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'No agreement with Centre over Katchatheevu'

CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Tuesday rejected the claim that there was an agreement between the Union and State governments over the ceding of Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka and criticised the Centre for not having taken steps to retrieve it. » PAGE 2

Five Naxals killed in encounter in Chhattisgarh

NARAYANPUR
Five Naxalites were killed in an encounter in Narayanpur of Chhattisgarh on Tuesday, the police said. The gunfight took place in Abujhmad when a joint team of personnel was out on an anti-Naxal operation, a police official said. » PAGE 6

Israel pounds Gaza following evacuation order

GAZA STRIP
Israeli forces carried out deadly strikes on Tuesday on southern Gaza after issuing an evacuation order which a UN agency said would impact 2,50,000 Palestinians. A source said shelling killed eight persons and wounded more than 30 others. » PAGE 14

Beijing, Manila hold talks after stand-off

MANILA
China and the Philippines held a crucial meeting on Tuesday to ease tensions after their confrontation in the disputed South China Sea that sparked fears of a wider conflict that could involve Manila's ally, the U.S. » PAGE 14

Stampede at prayer meet in U.P. kills 116

Over 200 persons were injured at a prayer meeting organised by self-styled godman Narayan Sakar Hari in Hathras; over 1 lakh people participated, though permission was granted for less than half that number; Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath forms committee to investigate cause of the incident

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

At least 116 people were killed and over 200 injured in a stampede at a religious event in Hathras district of Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday. Uttar Pradesh Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Singh said seven of the dead were children, one was a man, and the rest were women.

Over 1.2 lakh people had converged for a *satsang* (prayer meeting), titled "Manav Mangal Milan Sadbhavana Samagam", organised by self-styled godman Narayan Sakar Hari at Fulrai village in the Sikandraru police station limits.

Eyewitnesses said the police failed to control the crowd that went into a frenzy in an attempt to greet the godman at the end of the *satsang*. According to Sikandraru Sub-divisional Magistrate Ravendra Kumar, the devotees

also wanted to collect some soil from around his feet.

Heart-wrenching visuals shared by fellow participants showed bodies lying outside the post-mortem house, while kin of the deceased cried out for help.

People were forced to carry those who had fainted to get help. No ambulance was available on the spot.

The godman and his aides reportedly left the spot immediately after the stampede.

'Poor arrangements'
"How can they allow such a big event to happen when there was no preparedness for any untoward incident," asked Sumit Kumar, an eyewitness. He blamed the administration for the poor arrangements.

At a community health care centre in Hathras, people started protesting when no doctor was available to attend to the injured.



Tragic loss: A child mourns the death of relatives who attended the event in Fulrai village, at a hospital in Sikandra Rao of Hathras district. PTI

Videos showed people taking injured people and bodies in mini-lorries.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath formed a committee to investigate the cause.

Ashish Kumar, District Magistrate, Hathras, said permission for the event was granted by the Sub-divisional Magistrate and rest of the arrangements were supposed to be done

by the organisers. Initial investigation revealed that over double the permitted number of attendees reached the event.

Inspector-General of Police, Aligarh Range, Sha-

labh Mathur said 116 bodies were recovered so far among which 27 were sent to the Etah mortuary and the rest were in Hathras. "Bodies were sent to nearby places for post-mortem as we intend to hand over the bodies to their families as soon as possible," he said, adding that a First Information Report was being registered against the organisers.

Recalling the horror, Shakuntala, an eyewitness said, "Everyone was trying to rush out of the venue after the *satsang* ended. The fields near the event were swampy. People started falling in the mud swamp, one above the other."

The godman is also scheduled to hold a similar *satsang* in Agra from July 4 whose permission was denied by the authorities after Tuesday's incident.

RELATED REPORTS

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Nepal's largest parties strike deal to oust Prime Minister

Press Trust of India
KATHMANDU

Nepal's two largest parties have reached a deal on Monday night to form a new government to replace the ruling coalition led by Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'.

The agreement, between Nepali Congress (NC) president Sher Bahadur Deuba and Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) chairman K.P. Sharma Oli, outlines ministerial division, provincial leadership roles and a rotation for the prime ministerial position.

The NC, the largest party in the 275-member House of Representatives, has 89 seats, while the CPN-UML has 78 seats. Prachanda's Maoist party has 32 seats.

WILL NOT QUIT: PRACHANDA

» PAGE 14

Through the ghats



Devoted procession: Warkaris carry the Dnyaneshwar Maharaj palanquin through the Dive ghat near Pune on Tuesday. The procession will reach Pandharpur by July 17 to celebrate Ashadi Ekadashi. EMMANUEL YOGIN

Modi says mandate is for continuity, terms Congress a 'parasite' on its allies

Sobhana K. Nair

NEW DELHI

In his first parliamentary address since taking oath as Prime Minister for the third time, Narendra Modi said on Tuesday that the Lok Sabha election results were a mandate for "stability and continuity". In an almost two-and-a-half-hour speech delivered amid Opposition sloganising on Manipur, Mr. Modi launched a blistering attack on the Congress, terming it a "parasite party" that only achieved its 99-seat tally by leaning on its allies.

He was speaking in the Lok Sabha during the Motion of Thanks to the President for her address to the joint sitting of Parliament. Without directly naming Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, the Prime Minister singled him out, saying that on Monday, the House had witnessed "the wailing of a person with *balak buddhi* (imbecile)", a pejorative term he used repeatedly through his speech.

Underlining the Congress's defeat in the third consecutive Lok Sabha election, Mr. Modi pointed directly at Mr. Gandhi while saying, "You can't do it."

The Prime Minister used the opportunity to counter the Opposition's allegations during the election campaign that the BJP was trying to end reservations and being "anti-constitutional", citing the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's remarks on the subject of reservation and the Congress's treatment of B.R. Ambedkar, the



Direct attack: Narendra Modi speaks during the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. PTI

chief architect of the Constitution.

He spent a significant amount of time holding forth on post-2024 India, praising the BJP government for instilling "self-confidence", which in turn has become a driver for development. He applauded his government for moving from an "appeasement model of governance" to a "saturation model of governance", where schemes are extended to all. "In our third term, we will work at triple the speed...we will ensure three times the results," Mr. Modi said.

As the Prime Minister rose to speak, the Opposition trooped into the Well of the House, raising slogans on the situation in Manipur. They demanded that Mr. Modi visit the strife-ridden State, noting that he has not toured there since ethnic violence broke out on May 3, 2023. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla's entreaties and reprimands did not have any impact on the Opposition, who kept sloganising throughout the speech.

The Prime Minister directed his attack on the Congress, which he said has once again been given the mandate to sit in Opposition. "Instead of conceding defeat, they are being arrogant. They are trying to build a narrative that they have beaten us," he said.

