, national budgets are strained due to rising public debt and its costs. Global public debt reached a record figure of $102 trillion in 2024, with developing countries accounting for $31 trillion of this total. Since 2010, the public debt of developing countries has grown twice as fast as that of advanced countries. In 2024, according to UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), developing countries paid a record $921 billion in net interest payments in public debt leaving less for other needs including health.

> With foreign aid cuts and strained domestic budgets, the way forward may be to spend available money better

With public sources drying up, it is unlikely that more money will flow into health systems anytime soon and the way forward may be to spend available money better. There are three broad ways to make public health spending go further.

The first is to spend what is allocated. The World Bank reports that health budgets in LMICs are executed at around 85%-90%, rates that are lower than that for the general budget and for education. This effectively means that there is a deprioritisation of health at the implementation stage of budgets. In India, a parliamentary panel found that only about two-thirds of the allocation for the flagship health infrastructure mission was spent in 2024-25. Within the National Health Mission (NHM), the picture is worse: just 26% of the money earmarked for communicable and non-communicable disease programmes was actually used that year.

The right health investments

The second is to spend on the right things. Budget execution varies across expenditure categories. While wages and salary budgets tend to be implemented in full, there is underspending on goods and services. As a result, workers are not well-equipped to deliver quality health care. More broadly, there is a choice to be made in terms of the tiers of health care that are prioritised in public spending. A lot of the money goes to curative care at the secondary and tertiary levels – at the cost of preventive, primary health care. According to estimates from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, India spends less than one-fourth of public health money on preventive care.

Purely from a health impact viewpoint, public health money is best spent on classic public goods such as infectious disease control or sanitation, where there is a 'market failure' – rather than on the expansion of relatively cheap curative health services (for instance, treating common illnesses) that the private sector is already supplying competitively. Recent evidence bears this out: public health spending markedly improves infectious disease outcomes, through greater access, vaccination, and sanitation, but does far less for maternal and child health or non-communicable diseases, making a strong case for strategic allocation. As populations age, more will need to be done for chronic conditions in terms of addressing risk factors, early detection, and management.

Better governance, better health

The third is to improve governance and operational efficiency. Good governance is key: if corruption is reduced or the quality of bureaucracy improves, countries see greater positive effects of public health spending on desired health outcomes, such as child mortality. The converse also holds: simply increasing spending where governance is weak is unlikely to improve outcomes. Moreover, with the increasing decentralisation of public service delivery, it is becoming imperative to focus on improving governance at the subnational level.

Within governance, there is a crucial role for public finance management. While a well-formulated budget is a good starting point, impact will only be achieved if the budget is implemented efficiently. There is a need to improve budget credibility and cash disbursement. Involvement of public health providers in budget processes can enhance both their accountability and motivation. Improving procurement processes can help achieve greater value for money in health sector resources. As the pandemic has taught us, budgets should be flexible to respond to unforeseen circumstances.

That said, the case for enhanced spending remains: its returns are greatest precisely where health outcomes are poorest; hence, money that is well-directed can help narrow gaps across countries.

Both writers co-author 'The Care Gap', a living literature review supported by Coefficient Giving

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ayurveda and reform

The National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM), Government of India, recently issued a circular stating that those who denigrate ayurvedic degree holders as quacks or fake doctors would invite statutory action. It is certainly uncouth to hurl vile insults at people who undergo a five-year course fully recognised and endorsed by the same universities that grant MBBS degrees. As such, the NCISM is justified in issuing the statement. However, more fundamentally, the NCISM should introspect on why the professionals it creates and endorses are being called quacks. There are serious problems in the way ayurveda is approached, taught, and studied. A lack of timely, evidence-informed revisions has fossilised ayurvedic theories, which in turn has impeded a straightforward appraisal of its practices. Together, these factors have made a significant portion of the ayurveda degree syllabus pseudoscientific. The NCISM's recent mistakes, such as treating Indian philosophy as being close to quantum mechanics or introducing medical astrology as an elective subject, have worsened the situation. The NCISM must understand the ayurvedic dictum that "eliminating the cause of a disease is the sum and substance of all treatment". Unless there is serious introspection and a radical overhaul of the approach to ayurvedic studies, the NCISM will spend its time on futile statutory manoeuvres.

Dr. G.L. Krishna,
Bengaluru

K. Jamuna Rani

Even before music lovers could come to terms with the demise of the legendary playback singer S. Janaki, South Indian film music has lost another iconic veteran, K. Jamuna Rani, whose voice was more than just a part of cinema; it became a treasured memory for millions of listeners. She collaborated with some of the greatest music directors and sang over 6,000 songs across multiple languages, including Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Sinhalese. Renowned for her distinct folk flavour, rhythmic vitality, and memorable duets, she left an indelible mark on South Indian film music. Her timeless solos and duets, including *'Paatondru Ketten Paravasamanen'*, *'Kaalai Vayasu Kattana Saisu'*, *'Yaaradi Nee Mohini'*, *'Athikkai Kaai Kaai'*, and *'Kungumapoove Konjum Purave'*, will remain forever woven into the fabric of our memories.

R. Sivakumar,
Chennai

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Analysing the SC's judgment on sex work

Pankhuri Agarwal

Lecturer and Leverhulme Early Career Research Fellow at King's College London. Author of 'Fictions of Freedom: Migration, Modern Slavery and Bureaucracy in India' (Cambridge University Press)

For more than three decades, sex workers have told governments and courts how anti-trafficking interventions cause profound harm including forced rescues, indefinite detention in "corrective homes", separation from children and even threat to life. And for decades, these accounts were only acknowledged in fragments, and never in a comprehensive rights-based framework. That is what makes the Supreme Court's judgment of May 29, 2026, so significant.

Across nearly 300 pages, the court departs from many assumptions that have long shaped anti-trafficking discourse globally. It recognises that agency and vulnerability can coexist; rejects the conflation of migration with trafficking; affirms that constitutional rights do not disappear because society disapproves of sex work; holds that consenting adult sex workers cannot forcibly be rescued; and that any intervention must begin with an inquiry into consent. Invoking Article 142, the court gives these directions legal force.

But the judgment also exposes a paradox: it adopts arguments that have been painstakingly developed by sex workers but does not acknowledge the workers or their collectives (such as the National Network of Sex Workers among others). This is not only a question of credit; it reveals how even progressive jurisprudence can reproduce a hierarchy of knowledge in which those most affected by law remain its least recognised authors.

What the judgment assumes

The judgment places faith in institutions that have repeatedly failed the very people it seeks to protect. The court assumes that clearer legal standards will produce different institutional behaviour – that police officers will assess consent without prejudice, magistrates will suspend moral judgment, shelter homes will become rights-based support services, and sex workers will have access to legal aid.

For many women, especially those from the Dalit and Adivasi communities, bureaucracy has never been a neutral system. Caste discrimination and economic marginalisation continue to shape everyday encounters with the state. One woman, wrongly labelled a trafficker after a raid, has spent seven years reporting every month to a police station while attending court hearings where, despite all this time, her statement has never even been recorded. "I go to court and sit outside. Then they call my name, and I go inside. But they don't ask me anything. They have not even recorded my statement yet!"

The top court rightly recognises caste as one of the structural conditions that can push women into sex work. But it stops there. Caste does not simply explain entry into the profession. It also structures every institution responsible for implementing this judgment. As one worker put it: "The state says that *acche din* (good days) will come. When will our *acche din* come? Everything is about money these days. Take any actor. They can kill but do not get arrested. Those who do not have money have to keep going to the court like me." Her question exposes the judgment's central assumption: that the law is applied equally once rights are recognised. For many workers, the challenge is not only overcoming moral prejudice. It is navigating a legal and bureaucratic system that continues to be shaped by caste.

The judgment is also noticeably quieter about another source of violence: the anti-trafficking industry itself. The court recommends reforming shelter homes but does not examine the organisations that run them, the funding structures that sustain them, or the incentives that make carceral and forced rescue practices persist. The rescue industry is not solely a humanitarian project. It is sustained by a dense network of civil society organisations that participate in forced raids, manage shelter homes, and exercise significant authority over the women confined within them.

One woman who experienced both prison and a government shelter offered a striking comparison. "Even after rescue, we are bound by the shelter. It is another form of bondage. It seems better to serve six months in jail and come out free than to stay in a shelter for an unknown time." This account is not an exception. It exposes an uncomfortable reality that anti-trafficking discourse obscures: rescue can become another mechanism of control.

> Sex workers and their unions must move from the margins to the centre of implementation. They should draft guidelines, monitor compliance, shape police training, and establish standards for shelters

The road ahead

The top Court's recommendations are important. But for the judgment to fulfil its promise, three priorities stand out.

First, sex workers and their unions must move from the margins to the centre of implementation. They should draft guidelines, monitor compliance, shape police training, and establish standards for shelters. Second, the anti-trafficking NGO sector deserves scrutiny. Longstanding evidence suggests that some have become active participants in coercive rescue practices while operating with limited accountability to the communities they claim to serve. Their funding and legal immunity should no longer be taken for granted. Finally, the structural conditions identified by the court do not require new institutions to fix. India already possesses an extensive welfare architecture. The challenge is ensuring that sex workers can access it as rights-bearing citizens.

The Supreme Court has opened an important constitutional door. Whether it leads to meaningful change will depend on whether India's institutions can abandon decades of paternalism and begin treating sex workers as citizens whose choices deserve the same legal respect as anyone else's.

Bengaluru's civic woes

It remains to be seen whether clearance drives will lead to long-term solutions

STATE OF PLAY

K.C. Deepika

Over the last month, residents of Bengaluru have witnessed the Karnataka government waking up to some age-old problems such as encroached footpaths, garbage blackspots, footpath riding and the like.

Spearheaded by the new Greater Bengaluru Development Minister, Krishna Byre Gowda, back-to-back drives since July 1 saw civic authorities attempt to reclaim the city's notoriously bad pedestrian infrastructure from encroachments by commercial establishments, street vendors, abandoned vehicles, and garbage dumps – problems that most residents had simply resigned to live with.

Though citizens have welcomed the drives, street vendors argue that they were never given vending zones. Moreover, garbage dumping and blackspots exist mostly due to inefficient waste collection as well as civic apathy. In some cases, dumping is carried out by the civic workers themselves due to the lack of waste transfer stations.

The drive to clear footpaths in the city led to altercations between street vendors and civic authorities; in one such clearance drive in Shivajinagar, miscreants even attacked the officials carrying out the drive. Citizens also reported that several of the encroachments that were cleared were back to how they were days after the clearance drive.

The Minister maintained that the aim was not to displace anyone but to create safe pedestrian infrastructure at least on the arterial roads; he said that vendors could move to the inner roads to

continue business. However, street vendor unions have questioned this logic, pointing to the lack of will by successive governments to streamline street vending by assigning ID cards and notifying vending zones, so as to prevent harassment from anti-social elements and enforcement agencies. Mr. Gowda later directed corporation officials to conduct a fresh survey of street vendors as the previous survey had enumerated only a little over 30,000 street vendors, while the actual number exceeds 80,000. He also instructed them to identify vending zones.

In the case of abandoned vehicles, the Minister clarified that the campaign is not aimed at vehicles in regular use, admitting that parking regulations requiring houses to have dedicated parking spaces had not been enforced for decades, resulting in residents having to park their vehicles on public roads.

Lack of planning

Urban planning experts and residents have repeatedly pointed to one lacuna when it comes to Bengaluru: the lack of a long-term vision that can keep pace with the level of growth the city experiences. This, they have argued, applies to many areas, from planning the Namma Metro network, that is yet to reach the Kempegowda International Airport, to ensuring connectivity to Bengaluru's rapidly expanding boundaries.

To address what is easily the city's best claim to infamy, its traffic, the Congress Government has pushed for new tunnel roads and flyovers. However, urban experts and citizens' groups have continuously argued against them, reasoning that the city's public transport should be strengthened instead of introducing short-term solutions for the growing number of private vehicles.

Another case in point is the city's way of addressing its water needs. As Bengaluru's once famed network of lakes has been undermined by infrastructure projects, the government is focussed on bringing solutions from afar. Every drought-hit year threatens the Cauvery dependent-city's water security.

The State government, under the leadership of the new Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, is pushing aggressively for the positioning of Bengaluru as a prime investment destination. As Bengaluru continues to function without an elected civic council since 2020, with the State government facing pressure from the Supreme Court to conduct elections this year, the emphasis on mega projects such as tunnel roads is being seen as an attempt to tilt the odds towards the Congress.

But since there is no assurance on when these big-ticket projects would be realised, the slew of new drives to fix basic pedestrian problems are the ones that could provide instant relief to citizens. There is a growing call for the government to improve the quality of life of the citizens by first fixing the basics before moving on to big-ticket projects.

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Europe's relentless summer leads to unprecedented wildfires

France and Spain have been the most affected so far, with the area affected in the former this year already surpassing record levels since 1980

DATA POINT

Nitika Francis
Devyanshi Bihani

With at least a month left for summer to end in most of Europe, some of the countries, which were already affected by heat wave conditions this year, are now facing wildfires at a pace unseen in the recent past.

France and Spain are the most affected. As of last week, 91,209 hectares have been destroyed by wildfires in France, which already surpasses the total area burned due to forest fires in the country in a year at least since 1980.

As per the Forest Fires in Europe, Middle East and North Africa 2024 report brought out by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission, 75,566 hectares of land which got burnt in 1989 was the previous record.

The extent of the impact of the wildfires is likely to go up significantly in France in the coming days. **Chart 1** shows the area burnt due to forest fires in France in the past decade, as per the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS).

The effects of climate change

The heat wave conditions and the forest fires are seen as symptomatic of Europe's rising temperatures, attributed to climate change.

The fire in the Bordeaux region is shaping up to be the biggest forest fire France has seen. According to multiple media reports, the fire has already burnt through 42,000 hectares of pine forest, destroyed 240 homes, spread close to densely populated areas, with the smoke reaching up to 400 km away.

This has also led to the highest number of people who have been shifted in a single instance to safe locations due to natural disasters. According to the *Associated Press*, more than 2.2 lakh people have been temporarily relocated. Data show that the Bordeaux fire displaced more people than those displaced in wildfires over the past five years combined, which amounts to about 61,000 persons, as per the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre **(Table 1)**.

The total cumulative annual carbon emissions of the 2026 fires – 300 kilotonnes of carbon – has already surpassed the extreme emissions recorded in 2022 and 2003, according to the World Weather Association (WWA).

The area burnt due to wildfires in the European Union from the beginning of June till June 29, 2026 has already exceeded the total area affected by wildfires over the last 10 years **(Chart 2)**. Spain is also witnessing widespread destruction. Around 1.9 lakh hectares of land has been burnt in Spain since June, which is the second highest since 2022.

According to the WWA, the most severe fires are in southwestern France and central and eastern Spain. The map shows the regions affected by forest fires in France this year compared to the previous year. The report of the WWA states that the affected area in France and Spain received above-average rainfall in the winter, which led to the promotion of vegetation growth. These conditions were followed by record-high temperatures, which depleted soil moisture and increased water stress in shrubs and pine trees. These conditions increased the likelihood of the rapid spread of wildfires.

Europe has become the world's fastest-warming continent outside the Arctic. Average temperatures over successive decades show Europe moving from 1.08 degree Celsius below the 1991-2020 average in the decade ending 1955 to 0.87 degree Celsius above it in the decade ending 2025. During the same period, Europe warmed faster than every other continent except the Arctic, outpacing Asia, North America, Africa and the global average.

Burning crisis

The data for the charts were sourced from the European Forest Fire Information System and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

CHART 1: This shows the area burnt in wildfire incidents in France since 2017. The blaze in the Bordeaux region alone accounted for more than 50% of the area burnt in 2026

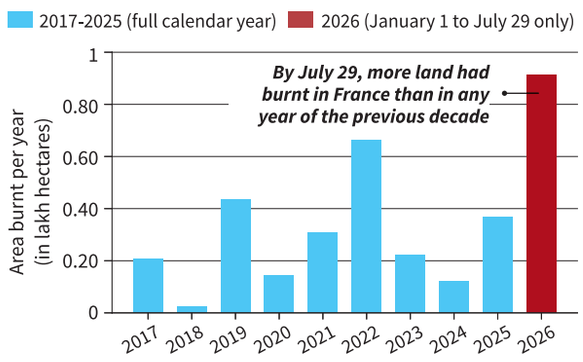


CHART 2: This shows the area burnt across the EU due to wildfires from June till end of July every year. The destruction in Spain is similar to 2022, while that in France is its worst ever

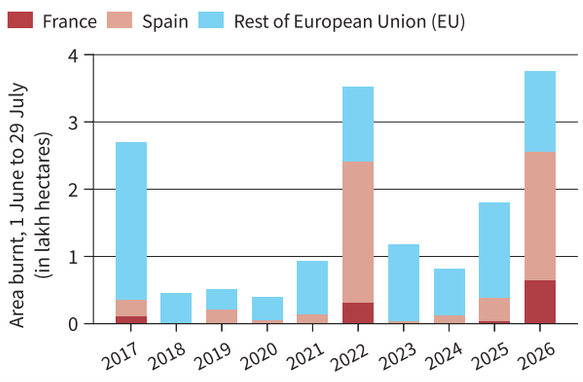
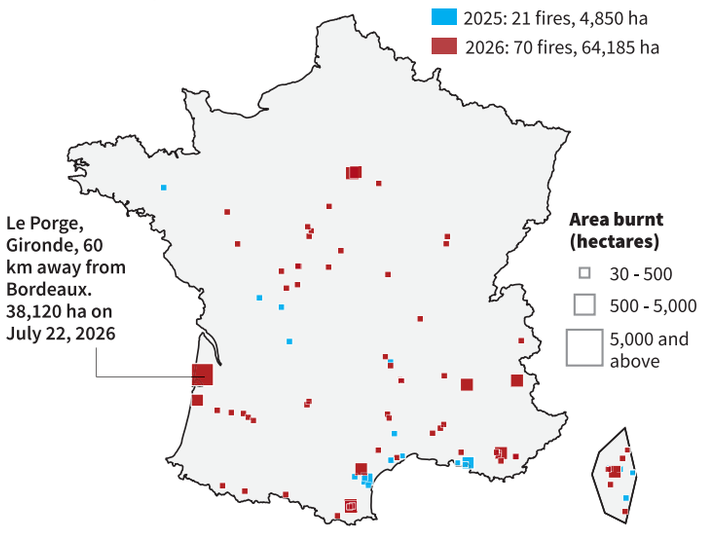


TABLE 1: Number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to wildfires in France. The 2026 figures only represent the persons displaced in the Bordeaux region

Year	Number of IDPs due to wildfires
2017	7,300
2018	682
2019	548
2020	3,010
2021	8,000
2022	44,556
2023	3,313
2024	142
2025	2,476
2026	2,24,000*

**According to an Associated Press report. The 2026 figure is more than three times the total of the previous nine years*

MAP 1: Each square represents a wildfire incident in the June to July period. The size of the square is indicative of the area burnt in the incident



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO AUGUST 3, 1976

5 tmcft. of water released to help Tamil Nadu

Bangalore, August 2: Karnataka is giving five tmcft. of water to Tamil Nadu as a 'gesture of goodwill' to save the kuruvai crop in Thanjavur delta.

The decision was taken this morning by the Chief Minister, Mr. D. Deveraj Urs, in response to a request from Tamil Nadu.