Mr. Modi also spoke at length on "reservation" and the "Constitution", two issues that dominated the 2024 election campaign. "Those who are dancing today holding the Constitution did not implement it in J&K. We had to break the wall of Article 370 to extend it to J&K," he said.

Before concluding his address, he finally broke his silence on the recent "paper leaks" and the NEET controversy. Mr. Modi said that the government was working on a war footing to curb such incidents of leaked question papers, adding that those playing with the future of youngsters would not be spared.

OPPOSITION HITS BACK

» PAGE 14

Restore speech in full, Rahul tells Birla; says expunction is against democracy

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Hours after portions of his maiden speech as the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha were expunged, Rahul Gandhi wrote to Speaker Om Birla on Tuesday, saying the action went "against the very tenets of parliamentary democracy".

Demanding that his remarks be restored to the official records of the Lok Sabha, Mr. Gandhi said BJP MP Anurag Thakur's speech was full of allegations, but only one word of it was expunged. "With due respect to your good self, this selective expunction defies logic. I request that the remarks expunged from the proceedings be restored," he said.



Concerned leader: Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi made a scathing attack on the BJP on Monday. PTI

In his speech on Monday, the Congress leader made a scathing attack against the BJP, questioning the Hindu credentials of its leaders and accusing the party of dividing people.

The Speaker removed 13 parts of Mr. Gandhi's

Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Lok Sabha.

"I am, however, shocked to note the manner in which considerable portions of my speech have been simply taken off from the proceedings under the garb of expunction," he said.

Freedom of speech

"I am constrained to state that the portions expunged do not come under the ambit of Rule 380. What I sought to convey in the House is the ground reality and the factual position. Every member of the House who personifies the collective voice of people whom he or she represents has the freedom of speech as enshrined in Article 105 (1) of the Constitution of India," Mr. Gandhi said.

PM silent as Manipur faces 'civil war-like' crisis, says MP

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Congress MP A. Bimal Akojam made a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi for remaining silent on Manipur, rocked by ethnic violence for the past one year.

In a speech in the Lok Sabha on Monday night, the Inner Manipur MP said there is a civil war-like situation in Manipur, "yet our Prime Minister has remained mute, not even a word". He also pointed to the absence of any reference to Manipur in President Droupadi Murmu's address to Parliament.

FULL REPORT

» PAGE 5

IN BRIEF



BJP's Maurya set to win U.P. council bypoll unopposed

BJP's MLC candidate Bahoran Lal Maurya is set to be elected unopposed in the bypoll to the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council. Mr. Maurya filed his nomination for the July 12 election on Tuesday in the presence of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and Deputy CM Brajesh Pathak. Till the end of the nomination time on Tuesday, only Mr. Maurya had filed his papers, Vidhan Sabha Secretary Pradip Dubey said. Mr. Adityanath congratulated Mr. Maurya as the Samajwadi Party has not announced any candidate for the seat. The bypoll was necessitated by the resignation of SP MLC Swami Prasad Maurya.

ASI seeks time from HC to submit report on Bhojshala

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) on Tuesday filed an application in the Madhya Pradesh High Court seeking four weeks' time to submit its survey report on the Bhojshala-Kamal Maula mosque complex, a medieval-era structure in Dhar district locked in a long-running dispute. The plea contended that the National Geophysical Research Institute, Hyderabad, has sought three weeks from the ASI to study the huge data collected during the Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR)-Geographic Information System (GIS) survey of the complex and submit a final report. The Hindus consider Bhojshala as a temple, while the Muslims call it a mosque.

MVA springs a surprise, fields Uddhav aide as third candidate for MLC polls in Maharashtra

Ateeq Shaikh
MUMBAI

The Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) on Tuesday fielded a third candidate for the July 12 Maharashtra Legislative Council polls despite having the numbers to get only two candidates elected to the Upper House of the State Legislature.

The surprise candidature of Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray's close aide Milind Narvekar came on the last day for filing of nominations for the elections to 11 seats, for which now 12 candidates are in the fray.

The Thackeray-led party's alliance partner Congress has fielded Pradnya Satav while the Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) is backing Peasants and Workers Party of India sitting MLC Jayant Patil.



Uddhav Thackeray, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief, is confident of winning all three seats.

Mr. Thackeray expressed confidence that all three candidates of their alliance will emerge victorious as they have the numbers. "We would not be doing it had we not been confident," he said.

Every candidate will require at least 23 votes to get elected to the Council. Members of the State Assembly form the electoral college for the biennial elections.

As RJD woos the community, NDA in Bihar bets on two Kushwahas being better than one

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

The recent Lok Sabha election verdict, which returned a rich haul for the ruling Janata Dal (United) and Bharatiya Janata Party but hoisted the Rashtriya Janata Dal to the top of the heap when it comes to vote share, has accentuated the political imperative of wooing communities even though Bihar goes to polls for the Assembly only next year.

The Kushwahas, the second-largest bloc among the Other Backward Classes (OBC) after Yadavs in Bihar, are at the centre of the latest charm offensive of the principal combatants.

Two vacancies
On Tuesday, the JD(U) and BJP-led National Democratic announced Rashtriya

Lok Morcha (RLM) president and former Union Minister Upendra Kushwaha, regarded as one of the community's tallest leaders, as its candidate for upcoming Rajya Sabha poll.

Two vacancies have arisen in the Upper House with Misa Bharti of RJD and Vivek Thakur of BJP being elected to the Lok Sabha from Patliputra and Nawada seats.

The decision was prompted in no small measure by the RJD – the leading Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc constituent in the State – making Abhay Kushwaha, who was earlier in the JD(U) but switched sides just before the Lok Sabha election, the leader of the party in the Lok Sabha.

JD(U) national president and Chief Minister Nitish



CM Nitish Kumar with Bhagwan Singh Kushwaha, JD(U) candidate for the Bihar Legislative Council bypoll, in Patna on Tuesday. ANI

Kumar then announced Bhagwan Singh Kushwaha, a prominent Kushwaha leader from the Shahabad region, as the party candidate for one of the vacant seats in the Bihar Legislative Council.

Mr. Bhagwan Kushwaha filed his nomination on

Ruling NDA alliance names Rashtriya Lok Morcha president Upendra Kushwaha for Rajya Sabha polls

dent: "With consensus, Upendra Kushwaha has been nominated for the Rajya Sabha and he will be the candidate of NDA."