The Karnataka authorities started releasing water in the afternoon. The water is expected to reach Mettur Dam in the next two days.

A spokesman of the Karnataka Government said that water was being released purely as a gesture of goodwill in spite of Karnataka's own difficulties. He pointed out that the situation in South Karnataka was bad and the standing crop, particularly sugarcane crop in the Krishnarajasagar ayacut, had suffered badly because of lack of water. The State Government was experiencing difficulty in providing adequate water to save the standing crop. The rainfall so far had been the lowest Karnataka had received in recent years.

Madras, August 2: The decision of the Karnataka Government to release five tmc feet of water from Krishnarajasagar has been welcomed by Tamil Nadu officials who were worried over the fast depleting storage in Mettur where the inflow has reached a mere 10 cusecs this morning.

They are happy that Karnataka has come to Tamil Nadu's rescue at this moment when water is urgently required for Kuruvai cultivation in Thanjavur district.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO AUGUST 3, 1926

Anglo-Indian association

Quetta, August 3: The Quetta branch of the Anglo-Indian and domiciled European Association has been resuscitated by Mr. Lawrence P. Atkinson, travelling Secretary, who addressed a meeting at the Baluchi Club on July 30, Rev. J. Cummings presiding. Mr. Atkinson said that it was imperative that the Anglo-Indian community should take their stand with the other communities in India as a combined minority. He appealed for support to Col. Gidney's fund for the higher education of the community. A successful dance was given to meet the travelling Secretary at the Railway Institute on the night of August 2.

Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Years after which disaster management personnel got hike

16 Delhi government has hiked the remuneration of disaster management personnel by up to 100%. Their previous salary hike was in 2009. The move will benefit staff working under the Delhi State Disaster Management Authority. PTI

Persons shifted to camps set up across Kerala following rains

5,792 Kerala CM V. D. Satheesan said that eight people have died, an equal number were missing and 13 injured in the previous day's rains which caused landslides, waterlogging and property damage in many parts. PTI

CBI cases related to exam irregularities awaiting trial

158 Around 158 cases linked to alleged recruitment exam irregularities are awaiting the start of trial in various courts despite the completion of CBI investigations, with some of them registered more than two decades ago, sources said. PTI

Amount earned as fines for ticketless travel in July

78 in ₹ lakh. The Jammu Division of Northern Railway generated about ₹78 lakh in revenue by penalising more than 10,000 ticketless and irregular travellers in July, reflecting intensified enforcement against fare evasion, an official spokesperson said. PTI

Number of persons killed in Spain's Ceuta migrant rush

72 At least 72 people died during the mass influx in recent days of migrants into Spain's Ceuta enclave, when tens of thousands of people mostly swam around the border post from Morocco, local officials said on Sunday. AFP

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Why are govt. schools shutting down?

Which States have witnessed the highest number of closures? How has school rationalisation affected children's access to education? Who bears the biggest burden of government school closures? Can the Centre step in to reverse the trend? Why has the Right to Education Act fallen short?

EXPLAINER

G. Ramakrishnan

The story so far:

A recent NITI Aayog report said some 94,000 government schools were closed over the past decade, an average of 25 a day, contributing to a 2.26 crore decline in government school enrolment. The government schools' share of total enrolment has fallen from 71% in 2005 to 49.24% in 2024-25.

Why are government schools shutting down?

School closures are happening across States on the grounds of rationalisation. The National Education Policy 2020 advocates such rationalisation but without endangering the concept of neighbourhood schools.

School closure numbers cannot be explained away as gradual demographic drift, urban migration and so on. Rather, it is a coordinated administrative decision taken in states where the poorest and most rural children have the least capacity to compensate for a school that has vanished.

Which States are among the worst affected?

Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir lead in this.

In December 2025, Madhya Pradesh's School Education Department found that 7.37 lakh children in the state have no school records. They are not enrolled in any school – private or government.

In Jhabua and Shivpuri, for instance, 29,000 children fall into the "Drop Box" category – the department's term for those at imminent risk of dropping out. Across the State's 55 districts, more than 3,500 government schools recorded zero new admissions this academic session. Another 6,500 schools saw fewer than 10 admissions.

The department's response was to instruct every district education officer to paste lists of unmapped children on school noticeboards, contact them directly, and upload their details to the State portal.

School closures are happening across States on the grounds of rationalisation. THULASI KAKKAT

Statewide, 11.38 lakh children fall under the "Drop Box" category. Another 1.23 lakh are already recorded as dropouts. A further 1.55 lakh have left school because their families were displaced or migrated for work.

The department's flagship outreach programmes, School Chalen Hum and the Home Contact Campaign, were built to prevent exactly this. The State's own audit of its own scheme found three-quarters of a million children whom neither programme had reached.

Government data tabled in the Lok Sabha in February confirms the scale. UDISE+ figures show the national count of government schools falling from 11.07 lakh in 2014-15 to 10.17 lakh in 2023-24, a decline of roughly 89,000 that lines up almost exactly with NITI Aayog's own count. Private schools nationally grew from 2.88 lakh to 3.31 lakh over the same decade.

Madhya Pradesh's government schools fell from 1.22 lakh in 2018-19 to 99,411 the very next year – a drop of roughly 22,600 in twelve months. Uttar Pradesh's government schools fell from 1.63 lakh to 1.38 lakh in that identical year, a drop of over 25,000.

Reports on J&K's rationalisation programme documented children now travelling 4 to 6 km daily to reach a functioning school, violating neighbourhood school mandates of Right to Education Act (RTE).

More than 4,300 schools were closed or merged under a rationalisation scheme, with the Lok Sabha's own UDISE+ figures showing the state's school count falling from 23,167 in 2020-21 to 18,785 by 2022-23, alongside nearly 13,000 vacant teaching posts reported separately in the state assembly.

What is the impact of the shutdown of government schools?

Government schools in India are not a neutral public utility used evenly across classes. They are, disproportionately, the schools of the poor – of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and the poorer strata of backward-class communities. India is home to roughly 60% of the world's below-poverty-line population, and it is their children who fill government classrooms.

A 2019 National Sample Survey analysis found access to free education declining unevenly, with Muslim and Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe households disproportionately marginalised from the schools nearest to them.

The burden falls disproportionately on girls who are the first to be withdrawn when the nearest school stops being nearby. What consolidation looks like on the ground is often a single teacher covering five classes at once – unable to know an individual child's background or tailor instruction, technically in breach of the Right to Education Act's staffing and quality norms.

Who is responsible for this trend?

In Lok Sabha, the concerned minister said education is on the concurrent list, and the responsibility for this trend lies entirely with States. But the RTE is a Central Act and the mandates on neighbourhood schools are the Centre's responsibility.

Further, the Centre seeks to intervene in State school education by making Central fund allocation for schools conditional on NEP implementation and also imposes a language policy. There are avenues for the Centre to step in against this trend.

The RTE Act, in force since 2010, guarantees free and compulsory education from age six to 14. RTE says nothing binding about the quality of what is delivered once a child is inside the classroom. It creates entitlements that children, by definition, cannot assert on their own – and parents, particularly poor and rural parents, often lack the legal and institutional capacity to enforce either. RTE assumes a symmetry of power between the state, the school, and the family that does not exist on the ground. RTE is not justiciable, in practice. School Management Committees, the one mechanism written into the RTE to give parents and communities a formal voice, largely go unconvened.

(The author is Chairman, Central Control Commission, CPI(M))

THE GIST

- Nearly 94,000 government schools have closed over the past decade under State-led rationalisation drives, with Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir among the worst affected, leading to falling enrolment and rising dropout risks.
- The closures have disproportionately affected poor, rural, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and girl students, while questions remain over the Centre's role in enforcing neighbourhood school norms under the Right to Education Act.

Why does Kerala report a high leptospirosis burden?

Which groups are most vulnerable to contracting leptospirosis in the State?

C. Maya

The story so far:

Leptospirosis is a tropical zoonotic disease – a bacterial systemic infection caused by pathogenic Leptospira – highly integrated with an environment in which both humans and animals thrive. The disease, which began to be reported in Kerala since 1989, has been endemic in the State for the past three decades or more and has now become the communicable disease with the highest mortality profile. Leptospirosis is yet again in focus now, as the disease has claimed 50 lives just in the month of July this year.

What makes Kerala a hotspot for the disease?

Kerala's unique environment, with heavy monsoons, frequent floods and year-round moisture and humidity, creates ideal survival conditions for Leptospira bacteria in soil and water bodies such as lakes and canals. An abundance of rodent and animal reservoir hosts live in proximity to human residential areas and farms. Paddy cultivation, pineapple plantations and canal cleaning activities expose large numbers of agricultural and manual labourers in productive ages to contaminated water, leading leptospira to enter the body through mucosal surfaces, abrasions or broken skin.

The Health Department maintains that according to the data of the National Centre for Disease Control, leptospirosis is endemic in at least 12 other States, with a high burden of disease. It is better disease surveillance, extensive diagnostic facilities and aggressive logging of both confirmed and probable cases that make Kerala seem like the State with the highest leptospirosis burden, it is claimed.

Which is the population most affected by leptospirosis?

Traditionally, leptospirosis has remained an occupational hazard, with people engaged in farming, dairy farming, and cleaning work – essentially, people are at high risk of coming into contact with soil and contaminated water – contracting the disease. The disease typically affects those in the low socio-economic strata, but there have also been cases in urban areas, where women have contracted the disease following gardening (possibly bare-handed). Health Department has also identified that construction workers – especially the migrant workers who are employed in the road works on the State's Highways – are at heightened risk of contracting leptospirosis. The proliferation of wayside eateries has increased the chances of soil contamination by rodents.

What is making the case fatality rate go up?

Late diagnosis and rapid progression of the disease, leading to a cascade of lethal complications such as pulmonary haemorrhage and multi-organ failure between 4.5 and 5 days, leaving a narrow therapeutic window for clinicians to intervene, has been making leptospirosis a very unpredictable disease with a difficult prognosis in recent times. Previously, patients showed signs of complications only by the second week of the illness. Clinicians note that in the post-COVID era, dysregulatory immune response triggering a rapid cytokine storm, with patients requiring mechanical ventilation, has been a feature of most infectious diseases.

Leptospirosis is associated with a broad spectrum of severity, ranging from subclinical or mild illness to severe disease, manifesting as fever, myalgia, conjunctival suffusion and gastrointestinal issues. It is only in 5-10% that the disease worsens and the prognosis becomes unpredictable.

In the initial days, the symptoms overlap with those of any tropical fever and hence people self-treat with analgesics and remain at home, till the symptoms suddenly worsen.

The laboratory diagnosis of leptospirosis also continues to be a challenge, because current serological tests for antibodies, such as ELISA, do not give confirmatory results in the acute phase of the disease.

Molecular diagnosis (PCR) has been introduced by the State for the early detection of leptospirosis; however, these tests are not widely available across districts. Intensive management and multidisciplinary support are crucial for a patient developing complications, but secondary care hospitals often lack round-the-clock emergency management facilities and human resources, all of which adds to the mortality.

What has been Kerala's strategy?

Chemo prophylaxis with Doxycycline – 200 mg twice a week – targeting the high-risk groups has been a strategy the State has always relied on to prevent leptospirosis. Clinicians point out that one cannot go wrong in starting doxycycline early on, even when the patients' symptoms might be hard to distinguish. The strategy is very effective even after one has contracted the infectious organism because, when taken as per the protocol, doxycycline prevents the replication of leptospira in the body. However, compliance has been poor and people seldom listen to the advisories issued by the Health Department.

The State's treatment protocol advised primary care physicians to maintain a high index of suspicion if a patient presents with fever and myalgia and without any respiratory symptoms and to start antibiotics as early as possible if the patient belongs to a high-risk category.

What are the modifications suggested in the strategy?

An experts' group has suggested that disease prevention strategies focussing on the vulnerable categories at high risk of occupational exposure to leptospirosis be devised and that risk communication be taken up as a campaign amongst these groups. Preventive gear, such as gum boots and heavy-duty gloves are to be provided to manual labourers and farm workers so that the risk of bare skin contact with contaminated soil and water is minimised.

CACHE

Image used for representational purposes. REUTERS

Why are people turning to social media for childbirth advice?

Social media platforms are monetising unscientific content promoting home births and free births without doctors; while many parents turn to these practices after traumatic hospital experiences, experts warn that unsafe online advice and lack of regulation can have fatal consequences

Sahana Venugopal

The story so far:

In late June, a Tamil Nadu woman, 32, died from a postpartum haemorrhage and other complications. According to the police, the woman died after a medically unassisted birth at home, where family members allegedly helped her by watching YouTube videos for guidance. She leaves behind both her newborn and an older daughter. According to the initial police reports, the couple had wanted a "natural delivery."

Around the world, more people who want to give birth at home or without doctors and surgeries are going to Reddit, Instagram, and YouTube to both give and get medical guidance. This unvetted, high-risk content could cost the lives of more parents and newborns.

Is social media promoting childbirth without doctors?

Social media companies with millions of users – Google-owned YouTube and Meta-owned Instagram – are allowing content creators to share unscientific advice, as well as make money from videos that document and promote home births with only a midwife. On Reddit, most home birthing content is text-based but still poses risks.

For example, a home birth YouTube vlog posted in November 2025 with over 146,000 views showed the mother touting a "2-HOUR PAIN FREE HOME BIRTH!" in a small pool, as well as promoting a religious birthing course and app. The mother said she gave birth at 42 weeks, and claimed she experienced a "healthy, supernatural labor". The vlog claimed that the midwife "finally got there only a few minutes before the baby's arrival" and that the family waited 90 seconds for the newborn's first breath, which is far longer than the accepted standard.

Another "natural home birth" vlog that was documenting the mother's labour ended with an emergency hospital delivery after meconium (the baby's very sticky first faeces) was detected before birth, upping the risk of potential infection should the baby inhale this via the amniotic fluid (meconium aspiration).

"Not the outcome we hoped for, but grateful to the NHS for keeping me and baby safe," stated the description of the mother's video from September that had over 420,000 views.

Multiple similar home birth vlogs contained links to online storefronts and other social media channels, or promoted products, coupon codes and affiliate links. This allows home birthers to directly profit from their content and view counts. But monetising childbirth vlogs brings up ethical concerns as birth videos include footage of the naked newborn and/or the mother in an undressed and vulnerable state.

On Instagram, several free birth influencers claim that they are going through their pregnancies without any doctors' appointments or ultrasound scans.

Other free or home birthers on Instagram recommended extending pregnancies well beyond 41 weeks (to avoid being induced at a hospital), even though such delays without medical clearance can increase the chances of a stillborn baby. Free birth influencers and even some midwives online share frightening anecdotes about patient abuse, and push the false idea that women's bodies are made to birth babies without outside help.

In Reddit's Home Birth community, forum rules ban medical advice. However, this rule is openly flouted as people often ask sensitive medical questions, with other users' answers presented as opinions or personal stories.

One pregnant user in the Reddit Home Birth community, for example, posted that they had multiple high blood pressure readings. They dismissed these readings and declined a hospital-recommended induction. Instead, they asked Reddit users about taking a specific oil. This Reddit poster also minimised the potential risks of that oil causing the baby to pass faeces (meconium) before birth.

The work of free birth influencers online has already led to fatal consequences in the offline world. Take the Free Birth Society movement – with 72,000 subscribers on YouTube and 134,000 followers on Instagram – that has been named in relation to multiple baby injuries and deaths around the world, per an investigation by *The Guardian*. The founder has continued to promote highly unscientific videos, as well as her business, on social media.

Unlike the health content shared online during the COVID-19 pandemic that came with compulsory medical disclaimers, home birthing videos on YouTube and Instagram lack formal warnings about the dangers of giving birth in one's house (home birth) or without doctors present (free birth).

Why do people choose home births or free births?

There are valid reasons why these practices still exist. Many pregnant women on forums such as Reddit have posted about traumatising birthing experiences at hospitals, such as being ignored or assaulted by healthcare professionals, being pressured into caesarean deliveries, having surgeons cut them without warning, not being given adequate pain relief, and having their bodies and babies handled roughly.

For their part, home birthers portray their deliveries as being quiet, peaceful, luxurious, and even spiritual. Edited vlogs and curated clips on social media show the birthing parents being cared for by their partners, midwives, and other children for hours on end. Many are seen seated in a pool of warm water while surrounded by soft lights, nature, prayers, soothing music, snacks, and even photographers. In multiple such videos, rushing to the hospital to be induced or undergo a C-section is often framed as a catastrophe to be avoided until the very last minute. But when such practices are normalised, hospital doctors and nurses face increased pressure; instead of a monitored delivery, they are dealing with a medical emergency.

In truth, the popularity of free birthing and home birthing can be seen as a response to the failure of hospitals to give pregnant parents the standard of care that they require. But as influencers leverage both trauma and technology in order to promote life-threatening birthing practices on social media, what viewers must really see is the dangerous absence of regulation.

THE DAILY QUIZ

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

On August 3, 1936, Jesse Owens won the 100 metres at the Berlin Olympics, the first of four gold medals that cemented his place as one of the greatest athletes in history

Prathmesh Kher

QUESTION 1
Why did "J.C." Owens become known as "Jesse"?

QUESTION 2
What was the nickname given to Owens' extraordinary sequence of performances at the 1935 Big Ten Championships?

QUESTION 3
Owens won four gold medals in Berlin. Which of these events was not one of them?

QUESTION 4
What was Jesse Owens' winning distance in the long jump at the 1936 Olympics?

QUESTION 5
Which two athletes were controversially dropped from the U.S. 4×100-metre relay team before the final, allowing Jesse Owens and Ralph Metcalfe to compete?

Visual Question:
Identify this U.S. President who neither congratulated Jesse Owens nor invited him to the White House after his four-gold-medal triumph at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM/VINCENZO LAVIOSA

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. Name his 2010 cult hit track that was also performed at the 2024 Paris Olympics. **Ans: *Nightcall***
2. Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo co-produced [1]. He was one half of _____, the iconic former French electronic duo. Fill in the blank. **Ans: Daft Punk**
3. Kavinsky was a stage persona of Vincent Belorgey. What is the character's backstory? **Ans: A driver crashes his Ferrari Testarossa in the 80s and returns decades later as a zombie-like figure whose supernatural experiences inspire his music.**
4. Many fans associate Kavinsky's work as part of an electronic music microcosm that evokes nostalgia of the 1980s culture. Identify the retro genre. **Ans: Synthwave**
5. What was the title of Kavinsky's second and final studio album, released in 2022? **Ans: Reborn**
Visual: This 2011 neo-noir thriller, starring Ryan Gosling in a scorpion jacket, introduced Kavinsky to a broader audience. Name the film. **Ans: Nicolas Winding Refn's *Drive***
Early Birds: Sonali Das | Tom Alan Faith | Sudhir Thapa | Dodo Jayaditya | Suchit Narottam

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

Judges looked completely nonplussed

She is known for her mercurial temperament

S. Upendran

What is the meaning of the word 'mercurial'? (R Sriram, Gurugram)

The Romans named many of the planets in our solar system in honour of their gods – Venus, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, etc. The word 'mercurial' comes from Mercury, and in Roman mythology, Mercury was the messenger of the gods. His job required speed, and the winged sandals and the winged helmet he wore enabled him to get from one place to another very quickly. Speed was one of the reasons why the small planet was named Mercury. Like the god, the planet closest to the sun is very quick as well. Among the planets, Mercury is the fastest to orbit the sun – while it takes Earth 365 days to go around the sun, Mercury takes a mere 88 days.