Gratitude to PM
The RLM chief expressed his gratitude to alliance leaders for the announcement, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mr. Kumar, Mr. Choudhary, Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) leader Chirag Paswan, and former Chief Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi of the Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular). "In days to come, whatever the challenges, we will collectively

face it," he posted on X. Mr. Upendra Kushwaha had contested on behalf of the NDA in the Lok Sabha election from Karakat but finished a distant third, with CPI(ML) candidate Raja Ram Singh winning the seat and Bhojpuri singer and actor Pawan Singh, who contested as an Independent, coming second.

Upset with BJP
The Kushwaha community was upset with the BJP because the party did not give a ticket to the Bhojpuri star from his desired Lok Sabha constituency, Ara, prompting him to throw his hat into the ring against the RLM chief.

The BJP had originally fielded Mr. Singh from Asansol in West Bengal, which he declined for "personal reasons". The BJP expelled him for "anti-party

activities and maligning the image of the party" after he entered the polling ring from Karakat.

While the Koiris (a Kushwaha caste) and Luv-Kush (Kurmi) communities are among core voter bases of the Bihar CM, resentment among Kushwahas against the ruling alliance has grown over the last three elections in the State due to their dipping fortunes.

Kushwaha candidates
In the 2015 Assembly election, while 20 Kushwaha candidates won, 11 of them belonged to the JD(U), four each to the BJP and one to the Congress.

The 2020 Assembly election saw 16 Kushwaha candidates become MLAs, including three from the BJP, four each from the JD(U), RJD and CPI(ML), and one from CPI. In the 2024

Lok Sabha election, a total of 11 Kushwaha candidates were fielded by the INDIA bloc and NDA but only four won.

The INDIA bloc gave tickets to seven Kushwaha candidates (three by RJD and one each by Vikash Patel, CPI(M), CPI(ML), and Congress). The NDA gave tickets to four Kushwaha candidates, the JD(U) fielding three and the RLM chief contesting from Karakat. The BJP, LJP (Ram Vilas) and HAM(S) did not give tickets to any Kushwaha candidate.

The ruling alliance hopes the decisions to field Mr. Upendra Kushwaha and Mr. Bhagwan Kushwaha blunts the RJD's gambit with Mr. Abhay Kushwaha, as the tug of war for the 4.2% community population in the State intensifies in the days ahead.

No effort to retrieve Katchatheevu by BJP regimes: T.N. CM

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Tuesday rejected the claim that there had been an agreement between the Union and State governments over the ceding of Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka.

He criticised the BJP government for not having taken necessary steps to retrieve the islet.

Mr. Stalin made the remarks in a letter to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar who had, in a communication, said that the genesis of the Katchatheevu issue dated back to 1974, following an understanding between the then Union and Tamil Nadu governments.

Speaking to the media persons, District Magistrate Ashish Kumar said it was a private function for which permission was granted by the sub-divisional magistrate.

Expressing grief over

the deaths, Samajwadi Party chief and former U.P. Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav has demanded immediate provision of the best possible medical facilities to the injured.

In a social media post on X, Bahujan Samaj Party leader and former U.P. Chief Minister Mayawati said: "The government should investigate and take appropriate action."

Referring to the contents made by Mr. Jaishankar in his communication dated June 29, the Chief Minister said: "The DMK-led

government is in power for the third term, no tangible and meaningful effort has been taken to retrieve the islet. The need of the hour is to ease the problems faced by the fishermen of Tamil Nadu and to find a lasting solution to this festering problem," Mr. Stalin said.

Despite the fact that the BJP-led government is



Grieving relatives of stampede victims in Hathras on Tuesday. PTI

administration's negligence for the tragedy.

As the hours went by, the official estimate of the fatalities jumped and the crowds outside the trauma centre and the mortuary swelled.

"There are almost 100-200 casualties and there was only one doctor at the hospital. There was no facility for oxygen. Some are

still breathing but there are no proper facilities for treatment," an agitated youth said outside the hospital.

Eyewitness Shakuntala Devi said the stampede took place while people were leaving the venue at the end of the event. "Outside, there was a road built on a height over a drain. People fell atop each other.

In a social media post on X, Bahujan Samaj Party leader and former U.P. Chief Minister Mayawati said: "The government should investigate and take appropriate action."

Haryana CM hikes expenditure limit for gram panchayats; it's misleading, says sarpanch union

The Hindu Bureau
GURUGRAM

Nayab Singh Saini

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Tuesday increased the expenditure limit for the gram panchayats from ₹5 lakh to ₹21 lakh for carrying out development works in villages without floating e-tenders.

The sarpanches across Haryana have been up in arms against the State government for more than a year, accusing it of curtailing the rights of gram panchayats and had opposed the Bharatiya Janata Party during the just-concluded Lok Sabha election.

Addressing the gram panchayat representatives at a State-level programme in Kurukshetra, Mr. Saini also announced that sarpanches could claim travel expenses at a rate of ₹16 per kilometre for using their car or taxi for pan-

chayat work.

Haryana Sarpanch Association president Ranbir Singh Samain, however, termed the announcements "misleading" and added that the association would go ahead with its earlier decision to convene a meeting on July 7 to discuss the future course of action.

Mr. Samain told *The Hindu* over phone that increasing the expenditure limit meant little without removing the 50% cap on the

expenditure by the gram panchayats to their total funds. Also, he added, that the major demands to scrap e-tendering and restore the rights of gram panchayats were not addressed.

Leading the sarpanches agitation, the association, which claims to represent a majority of 6,000-odd panchayats in the State, seeks the implementation of 29 functional items for the panchayats under the 11th Schedule added as part of 73rd amendment to the Constitution.

String of demands
It also demands withdrawal of the "Right to Recall" Act, scrapping of e-tendering process for development works in the villages, and stopping the interference of the MLAs into the functioning of the panchayats.

Shivakumar completes 4 years as KPCC chief, amid power tussle

The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Tuesday completed four years as president of the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC).

In the midst of him completing four years, a section of the Congress leaders and loyalists of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah have been demanding the replacement of Mr. Shivakumar as the State Congress chief. Home Minister G. Parameshwara said there was nothing wrong with party leaders seeking the replacement of Mr. Shivakumar as he heads multiple posts. There is also a demand for creation of multiple Deputy Chief Minister posts, in an alleged attempt to curtail Mr. Shivakumar, who is the only one holding the post now.

Loyalists of Mr. Shivakumar have been demanding the replacement of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. In a closed-door meeting of the KPCC office-bearers on Monday, Mr. Shivakumar said he will not budge to attempts being made to replace him as the party's president.

Loyalists of Mr. Siddaramaiah have staked a claim for the change in the KPCC chief after the party's debacle in the Vokkala belt. They claim that leaders of other backward communities, SCs, and STs too should get an opportunity to head the party.

Naidu, Revanth to mend fences

Newly appointed Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister's letter to his Telangana counterpart rekindles hopes of resolving bifurcation issues between the States amicably; leaders likely to meet on July 6 to discuss the pending differences

M. Rajeev
HYDERABAD



Telangana and Andhra Pradesh Chief Ministers A. Revanth Reddy and N. Chandrababu Naidu are keen on ending bifurcation issues.

ing issues and resolve them amicably.

This brings to the fore the issues between the two States that remained unresolved for over a decade. Division of assets and liabilities of the Schedule IX and X institutions has been

the bone of contention between the two States. There are 91 institutions under Schedule IX and 142 under Schedule X listed in the A.P. Reorganisation Act, in addition to 12 institutions that were not mentioned in the Act.

Press for return of seven mandals: BRS

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

and his Andhra Pradesh counterpart N. Chandrababu Naidu and get back seven mandals and the 460-MW Lower Sileru hydel project forcibly transferred from Telangana to A.P. in 2014 through an ordinance.

The total fixed asset value of these institutions has been estimated at ₹1.42 lakh crore by the A.P. government, but the Telangana government terms it nominal, claiming the actual value would be much lower. The high-power com-

mittee headed by retired bureaucrat Sheila Bhide made recommendations on division of assets and liabilities pertaining to 89 of the 91 institutions but the two States are at loggerheads on these recommendations.

UDF walks out over worrying state of public health

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM



Veena George

ported in 2024, Leader of the Opposition V.D. Sathesan, who led the walkout, said pre-monsoon cleaning activities had totally failed this year. Of the ₹12-crore funds set aside for control of communicable diseases, the government had managed to spend just 0.08%.

Earlier, Speaker A.N. Shamseer denied leave for an adjournment motion proposed by Kondotty MLA T.V. Ibrahim to discuss the alarming situation because of the steady rise in infectious diseases and the multiple clusters of Hepatitis A cases in Malappuram

district.

Mr. Ibrahim accused Health Minister Veena George of taking the situation "very lightly" and contending herself that "everything can be set right by issuing

directives from the top".

Ms. George said that climate change, increased environmental temperatures and urbanisation had made Kerala more epidemiologically vulnerable to infectious diseases. She denied the allegations that pre-monsoon cleaning and sanitation drives had not been initiated sufficiently.

Going by the data of infectious diseases over the years, there was no marked spike in cases this year, Ms. George said.

As for the Hepatitis A outbreaks in Malappuram, all control measures had been launched. The situa-

tion was well within control and there were no inpatients in hospitals with Hepatitis A in Malappuram at present.

She said Kerala had succeeded in bringing down the dengue mortality rate from 0.34% in 2015 to 0.25% in 2024 and that there was no alarming situation in the State.

Mr. Sathesan dismissed Ms. George's arguments and said the Speaker should have allowed a discussion on the state of public health in the State, which would have brought out the seriousness of the situation.



A municipal worker fumigates a park in Bengaluru on Tuesday.

Karnataka to fix price cap on dengue tests in private hospitals

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Amid a surge in dengue cases, Karnataka is all set to announce a price cap on dengue tests in private hospitals. Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao on Tuesday directed officials to deliberate and fix a reasonable price cap on tests in all private hospitals and diagnostic laboratories in the State.

Rise in cases

Dengue has been on the rise in the State, with 6,187 cases and six deaths reported this year so far. A similar price cap was stipulated by the Congress government in 2015.

Mr. Dinesh Gundu Rao, who held a coordination meeting on Tuesday with officials from the BBMP, Health and Rural Development, and Panchayat Raj (DRD) departments to devise dengue control measures, said a notification on the price cap will be issued on Wednesday. Dengue detection and treatment are free of cost in government hospitals.

Directing all hospitals, including private facilities, to mandatorily notify all dengue cases, the Health Minister said, "More dengue cases are being detected as the testing rate has increased by 42% compared to last year. Early detection can help prevent complications and fatalities. Officials from the Health Department and BBMP should be on alert and function in coordination," the Minister said.

Directing officials to visit every house and create awareness about dengue preventive measures, the Minister told the officials to conduct door-to-door surveys and create awareness.

"BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Giri Nath has been instructed to conduct a meeting with builders and members of CREDAI to ensure that there is no water stagnation on the construction sites," the Minister added.

Row over mass in Syro-Malabar church: rebels conditionally agree to synod's 'conciliation terms'

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

Signalling that a resolution could be in sight for the stand-off between the Syro-Malabar Church and a good share of priests and members of the Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese, the Archdiocesan Movement for Transparency (a rebel group of laity and priests opposed to observing the synod-approved unified Mass) conditionally agreed on Tuesday to the 'conciliation terms' put forward by the synod leadership late on Monday to end the stalemate.

Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church Mar Raphael Thattil and apostolic administrator Bosco Puthur had on Monday directed priests in the archdiocese to celebrate at least one Mass on Sundays and days of obligation in the unified synod liturgy. If the churches followed the order, they can continue with the present system of celebrating people-facing Mass. Priests refusing to heed the order will face disciplinary action.

In keeping with the implementation of the order, canonical forum elections will be held and deacons ordained as priests in consultation with Rome, read a clarification issued late on Monday. The Archdiocesan Movement for Transparency (AMT) said discussions had been held during the past few days in this regard. Talks helped arrive at decisions based on conciliation, it said in a press release on Tuesday.

Subsequently, both the parties agreed to adhere to the following measures, the first being that there was no need to implement the conciliation circular in churches where litigations were pending. In addition, the circular would be put on hold in churches where the congregation was opposed to the unified Mass.

It was also decided that the unified Mass would be observed only as special Mass in such churches. Another decision was not to involve the police to implement the unified Mass order.

The Archdiocesan Movement for Transparency (AMT) said discussions

Worrying spread



Green woes: Water hyacinth cover a vast portion of the Vembanad lake at Kumarakom in Kottayam district of Kerala. This invasive species is detrimental to fish and other aquatic species, and also affects the flow of water. VISHNU PRATHAP

Six feared drowned in river while escaping raid

The Hindu Bureau

BELAGAVI

As many as six people were feared drowned when they tried to escape from a police raid in Hale Baluti village of Karnataka's Vijayapura district on Tuesday.

Based on a tip-off, a team of police officers from Kolhar Police Station raided a group that was allegedly gambling on the banks of the river Krishna. The gamblers were alerted when they saw the police and tried to escape by jumping into a coracle. However, it sank in the river after going a small distance and all of them drowned.