Nowadays, the word 'mercurial' is used in everyday contexts to mean several different things. When used with people, it can refer to someone who is clever and full of energy. So energetic, in fact, that the person keeps changing his mind frequently; in other words, an individual who is mercurial is unpredictable - it becomes difficult to know what he will do next. In fact, the person himself may have no idea. A mercurial individual will have terrible mood swings; he will not be easy to get along with.

Jai didn't have too many friends because of his mercurial temperament.

Other common expressions with the word are 'mercurial wit' and 'mercurial mind'.

What is the meaning of 'nonplussed'? (K. Lalitha, Chennai)

The word consists of two syllables; the first is pronounced like the word 'non', while the 'plus' in the second sounds like the word 'plus'. The final 'ed' is like the 't' in 'tap', 'toe' and 'tin'. The word is pronounced 'non PLUST' with the stress on the second syllable. It is a Latin word, and literally means 'no more' or 'no further'. Traditionally, the word has mostly been used to mean confused or surprised. When you ask someone a question and his reply leaves you nonplussed, you are left scratching your head; you are left speechless, for you do not know how to react to the strange or confusing remark. By the way, the opposite of 'nonplussed' is not 'plussed'; the word 'plussed' does not exist on its own.

The workers were nonplussed by the Management's decision.

Everyone was nonplussed when Vikram submitted his resignation letter.

For several centuries now, 'nonplussed' has mostly been used to mean confused, dumbfounded, etc. Of late, however, Americans have been using the word to mean 'unfazed' or 'nonchalant' – mostly in informal contexts. When you are unfazed by something, you are not affected by it – you are not worried, and therefore stay calm. When Barack Obama was asked how his young daughters were dealing with the constant public scrutiny, he replied, "I've been really happy by how nonplussed they've been." Old timers would frown on the former President's use of 'nonplussed'. This usage, however, is becoming relatively common in American English.

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Word of the day

Chary:
characterised by great caution and wariness

Synonyms: careful, alert, circumspect, considerate

Usage: *The manager was chary about hiring too quickly.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/chary

International Phonetic Alphabet: /tʃeəri/

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

From Page One

Cauvery situation slightly better, says CM

"(Four) reservoirs in the Cauvery basin are cumulatively receiving about 68,000 cusecs of water. Our dams were not full since there was no rain. There has been some rain (now) and the situation has become slightly better. Kabini (reservoir) is full," Mr. Shivakumar said.

Asked if he would be able to convince Mr. Vijay of the situation, Mr. Shivakumar said: "We will make him understand (the situation) and he will understand... Whatever our political differences may be, he wanted to come to Karnataka."

He said he will speak to the protesting farmers, Kannada organisations, and Opposition leaders.

However, in Mysuru, former MLA Vatal Nagaraj said the bandh had not been called on one issue.

"More than 2,000 Kannada organisations have extended support to the bandh... Bandh is for various issues, including the Mahadayi river water dispute, employment for Kannadigas, and the development of Mysuru, Hyderabad-Karnataka region, North Karnataka, Belagavi, Hubballi-Dharwad and border areas. There is no question of withdrawing the bandh."

Cauvery water to reach Tamil Nadu today

Water Resources Department (WRD) officials at the Mettur Dam said that 500 cusecs of water was initially released from the Kabini Dam on Saturday morning. The discharge was gradually increased to 5,000 cusecs in the afternoon before reaching 25,000 cusecs by Saturday night.

"We expect the present discharge of 25,000 cusecs to continue for the next few days. If the Mettur Dam receives 25,000 cusecs of inflow for an entire day, the water level will rise by about four feet. Once the reservoir level crosses 90 feet, the government will decide on releasing water from the dam for delta irrigation," WRD officials said.

Officials said Tamil Nadu is likely to receive a substantial quantity of Cauvery water only after Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS) Dam fills up. The dam is yet to reach capacity. At present, the reservoir holds around 20 tmc ft of water against its storage capacity of 49.45 tmc ft.

On Sunday, the water level at the Mettur Dam stood at 73.33 feet against its full reservoir level of 120 feet. The storage stood at 35.63 tmc ft, compared with the dam's capacity of 93.47 tmc ft. Inflow into the reservoir increased to 47 cusecs from 42 cusecs, while the discharge for drinking water purposes into the Cauvery river was maintained at 1,500 cusecs.

Fuel consumption rises in July; LPG use down

Coal production soared 7.5% and dispatches surged 17.34% amid increased demand for power due to the uneven monsoon and increased temperatures.

Official data indicated that the country's power consumption grew by about 11% in June compared to the same period last year, reaching 170.7 billion units as demand for cooling appliances rose.

India produced 69.75 million tonnes (MT) of coal in July, higher than the 64.88 MT produced last July, according to provisional figures provided by the Coal Ministry.

Overall coal dispatches stood at 86.33 MT during the reported period – 17.34% higher than 73.57 MT dispatched last year.

In the reported period, Coal India accounted for 50.35 MT of production – 8.42% higher on a year-on-year basis – and its exclusive dispatch was 63.67 MT during the period. Production is the amount of coal mined and dispatch the volume sent to consumers.

Consumption of aviation turbine fuel, or jet fuel, marginally fell by 1.44% year-on-year to 0.699 MMT during the reported period.

Haryana town fuels India's CWG boxing haul

"For the last two years, selections were done without trials, based on five to seven parameters decided by coaches. It was like a teacher giving marks in class. Coaches got influenced by whether someone greeted them or had a good rapport. But in the ring, only punches matter," Mr. Singh told *The Hindu*.

Following backlash from players and intervention by the Sports Authority of India, the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) scrapped its controversial points-based "assessment" system and reverted to open, trial-based selections, said Mr. Singh, who also coached Glasgow gold medallist Sakshi Chaudhary. This time, he said, BFI officials conducted neutral trials in public view with neutral judges. "Earlier, results were withheld, or there were just informal bouts with no declared outcome," he added.

In Dhanana village, it was a moment of pride for Ms. Priya Ghanghas's family. Her father Mahendra told reporters that the entire village would welcome her home.

Speaking about her discipline, he said her diet of "churma, kheer, curd and milk" had played a big role. "Every parent should take a lesson from Priya: encourage your children to take up sports and work hard," he said.

Drugs-free youth crucial for developed India: Modi

The PM launches nationwide campaign against drugs, says physically and mentally fit young Indians are key for 'Viksit Bharat'; over one crore participants join pledge against substance abuse

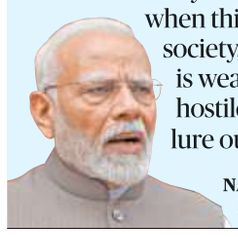
The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday laid out a national vision for building a drugs-free youth population as the foundation of "Viksit Bharat" (developed India). Stressing the need for sustained action and community participation to combat drug abuse, he said today's youth would eventually enjoy the fruits of a developed India.

After launching the *Nasha Mukt Yuva* for Viksit Bharat *Sankalp Abhiyan* (Drug-Free Youth for Developed India Pledge Campaign), Mr. Modi said that as India has set the goal of becoming a developed country, it was essential for the youth to remain physically and mentally fit, and therefore stay away from drug abuse.

Supported by more than 125 spiritual and public organisations, educational institutions, and industrial associations, the programme was conducted at over 28,000 locations across the country and saw participation from over one crore youth, besides several Chief Ministers and Governors.

> When a young person falls into drug addiction, it is not only that individual who loses. A dream dies before it can be fulfilled. An entire family suffers and often falls apart... when this happens in families and society, the strength of the country is weakened as well. That is why hostile countries also conspire to lure our youth into drug addiction
>
> **NARENDRA MODI**
> Prime Minister



Before the Prime Minister's address, the participating youth pledged to make India drugs-free.

'Youth to lead India'

Mr. Modi said the initiative required collective action. "The pledge taken today will continue over the next 100 weeks. Every Sunday, activities related to art, culture, sports, meditation, spirituality, and service will be organised. The message of a drug-free life will reach more and more people," he said.

"Over the next 20 to 25 years, you will shape your own lives, and by 2047, it is you who will lead India to the goal of becoming a developed country. You will be the ones enjoying the fruits of that achievement," he said, addressing the youth.

Noting that young people were today excelling in start-ups, leading the field of Artificial Intelligence, setting new milestones in sports, science and space, he said the country needed their energy, imagination, and talent.

"That is why it is essential that you remain free from drugs, for both your own future and for the country... When a young person falls into drug addiction, it is not only that individual who loses. A dream dies before it can be fulfilled. An entire family suffers and often falls apart," said Mr. Modi.

"When this happens in families and society, the strength of the country is weakened as well. That is why hostile countries also conspire to lure our youth into drug addiction. Profiting from drug trafficking while weakening our country is part of their malicious agenda. Therefore, we must protect every young person from falling into the trap," he said.

Mr. Modi urged people not to hide cases of addiction and to seek professional help for young people struggling with substance abuse, pointing out that rehabilitation centres have been established to aid their recovery. "Someone who defeats addiction is a true warrior. Society should respect them and give them a second chance," he said.

The Prime Minister said the government had been taking stringent action against drug traffickers and dealers. "Compared with previous years, arrests have increased significantly. This shows how seriously our government is tackling this issue," he said., expressing confidence that the government would continue the mission with full commitment.

Cong. criticises use of NSA against Assam land rights activist

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Pranab Doley

The Congress on Sunday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party government in Assam of misusing the National Security Act (NSA) to detain land rights activist Pranab Doley after he was granted bail, alleging that the move was an attempt to suppress democratic dissent.

Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh said the Assam government invoked the NSA against Mr. Doley on July 30, a day after a district court granted him bail. He described the detention as a "blatant misuse" of preventive detention laws and an overreach by the State. Mr. Ramesh said Mr. Doley had been arrested for supporting villagers protesting against a proposed five-star resort near Kaziranga National Park, a project backed by the Assam Chief Minister. He said that indigenous residents of Golaghat had been opposing the project since 2022, claiming that their land had been forcibly acquired.

Against bail order

Mr. Ramesh cited the Sessions Court's bail order, which had observed that "where ecological preservation intersects with indigenous survival, criminal law cannot be used to suppress legitimate local anxieties". "It is clear that the Assam government invoked the NSA to do exactly that. Doley's NSA detention order relies on vague and speculative allegations, including that Doley had engaged in 'suspicious foreign transactions from doubtful sources'," Mr. Ramesh alleged.

Alleging a broader pattern, Mr. Ramesh claimed BJP governments had increasingly used extraordinary laws such as the NSA to stifle dissent and cited its invocation against labour activists in Uttar Pradesh.

He also added that the Supreme Court and several High Courts have cautioned that preventive detention laws must not be used as a device to defeat or circumvent judicial orders to prolong incarceration.

Indian Ambassador to China Vikram Doraiswami says the embassy has been using social media to counter misinformation. PTI

Indian diaspora flags visa, social media concerns in China

Press Trust of India
BEIJING

Members of the Indian diaspora in China raised concerns over abusive anti-India content on Chinese social media, declining work visas for professionals, and restrictions on employment for spouses at the Indian Embassy's first Open House in recent years.

The mission hosted the outreach initiative on Friday, bringing together a large number of Indian professionals working in various sectors in Beijing to discuss issues affecting the community.

Indian Ambassador Vikram Doraiswami, accompanied by Counsellor (Consular, Education and Community Affairs) Nitinjeet Singh and Counsellor (Visa) Ramesh Singh, interacted with members of the diaspora on a range of issues.

Among the concerns raised were the increase in abusive content against Indians, including their food habits and culture, on Chinese social media platforms, a decline in the number of job visas issued by China to Indian professionals, restrictions on employment for spouses, and difficulties relating to counsellor services.

Mr. Doraiswami, who assumed charge in May and has stepped up engagements with Chinese officials as part of efforts to improve bilateral ties, said the embassy would further simplify the documentation required for Chinese nationals applying for Indian visas from next week to facilitate greater travel to India.

Embassy's efforts

Responding to concerns over negative and abusive content on Chinese social media, he said the Chinese government is also concerned about the rise in such content and is taking steps to address the issue.

On its part, the embassy is countering misinformation by disseminating fact-based information through its social media handles, Mr. Doraiswami said.

The Ambassador also said the embassy planned to organise more cultural events, building on the huge response to annual programmes such as the *Vasant Mela*, to showcase India's diverse culture and cuisine.

The mission is also working to establish a mechanism with legal professionals to assist Indians facing work-related issues, he said.

To improve consular services for the Indian diaspora, the embassy plans to hold Open House interactions periodically to address their concerns, Mr. Doraiswami said.

Kishor slams police official for bid to 'influence' bypoll

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

A day before the counting of votes for the Bankipur byelection, Jan Suraaj Party (JSP) founder Prashant Kishor on Sunday accused Kartikey Kumar Sharma, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Patna, of influencing the byelection and arresting JSP workers.

Mr. Kishor, who has also made his electoral debut in the Bankipur byelection, pointed to the SSP's justification that outsiders were causing disturbances, necessitating their detention or arrest to maintain peace. He added that over 50 people were arrested, and that the majority were locals from Patna whose homes were raided by the police. Mr. Kishor was joined by people whose houses were allegedly raided by the police the night before polling day.

JSP founder Prashant Kishor addresses the media at the party office in Patna on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"The SSP claims they were only arresting outsiders for violating Section 144. Let them explain how a person sleeping at night was violating Section 144," Mr. Kishor said.

He further said, "BJP members also behaved rudely with our leaders there when I went to the spot. This is the same SSP who had earlier said the rape and murder of a NEET aspirant was a case of suicide."

He also alleged that the SSP acted on the orders of the BJP. "We have never witnessed such misuse of the administration and police during Nitish Kumar's 20-year tenure".

Congress suspends former Datia MLA Bharti

The Hindu Bureau
BHOPAL

A day before the result of the byelection to Madhya Pradesh's Datia Assembly seat, the Congress suspended former MLA Rajendra Bharti – whose disqualification necessitated the bypoll – from the party's primary membership.

The suspension comes days after the Congress candidate for the bypoll, Ghanshyam Singh, accused Mr. Bharti of trying to sabotage his campaign and colluding with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Mr. Bharti alleged that Mr. Singh had been colluding with BJP leader and former State Home Minister Narottam Mishra, who was denied ticket by the ruling party.

Municipal official murdered in Bihar; his wife alleges MLA's involvement

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

The Executive Officer (EO) of Dalmianagar Municipal Council in Bihar was beaten to death on Saturday night, the police said. While the EO's driver has been arrested, his wife has alleged the involvement of a Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) MLA.

The murder took place in the Barun police station limits in Aurangabad district. Vimal Kumar, the EO, was on his way to Patna from Dehri-on-Sone in Rohtas district when he was allegedly attacked in a deserted area.

The police arrested his driver Mithilesh Kumar in the case. According to police sources, the driver admitted to his involvement in the murder. On Sunday, Magadh Range Inspector-General Vikas Vaibhav confirmed the arrest of the driver.

Family members mourn the death of Vimal Kumar, EO of the Dalmianagar Municipal Council in Bihar. PTI

Based on a complaint filed by Vimal's family, a first information report (FIR) was registered at Barun police station.

"Acting on the information provided by the arrested driver, a team of divers recovered the iron lever pipe used in the crime from the Patna-Barun-Baura canal located near the crime scene. The arrested accused is being sent to judicial custody. The investigation into the case is ongoing," the Aurangabad Police said in the statement.

Rohtas District Magistrate Deepak Kumar Mishra said that though the incident had taken place in Aurangabad, the investigation was being conducted in coordination with the Rohtas Police. Dalmianagar is located in Rohtas district.

Vimal is survived by his wife, Babita Kumari, and their children, Vaibhavi, 7, and Vivan, 5.

Ms. Kumari accused Rajiv Ranjan Singh, alias Sonu Singh, the LJP (RV) MLA for Dehri-on-Sone, of being involved the murder. Ms. Kumari said that the MLA used to call her husband every day and demand ₹25 lakh to ₹50 lakh. "My husband used to say that he had not done anything wrong, and where would he get that much money?... He kept pressuring him to pay ₹50 lakh, and now he has been murdered," Ms. Kumari said.

Youth Cong. helpline receives over 3,000 calls

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A helpline launched by the Indian Youth Congress (IYC) on July 27 to provide legal and other support to students facing online and offline harassment over their participation in protests has received over 3,000 calls so far, the Congress party said.

A significant number of callers were women, the IYC leaders said, adding they had stepped up outreach efforts to people allegedly targeted by authorities. The Congress has strongly criticised the police case registered against protester Ruchika Singh for allegedly making objectionable remarks at Jantar Mantar on July 23. According to the complaint filed with Uttar Pradesh Police, her remarks "insulted the dignity of the Prime Minister's Office".

The helpline was launched after the police crackdown on protesters began, a senior IYC leader said. On its first day alone, they received 1,080 calls.

SIT probe into Ram Temple case a sham, says Congress

Party reiterates demand for Supreme Court-monitored probe; senior leader alleges that this is not the first instance of embezzlement; blames former official Champat Rai for institutionalising 'theft'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Reiterating the demand for a Supreme Court-monitored probe into the alleged financial irregularities, senior Congress leader Pramod Tiwari on Sunday said, "Not every BJP worker is a thief, but every thief who stole donation money from the Ram Temple in Ayodhya is from the BJP."

He was speaking at a press conference at the party headquarters in Delhi. "I hail from the Awadh region myself, and between 1985 and 1990, I served as the Tourism Minister in the Uttar Pradesh government. I have witnessed the Ram Janmabhoomi movement from very close quarters," Mr. Tiwari said.

He claimed that the recent alleged theft of donations, in which eight persons were arrested, was not the first case of embezzlement. "The corruption can be traced back to the 1980s, when *shila pujan* (foundation stone laying ceremony) was conducted," he said.

Congress Deputy Leader in the Rajya Sabha Pramod Tiwari addresses a press conference in New Delhi. PTI

Describing the Special Investigation Team (SIT) constituted to investigate the matter as a "sham", Mr. Tiwari claimed that the person heading the probe was himself under criminal investigation. He alleged that seers and saints were excluded from the Ram Mandir Trust, while individuals associated with the BJP and the RSS were inducted instead.

'PM accountable'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mr. Tiwari said, had personally selected every member of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust and, therefore, could not evade accountability for the alleged theft of temple offerings. He questioned, "If Modi*ji* has claimed credit for this, how can he absolve himself of the sins committed by the very people to whom he entrusted the responsibility?"

Mr. Tiwari, the Congress's Deputy Leader in the Rajya Sabha, added that the BJP was trying to make people forget the theft of offerings, but would ultimately have to answer for it. He laid the blame directly on former general secretary of the temple trust Champat Rai, accusing him of institutionalising "theft".

The Opposition would continue to raise the issue in Parliament, Mr. Tiwari said, adding that without an independent investigation under the supervision of the Supreme Court, the real culprits would never be identified.

Rahul criticises Modi, says government owes students truth, justice and apology

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

"India's students do not need the Prime Minister's forgiveness; instead, they need an apology from him," Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said in a video released by the Congress on social media on Sunday.