If you want to hike ticket fares, make video on drug menace: Revanth tells filmmakers

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD



Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy flagging off the new vehicles in Hyderabad on Tuesday. NAGARA GOPAL

must make a short video with the stars in their movies about drug awareness and cybercrimes, only then will we respond to their requests. Cinema has power and responsibility towards society," the Chief Minister said as he flagged off the latest fleet for the Telangana Anti-Narcotics Bureau (TGANB) and Telangana Cyber Security Bureau (TSCSB) at the Inter-

grated Command Control Centre (ICCC) in Hyderabad on Tuesday.

"Not just that, filmmakers seeking location permissions for their shoots will also have to show a short video," said Mr. Revanth Reddy.

"Since most of the shootings happen in Cyberabad and Rachakonda commissionerates, filmmakers must make a one-two-minute video on the two subjects and share that with the police before seeking permission for location," he said.

The government will assist those who comply with these regulations in the matter of permits, he added.

Kavitha was a main conspirator in Delhi excise scam, says HC

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader K. Kavitha was *prima facie* one of the main plotters of the criminal conspiracy behind the formulation and implementation of the Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22, the Delhi High Court has said while denying bail to her in two cases of corruption and money laundering linked to the liquor scam.

The High Court, which perused the material collected by the investigating agencies, said Ms. Kavitha was *prima facie* involved in the payment of kickbacks

in various processes and activities relating to proceeds of crime and in the commission of the offence of money laundering.

The court said no case for grant of regular bail was made for now as the investigation is at a crucial stage. It rejected her plea for relief on ground of being a woman, saying as a well-educated person and a former MP, she cannot be equated with a vulnerable woman and the court cannot lose sight of the "serious allegations" against her.

Both the CBI and the ED opposed Ms. Kavitha's bail pleas.

Police confirm murder of woman who went missing 15 years ago

The Hindu Bureau
ALAPPUZHA

The Kerala police seem to have cracked a 15-year-old missing woman case with the recovery of suspected human body parts and other materials from a septic tank at Mannar in Alappuzha district on Tuesday.

Kala, 27, then wife of Anil Kumar of Mannar, went missing in 2009.

District Police Chief Chaitra Teresa John confirmed that the woman was murdered. Ms. John said the FIR had been registered and a special team would carry out the probe. Terming the investigation at a preliminary stage, she did not divulge how the woman was killed and the reasons behind it.

Husband prime suspect
Mr. Kumar, who is working in Israel, is the prime suspect in the case. The Mannar police have taken five people, all friends and relatives of Mr. Kumar, into custody in connection with the case. Authorities said steps had been initiated to bring Mr. Kumar back from Israel.

The materials recovered from the septic tank will be sent for forensic examination. The police, a couple of months ago, launched a probe into the woman's missing case after receiving an anonymous letter stating that Kala had been murdered.

Mr. Kumar allegedly killed her after suspecting her of having a relationship with another person, according to police sources.

He then remarried and went to Israel a few months ago.

Jaishankar to represent India in place of Modi at SCO summit in Kazakhstan

Xi, Putin, and Sharif are expected to attend; Modi's decision to skip Eurasian grouping meet could disappoint Central Asian countries as interactions with them have been cancelled twice in the past; meeting is expected to see discussions on multilateral cooperation in trade and fight against terror

Suhasini Haidar

NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar reached Astana in Kazakhstan on Tuesday to lead the Indian delegation at the SCO Council of Heads of State in place of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on July 3 and 4, the Ministry of External Affairs has said.

Leaders of other countries in the Eurasian group, newly expanded to include Belarus this year, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif and the Presidents of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan will be hosted by Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev at the summit. Chinese President Xi Jinping landed in Astana for a state visit and bilateral meetings ahead of the SCO, while Iran's President may not be able to attend as the country is in the middle of elections. Shortly after landing, Mr. Jaishankar met Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Murat Nurtulev. In a social



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister Murat Nurtulev in Astana on Tuesday. X/DRSJAISHANKAR

media post, he said that he had "discussed our expanding strategic partnership and India's increasing engagement with Central Asia in various formats".

Mr. Jaishankar is expected to address the grouping during the plenary session on Thursday morning.

"At the summit, the leaders are expected to review the organisation's activities over the past two decades and discuss the state and prospects of multilateral cooperation. Topical issues of regional and international importance

are also expected to be discussed at the meeting," the MEA said in a press release on Tuesday, which did not give any reason for Mr. Modi's decision not to attend the summit on July 4.

While Mr. Modi may still address the Eurasian grouping virtually, his decision to drop out of the summit in Kazakhstan will avoid awkward moments from sharing the stage with the Chinese President and Pakistan PM, given that his planned engagements with them have been cancelled twice in recent years, once when they were invited to India for Republic Day in 2022 (the visit was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic), and when India turned the SCO Summit in July 2023 into a virtual format.

Given that the next SCO Heads of Government

next week in Moscow for a bilateral visit.

However, the absence of Mr. Modi in Astana could disappoint the Central Asian leadership, given that his planned engagements with them have been cancelled twice in recent years, once when they were invited to India for Republic Day in 2022 (the visit was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic), and when India turned the SCO Summit in July 2023 into a virtual format.

Given that the next SCO Heads of Government

No topic off-limits: Russia

Press Trust of India
MOSCOW

Given the "very trusting nature" of the relationship between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, no topic is off-limits for the two leaders when they meet here soon, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov

said on Tuesday. The dates of Mr. Modi's visit to Moscow will be announced a bit later but preparations for it are already at their final stages, he said.

Describing Mr. Modi's visit as "very important", Mr. Peskov said the leaders will discuss regional and global security, trade and all other topics.

During the SCO Foreign Ministers meeting in May, MEA Secretary (Economic Relations) Dammu Ravi had promoted "maximising the utilisation of the Chabahar Port" as well as using the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) connecting India to Central Asia and Russia via Iran, and the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) that has been stalled due to the Israel-Gaza conflict.

Mr. Sharif is expected to also offer Qasim port and Gwadar port for landlocked Central Asia's trade routes. India and Pakistan both became members of the SCO in 2017, and their leaders have often sparred at the high-level meetings over issues like terrorism and transit trade, including in Uzbekistan in 2022, and last year's SCO Foreign Ministers' meeting in Goa.

The leaders are also expected to discuss developments in Afghanistan, given that nearly all SCO members are engaged closely with the Taliban regime in Kabul.



Serious charges: The agency will inquire into allegations of irregularities in tender conditions and import of coal. FILE PHOTO

DVAC gets T.N. govt. nod, launches probe into coal import scam involving Adani Group

S. Vijay Kumar

CHENNAI

done by Adani Global Pte Limited alone," he had said in the letter.

Mr. Venkatesan said he had furnished evidence in his earlier complaints denoting how the tender conditions were changed after 2011, favouring the Adani Global Pte Ltd. and a small coterie of firms importing coal.