The clip showed his interaction with the families of three students – Gopika, Roshini and Vetri Anandan – who died by suicide following the NEET paper leak and subsequent cancellation of the examination, during his visit to Tamil Nadu on Saturday.

Mr. Gandhi said, "Each family was left with the same painful question: why should honest, hardworking students pay the price for a dishonest system? Behind every statistic is a child with a dream and a family now living with an irreplaceable loss," he said.

"The Prime Minister speaks of 'forgiving' students. After listening to these parents, my conviction is even stronger: India's students need no forgiveness. The government owes them truth, justice and an apology," the Congress leader said.

Rahul Gandhi meeting the families of three students who were found dead in Tamil Nadu following the NEET controversy. PTI

Referring to paper leaks and cancelled examinations, he said, "The Prime Minister has the audacity to talk about forgiving the students. Has he even met a single grieving family who has lost its child, or those whose entire savings, life, time and dreams have been snatched away by paper leaks? The answer is no! India's students do not need the Prime Minister's forgiveness; Modi*ji* should apologise to them," the Congress leader said.

In Mamallapuram, while interacting with the relatives of the deceased students, Mr. Gandhi said, "Nothing is more painful than seeing a parent grieve their child. Behind every young life lost is a family carrying pain that will never leave them and serious questions about a broken education system. Leaked papers. Cancelled exams. Years of preparation were destroyed overnight. Our students are told to work honestly in a system that is not honest with them."

Aaditya writes to DGP seeking clarity over withdrawal of FIRs

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Worli MLA and Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray has written to Maharashtra Director General of Police (DGP) Sadanand Date seeking clarity over the first information reports (FIRs) registered against protesting students.

Mr. Thackeray said the Home Department had said on July 31 that it had decided to withdraw, in accordance with the prescribed legal procedure, the criminal cases and FIRs registered against students, youth, and other individuals who participated in protests held at various places across Maharashtra in support of the demonstration at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi.

"We are continuously being contacted by many students, parents, lawyers, and citizens across the State. There is confusion regarding how the decision will be directly implemented," Mr. Thackeray wrote in the letter on Saturday.

Question on SoP

He asked if the benefit that the Home Department of the State offered extended to all cases; if police stations would pursue *suo motu* charges; if the students would have to independently file applications in the court; and if a Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) had been issued to the police to make sure the cases were withdrawn.

Gen Z is a constituency defined by mindset, not identity, says strategist

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The generation that came out in large numbers during the recent protests at Jantar Mantar can be viewed as India's first political constituency defined by a common mindset rather than caste, religion, or ideology, political strategist Naresh Arora said on Sunday.

Speaking at a webinar hosted by *The Hindu* on whether Gen Z is the new driving force in politics, Mr. Arora, who has worked on the Congress party's election campaigns and advised the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) when led by the late Ajit Pawar, said young voters consume information differently and are less loyal to political parties than they are to issues. "Gen Z is the first generation that should be treated as a constituency based on mindset rather than identity," Mr. Arora said, adding, "They can support you on one issue today and oppose you tomorrow without feeling contradictory."

Naresh Arora

According to him, political parties would be making a mistake if they viewed Gen Z merely as first-time voters.

"They are the first generation that expects politics to function with the responsiveness of a digital platform," he said.

Referring to the mobilisation around the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), Mr. Arora said its appeal lay less in the organisation than in what it symbolised. "It became a vessel for accumulated frustration. The paper leak was only the spark," he said.

Mr. Arora argued that the movement resonated because many young Indians view institutional failures as moral questions rather than administrative lapses. "At 20, corruption is not seen as a practical inconvenience. It is seen as a moral failure," he said.

The protests drew strength from being "decentralised and leaderless", Mr. Arora said, allowing participants to rally around a cause rather than a political organisation.

He cautioned both the government and the Opposition against drawing simplistic conclusions from the protests. "The government should not assume this is only about one examination. It is about trust," he said.

Mr. Arora also warned the Opposition against treating public anger as an automatic electoral dividend. "Gen Z is testing the entire political class. The party that wins this generation will be the one that convinces young Indians that hard work will once again be rewarded fairly," he said.

Users protest after YouTube terminates slum-dweller's page

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Social media has erupted with calls from users asking YouTube India to restore the account of Mohammad Irfan, a resident of a Delhi slum, whose channel gained a substantial following overnight before being taken down by the video-hosting platform.

While YouTube has not yet issued any official clarification, attempts to access Mr. Irfan's page, *Main Irfan*, display a message stating that "this account has been terminated for violating Google's Terms of Service".

CJP protest

Mr. Irfan went viral for reciting the Preamble to the Constitution during the recent Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) protest at Jantar Mantar. He spoke about the hardships faced by workers in the unorganised sector and the need for accessible education, healthcare, and democratic rights.

On July 28, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, met him and said Mr. Irfan's outlook reflected the strength and promise of India's youth.

After his YouTube channel was taken down, Mr. Irfan took to X, saying the termination was "some kind of mistake" and urged the platform to rectify it. "My channel was completely new, and I have honestly followed all of YouTube's guidelines," Mr.

Mohammad Irfan

Irfan said in his post on X. "People really liked my content, which is why my subscribers increased. It seems like there was a mistake by your automatic system. Please review my channel again and restore it," he wrote.

Mr. Irfan's channel found a vocal supporter in veteran journalist Ajit Anjum, who posted several times on X in support of the page while it was active, and after it was taken down.

"A young man named Mohammad Irfan, who lives in a slum in Delhi, started his YouTube channel just yesterday with our support," Mr. Anjum posted on X on Sunday. "From yesterday evening until this morning, his channel gained more than 70,000 subscribers." "Suddenly this morning, his YouTube channel was terminated," he added. "How did a working-class young man manage to gain so many subscribers in such a short time? That in itself is an extraordinary achievement. So why did YouTube terminate his channel so abruptly?" the post said.

Slipper hurled at Pappu Yadav; one taken into police custody

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Two men intruded into the residence of Independent MP Rajesh Ranjan, alias Pappu Yadav, on Sunday, and one of them hurled a slipper at the lawmaker.

Mr. Yadav's supporters alleged that one assailant was also carrying a knife.

Opposition leaders hit out at the Delhi police for failing to ensure the safety of the Lok Sabha member from Purnea. The MP had taken part in a skit at the Parliament House complex last week on the alleged theft of donations at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

"There has been an ongoing conspiracy to kill me ... had so many people not been present, I would have been dead today. Just last night, my family was harassed," Mr. Yadav later told presspersons.

Referring to the donations case, Mr. Yadav said he had only asked questions about the missing gold and silver.

"I have done nothing wrong. Today, we are demanding answers from the Prime Minister [Narendra Modi] regarding the way the faith of the common man has been undermined," he said.

Following the attack, Purnea MP Pappu Yadav said he won't be intimidated. R.V. MOORTHY

Around 6.15 p.m., Mr. Yadav was holding a press conference when the incident took place. Standing among the journalists, one of the intruders – later identified as Sumit from Uttar Pradesh – hurled a footwear at Mr. Yadav, following which his supporters overpowered him.

The police later took Mr. Sumit into custody.

Mr. Yadav's advocate Kanishk Arora termed the incident a major failure of the police, particularly when they were told a day earlier that there was the possibility of anti-social elements resorting to such an act. "Despite informing the police, only two or three personnel were deployed. We will initiate legal action," he said.

Oppn. hits out at police

The incident evoked sharp reactions from Opposition leaders. Congress MP Pawan Khera criticised the police. "The Delhi police seem remarkably efficient when it comes to repressing students peacefully demanding their constitutional rights. But when it comes to protecting a vocal Opposition leader - even a sitting Member of Parliament - at his own residence, it suddenly falls short," he said.

CPI (M) MP V. Sivadasan also condemned the attack, saying that those who raised questions about the alleged loot of the temple money were facing attacks by "RSS and BJP persons".

Rajya Sabha MP Upendra Kushwaha also denounced the incident. "There is no place for such actions in a democracy," he said.

The police are yet to issue a statement and share details of the action taken against the accused.

Fadnavis likely to be made Education Minister, claims Raut

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader and Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Raut claimed that Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis may move to the Union Cabinet to take over the Education portfolio.

At a media briefing on Sunday, he said: "Discussions have taken place between Mr. [Narendra] Modi and Mr. Fadnavis, I have good information... Prime Minister Modi has in mind that the country needs a highly educated, far-sighted and good administrator for the Education Department. At this moment, the person who can become such a good Education Minister in the country is Devendra Fadnavis. There have been discussions between the Prime Minister and Mr. Fadnavis in this regard, and Mr. Modi has suggested that 'you come to the Centre'," said Mr. Raut.

It is an important portfolio that builds a strong generation of the country's youth. The future of crores of youth depends on this portfolio, but unfortunately, today it is withering there, he added.

Sanjay Raut

"Mr. Fadnavis is likely to be given charge of the Human Resource Development Ministry. This is one of the top five important departments in the Central government. We also want the country to have a good Education Minister, but now it is up to him," Mr. Raut said.

The speculation over him assuming the position had begun when Mr. Fadnavis visited New Delhi during the student protests at Jantar Mantar.

Raj Thackeray says ₹18 crore siphoned off from temple

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) president Raj Thackeray on Sunday alleged that donations worth ₹18 crore were being siphoned off every year at the famous Siddhivinayak Temple in Mumbai.

"Even temples were not safe these days," Mr. Thackeray said at a programme and demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi speak on this issue. He also alleged that ₹1,400 crore had been stolen at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

He said some alert trustees caught employees who stole money from the donation box at the Siddhivinayak temple, reading out a letter written by eight trustees to Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

Sada Sarvankar, chairman of the Siddhivinayak Temple Trust, said, nine employees were arrested in the case. The temple reportedly earned a revenue of ₹182 crore in the fiscal year 2025-26.

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No.OHPC:TECH:C&P/21/26-27/ 7165 Date: 30.07.2026

NOTICE INVITING TENDER No.08/2026-27

Sealed tenders are invited in two parts i.e. (i) Techno Commercial Bid & (ii) Price Bid in separate sealed envelopes from consultancy firms having valid GST Registration Certificate & IT PAN and having experience in Preparation of DPR as well as fulfilling the other eligibility criteria as per the terms & conditions of this tender specification for the work as mentioned below.

Description of Services	Cost of Tender paper in Rs. (including GST @18%) (Non-refundable)	EMD in Rs. (Refundable)
Providing of Consultancy Services for Preparation of Detailed Project Report (DPR) of Lakaisuni Pumped Storage Project, Gajapati, Odisha.	Rs.11,800/-	Rs.19,25,000/-

For details of the tender specification, terms & conditions and corrigendum, please visit / refer our official website www.ohpc.co.in from dated 06.08.2026.

C & P Head

4001/233/2627

OIPR-4001/4088/1/26-27/0007

INBRIEF

FPIs reverse 4-month selling trend with ₹20,200 cr. inflow

After four straight months of selling, foreign investors turned net buyers of Indian equities in July, pumping in ₹20,200 crore, aided by attractive valuations, improving corporate earnings, and easing global headwinds. The latest inflow marks a sharp reversal from the preceding months when Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) withdrew ₹49,340 crore in June, ₹32,963 crore in May, ₹60,847 crore in April, and a massive ₹1.17 lakh crore in March, according to data from the Central Depository Services (India) Ltd. (CDSL). Prior to the four-month selling spree, the FPIs had invested ₹22,615 crore in Indian equities in February. PTI

TCS case: Nashik court grants bail to five accused

A court has granted bail to five accused in the sexual harassment and forcible conversion case at the Nashik unit of IT major TCS, observing that the chargesheet has been filed and investigation was practically complete. The court allowed the pleas of Raza Rafiq Memon, Asif Aftab Ansari, Shahrukh Hussain Shaukat Qureshi, Shafi Bhikan Shaikh and Tausif Bilal Attar on July 30. They were granted bail in connection with multiple FIRs registered at Mumbai Naka police station in Nashik. The court also said there was no serious apprehension that the accused would threaten witnesses or tamper with evidence if released. PTI

Uniform Civil Code must be implemented: Nasrin

Exiled Bangladesh writer says it will protect women from discrimination; seeking ban on madrasas, she says secular schools should come up instead; says Hindus are being tortured in Bangladesh

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Exiled Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasrin on Sunday called for all countries of the Indian subcontinent to implement a Uniform Civil Code (UCC), arguing that this was needed to protect women from discrimination.

"Uniform Civil Code is a must. This is the first step for any civilised society," Ms. Nasrin said. The Bengali writer said that she has been fighting for the UCC for the past 40 years and added that "if women come under religious laws, there is discrimination and persecution".

Delivering a speech in Kolkata on Saturday, she had said that India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan should have a uniform law for all their citizens.

"Hindus are being tortured in Bangladesh. During the Yunus regime, Hindus were tortured even more. In many madrasas and mosques, hatred is being taught against Hindus. Now we have Jamaat-e-Islami as an Opposition party.

Taslima Nasrin signs her book as she attends a press conference in Kolkata on Sunday. AFP

It is against women's equality, and they want Sharia rule," she said, reflecting on the situation in her home country.

The author's remarks come at a time when the West Bengal government has announced plans to implement UCC in the State, and has set up a committee headed by a retired Supreme Court judge to look into the provisions of a draft UCC Bill.

Return to Kolkata

Ms. Nasrin arrived in Kolkata on July 31, almost 19 years after she was forced to leave the city due to violent protests by a mob upset with her writings during the Left Front government. Prior to this, she was exiled from Bangladesh in 1994.

Her return to Kolkata was celebrated by West Bengal's first BJP government, even as she shared the stage with Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari.

Ms. Nasrin came down hard on madrasas, saying that some of these religious schools produce jihadis. "In my opinion, madrasas should not exist... not in all cases, but in some, it is seen that jihadis are being produced in madrasas," she said, alleging that "child abuse is going on there, rapes are happening... imams and madrasa teachers are being held".

"No one does anything after passing out of madrasas... They beg, survive on charity... Madrasas should go, and secular schools should come up instead," Ms. Nasrin said.

Freedom of speech

She also expressed anguish over an incident during Saturday's event, where the crowd prevented Bengali poet Joy Goswami from addressing the gathering. The poet is considered to be close to the Trinamool Congress regime. Ms. Nasrin had called Mr. Goswami to take his seat on the stage when the people gathered started shouting.

"Not only was Joy insulted, but I was also insulted because I had invited him," she said. "In my speech, I spoke about freedom of expression. Everyone should be allowed to speak. It is not right to stop anyone from expressing their views," she said.

Hasina to hold press conference to 'outline vision for Bangladesh'

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

A month before the expected visit of Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman for the India-chaired BRICS summit, the country's deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will address a press conference at the Foreign Correspondents Club here on Wednesday, the second anniversary of her arrival in India following the monsoon uprising of 2024 in Dhaka.

The media interaction will also be addressed by Ms. Hasina's son, Sajeeb Wazed Joy, and the former Education Minister of Bangladesh Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury Nowfel.

"In this exclusive engagement, Sheikh Hasina will address the international media virtually to announce her homecoming and outline her vision for Bangladesh. The session will also feature senior leaders of the Bangladesh Awami League and former Ministers, participating both in person and virtually, followed by an interactive Q&A," said Waiel Awwad, president of the club.

India has invited Mr. Rahman to attend the

Sheikh Hasina has been based in India since leaving Dhaka on August 5, 2024. AFP

BRICS summit. Mr. Rahman is yet to acknowledge the invitation.

Ms. Hasina – who has been based here since leaving Dhaka on August 5, 2024 – has recently given interviews to global media outlets, recollecting her experience of returning to Bangladesh on May 17, 1981, ending six years of exile that followed the assassination of her father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. In her latest interview, given to *AFP*, she reiterated her plans to go home and said, "I may be killed."

Bangladesh Deputy Minister for Liberation War Affairs Ishraque Hossain termed the announcements a "political gimmick".

Focus on health care, sanitation, power restoration in flood-hit areas: Assam CM

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday began a tour of the State's worst flood-hit districts to assess the damage and oversee relief and rehabilitation operations.

Beginning his tour from Dibrugarh district in eastern Assam, he said the government machinery was focusing on health care, drinking water supply, power restoration, and sanitation to help the affected areas return to normal at the earliest.

Sharing data on social media, he said recurring floods affected 11.45 lakh people across 25 districts, claiming 82 human and countless animal lives between April 29 and August 1. According to the data, 63 of the 82 people who died were from Sivasagar and Charaideo districts.

"As Assam moves from relief to recovery, our work on the ground continues," Mr. Sarma said, adding that a comprehensive State-wide flood damage assessment would begin on August 9.

A girl dries her textbooks in the sun after they were salvaged from floodwaters at Santak Kenduguri in Sivasagar. ANI

Meanwhile, the State government announced a waiver of the July electricity bill for people in Charaideo and Sivasagar districts, who consumed up to 300 units of power. The government also released ₹7.63 crore from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund for uniforms for school students (up to Class 8) in Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat, and Golaghat districts.

Nagaland impact

Many in Assam attributed the floods to excessive rainfall in parts of Nagaland, leading to death of nine persons in a landslide in Mon town on July 19.

Reacting to allegations, the Konyak Union said the recent floods in parts of Assam were unrelated to Nagaland. The union is an apex body of the Konyak Naga community, which dominates Mon district.

A few days ago, Sivasagar MLA Akhil Gogoi said syndicates formed by legislators and Ministers dug up a 21-km stretch in the foothills of Nagaland to extract coal and stones. "Water accumulated in the trenches and pits broke out to devastate three Assam districts," he said.

The Konyak Union refuted the claims that the Assam floods were caused by the release of water from a purported hydroelectric dam in Mon district or alleged illegal coal mining activities. Citing experts, Mr. Sarma had said rainfall of 435%-490% above normal in parts of Assam and Nagaland, along with hill catchment runoff and silt movement, hit Sivasagar, Jorhat, and Charaideo hard.

A lepidoptera hotspot, India is home to 8.25% of the world's butterflies, moths

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

India is home to 13,703 species of lepidoptera – butterflies and moths – which is about 8.25% of the total lepidoptera found across the globe.

Scientists of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) have come out with a detailed "Catalogue of Lepidoptera (Butterflies & Moths) of India", which has been published in the peer-reviewed journal *Zootaxa*.

ZSI scientists Navneet Singh and Rahul Joshi took almost 12 years to complete the monumental work of cataloguing, field exploration, museum curation, and rigorous literature verification.

"There have been attempts to classify and catalogue lepidoptera for over 100 years. There are 13,703 species of butterflies and moths across 3,705 genera, 240 subfamilies, 102 families, and 31 superfamilies," Mr. Singh said.

Of the 13,703 species of lepidoptera found in India, 12,286 are moths and 1,417 are butterflies. M. PERIASAMY

Of the 13,703 species of lepidoptera, 1,417 are butterflies, and the remaining 12,286 are moths, Mr. Singh said.

The scientific work bridges critical taxonomic gaps that have persisted for more than 100 years, since the first historical attempts to document the region's insect fauna, a Press Information Bureau release stated. "It firmly positions India among a select group of megadiverse nations possessing a fully updated, centralised, and authoritative baseline inventory of its butterfly and moth diversity," the release said.

Crucial role

Butterflies and moths play crucial roles in maintaining ecological equilibrium, serving as essential herbivores, detritivores, and pollinators, while acting as vital food resources for birds, bats, and other insectivores, the ZSI scientists said.

"These catalogue volumes will serve as a vital national asset for biodiversity research, ecological monitoring, and global conservation strategies. Such comprehensive catalogues ensure these species are given an authoritative voice, a clear legal identity, and a permanent place in scientific history," Dhriti Banerjee, Director, ZSI, said.

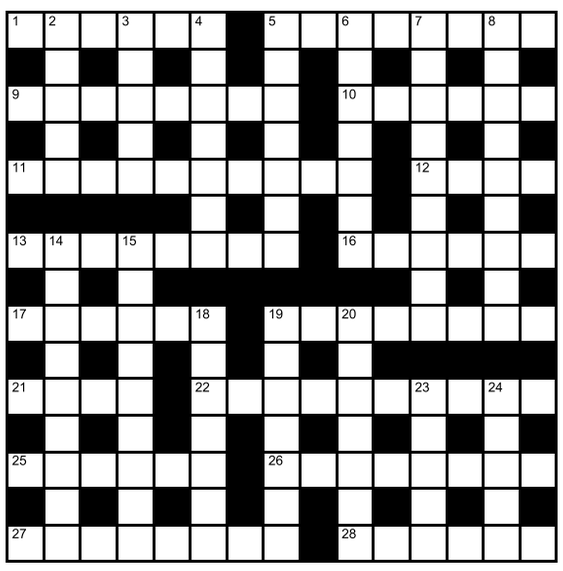
Among the 13,703 species of lepidoptera, the scientists have identified and catalogued 2,205 species of Geometroidea, nocturnal pollinators taking over the "night shift" when daytime butterflies rest. These 2,205 species account for 8.8% of the world's known species in this superfamily.

TH CROSSWORD + 14862

(set by Pixie Dust)

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

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Masked traffickers and escorts (6)
5 Dismiss exhibitionist replacing old woman with runner (5,3)
9 Tackle a very soft insect (8)
10 I study a great deal of Frost...Classic! (6)
11 Control panels? So drab! (10)
12 Archbishop's skirt (4)
13 Uzbekistani Techie Lobo Agnus seen regularly in winter sport (8)
16 European repelled by journo slipped away (6)
17 Recoiled after Superintendent of Police gave a buzz (6)
19 The Don is thus sheltering a pleasure seeker (8)
21 Box picked up for a piece of metal at end of an arrow (4)
22 Can Ted be employed again and again in family? (10)
25 Indian state, large and mountainous (6)
26 Narcissistic outings? (3,5)
27 Nonsense crew, declares Spooner - withdraw! (4,4)
28 Asch, Kyle & Alan discovered a nymph that became a sea-monster (6)

Down

2 Subtle, earthy pigmentation in art-galleries basically? (5)
3 Elements of objective art highlighting our planet (5)
4 Look legendary Welsh King delivered finely ground pulverised material (3,4)
5 Asha somehow managed one originating from the African Desert (7)
6 Rise up and plead for release once more (7)
7 Goths won't bust a deserted community (5,4)
8 I sent fans out in exhaustion (9)
14 Unprepared, independent member of parliament meets Trump casually around 1st of October (9)
15 Giant bearing pain with black electronic device (9)
18 Ultimately amazing supporter, a superman, proud champ 'Dada' (7)
19 Not right! Criminal to shred Kevin's shared workstation (7)
20 Are these drug dealers making a mess of Taco orders? (7)
23 Tarnished parts of spiky trident held up (5)
24 The French writer sent back to country (5)

SUDOKU

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

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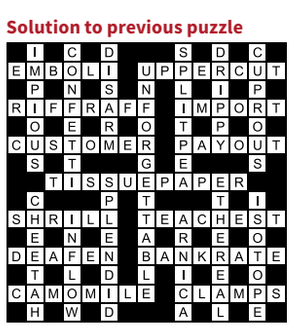
DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Chaturmasya importance

In the chapter on domestic virtue, Tiruvalluvar says, "The householder is the prop of the three orders of life in the conduct of their virtue." (The three orders being the student, the eremite and the ascetic). The tally of virtues accrued by a man in this life will be the only true wealth he will carry when he transmigrates to his next birth. To achieve this, it is mandatory that a person observes certain rituals, including the observing of *Chaturmasya* vrat. The role of the householder becomes even more pertinent during *Chaturmasya*, which falls during monsoon season.

What is *Chaturmasya*? It is the four-month period starting from Aadi Shukla Paksha Ekadasi to the Shukla Paksha Ekadasi falling in the Tamil month of Kartigai. It is the period when God assumes the sleeping posture, due to which the Aadi Ekadasi is also known as the Sayana Ekadasi. During this period, the resident deity in all the Divya Desa temples will be adorned with oil (*ennai kappu*) and devotees will be able to have darshan of only the face, with the rest of the idol screened from public view. God is viewed in two forms: one is the non-moving image (temple deity) and the second is the '*asaiyum vadivam*', (mobile entity), which is merely another way of referring to sanyasis. As moving entities, sanyasis too echo what the resident deity does and refrain from moving anywhere from their camp, during the four months of the *Chaturmasya* vrat. For a sanyasi abstinence is a way of life. To this end, the sanyasi is careful not to step onto any creature, while walking on the ground. This is another, practical reason why men of God camp in one place during the *Chaturmasya*.

MONEYWISE

Gold and silver lacked lustre in July

PRECIOUS METALS

Lose sheen: War, U.S. rate issues influenced the prices of precious metals in July. REUTERS

B. Krishnakumar

Precious metals were confined to a very narrow range and remained subdued for the best part of July.

The geopolitical developments in West Asia along with the concerns relating to a potential interest rate hike in the United States kept the prices of precious metals under check. Price of gold witnessed some recovery toward the end of July after the U.S. Federal Reserve kept the interest rates unchanged.

Gain and hit

Comex gold posted a modest 1.7% gain in July to settle at $4,107 by the end of month. In contrast to gold, Comex silver price took a modest 3.6% hit in July to settle at $57.75.

Mirroring the trend in the global markets, the precious metal prices took a hit in domestic markets too. MCX Gold fell 1.71% in July to settle at ₹1,43,376 per 10-gram. MCX Silver too closed on a weak note at ₹2,17,198 per kilogram, a 4.6% fall last month.

Comex gold price was confined to $3,949-$4,215 range in July. There is no change in the short-term negative outlook for gold that was shared last month. Gold price is vulnerable to drop to $3,750-$3,850 range.

As observed last month, the trend will remain weak unless the price closes above $4,410. Above $4,410, the trend could turn positive, and the price could head to the next upside target of $4,650-$4,700. But, until this breakout above $4,410 happens, expect the gold price to drift lower to the target zone of $3,750-$3,850.

Comex silver price moved in sync with last month's expectations and the price also dropped to the then mentioned support zone at $54-$56. The short-term outlook for silver does not look positive and the price has to cross above $66 to invalidate this outlook. In the short-term, expect the price to remain subdued and drift lower to $52-$54 range.

As observed last month, the trend in MCX gold price has turned negative too. The gold price at MCX dropped to the then-mentioned target level of ₹1,35,000-₹1,40,000 range. The short-term outlook remains weak and the price could now drop to ₹1,32,000-₹1,35,000 zone. This view would be invalidated if the price moves above ₹1,49,000. Similar to gold, the trend in MCX silver price too is bearish and the price now is vulnerable to a slide to ₹1,99,000-₹2,05,000 in the near term. Only a breakout above ₹2,45,000 would invalidate this negative view.

Conclusion

To summarise, the short-term trend in gold and silver are negative post the breach of key support levels in June. The trend would remain weak until the resistance level mentioned above is not taken out.

(The author is a Chennai based analyst / trader. The views and opinion featured in this column is based on the analysis of short-term price movement in gold and silver futures at COMEX & Multi Commodity Exchange of India. This is not meant to be a trading or investment advice.)

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ILLUSTRATION: SAAI

Take dedicated insurance cover for your travel

Most travellers assume they covered their bases once they buy the standard travel cover; when it comes to risks specific to adventure sports, dedicated cover will protect against them

FULLY COVERED

Amit Chhabra

Helen Keller famously said - 'Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all.'

Seasoned travellers can relate to this. But there's something else they know. When you choose adventure, you also choose the risks coming along with it. Not every adventure might end in an adrenaline rush. Some adventures also end up turning into accidents. And when they do, there ought to be a back-up plan or at the very least, a protective shield. Most travellers assume they covered their bases once they buy the standard travel cover. When it comes to risks specific to adventure sports, dedicated cover will protect against them.

As per several international travel health reports, injury is the single biggest cause of emergency hospitalisation for healthy people crossing international borders. Our own data notes out of the total number of travel cover claims, more than 60% is due to medical and related reasons. In fact, the breakdown of claim amounts shows medical emergencies account for almost 90% of the total payout with the rest for non-medical reasons. Clearly, health emergencies tend to overshadow every other risk here.

Imagine weeks of planning your great escape only to be blindsided by a medical crisis that a standard travel insurance usually won't cover. However, it doesn't have to turn out this way. Here's what you should know.

> Standard travel cover is built for situations such as flight delays or an unexpected medical emergency. It draws a clear line between routine travel mishaps and higher-risk pursuits

> An undisclosed adventure activity or an inaccurate declaration while taking insurance can render the whole exercise meaningless; so, make sure you declare everything needed

Gamble before thrills

People meticulously plan itineraries and book activities but overlook the fine print of what insurance covers or doesn't cover. Standard travel cover is built for conventional situations such as flight delays, lost baggage or an unexpected medical emergency. It draws a clear line between routine travel mishaps and higher-risk pursuits. This is especially true if the plan is bought bundled along with tickets.

This leaves activities such as high altitude mountain sports, deep-sea diving and aerial adventures outside the scope of standard cover unless additional protection has been purchased in advance. The surprise actually comes when a claim is declined. Depending on the plan, there might be further differentiation between recreational activities and extreme sports, or imposing altitude limits, age restrictions and norms the activity be undertaken under certified supervision. These need to be taken into account before you go diving, hiking or climbing.

Only few extra bucks

If you plan to go for an adventure sport, you should check if your base plan offers the cover or you need to buy it as add-on. Consider a week-long overseas trip costing about ₹2.5-3 lakh. Your total premium will cost anywhere from ₹1,000-₹1,600. That small addition is what could save you hundreds of thousands of rupees you might end up spending on a hospital in a foreign country.

An emergency helicopter evacuation from a remote trekking route or ski resort can run into lakhs before the treatment even begins. Add surgery, intensive care or a specialist consultation in destinations such as the UK, Switzerland or New Zealand, and the final bill can climb several times higher. In the unfortunate case that your trip is disrupted by a mishap during a high-risk sport, this rider can provide coverage for emergency medical treatment, evacuation, accidental disability or death from covered activities, and more such expenses that can otherwise escalate into a full scale financial setback.

For about five extra minutes of time, you can understand how critical this addition is to the policy and protect against expenses that may otherwise eclipse the cost of the entire holiday.

Better preparation

For many, collecting experiences has now become more valuable than collecting souvenirs. Insurance has had to keep pace with that change. It is evolving from a generic safeguard into a product that can accommodate increasingly diverse ways of exploring the world. That evolution matters because the purpose of insurance is to ensure that one unforeseen moment does not end up defining an entire journey.

The purpose of this critical addition is to strengthen the traveller's economic confidence.

But even the most comprehensive policy has one non-negotiable requirement – transparency. An undisclosed adventure activity or an inaccurate declaration can render the whole exercise meaningless. So, make sure you declare everything that is needed. As travel becomes more experiential, insurance should be measured by how well it matches the risks that you as an individual choose to embrace.

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

Personal Loans

Rates and Charges — Loan amount 5 lakh, Tenure 5 years; Loan amount 1 lakh, Tenure 5 years; (% of loan amount)

Name of Lender	Interest Rate (%)	EMI (Rs)	EMI (Rs)	Processing fee
HDFC Bank	9.99 onwards	10,621 onwards	2,124 onwards	Up to Rs 6,500
Tata Capital	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Flat Rs. 49
State Bank of India	10.00-15.00	10,624-11,895	2,125-2,379	Up to 1.50% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 15,000)
ICICI Bank	9.99 onwards	10,621 onwards	2,124 onwards	Up to 2%
Bank of Baroda*	10.15-18.00	10,660-12,697	2,132-2,539	Up to 2% (Max. Rs 10,000)
Axis Bank	8.90 onwards	10,355 onwards	2,071 onwards	Up to 2%
Kotak Mahindra Bank	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 5%
Bank of India	10.85-16.15	10,834-12,199	2,167-2,440	Up to 1% (Min. Rs 250; Max. Rs 15,000)
Canara Bank	9.70-15.15	10,550-11.934	2,110-2,387	0.25% (Rs. 500 - Rs. 2,500)
Punjab National Bank	10.25-16.80	10,685-12,373	2,137-2,475	Up to 1%
HSBC Bank	9.75 onwards	10,562 onwards	2,112 onwards	Up to 2%
Federal Bank	11.75 - 18.99	11,059 - 12,968	2,212 - 2,594	Up to 3%
Union Bank of India	8.90 - 12.65	10,355-11,287	2,071-2,257	Up to 1% (Max. Rs 7,500)
Bajaj Finserv	10.00-30.00	10,624-16,177	2,125-3,235	Up to 3.93%
Punjab & Sind Bank	9.60-13.85	10,525-11,595	2,105-2,319	0.50%-1%
Indian Overseas Bank	10.25 onwards	10,685 onwards	2,137 onwards	Up to 0.75%
UCO Bank	9.95 - 13.20	10,611-11,428	2,122-2,286	Up to 1% (Min. Rs 750)
IDFC FIRST Bank	9.99 onwards	10,621 onwards	2,124 onwards	Up to 3.5%
Bank of Maharashtra	9.75-15.00	10,562-11,895	2,112-2,379	Up to 1% (Max. Rs 10,000)
Central Bank of India	11.25 onwards	10,934 onwards	2,187 onwards	Up to 1%
IndusInd Bank	10.49 onwards	10,744 onwards	2,149 onwards	Up to 3.5% (2% for instant personal loans for limited period)

*Interest concession of 0.10% to customers opting for group credit life insurance.

Car Loans

Rates and Charges — Loan amount 5 lakh, Tenure 1 year; (% of loan amount)

Name of Lender	Interest Rate (%)	EMI (Rs)	Processing fee
Union Bank of India	7.50-10.00	10,019 - 10,684	Up to Rs 1,000
Punjab National Bank	7.60-10.70	10,043 - 10,797	Up to 0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 1,500)
Bank of Baroda	7.60 - 11.35	10,043 - 10,959	Up to Rs. 2,000
Canara Bank	7.45-11.45	10,007 - 10,984	0.25% (Rs 1,000 - Rs 5,000)*
Bank of India	7.60-12.55	10,043 - 11,262	Up to 0.25% (Rs. 2,500 - Rs. 10,000)
UCO Bank	7.35-10.00	9,983 - 10,624	0.5% (Max. Rs 5,000)
State Bank of India	8.70 - 9.85	10,307 - 10,587	Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 4,000
Bank of Maharashtra**	7.45-11.75	10,007 - 11,059	0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 15,000)
Indian Overseas Bank	7.55-12.00	10,031 - 11,122	NIL
ICICI Bank	8.40 onwards	10,234 onwards	Up to Rs. 8,500
HDFC Bank	8.15 onwards	10,174 onwards	Up to 0.5% (Rs. 3,500 - Rs. 8,000)
Karnataka Bank	8.14-11.64	10,172 - 11,031	Up to 0.60% (Rs. 2,500 - Rs. 11,000)
Federal Bank	7.65-9.00	10,055 onwards	1% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 50,000)
Punjab and Sind Bank***	7.50-14.00	10,019 - 11,634	0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 15,000)
Indian Bank	7.50-9.65	10,019 - 10,513	Rs. 1,200
Central Bank of India	7.60-9.30	10,043 - 10,452	0.50%(Rs. 2,000 - Rs. 20,000)

*50% waiver on processing fee till September 30
**0.25% interest rate concession for existing home loan borrowers and other existing customers having at least 6 months of relationship with the bank.
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Rates and charges as on July 29

Source: Paisabazaar.com

Satellite portfolio to the rescue

THINKINVESTOR

Transferring from satellite to a core portfolio will reduce trading capital. You can transfer the amount from the core back to the satellite once you create buffer capital in the core portfolio

Venkatesh Bangaruswamy

In a core-satellite framework, the core portfolio relates to goal-based investments while satellite portfolio captures short-term price movements in the market. Here, we discuss the benefits of having satellite portfolio alongside your core portfolios.

Managing gains

The satellite portfolio is about market timing. Actively buying and selling ETFs and individual stocks, for instance. There are two benefits from managing a satellite portfolio. Suppose you buy a stock at ₹500 and sell it at ₹700. There is the pleasure of generating gains. Suppose the stock dips after you sell it. The emotional satisfaction of perfectly timing the market is profound though you may realise luck played an important role in the process. This pleasure of generating gains does not diminish even if you self-manage your satellite portfolio for many years.

What do you with the gains from the satellite portfolio? Often, we reinvest the proceeds into the satellite portfolio, confident about market timing. But it pays to hold some gains and invest in bank deposits.

You can plough back the proceeds into the satellite portfolio when you incur losses. Also, you can use these funds and some from the satellite portfolio to manage any shortfall in your core portfolio. That is the second benefit.

Suppose one of your core portfolios must generate 12% pre-tax return on equity investment to achieve a goal in eight years. Now, suppose the actual return in year three is 10%, two percentage points short of the expected return.

If you do not bridge this shortfall, the gap can widen by the end of eight years. You can bridge this gap with more contribution into equity investments. But how will you raise savings without cutting into your current consumption? You can transfer some amount from satellite portfolio to core portfolio in any year the core faces a shortfall.

Conclusion

Transferring from satellite to a core portfolio will reduce trading capital. You can transfer the amount from the core back to the satellite once you create buffer capital in the core portfolio. Suppose you have ₹1 crore equity investments and the expected annual return is 12%.

After you transfer from the satellite to the core portfolio, suppose the equity investment earns 14%. You can transfer two percentage points of the investment value, ₹2 lakh or the actual amount, which is lower, back to the satellite portfolio.

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

DHAKA

BNP authorises Rahman to finalise nominee for presidential elections

AP

The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has authorised Prime Minister Tarique Rahman to select the party's candidate for the country's presidential elections, local media reported. The decision was taken on Saturday at BNP's National Standing Committee's meeting, the *Dhaka Tribune* newspaper reported. PTI

CEUTA

Five more bodies found; death toll in Ceuta migrant rush rises to 72

AFP

The death toll from Thursday's mass rush into Spain's North African enclave of Ceuta from Morocco reached at least 72 on Sunday as five more bodies were found along Ceuta's coast, officials said. More than 50,000 people crossed into Ceuta by land and sea in an unprecedented surge that began on Thursday. REUTERS

ATHENS

Two killed as helicopters collide while battling wildfire in Greece

REUTERS

Two Greek firefighting helicopters collided on Sunday as they were battling a wind-driven wildfire west of Athens, sending one aircraft crashing to the ground. Two crew members, a Greek and a Danish national, died in the crash. Two other crew members who were recovered alive were a Greek and a British national. AP

NEW YORK

Sopranos actor Vincent Pastore, known for playing mobsters, dies

AFP

Vincent Pastore, a veteran actor who played mobsters and tough guys, and was best known for portraying Salvatore "Big Pussy" Bonpensiero on *The Sopranos*, has died. He was 80. Pastore appeared in movies dating back to the 1980s including roles in big films such as *Goodfellas* and *Awakenings*, both in 1990. AP

Israeli strikes kill 13 in Gaza; Energy Minister says no deal to halt attacks

The strikes target Gaza City, Deir al-Balah, and Khan Younis, marking the deadliest day in weeks; while Israel says it would give Hamas a chance to disarm, the militant group says it would only hand over weapons after the former stops its attacks

Reuters
CAIRO/JERUSALEM

Israeli air strikes hit Gaza for a second straight day on Sunday, killing at least 13 Palestinians, medics said, despite U.S. President Donald Trump's announcement of a breakthrough in efforts to implement last year's Gaza ceasefire agreement.