On January 31, 2023, Arappor Iyakkam convenor Jayaram Venkatesan wrote to Chief Minister M.K. Stalin that no step was taken to investigate the coal import scam which led to Tangedco incurring huge losses and debt. "Even after one-and-a-half years of assuming office, your government has so far not taken any steps to investigate the massive coal import scam of the previous government to the tune of ₹6,066 crore of which around ₹3,000 crore of corruption was done by Adani Global Pte Limited alone," he alleged.

"We have received the nod to investigate the allegations into the import of coal by the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (Tangedco). The sanction was accorded under provisions of Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, based on a complaint lodged by Arappor Iyakkam," official sources told *The Hindu* on Tuesday.

Arappor Iyakkam, an organisation working towards transparency and accountability in governance, had alleged massive corruption in coal imports involving officials of the Tangedco, and the Adani Global Pte Ltd., among others, to the tune of ₹6,066 crore between 2012-2016.

Despite complaints lodged with evidence between 2018 and 2019, no case was registered, it said. On January 31, 2023, Arappor Iyakkam convenor Jayaram Venkatesan wrote to Chief Minister M.K. Stalin pointing out that no step was taken to investigate the scam. "Even after one-and-a-half years of assuming office, your government has not taken any step to investigate the scam of the previous government to the tune of ₹6,066 crore, of which around ₹3,000-crore worth corruption was

CAG findings

Mr. Venkatesan said he had furnished evidence in his earlier complaints as to how the tender conditions were changed after 2011 in order to favour Adani Global Pte Ltd. and a small coterie of firms importing coal. Even the CAG found that the turnover requirement for tender value of ₹100 crore was increased to almost ₹1,000 crore to favour a few firms.

He alleged that Adani Global Pte Ltd. and a few others were given tenders at least \$15 to \$20 more than the market rate per metric ton. The proof of market price published by the Indonesian government was evidence to prove the allegation. The poor quality of coal imported also resulted in inefficient thermal power generation leading more losses.

Bihar govt. moves SC against HC order quashing 65% quota

Amarnath Tewary

PATNA

The Bihar government moved the Supreme Court on Tuesday, challenging the Patna High Court's directive to 'set aside' the increase in the State's reservation for disadvantaged communities, from the existing 50% to 65%. This is the quota for SCs, STs, Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs), and OBCs in government jobs and educational institutions.

The Bihar government's appeal before the top court was filed through advocate Manish Kumar. Senior advocate Dinu Kumar, representing the petitioners who had gone to the High Court against the quota hike, said, "Yes, the State government has filed an appeal before the Supreme Court today and our advo-

cate Ayush Anand too has filed a caveat."

Following the release of a caste-based survey report in 2022, the government had decided to increase the quota from 50% to 65%. Immediately afterwards, PIL petitions were filed in the Patna HC, challenging the quota hike as a "violation of the right to equal opportunity for citizens in matters of employment and education".

Mr. Dinu argued that the Supreme Court had imposed a 50% cap of reservations in the *Indira Sawney* case. He told the Patna HC that the State's decision was taken "on the basis of the proportion of castes".

Appearing for the government, Advocate-General P.K. Shahi insisted that the quota hike was due to the lack of adequate representation of these classes.

Anuj Kumar

GAZIABAD

More than 100 people were killed in a stampede on Tuesday at a religious congregation conducted by spiritual preacher Suraj Pal in Hathras district of Uttar Pradesh.

Mr. Pal, popularly addressed as Narayan Sakar Hari or Bhole Baba, hails from Bahadur Nagar village in the Patiyali tehsil of Kasganj district in Uttar Pradesh.

His followers come from many places in the western and central parts of Uttar Pradesh and neighbouring States, and prominent political leaders have also been seen at his programmes. Sources said Mr. Pal was a constable in the local intelligence unit of the Uttar Pradesh Police until the 1990s when he turned to spirituality,

adopted a new name, and started giving public sermons about leading a pious life. He described himself as a disciple of Narayan Sakar Hari and asked his followers to find the Almighty within.

Large ashram

Mr. Pal's Narayan Sakar Hari ashram in the village is spread over 30 acres. He moves with a cavalcade of cars and has his personal

security. He maintains a distance from the media but has a considerable following in villages. People in the area said there are no idols in the ashram.

In his early 60s, he usually dresses in a white coat and trousers and wears colourful sunglasses. His followers, most of whom are women, are usually dressed in pink and worship him as "Bhole Baba". His wife, who is often present during congregations, is addressed as "Matashri".

In 2014, he shifted base from Bahadur Nagar to Bichhwa in Mainpuri, leaving the ashram to be managed by a local administrator. However, he continued to hold congregations in the region which were scheduled on Tuesdays. Sources said despite Mr. Pal shifting base, the ashram had a footfall of up to

12,000 every day. Local media sources said mismanagement was common at the congregations. "It was written about but the administration showed a soft corner towards the ashram. Even during the COVID lockdown, his followers were allowed to worship at the ashram," said a local journalist.

In Patiyali, which has voted for the Samajwadi Party candidate in the Lok Sabha polls, meanings are already being drawn about the political affiliation of Mr. Pal. While Bharatiya Janata Party supporters used social media to point out that SP president Akhilesh Yadav had shared the stage with Mr. Pal in 2023, SP sources accused the BJP affiliates of using Mr. Pal to mislead Dalits by keeping them away from the Ambedkarite movement.

Text of laws changed but criminal justice administration awaits reforms: Bajpai

Vijaita Singh

NEW DELHI

The text of the three criminal laws may have been changed but the real test lies with reforms of the criminal justice administration, and expecting the new laws to function from the first day is not feasible, says G.S. Bajpai, who headed the first committee set up by the Union Home Ministry in 2020 to examine the laws.

Mr. Bajpai told *The Hindu* that the lower judiciary was stressed and there was huge pendency of cases, and it was unrealistic to expect that the new laws would function immediately.

The Indian Penal Code evolved in more than 100 years till it was scrapped in 2023. Expecting these laws to kick off from first day is not feasible, and the effects of their implementation will be known in six to 12



G.S. Bajpai

months," Mr. Bajpai said, adding that 70% text of the old laws had been retained in the new laws.

According to the National Judicial Data Grid, as on Tuesday, there were 3.4 crore cases pending in district courts across India, out of which nearly 1 crore cases were pending for more than a year.

From July 1, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) replaced the Indian Penal Code, 1860; the Bharatiya Sakshiya (BS) replaced the Indian Evidence Act, 1872; and the Bharatiya Nagarik

days of the first hearing and deliver the judgment within 30-45 days from the date of completion of arguments.

"Theoretically, the police will have to record everything. What will be the total range of issues while recording will be known in a few days," he said.