From dawn, Israeli warplanes hit Gaza City in the north, the central city of Deir al-Balah and the southern area of Khan Younis, causing the biggest daily death toll in weeks, according to Palestinian health officials.

Mr. Trump's assertion on Thursday that Palestinian Hamas militants and other armed groups had agreed to disarm had raised hopes of a turning point in the conflict.

Grave loss: Palestinians inspect the site of an Israeli strike on a vehicle in Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip on Sunday. REUTERS

On Sunday, Israeli Energy Minister Eli Cohen – a member of Prime Minister Netanyahu's Security Cabinet – told Israel's Army Radio the government would give Hamas the opportunity to disarm but said he was "very sceptical" that would happen.

Mr. Cohen added that there had been no deal to halt attacks on Gaza and that he saw a need for Israel – which already controls 70% of the enclave – to take full control of it if Hamas did not disarm.

"In the deal we signed with the United States, our stance is that Hamas must be dismantled. This is the first thing that must happen," he added.

Mr. Trump's Board of Peace, the U.S.-led body overseeing the ceasefire, published on Friday a 15-point roadmap setting out the final steps for implementing the agreement.

Hamas has said Israel must stop its attacks in Gaza and pull its troops back, in accordance with other key terms of the ceasefire deal, before it will agree to hand over weapons to a new Palestinian body named to run Gaza.

A senior Hamas official said on Sunday the group had demonstrated "considerable flexibility", but accused Israel of wanting to impose a de-facto situation on the ground by intensifying its strikes.

He said that the success of the deal now depended on Israel fully ending its daily attacks on Gaza.

14 killed in suicide attack on peace rally in Pakistan

Associated Press
PESHAWAR

A suicide bomber targeted protesters at an anti-militant rally in northwestern Pakistan on Sunday, killing at least 14 people, including police officers, and wounding more than two dozen others, officials said.

The attack occurred in Kabal, a town in Swat Valley in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, where demonstrators had gathered near a police station, chanting anti-militant slogans and demanding peace, district police chief Omar Khan said. He added that at least five officers were among the dead.

Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi condemned the attack, issuing a statement extending condolences to the families of those killed and prayers for the speedy recovery of the wounded.

People evacuate an injured victim following a suicide bombing during a protest in Pakistan's Swat district on Sunday. AFP

The Swat Valley was once a stronghold of Islamic militants who imposed a strict interpretation of Sharia, or Islamic law, before the Pakistani military launched a major operation in 2007 that drove them out and restored government control.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the bombing, but suspicion is likely to fall on the Pakistani Taliban, known as TTP. A military spokesperson said on Friday that militant attacks and ensuing operations had killed 819 security personnel and civilians this year.

U.K. PM Burnham signals support for written Constitution

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

Britain's new Prime Minister Andy Burnham has signalled his support for a written Constitution for the U.K., which, unlike most countries, does not have one authoritative document and is governed by a patchwork of statutes, common law judgments, and treaties.

Since entering office just two weeks ago, the former mayor of Greater Manchester has made devolution of power to regional authorities a focus of his administration.

"In the end, I think it does start to point towards a new constitutional settlement," Mr. Burnham said of his devolution plans on the weekend.

Andy Burnham

Calling for a "new clear set of principles about how this country should be run", Mr. Burnham said there was a need for a written Constitution – something he has called for before he was Prime Minister.

Ukraine hits multiple Russian regions and kills at least 8: officials

Agence France-Presse
MOSCOW

Ukraine attacked multiple regions of Russia on Sunday, killing at least eight persons, Russian officials said. Some of the strikes hit hundreds of kilometres from the front line, according to authorities.

Both Moscow and Kyiv have increased attacks on each other in recent months, as U.S.-led talks aimed at ending the conflict remain largely frozen.

Kyiv, which denies targeting civilians, says the strikes are fair retaliation for deadly Russian bombardment of its own territory and are aimed at pressuring Moscow into negotiations.

Ukrainian shelling of Russia's Belgorod region bordering Ukraine left three dead, while a separate drone attack on the Saratov region bordering Kazakhstan killed two others, regional authorities said.

Three were killed in a drone strike on a car in Russia's Udmurtia region, more than 1,000 km from the front line, the region's acting governor Olga Abramova said on Telegram.

"This act is monstrous in its senselessness. These people were definitely not a military target," she said.

Russian air defence systems intercepted 635 Ukrainian drones, the Russian Defence Ministry said.

Blaze on Indonesian passenger ferry leaves at least 5 dead and 41 missing

Agence France-Presse
SURABAYA

An Indonesian ferry caught fire at sea on Sunday, killing five persons and leaving another 41 missing after some jumped overboard, search and rescue officials said.

A total of 225 people on the vessel were rescued, said the regional Surabaya Search and Rescue Agency, which provided the latest figures in an afternoon update.

Some passengers jumped into the sea and were picked up by a nearby ship, according to Basarnas, Indonesia's National Search and Rescue Agency.

Four other vessels were on standby near the ferry but could not approach because of the risk posed by flammable material on the ferry, it said.

Relatives wait for updates on the rescue operation after a ferry caught fire off Madura island, in Surabaya on Sunday. AFP

The captain had called the ferry company to report the fire as the vessel sailed from Surabaya in East Java to Makassar in South Sulawesi, Basarnas said. The captain had not been in contact since then, it said.

A larger rescue operation was heading to the site from Surabaya, a six-hour journey from the site of the disaster, Basarnas said.

"Based on preliminary reports from the field, passengers are waiting to be evacuated by the vessels in the vicinity of the incident site," said Muhammad Masyhud, a senior official at Ministry of Transportation.

"The safety of passengers and crew is our top priority. We are continuously coordinating with all relevant parties to ensure that the evacuation process can proceed quickly, safely, and effectively," he said in a statement.

Marine accidents are a regular occurrence in Indonesia, an archipelago of more than 17,000 islands, partly due to lax safety standards and unpredictable weather.

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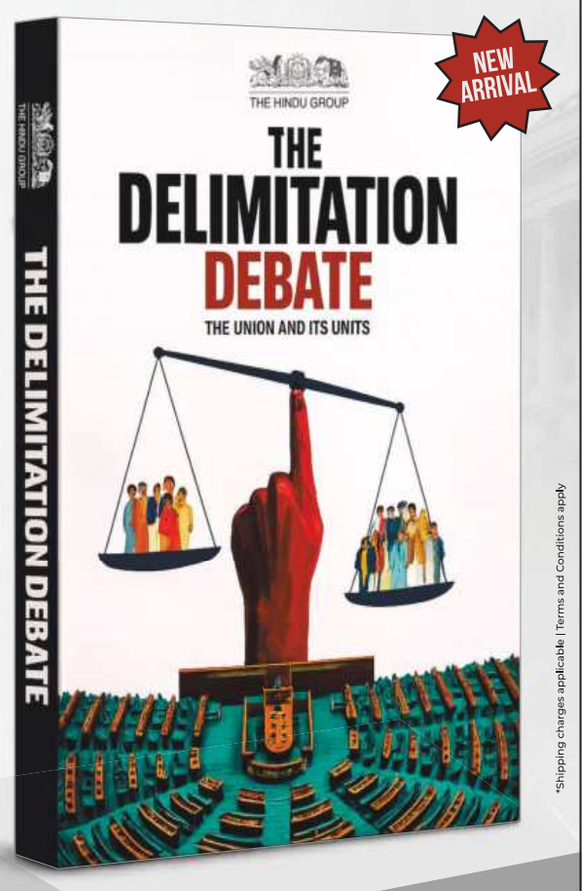

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LOCAL HERO

Commonwealth Games poster boy Kerr delivers mile gold at home

REUTERS

Fresh from setting a World record in the mile, Josh Kerr delivered a Commonwealth Games gold in front of home fans at Glasgow on Saturday. Kerr, who was 12 seconds slower than the mark of 3m 42.66s he set in London last month, finished ahead of Australia's Cameron Myers (3:55.26) and Kenya's Timothy Cheruiyot (3:55.41).

MIXED FORTUNES

Indian relay team finishes sixth, Jamaican quartet clinches gold

AFP

The Indian mixed 4x400m relay team of Vishal T.K., Rajesh Ramesh, Rashdeep Kaur and Neeru Pathak finished sixth (3:20.32) at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow on Saturday. The gold medal was won by Jamaica (3:10.97). England bagged silver with 3:11.58 while Nigeria completed the podium (3:12.85).

INSATIABLE

Double medallist Gulveer eyes more podium finishes

GETTY IMAGES

Gulveer Singh said it felt great to win two medals at the Commonwealth Games, but insisted that he will continue to strive for more podium finishes. "I am happy with the bronze medal (in 5000m). But I want to win more medals. I am still hungry. With the Government's support, Indians can do well in athletics".

SETBACK?

Spearhead Bumrah likely to miss Test series against Lanka

FILE PHOTO

Jasprit Bumrah is likely to miss India's two-Test series in Sri Lanka, says a report in *Cricinfo.* The BCCI medical team has advised the premier pacer to allow more time for his recovery from a left-knee issue. No replacement has been announced so far. Bumrah has not bowled since the second ODI against England in Cardiff on July 16.

A highly satisfying show by the Indian contingent in Glasgow

The boxers make a significant contribution to the country's medal tally; Gulveer, with a double podium finish, turns out to be the brightest star among the athletes; Asmita and Harsh bag historic gold in judo; Mirabai proves her class yet again

C'WEALTH GAMES

K. Keerthivasan
GLASGOW

Striking it rich: Lovlina finished with a silver while fellow boxers Jaismine, Priya, Preeti, Sakshi and Arundhati took home the gold. PTI

The people of Glasgow were warm and welcoming, displaying immense hospitality towards visitors who landed for the Commonwealth Games here.

On the roads leading to the stadiums and inside the venues, the volunteers were a shining example of kindness, respect and helpfulness. They went out of their way to make everyone feel at home. True to its official slogan, 'People Make Glasgow', the city once again showed it's the people who make the Games special.

For many Indian athletes, the cold weather did pose a challenge and affected their performances to some extent. But they refused to use the conditions as an excuse, instead using it as an opportunity to learn and compete with dignity and pride.

India's tally of 13 gold, 17 silver and nine bronze was one of its best returns in the quadrennial event. It reflected the steady growth of Indian sportspersons on the Commonwealth stage and their ability to adapt to different conditions. Though it would not be fair to compare the previous editions as Glasgow was a scaled-down Games featuring only 10 sports.

Boxing's contribution to India's overall medal tally was significant and impossible to overlook. It was easily the the country's best-ever showing in the sport in the Games history, with a haul of 10 medals, including seven gold and three silver.

The boxing arena at the Scottish Event Campus here was transformed into a sea of Indian supporters. The competition witnessed fierce contests, with England, Canada and Northern Ireland fielding some of their top boxers.

However, weightlifting was somewhat of a disappointment for India. Head coach Vijay Sharma had expected a medal haul of "around 10", but the team could not touch double digits and finished with eight medals – one gold, six silver and a bronze.

Bindyarani Devi, who had won a silver at the 2022 Commonwealth Games in women's 55kg, was expected to improve on that, but she ended up with a bronze in 58kg.

Sachin and Ankush continued India's domination in boxing. AP

Much was expected from Raja Muthupandi in the men's 65kg category. However, he fell short, finishing second despite a spirited effort.

Mirabai Chanu continued to win hearts with her exploits. The humble Indian weightlifting star claimed her third successive Games gold medal, adding another glorious chapter to a remarkable career and cementing her status as a Commonwealth legend.

Gulveer Singh was the standout performer for India in athletics. The 28-year-old achieved a rare feat by winning two medals in a single Games.

His historic silver in the men's 10000m and bronze in the 5000m, achieved in a strong field featuring several Kenyans and world-class competitors, highlighted his ability to take on elite opposition and deliver.

The Indian athletics contingent also improved on its 2022 Birmingham Games tally, winning 10 medals – five silver and as many bronze – even though a gold remained elusive.

The historic gold medals in judo by Asmita Dey and Harsh Singh enhanced India's impressive overall campaign.

Para sports also made a huge contribution to India's kitty as the gutsy athletes scripted history with a record seven medals.

Like every edition, Glasgow brought its share of triumphs and setbacks, moments of joy and lessons to be learnt for the Indian sportspersons.

'Exceptional Indian boxers exceeded expectations'

K. Keerthivasan
GLASGOW

Terming India's record haul of 10 boxing medals, comprising seven gold and three silver, at the Commonwealth Games as "exceptional", Boxing Federation of India (BFI) president Ajay Singh said he was pleasantly surprised by the team's performance.

He admitted that he had expected only "six or seven boxers to reach the finals" rather than all 10. "We are proud of our contribution to India's medal tally," said Ajay at a virtual interaction on Sunday.

Of India's 10 boxing medals, seven were won by women. Ajay attributed the outstanding performance to their hunger for success and unwavering determination to excel. "The women have shown tremendous commitment and desire to keep improving. The BFI will continue to provide them with every possible facility and support to help them perform even better," he said.

Ajay, however, cautioned against expecting a similar medal haul at the forthcoming Asian Games, describing it as a far tougher competition.

"The top three teams in Asia are Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and China, and they are extremely strong. The Asian Games will be much more competitive," he said.

India's men's head coach C.A. Kuttappa and women's head coach Santiago Nieva also praised the team's performance.

Raising the bar: Gulveer became the first Indian to win two medals in athletics in a single edition of the Commonwealth Games. AFP

Gulveer breaks new ground for Indian distance running

K. Keerthivasan
GLASGOW

Gulveer Singh etched his name in the annals of Indian athletics at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games. The 28-year-old broke new ground for Indian distance running on the Commonwealth stage by winning two medals in a single Games.

Gulveer had made history by clinching a silver in the men's 10000m, India's first-ever medal in the event at the Games.

Gutsy display

He returned to the track on Saturday and produced another gritty performance in a competitive field to secure the bronze medal (3:24.95s) in 5000m. Mathew Kipsang of Kenya won the gold in a time of 13:23.61 while Ky Robinson of Australia bagged the silver (13:24.70).

Cornelius Kemboi of Kenya came within striking distance of overtaking Gulveer, but the latter shifted gears in the final 10-odd metres to stay ahead and hold off the former. The Kenyan was a mere 0.04 seconds short at 13:24.99.

Gulveer secured the bronze medal in 5000m with a timing of 3:24.95s
The 28-year-old finished behind Kenya's Kipsang and Australia's Robinson

Keeping pace

Gulveer stayed with the pack for almost the entire race, even when he wasn't setting the pace. At the 1000m mark, he kept pace with the leaders, alongside the likes of Kipchumba, Robinson, Mohammed Ahmed, Dan Kibet and Kemboi. He remained firmly in contention, consistently featuring among the top five.

The blip came around the 2400m mark when he slipped to seventh, but Gulveer quickly regained his position in the front group, ensuring he was well placed to finish well on the home stretch.

Tilak is South skipper for Duleep Trophy

Sports Bureau
HYDERABAD

Tilak Varma will lead South Zone in the Duleep Trophy, starting later this month in Bengaluru. Andhra batter Ricky Bhui will serve as Tilak's deputy.

The 15-man squad includes India international Karun Nair, who last played for the national team in the Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy in 2025.

A reward

Promising players like Karnataka's R. Smaran, the leading scorer in the previous Ranji Trophy season (950 runs), and Hyderabad's K. Himateja are also part of the contingent.

M.N. Vikram Varma has been appointed as the head coach.

By virtue of reaching the final in the previous edition, where it lost to Central, South has received a direct entry into the semifinals.

Tilak. FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

The squad: Tilak Varma (Capt.), Ricky Bhui (Vice-capt.), N. Jagadeesan (wk), Abhinav Tejrana, Shaik Rasheed, K. Himateja, R. Smaran, Karun Nair, Tanay Thyagarajan, Shreyas Gopal, K. Sai Teja, T. Vijay, Vidwath Kaverappa, Aman Khan, and M.D. Nidheesh.

Ankur, Yashaswini secure titles with contrasting wins

C'WEALTH TT

Amol Karhadkar
NEW DELHI

Ankur Bhattacharjee and Yashaswini Ghorpade emerged as the men's and women's singles champions as India capped a dominant campaign by winning four of the five gold medals at the 22nd Commonwealth Table Tennis Championships at the Thyagaraj Sports Complex here on Sunday.

The men's final, featuring two of the brightest prospects in Indian table tennis, lived up to the expectations. In a pulsating 70-minute contest, Ankur staged a stirring comeback to overcome Payas Jain, making a strong statement after narrowly missing out on a place in India's Asian Games squad.

Yashaswini, meanwhile, added a major title to her growing resume by defeating the fancied Sreeja Akula. Both the finalists had been pushed to the limit in the semifinals earlier in the day. Yashaswini had edged teenager Syndrela Das 11-9 in the deciding game, while Sreeja had survived an equally stern examination from Olympian Sutirtha Mukherjee to win by the same margin.

Trophy collectors: Ankur rallied from a game down while Yashaswini dominated the summit clash. The Syndrela-Sreeja pair and Taneesha-Manav duo won the women's and mixed doubles crowns. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

The draining last-four match, however, left little trace on Yashaswini. She quickly settled into the final, repeatedly finding the mark with her forehand topspins to deny Sreeja any rhythm. The victory served as redemption after she and Divyanshi Bhowmick had gone down to Sreeja and Syndrela in the women's doubles summit clash earlier on Sunday.

While the women's title battle was largely one-sided, the men's final ebbed and flowed. Payas' powerful forehand topspins initially outweighed Ankur's trademark backhand winners as the Delhi paddler moved within a game of the crown at 3-2. But Ankur showed remarkable improvement in service returns, reeling off nine consecutive points in the sixth game to force a decider.

The seventh game brought another twist. A yellow card for protesting Payas' service appeared to disrupt Ankur's concentration as he slipped 4-7 behind. But the Kolkata youngster used his timeout to regroup, returned with renewed purpose and completed a memorable comeback to earn the biggest title of his career.

The results:
Men: Singles: Final: Ankur Bhattacharjee bt Payas Jain 11-8, 9-11, 7-11, 11-8, 4-11, 11-4, 11-9; **Semifinals:** Payas bt Manush Shah 11-9, 11-7, 5-11, 12-10, 11-9; Ankur bt Manav Thakkar 8-11, 11-8, 11-8, 11-8, 11-8. **Doubles: Final:** Shen Qi Wong & Javen Choong (Mas) bt Manav & Manush 11-9, 12-10, 11-7.
Women: Singles: Final: Yashaswini Ghorpade bt Sreeja Akula 11-6, 11-1, 8-11, 11-7, 13-11; **Semifinals:** Sreeja bt Syndrela Das 10-12, 11-7, 11-8, 12-10, 9-11, 9-11, 11-9; Yashaswini bt Sutirtha Mukherjee 6-11, 11-5, 7-11, 11-9, 5-11, 11-4, 11-9.
Doubles: Final: Sreeja & Syndrela bt Yashaswini & Divyanshi Bhowmick 11-8, 11-13, 11-8, 11-6.
Mixed doubles: Final: Taneesha Kotecha & Manav bt Ai Xin Tee & Richard Rui Zhe Yap (Mas) 11-8, 10-12, 10-12, 11-9, 11-5.

Near-perfect Tanvi stands tall to clinch maiden World Tour title

The 17-year-old beats Nguyen to become the youngest Taipei Open champion; she is the first Indian woman to win the crown since Saina in 2008

Holding her own: Tanvi stayed in control barring a few hiccups. BADMINTONPHOTO

BADMINTON

Press Trust of India
TAIPEI CITY

Teen Indian sensation Tanvi Sharma clinched her maiden BWF World Tour title, defeating sixth seed Nguyen Thuy Linh of Vietnam in the women's singles final of the Taipei Open Super 300 badminton here on Sunday.

The 17-year-old, hailing from Punjab, needed just 36 minutes to beat World No. 21 Nguyen 21-16, 21-16.

"I did not expect to win a title here, so I am really happy," said Tanvi, who became the youngest champion in Taipei Open history at just 17 years and 222 days.

Coached by P.V. Sindhu's former mentor Park Tae-sang, the youngster is the first Indian to bag the Taipei Open women's crown since Saina Nehwal in 2008.

> I was quite nervous, but I tried to give my 100%. I was going step by step, match by match

"I was quite nervous, but I tried to give my 100%. I was just trying to deliver my best. I was going step by step, match by match. I played really well in every match," added Tanvi, who dropped only one game all week.

"I have to do a lot more to play Super 500 and 750s. So, I will be keep working hard."

In the title decider, the Indian made a flying start, catching the Vietnam player at the front court with deft drops played with the same action used for a smash.

After surging to a 10-2 lead, Tanvi made a string of errors to allow Nguyen to reduce the deficit to six points at 9-15. She, however, regained control in the closing stages of the opener and sealed it with a cross-court smash.

In the second game, the Vietnamese opened up a 3-0 lead before Tanvi racked up a series of points to hold a three-point edge at the interval. The Indian gradually stretched the advantage, her deception once again fetching crucial points.

At 19-12, Tanvi unsuccessfully challenged a line call after being ruled late, but she soon earned seven match points with a smash. She squandered three of them in a nervous finish before settling the issue.

In a heart-warming gesture, Tanvi took off her gold medal and placed it around Park's neck before the two posed for photographs.

Vansh steers Kings home in a rain-affected game

DPL

Sports Bureau
NEW DELHI

Vansh Bedi stepped up in a rain-curtailed encounter to help Central Delhi Kings beat Outer Delhi Warriors by four wickets in the Delhi Premier League at the Arun Jaitley Stadium here on Sunday.

Chasing 131 in a game reduced to 10 overs per side due to rain, Vansh, who came in at No. 4, unleashed a few towering blows in an unbeaten 47 off just 16 deliveries as Kings reached the target in 9.5 overs.

Skipper Yash Dhull had laid the foundation for the blistering chase with a 16-ball 35 at the top of the order.

Jonty Sidhu also played his part by racing to 25 off 12 balls.

In the Warriors' bowling effort, the experienced Navdeep Saini was meted out harsh treatment, leaking 40 runs off his 1.5 overs.

When Saini was handed the ball for the final over, Kings needed 17 runs for victory with four wickets in hand. Money Grewal dispatched the fellow quick for a four before Vansh got the job done with two more fours and a maximum over deep midwicket.

Earlier in the evening, Yajas Sharma, Akshay Saini and Mohit Panwar chipped in with quickfire knocks to take Warriors to 130 for five.

The scores: Outer Delhi Warriors 130/5 in 10 overs (Yajas Sharma 39, Akshay Saini 31, Mohit Panwar 37, Keshav Dabas 2/14) lost to Central Delhi Kings 133/6 in 9.5 overs (Yash Dhull 35, Vansh Bedi 47 n.o., Aman Chaudhary 2/15, Pratham Saluja 2/26).
Note: match reduced to 10 overs per side.

Gem: Vansh smashed an unbeaten 47 off just 16 balls.

LIVE TELECAST

Durand Cup: Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 & LIV, 4 & 7 p.m.
West Indies vs Pakistan: Second Test, Day 2, FanCode, 7.30 p.m.

Triumphant: Round-4 winners Rudra Gokulnath, Kairav Roberson, Rehan Khan Rasheed and Aaruthran Prabhu. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Aaruthran claims Mini Under-10 class title

Sports Bureau
CHENNAI

Aaruthran Prabhu produced a brilliant performance in the Mini Under-10 class as the fourth round of the IAME India Series Karting promoted by RA Motorsports and organised by the Madras Motor Sports Club at the Madras International Karting Arena concluded on Sunday. Equally impressive was Chennai's Rehan Khan Rasheed (Momentum Motorsports) who dominated the Junior class, winning the Super Heat and the Finals.

The results (provisional, subject to post-race scrutiny):

IAME X30 - 125cc Seniors (Finals, 16 laps): 1. Kairav Roberson (MSPORT) (13mins, 25.527secs); 2. Armaan Dhawan (Leap Frog Racing) (13:28.204); 3. Krishna Premchandar (Peregrine Racing) (13:39.470).
Super Heat (14 laps): 1. Kairav (11:49.326); 2. Armaan (11:51.159); 3. Madhusudhan (Kartkrew Motorsports) (11:57.715). **Juniors (Finals, 14 laps):** 1. Rehan Khan Rasheed (Momentum Motorsports) (11:59.263); 2. Adithya Pratap (Momentum Motorsports) (12:00.274); 3. Abhishikt Barse (Crest Motorsports) (12:00.341).
Super Heat (12 laps): 1. Rehan (10:13.559); 2. Abhishikt (10:18.583); 3. Adithya (10:19.663). **IAME X30 - 60cc Mini Class (Finals, 12 laps)**: 1. Rudra Gokulnath (NKRA with Momentum) (11:09.173); 2. Eeshan Swaroop (Kartkrew Motorsports) (11:12.044); 3. Ridhaan Anil Kumarr (Red Rabbit Racers) (11:15.912).
Super Heat (9 laps): 1. Shiv Neel (NKRA with KKM) (08:26.592); 2. Rudra (08:26.645); 3. Eeshan (08:33.161). **Mini Under-10 (Finals, 12 laps):** 1. Aaruthran Prabhu (Kartkrew Motorsports) (11:09.300); 2. Yeshwin Vinay Kishore (Peregrine Racing) (11:14.188); 3. Parth Singh (NKRA with KKM) (11:50.956).
Super Heat (9 laps): 1. Aaruthran (08:25.834); 2. Aarav Sureka (Rayo Racing) (08:27.395); 3. Yeshwin (08:33.378).

Infantino struggling to survive: former IOC marketing chief

FOOTBALL

Agence France-Presse
PARIS

FIFA president Gianni Infantino's leadership has become "radioactive" and his 10-year reign as head of world football "is over", a former head of IOC marketing said.

A FIFA plan to raise up to $4.2 billion, based on a valuation of $20 billion, through private investment leaked to the media on Tuesday.

Following a furious global reaction, Infantino shelved the scheme on Saturday.

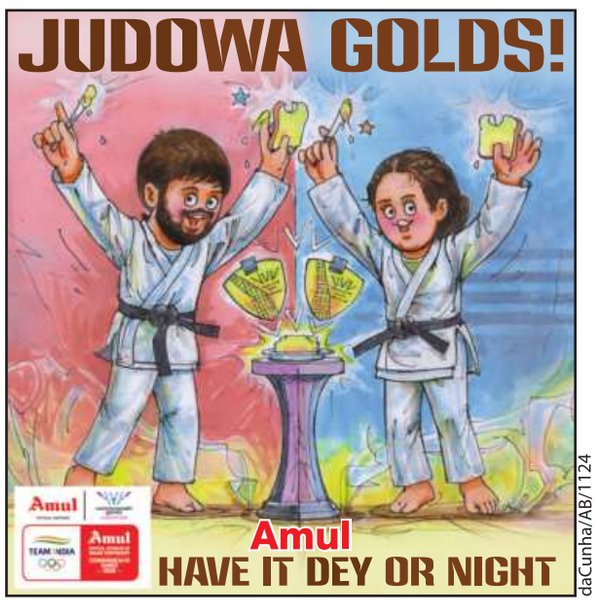
"I do not think we have ever seen such a fast fall from grace by a sports leader," Michael Payne, former head of marketing at the International Olympic Committee, added.

"One week ago, Infantino was riding high from delivering a very successful World Cup, and expected to run unopposed for election next year to continue his mandate as president of FIFA. Now Infantino will struggle to survive the month. How does he find himself in this mess – gross hubris!"

The signs are not good for the 56-year-old Swiss, with European football's governing body UEFA and CONCACAF – which includes the three recent co-hosts of the World Cup, the US, Canada and Mexico – among those expressing their discontent over his leadership.

Terrence Burns, who was brand and marketing strategist for two successful World Cup hosting bids, said he had never seen "anything mismanaged and bungled so badly by people so smart".

However, Burns said that even though Infantino's position is "precarious", it is not beyond repair even if a challenger does emerge for the vote in Rabat next year.



Infantino. AP

Samaleswari pulls off a shock win over Mohammedan

Sports Bureau
KOLKATA

Debutant Samaleswari Sporting pulled off a major surprise by defeating two-time champion Mohammedan Sporting Club 3-2 in a thrilling Group B match of the 135th Durand Cup at the Salt Lake Stadium on Sunday. The Sambalpur-based side took a two-goal lead before half-time through strikes from Basit Ahmed Bhat and Russian forward Marat Tareck. Mohammedan responded strongly after the break, with Lalthankima and Lalngaihsaka scoring.

Veer Arjun Joshi produced a fine free-kick in the 81st minute to restore Samaleswari's lead.

Mohammedan SC's substitute Adison Singh was red-carded in injury time.

The win saw Samaleswari complete its group campaign with six points from three matches to finish atop the table. Mohammedan remained second with three points from two matches.

The result: Group B:
Mohammedan SC 2 (Lalthankima 60, Lalngaihsaka 66) lost to Samaleswari Sporting 3 (Basit Bhat 11, Marat Tareck 27, Veer Arjun Joshi 81).

Tanveer does the trick for Team Petronas TVS Racing

Sports Bureau
COIMBATORE

Team Petronas TVS Racing's star rider Abdul Wahid Tanveer emerged the overall winner of the MRF 2W Rally of Coimbatore, the opening round of the MRF MOGRIP – FMSCI Indian National Rally Championship for two-wheelers, here on Sunday.

"Coimbatore has been my favourite track for a very long time. It was pretty close in the first, but thereafter I pushed myself midway through to take the day's honour," said Tanveer.

Team Petronas TVS Racing's Aishwarya Pissay finished on top in the women's class and Deepan Kumar in the Star of Tamil Nadu category.

Joseph Mahalson, the Coimbatore District Manager, MRF Limited, gave away the prizes.

Plenty to cheer about: The overall winners of the MRF 2W Rally of Coimbatore. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The results (Top three categories only): Class 1 (Super Bike Pro Expert): 1. Abdul Wahid Tanveer (Team Petronas TVS Racing) 00:47:27; 2 Shlok Vikram Ghorpade (Team Hero Motorsports) 00:48:00; 3. Samuel Jacob (Team Petronas TVS Racing).
Class 2 (Super Bike Expert): 1. R. Nataraj 00:48:54; 2. V.S. Naresh 00:51:15; 3. Amogh Nag 00:51:46.
Class 3 (Super Sport up to 165cc): Group B: 1. L. Nithyan 00:53:25; 2. L. Bharath 00:54:01; 3. Varun Kumar 00:55:37.

Chhetri urges Tata Group to reconsider JFC exit from ISL

ANI
NEW DELHI

Former India captain Sunil Chhetri has made an emotional appeal to the Tata Group to reconsider its decision to shut down Jamshedpur FC's first-team operations, describing the development as "a punch to the gut" and warning that Indian football cannot afford to lose one of its strongest institutional supporters.

Reacting to the club's decision in a post on X on Sunday, Chhetri reflected on the difficult state of Indian football and the importance of long-term stakeholders.

"To know that Jamshedpur has folded first team operations is a punch to the gut... I understand that some tough decisions in sport are down to what makes sense in the boardroom. But I can only request and hope that the think tank at TATA picks their heart over head and reconsiders this call. It might be a poor business decision, but it will be the one Indian football needs the most at this hour," Chhetri posted on X.

Immediate impact

He also highlighted the immediate impact of the decision on players and staff, noting that while many may eventually find new opportunities, Indian football stands to lose much more.

Andre' primed to do the 'trick in feature

HYDERABAD: The four-year-old colt Andre', who has won both his last two starts, looks poised to complete a hat-trick in the S. Rangarajan Memorial Trophy, the feature event of Monday's (Aug. 3) races.

1 HYDERABAD RACE CLUB PLATE (DIV. II) (1,200m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 1.40 p.m.: 1. Cosmico (7) Akshay K 61.5, 2. Hurricane Wave (5) Afroz K 61, 3. Sweet Dancer (1) Kuldeep Jr. 61, 4. Double Bubble (6) Kuldeep Sr. 60, 5. Tiger Ruby (4) Surya Prakash 60, 6. Stars Envied (3) G. Naresh 58.5, 7. Beverley (11) P. Ajeeth K 57, 8. Shubrak (2) Rafique Sk. 55.5, 9. Celestial (8) Uday Kiran 54.5, 10. Live Legend (10) Ajay K 51.5 and 11. Hoping High (9) Arjun 51.
1. COSMICO, 2. DOUBLE BUBBLE, 3. LIVE LEGEND

2 KOTHAGUDEM PLATE (1,200m), (Terms), Maiden 3-y-o only (Cat. II), 2.10: 1. Excalibur (4) Antony Raj 56, 2. Pedal To The Metal (6) Trevor 56, 3. Sporting Touch (5) Santosh Raj 56, 4. Varttamaan (9) Shivam 56, 5. Vinfast (10) Yash Narredu 56, 6. You Tuber (2) Akshay K 56, 7. Zorba (8) P. Ajeeth K 56, 8. Akkarshaka (1) Md. Ismail 54.5, 9. Mazagran (7) B.R. Kumar 54.5 and 10. My Day (3) Kuldeep Sr. 54.5.
1. YOU TUBER, 2. EXCALIBUR, 3. MY DAY

3 S. RANGARAJAN MEMORIAL TROPHY (1,600m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II), 2.45: 1. Bholi Punjaban (9) Surya Prakash 60, 2. Black Dust (3) Ajay K 60, 3. Andre' (6) Antony Raj 59.5, 4. Racing Ruler (5) P. Sai K 59.5, 5. China Town (4) Kuldeep Sr. 58.5, 6. Gloria (1) Kuldeep Jr. 58.5, 7. Krystallos (7) P. Ajeeth K 56.5, 8. Federer (8) G. Naresh 54.5, 9. Clefairy (2) A.A. Vikrant 54 and 10. One Nation (10) B.R. Kumar 53.5.
1. ANDRE', 2. RACING RULER, 3. CHINA TOWN

4 BAKHTAWAR PLATE (1,400m), 3-y-o and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 3.20: 1. Knotty Senorita (3) A.A. Vikrant 60, 2. Suryavanshi (9) Surya Prakash 59, 3. Real Thalaivaa (9) Mohit 58, 4. Surrealist (8) Yash Narredu 57.5, 5. Cherish The Lady (1) Ajay K 57, 6. Cosmic Gift (7) Trevor 56.5, 7. Mandate (6) Akshay K 56, 8. Lego (4) Kuldeep Sr. 55.5, 9. Photograph (10) G. Naresh 53.5 and 10. Anemoi (2) Kuldeep Jr. 52.5.
1. MANDATE, 2. SURREALIST, 3. KNOTTY SENORITA

5 HYDERABAD PLATE (1,600m), 4-y-o and upward (Cat. I), 3.55: 1. Celestial (1) Yash Narredu 58, 2. Vivaldo (5) Md. Ekram 56, 3. Get Lucky (4) Akshay K 54, 4. Shadow Of The Moon (3) Afroz K 54, 5. Black Onyx (7) Arjun 52, 6. N R I Superpower (6) Ajay K 50.5 and 7. Reigning Beauty (2) Santosh Raj 50.5.
1. BLACK ONYX, 2. GET LUCKY, 3. CELESTIAL

6 RACHAKONDA TROPHY (1,200m), 3-y-o and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), no whip, 4.30: 1. Diligence (4) Yash Narredu 61, 2. Sunny Day (2) P. Ajeeth K 59.5, 3. Nyanza (5) P. Uday Kiran 57, 4. Una Paloma Blanca (6) Surya Prakash 57, 5. Dhanadeepa (3) D.S. Deora 54.5, 6. Noorian (10) A.A. Vikrant 54.5, 7. Beast Master (13) P. Sai K 53, 8. Quality Warrior (9) Santosh Raj 52.5, 9. Exclusive Luck (8) Md. Ekram 52, 10. Pranava (12) B. Nikhil 51. 11. The Divinely (11) Rafique Sk. 51, 12. Timeless Elegance (1) G. Naresh 51, 13. Dino (7) Kuldeep Jr. 50.5 and 14. See My Attitude (14) Arjun 50.
1. DILIGENCE, 2. BEAST MASTER, 3. EXCLUSIVE LUCK

7 HYDERABAD RACE CLUB PLATE (DIV. I) (1,200m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 5.05: 1. Her Ladyship (10) Kuldeep Sr. 62, 2. Bold Beauty (8) Md. Ismail 61, 3. Mix The Magic (2) B. Nikhil 61, 4. Linda (11) Kuldeep Jr. 60, 5. Swiss Girl (9) Trevor 60, 6. Inderdhanush (3) A.A. Vikrant 59, 7. Fox Worth (7) Shivam 58, 8. Natu Natu (4) G. Naresh 55.5, 9. American Affair (5) P. Ajeeth K 55, 10. Silver Lining (6) P. Uday Kiran 53.5 and 11. Desert Sultan (1) Surya Prakash 51.5.
1. LINDA, 2. SWISS GIRL, 3. NATU NATU

Day's Best: **MANDATE**
Jackpot: 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7.
Mini Jackpot: (i) 1, 2, 3 & 4, (ii) 4, 5, 6 & 7.
Treble: (i) 2. 3 & 4, (ii) 5, 6 & 7.
Tanala: All races.

The eternal crisis-man with a penchant for the big stage

When the mood seized him, which wasn't too often but not rare as hen's teeth either, Rahane cut a dashing picture at the crease, powerful off the backfoot and felicitous off the front. Lord's and the MCG seemed to bring the best out of him maybe because he is a strong student of history and knows the prestige attached with performing optimally there

R. Kaushik

Michael Atherton is regarded as the greatest English opening batter of his generation, almost a natural successor to that other wonderfully accomplished technician who also hailed from the north of the country and who will rank among the top openers of all time, Sir Geoffrey Boycott.