Mr. Bajpai was the convener of the Committee for Reforms in Criminal Laws set up by the Ministry.

"The reforms have been made to the criminal laws but not to the criminal justice administration. The operational aspects rest with the criminal justice system," Mr. Bajpai said.

"A dashboard can be created where all stakeholders can upload the challenges and issues being faced during implementation of the laws," he said.

The BNS mandates audio-video recording of search and seizure in each criminal case and forensic examination in all crimes punishable by more than seven years. All such records will have to be submitted before the court in electronic format "without delay". Under the BNS, the courts will have to frame charges within 60

Indian envoy highlights energy trade ties ahead of PM Hasina's visit to China

Kalol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

Days ahead of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's upcoming visit to China, India's envoy to Bangladesh Pranay Verma has identified "energy connectivity" as a key pillar of the "transformative changes" that are shaping the India-Bangladesh relationship.

Speaking at an event in Dhaka on Tuesday, Mr. Verma said the regional electricity trade between India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan would mark a "paradigm shift" in the quest for energy security in South Asia.

The High Commissioner described energy connectivity as a "hallmark of transformative changes". Cross-border power transmission lines are not

join each other through the Indian grid for seamless cross-border electricity trade," the BNS has reported.

FTA talks

Mr. Verma was speaking at a regional workshop on "Transforming Cross Border Electricity Trade and Regional Electricity Market for an Energy Secure South Asia", jointly organised by the Research and Information System for Developing Countries and the USAID's South Asia Regional Energy Partnership (SAREP).

"In his address, the High Commissioner emphasised that the robustness and integrated nature of the Indian grid, together with sophisticated platforms for power trading and exchanges existing in India, offer great opportunity to its neighbours in the coming months.

Revoke my suspension, says Hazratbal shrine priest

The Hindu Bureau

SRINAGAR

Kamal-ud-Din Farooqui, head priest of the Hazratbal shrine in Srinagar, on Tuesday sought the intervention of the Lieutenant-Governor's (L-G) administration to end his debarment from the shrine.

He was suspended by the Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board in April after a non-local Hindu converted to Islam at the shrine. The ceremony was presided over by Mr. Farooqui and the Board, headed by BJP leader Darshan Andrabi, accused him of "forcible conversion".

"We seek the government's intervention. The board has no mandate to interfere with religious practices. The Constitution gives freedom to practice, profess, and propagate any religion," he said.



Indian envoy Pranay Verma greets Bangladeshi PM Sheikh Hasina in January.

only bringing power from India to Bangladesh, but also facilitating power transmission from Nepal to Bangladesh through India, the state-owned news outlet BNS quoted him as saying.

"In his address, the High Commissioner emphasised that the robustness and integrated nature of the Indian grid, together with sophisticated platforms for power trading and exchanges existing in India, offer great opportunity to its neighbours in the coming months.

Opposition hits back after uproar over Rahul's remarks in Lok Sabha

INDIA bloc leaders build a counter-narrative of being the 'real Hindus'; House adjourned *sine die*; Akhilesh Yadav asserts that the election has put an end to communal politics, attacks govt. on paper leaks, EVMs, unemployment and reservation

Sandeep Phukan
NEW DELHI



Scathing attack: Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav speaking in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. ANI

A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his BJP colleagues accused the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, of insulting the Hindu community, Opposition leaders built a counter-narrative of being the "real Hindus" while speaking on the Motion of Thanks to the President for her address to the joint sitting of Parliament.

After the passage of the Motion, the first session of the 18th Lok Sabha was adjourned *sine die* on Tuesday.

Earlier, during the debate, Congress leader K.C. Venugopal said the BJP was using Hindu religion to polarise people and win the

election.

"Mahatma Gandhi and [Nathuram] Godse both believed in Bhagavad Gita. But Gandhi learnt tolerance, non-violence and the message of Bhagavad Gita and Lord Krishna. Godse learnt violence and intolerance from the same text. We are followers of

Gandhi's Hinduism, not Godse's Hinduism," he said.

His party colleague Gaurav Gogoi said the Prime Minister may believe in his divine origins but the mandate proved that he was human.

Awadhesh Prasad, Samajwadi Party (SP) MP for

Faizabad in Ayodhya, said the BJP's loss in Lord Ram's birthplace not only made domestic headlines but international ones as well. "In this 29-page President's Address, there is no mention of Ayodhya, the land of Lord Ram," he said.

SP chief Akhilesh Yadav said the BJP's defeat in Faizabad conveyed the wisdom of voters and had brought an end to communal politics. "The victory in Ayodhya is the victory of mature voters' democratic understanding," he said.

He lashed out at the government over a spectrum of issues — from paper leaks including the recent NEET exam, unemployment, Agnipath scheme, caste census and the conduct of the Lok Sabha election.

Questioning the func-

tioning of the electronic voting machines, Mr. Yadav said: "I did not trust EVMs yesterday, I don't trust them today. And even if I win all 80 seats [in Uttar Pradesh], I will not trust EVMs."

On the NEET row, he said: "The achievement of last 10 years is the birth of an education mafia. The most prestigious paper in the country was also leaked... The government is enabling leaks because they don't want to give jobs to youth."

Reflecting on the 2024 electoral mandate, he said the election was a moral victory for the INDIA bloc.

"June 4, 2024 was the day of independence from communal politics for India. In this election, communal politics has lost forever," he added.

Kharge targets Modi over his jibe at Rahul in LS speech

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Responding to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reply to the Motion of Thanks to the President for her address, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said 140 crore Indians conveyed the same message to him, as the phrase he used for the Congress, in the Lok Sabha election.

Hitting back at *tumse na ho payega* [you are not up to it] jibe of Mr. Modi at Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, in a X post, he said: "The way you mentioned 'Tumse Na Ho Payega' in your speech of two hours and 24 minutes, 140 crore Indians have said the same thing to your government in this election".

"Modiji, you have insulted the mandate. Understand the sentiments of the people. Give up dictatorship," he said.

IN BRIEF



At meeting, Modi advises NDA MPs to always keep nation first

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday asked the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) MPs to execute their responsibilities by always keeping the nation first and learn about parliamentary practices from senior members. Speaking with presspersons, Union Minister Kiren Rijiju said the first meeting of the NDA parliamentary party was held on Tuesday. During the meeting, Mr. Rijiju said the Prime Minister shared a key "mantra" with all the MPs. He said the MPs, irrespective of the parties they belonged to, had come to Parliament to serve the country and that they should always keep the nation first.