Earmarked for the English captaincy from very early in his career - remember the famous FEC (Future England Captain)? - the Lancastrian was a grand mixture of technical expertise and remarkable concentration. He was a pleasing stroke-maker, without a doubt, but stroke-making won't be the first thought when one hears the name Michael Atherton.

At a time when English batting was desperate for solidity at the top of the order, Atherton loomed as the panacea, his unflappability instilling a sense of calmness and confidence within the batting groups. In a career spanning 115 Tests, the currently 53-year-old articulate and understated commentator and analyst produced numerous fantastic essays, as is to be expected. It is his highest Test score, however, that is still spoken of with awe and reverence, not just by those privileged to watch it first-hand or those who saluted his commitment on television, but even by those of succeeding generations who might not have seen him negotiate even a single ball during his long stint at the crease.

The epic unfolded at the Bullring that the New Wanderers in Johannesburg goes by. And make no mistake, it truly is an amphitheatre. Even without a single bum on the seats beyond the boundary buntings, Wanderers can be an intimidating stage. Standing in the middle, with neither bat nor ball in attendance, you can feel the stands closing in, the heat rising to your face, hands suddenly clammy and the heart beating at the rate of knots. One can only imagine what it must be like to take guard, gladiator-like, with Allan Donald and Meyrick Pringle and Brian McMillan and a very young Shaun Pollock chomping at the bit, desperate to have a go.

The first Test of the five-match series in 1995-96, in Centurion, had ended in a tame draw with not a ball bowled on the last three days. Pollock, on debut, had provided glimpses of his extraordinary talent with three for 98 from 29 overs while Atherton, the captain, ground out a five-and-a-half-hour 78 in England's 381 for nine declared.

South Africa called the shots in Johannesburg, Pollock's three for 44 earning them a 132-run lead which they increased to 478 at which point Hansie Cronje decided he had enough runs, and time, to force a 1-0 advantage. England had to bat out the better part of two days to secure a draw - a tilt at a record target was out of the equation - and the odds heavily favoured the hosts, but no one had told Atherton that.

He wasn't just obdurate defence. By his own admission, for the first time in his Test career, which was into its seventh year at the time, he felt he was in 'the zone', that elusive and intangible state that sportspersons strive for with limited success. He played the hook and the pull - horror, horror - and one ball after being dropped on 99 by Gary Kirsten off 'White Lightning' Donald, it was the hook that took him to three-figures. Atherton wasn't done; the skipper was unconquered and unbowed at the end, unbeaten on 185 – in nearly 11 hours (643 minutes) - after negotiating 492 deliveries in the first of several grand tussles with Donald to shepherd his team to an honourable draw.

This would remain the defining innings of Atherton's career, one that catapulted him to English folklore. And yet – we say this with no disrespect – Atherton finished his career with no more than a middling average of 37.69. And 16 hundreds from 212 innings.

In another era, Rahane might have been a longer-term captain, but because of the overlap with first Dhoni and then Kohli, he ended up leading the Test side just six times, all in an interim capacity when Kohli was either injured, rested or was away on paternity leave. India won four and lost none of those six Tests, a terrific achievement as four of those outings were against the Aussies, and three in Australia

Perceptions vary

It's amazing how perceptions vary depending on so many different factors, not least recency bias which might cloud a forensic audit of Ajinkya Rahane's international career in general, and his Test record specifically. Like Atherton, Rahane - who led India six times in Tests, almost entirely by default - also finished with an average of less than 40 (38.46, superior by more than half a run per innings to Atherton) but where the Englishman is hailed and eulogised, the stylish Mumbaikar leaves behind a feeling of what-if. What if he had converted even a quarter of his (26) half-centuries into hundreds? What if he had sometimes been a little more selfish? What if he had been a little less flamboyant? What if he didn't have to perform in the towering presence of Cheteshwar Pujara and Virat Kohli? What if...?

But like the great stylist from Hyderabad who took the steel in the Indian batting and fused it with style, Rahane will always be more than his borderline-modest numbers. No, one isn't falling into the trap of comparing Rahane with V.V.S. Laxman. Not by a long way. For starters, Laxman had far superior numbers - an average of 45.97 - and played numerous more match-altering knocks than Rahane. But like Rahane, Laxman had to operate in the giant shadows of Rahul Dravid and the peerless Sachin Tendulkar and, from midway through his career, the effervescent genius of Virender Sehwag. That Very Very Special managed to carve a niche for himself and more than hold his own in this illustrious company is credit to his magic, of course, but also to a single-mindedness that he doesn't get enough credit for.

In Laxman's example was a tack for Rahane to emulate, and a contemporariness that should have been his greatest motivation. But let's leave that for another day. In his own way, Rahane contributed to India taking not a lot of time in tiding over a tricky transition phase which saw Dravid and Laxman play their last Tests in Adelaide in January 2012 (though no one knew it at the time), Sehwag slowly fall out of favour and Tendulkar walk away into the sunset in November 2013.

Dashing picture

When the mood seized him, which wasn't too often but not rare as hen's teeth either, Rahane cut a dashing picture at the crease, powerful off the backfoot and felicitous off the front. Lord's and the MCG seemed to bring the best out of him, whether because he is a strong student of history and knows the prestige attached with performing optimally there or simply because he liked the pace with which the ball came on to his bat. Strangely for an Indian batter hailed as a very good player of the turning ball, Rahane enjoyed greater success overseas - only four of his 12 tons came in India - which perhaps obliquely explains his average.

In another era, Rahane might have been a longer-term captain, but because of the overlap with first Mahendra Singh Dhoni and then Kohli, he ended up leading the Test side just six times, all in an interim capacity when Kohli was either injured, rested or was away on paternity leave. India won four and lost none of those six Tests, a terrific achievement what with four of those outings against the Aussies, and three in Australia. His captaincy debut, in Dharamshala in March 2017, was sensational; with the series tied 1-1, Rahane heeded head coach Anil Kumble's advice and unleashed left-arm wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav, who rode on tips from Shane Warne to pull the rug from under the feet of the great man's colleagues. Rahane himself counter-punched as India pursued a tricky target of 106 on a still-spicy deck against a fired-up duo of Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood, taking his team home from 46 for two with a racy unbeaten 27-ball 38.

But his greatest hour as leader came in Australia, on the Covid-adjacent tour in 2020-21 when Kohli left for the birth of his first child after the first Test. India looked out for the count after an eight-wicket drubbing in the Adelaide day-nighter, courtesy their lowest Test tally of 36 all out in the second innings. Alongside Kohli, pace ace Mohammed Shami was also ruled out of the series, with a broken forearm.

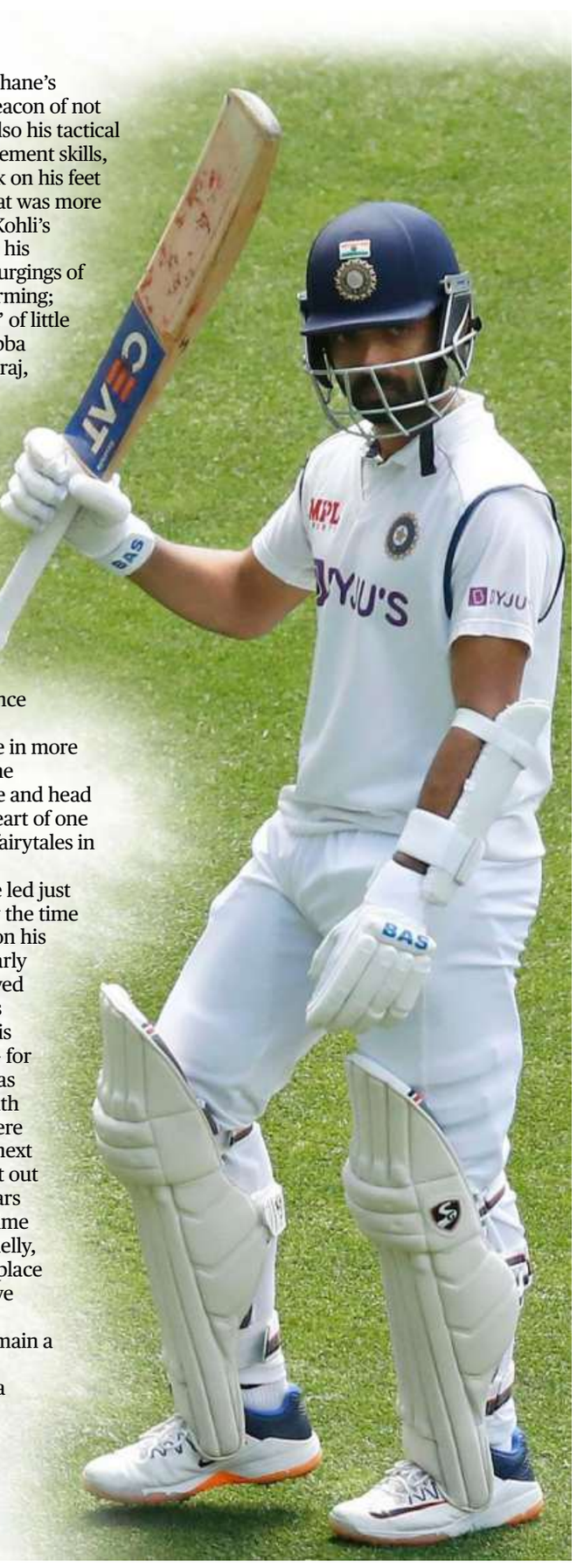
A 4-0 whitewash was the predicted outcome at that stage but somehow, Rahane masterminded an extraordinary fightback. By the final Test in Brisbane – how India still managed to keep the scoreline at 1-1 remains a great mystery – Rahane had to make do without the services of Ravindra Jadeja, R. Ashwin, Hanuma Vihari and the irreplaceable Jasprit Bumrah. But India weren't going away, were they? Rahane's fabulous 112 was the catalyst for an instant backlash in Melbourne and once the skipper had shown the way, how could Pujara and Rishabh Pant and Vihari and Ashwin – who defied a hamstring strain and a back injury respectively to bat out more than three hours and secure a magnificent draw in Sydney in the third Test – not follow suit?

Need of the hour

Australia in 2020-21 was Rahane's brightest hour, a shining beacon of not just his batting chops but also his tactical awareness, his man-management skills, the uncanny ability to think on his feet and his innate calmness that was more the need of the hour than Kohli's unquestionable fire. To see his teammates respond to the urgings of their captain was heart-warming; India had a bowling 'attack' of little pedigree going into the Gabba decider, but Mohammed Siraj, Navdeep Saini, Shardul Thakur and debutants T. Natarajan and Washington Sundar – this group combined had played fewer than 10 Tests at the time – delivered at the most Australian of venues to set up a spectacular coup taken to its denouement by the steadfastness of Pujara and the enterprise and incandescence of Pant. The Gabbatoir was conquered for the first time in more than three decades, with the leadership group of Rahane and head coach Ravi Shastri at the heart of one of the most extraordinary fairytales in the five-day game.

It's a shame that Rahane led just once more in Tests, and by the time Kohli decided to call time on his career in South Africa in early 2022, his form had nosedived enough - just three 50-plus scores and no century in his preceding 28 Test innings - for Rohit Sharma to take over as all-format leader. After South Africa, Rahane played a mere three more Tests over the next 18 months before being put out to pasture - some three years before he officially called time on his stirring journey. Cruelly, perhaps, but there is little place for sentiment in competitive sport.

Rahane, though, will remain a sentimental favourite. The eternal crisis-man but not a fair-weather fill-the-boot types. Maybe that's something he should have been better at. Thanks for the entertainment, Jinks. And the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, of course.



THE GIST

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India produces smart scientists but is struggling to retain them

Research flourishes when ideas compete but suffers when people compete for proximity to power; many of India's laboratories continue to operate within rigid hierarchies that would appear strange in leading scientific institutions elsewhere in the world

Biju Dharmapalan

Recent reports of nearly 120 scientists resigning from the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) have rightly raised concerns. The ISRO has been a symbol of India's scientific aspirations and such an exodus cannot be dismissed as an ordinary episode of employee turnover.

Resignations have occurred over the years but the scale of recent departures confronts us with the question: of why some of India's brighter scientific minds are electing to leave institutions millions dream of joining.

The phenomenon is not unique to ISRO. Similar stories have emerged from laboratories under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), premier autonomous institutes, and several government-funded research organisations. Often these departures are hard to notice as part of a larger pattern because they occur one scientist at a time – yet together they point to a deeper issue deserving of national attention.

Representative image of the National Institute of Animal Biotechnology (NIAB) in Hyderabad. India is spending a historically unprecedented, but otherwise still insufficient, amount of money on scientific research. FILE PHOTO

Real main reason

The most obvious explanation is salary but it is not sufficient. Scientists who have spent decades building their expertise and reputation rarely leave only because another organisation is offering a bigger paycheck. Many of those that are resigning are also in the latter half of their careers, and generally unwilling to risk financial and professional stability. No; what they want is something even greater: professional dignity, freedom of thought, and the freedom to work on their topics of choice.

Several researchers – many of whom are unwilling to go on record for fear of repercussions – in private characterise these institutions as places where bureaucratic power is increasing at the expense of that of science, and where it is becoming more risky to question authority. The tragedy is that while Indian science inherited world-class institutions, it also retained a colonial administrative mindset.

Research flourishes when ideas compete but suffers when people compete for proximity to power. Many of India's laboratories continue to operate within rigid hierarchies that would appear strange in leading scientific institutions elsewhere in the world. Young scientists often learn quickly that survival depends less on asking bold scientific questions than on understanding invisible administrative boundaries. In some institutions, even simple acts of professional equality are viewed as breaches of etiquette. Respect, instead of being earned through scholarship and mentorship, is demanded through designation.

A class system

In order to be creative, for example, a doctoral student should be able to challenge a senior scientist's hypothesis without fearing that his or her long-term career will be adversely affected. A young investigator should feel confident enough to question established ideas. The world's best research environments are the best because they allow just such interactions.

Attend an international scientific conference in Europe or the Americas and you will often witness something remarkably ordinary: Nobel laureates standing in the same cafeteria queue as graduate students, and young scholars openly questioning senior scientists during presentations. They are respectful – and the seniors know that – but that respect flows from intellectual contributions rather than via ceremonial protocols.

However, many Indian scientific gatherings continue to have a bureaucratic rather than academic culture. Distinguished speakers receive VIP badges, exclusive dining arrangements, and special hospitality while students and junior participants are treated as an entirely different class. Such symbolism is not harmless: it reinforces a hierarchy that has little place in science. Science has never progressed because someone occupied a larger office or enjoyed a separate lunch. Let us foster the many little interactions; they could make a big difference.

Speaking up

Equally worryingly, scientists rarely speak openly about unhealthy workplace cultures because the ecosystem is remarkably small. Today's reviewer may become tomorrow's selection committee member. Today's director may influence tomorrow's funding decision.

Several researchers – many of whom are unwilling to go on record for fear of repercussions – in private characterise some institutions as places where bureaucratic power is increasing at the expense of that of science

Occasionally, some disturbing information emerges, including allegations of harassment, vindictive administrative actions, and attempts to publicly discredit accomplished scientists. Whether every allegation withstands scrutiny is for due process to determine – but the recurring perception is immediately damaging.

As a result, many talented researchers are now moving to private research organisations, emerging deep-tech companies, universities abroad, and/or international collaborations where scientific autonomy has more room than administrative strictures. India's growing innovation ecosystem benefits from this movement to some extent but it is not a zero-sum: our national laboratories lose institutional memory and experienced mentors.

India is spending a historically unprecedented, but otherwise still insufficient, amount of money on scientific research. Excellent skills are now needed for new research missions, including those involving semiconductors, quantum technologies, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and spaceflight. But whereas buildings can be built in a few months and, with adequate funds, sophisticated instruments can be bought, building an environment that holds great scientists is a very long process, often taking decades.

Conscious effort

Today, India must increase administrative transparency in scientific institutions, and install robust systems to redress grievances concerning workplace harassment and mentoring-based leadership training to ensure a leadership free from command.

In parallel, we need a conscious effort to break free of the colonial bureaucracy that remains in the daily life of institutions. Respect should not disappear from scientific workplaces but it differs fundamentally from unquestioning deference.

India has repeatedly demonstrated that its scientists possess extraordinary capability. Our achievements in space exploration, vaccines, supercomputing, mathematics, biotechnology, and engineering stand as testimony to that talent. The challenge today is not producing brilliant scientists – our universities and institutions have figured that out. The challenge is to ensure those scientists can still flourish after they enter India's laboratories.

If we fail to reform workplace culture, the next generation may simply leave our public institutions. That will be an immeasurable loss. Science has always advanced through ideas that challenged power – not by power that silenced people or ideas.

(Dr. Biju Dharmapalan is Dean, Academic Affairs, Garden City University, Bengaluru, and an adjunct faculty member at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru. bijudharmapalan@gmail.com)

THE GIST

Recent reports of nearly 120 scientists resigning from the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) have rightly raised concerns

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India must increase administrative transparency in scientific institutions, and install robust systems to redress grievances concerning workplace harassment and mentoring-based leadership training

BIG SHOT

Greek firefighters try to extinguish a wildfire in the area of Porto Germeno, some 70 kilometres northwest of Athens in the region of Viotia, on Sunday. Greece faced multiple fronts and a growing damage toll after a week of wildfires that devastated over 12,000 hectares of forest and agricultural land, experts said. AFP

WHAT IS IT?

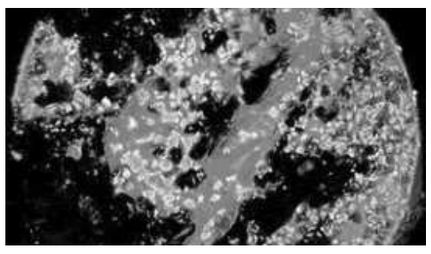
Extreme-event materials

Vasudevan Mukunth

Researchers have found a previously unknown metal alloy created by the blast of the Hiroshima atomic bomb in 1945. The material was found inside small, glass-like beads called hiroshimaites, which were recovered from the beach sands of Hiroshima Bay. These beads formed when the intense heat of the blast vaporised building materials, soil, and metals, which solidified as they fell back to the earth.

When the researchers examined the beads, they identified a micrometer-sized metallic grain embedded in the glass. It turned out to be a complex mix of iron, chromium, nickel, manganese, molybdenum, silicon, and aluminium — and it had a unique crystal structure.

The findings were published in *Science Advances* on July 29. The team has expressed belief that the alloy formed by ultrafast quenching: the explosion's fireball reached temperatures over 7,000 degrees Celsius, turning urban materials such as construction steel into a mixed metallic vapour. As the fireball expanded and rapidly cooled, the elements mixed in a way that is impossible under normal conditions. According to the researchers, their work shows that high-energy plasma events like nuclear detonations can be natural laboratories where scientists can discover new materials that are difficult to synthesise in a scientific lab. The alloy already shares characteristics with other unusual high-entropy alloys and quasicrystals.



Back-scattered electron image of the spheroidal hiroshimaite sample in which the alloy was found. BINDI ET AL., SCI. ADV. 12, EAEG8299 (2026)

The researchers also wrote that their work shows how debris can preserve a "high-resolution record" of the chemical and physical environment during a nuclear event.

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