Engineer Rashid gets custody parole to take oath as MP

A Delhi court on Tuesday granted custody parole to Sheikh Abdul Rashid, aka Engineer Rashid, to take oath as a Member of Parliament on Friday. The Additional Sessions Judge of the Patiala House court allowed Mr. Rashid two hours, or till the time oath proceedings take place, whichever is later. The order was passed after the National Investigation Agency (NIA) gave its consent for Mr. Rashid to take oath. He had won the Lok Sabha election as an independent candidate from Baramulla in Jammu and Kashmir. In jail since 2019, Mr. Rashid has been charged by the NIA under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in an alleged terror-funding case.

Complaint filed against Rahul Gandhi for 'remark on Hindus'

A complaint has been filed in Bihar against Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, on Tuesday over his recent remark on Hindus in Parliament. Divyanshu Kishore, a Hindu outfit leader, filed the case in the Chief Judicial Magistrate Court of Muzaffarpur. The court has accepted the complaint and the next hearing will take place on July 15. In the complaint, Mr. Kishore has accused Mr. Gandhi of hurting the sentiments of Hindus. In his maiden speech in the 18th Lok Sabha on Monday, criticising the top BJP leadership, the Congress leader said: "Those who call themselves Hindus indulge in hate and violence round the clock."

Rahul urges PM to facilitate debate in LS on NEET issue

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Rahul Gandhi, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, requesting him to facilitate a debate on the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) issue in the House on Wednesday.

He said the Opposition's request to discuss the issue related to the medical entrance test was denied in both Houses of Parliament on June 28 and on Monday.

"I am writing to request for a debate in Parliament on NEET," he said in his letter to the Prime Minister on Tuesday.

"Our aim is to engage constructively to find a way forward. At this moment, our only concern is the welfare of nearly 24 lakh NEET aspirants across India," he said.

'Rebuilding faith'

Referring to the government's move to postpone other examinations and replace the Director-General of the National Testing Agency, the Congress leader said these moves were to "cover up the systemic breakdown of our centralised testing system".

"Our students deserve answers. A parliamentary debate is the first step towards rebuilding and restoring their faith," he said.

"Given the urgency of the matter, I request the government to facilitate a debate in the House tomorrow. I believe that it would be fitting if you were to lead this debate in the interest of the students," Mr. Gandhi said.

Kharge asks V-P not to spread RSS ideology

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Amid continuing attacks from Opposition benches in the Rajya Sabha during the debate on the Motion to Thank the President for her address to the joint sitting of Parliament, the BJP fielded the leader of the Upper House J.P. Nadda to counter the attack.

Mr. Nadda targeted the Congress and said the party that had imposed Emergency and tried to dilute reservations was speaking about democracy and protecting reservations. In his speech, Mr. Nadda said the Narendra Modi government had worked to ensure global economic crises did not impact India.

In their speeches, the Opposition members took up several issues, including unemployment, paper



leaks and problems in the education sector. Samajwadi Party (SP) leader and senior MP Ram Gopal Yadav said the President's speech had been silent on rampant corruption.

Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) MP A.A. Rahim said there had been no mention of unem-

ployment in the President's speech. The Aam Aadmi Party's Raghubir Singh Chadha said two IPLs were played in the country — one was the Indian Premier League for cricket, and the second was the "Indian Paper Leak", and that the National Testing Agency now stood for "No Trust anymore".

Congress leader Digvijaya Singh, too, demanded strict action against those who are responsible for the widespread irregularities in the exam process.

Trinamool Congress member Sagarika Ghose mentioned the lynching of three men in Chhattisgarh by a mob a few days ago. Pointing to the delegitimisation of the Opposition,

she said there was a "democracy deficit" in the nation, adding that the civil war in Manipur was continuing without redress.

P. Wilson of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam also raised the NEET issue.

"The Tamil Nadu Assembly has recently moved a resolution seeking exemption for Tamil Nadu from NEET, or to scrap NEET for admission to medical courses. Therefore, we seek the Prime Minister's immediate attention, either to approve the Bill passed by the State government, or to bring about amendments to the National Medical Council Act so NEET and other exams are given up on the national-level," he said.

Woman in Chopra flogging incident refuses to meet Bengal Governor

Shiv Sahay Singh
SILIGURI



C.V. Ananda Bose

West Bengal Governor C.V. Ananda Bose was on Tuesday forced to cut short his visit to north Bengal after the woman who was seen being beaten up by a man publicly in a viral video, refused to meet him.

"The victim wants to be left alone, and I will respect her right," Mr. Bose told presspersons before leaving for Delhi.

The Governor took a morning flight from Bagdogra to Siliguri on Tuesday, and elaborate arrangements were made, including deployment of the police, at Chopra in Uttar Dinajpur, where the flog-

who had made the one-minute video clip go viral.

"I do not know who the person beating me up was," she told presspersons.

Asked if the woman had been pressured into declining a meeting with him, the Governor said, "If any malpractice has taken place, we will look into it."

The woman, however, said that she had not stopped the Governor from visiting her house.

Mr. Bose, meanwhile, met the survivor of a mob assault at Mathabhanga in Cooch Behar district. "I have no faith in Mamata Banerjee's police. I was stripped and beaten up by supporters of the Trina-

mool Congress. The Governor assured me that he will stand by me," the woman, who highlighted her allegiance to the BJP, said.

In another incident at Fulbari in Jalpaiguri district, a woman was found dead after she was tried for alleged adultery at a kangaroo court.

She was assaulted by the local people publicly. While it was Trinamool MLA Hamidur Rahaman who had raised questions about the character of the woman at Chopra, the husband of local panchayat leader Shambu Roy cast aspersions on the Fulbari victim.

Four persons have been arrested.

Manipur facing civil war-like crisis, but PM is silent: MP

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Congress MP A. Bimal Bimaljami made a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi for remaining silent on Manipur, which has been affected by ethnic violence for the past one year.

In a late-night speech in the Lok Sabha on Monday, he said there is a civil war-like situation in Manipur, "yet our Prime Minister has remained mute, not even a word".

Mr. Bimaljami, who was the last to speak on Monday, around 11.45 p.m., on the Motion of Thanks to the President for her address to Parliament, expressed his anguish over

the absence of any reference to ethnic violence-hit Manipur in President Droupadi Murmu's address to the joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament.

"It is an irony that such an important matter, which is sought to be silenced by the government, gets an opportunity as the midnight approaches," he said.

A professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), the first-time Congress MP from Inner Manipur drew the attention of the House to the 60,000 people living in wretched conditions in relief camps in Manipur for more than a year.

"I will keep quiet the moment the Prime Minister opens his mouth, and the nationalist party [BJP] Day till then," he said.

says that Manipur is a part of India and we care for the people of that State," said Mr. Bimaljami.

"Keep your hands on your heart and think about the homeless, the mothers and the widows. Think of them and then talk about nationalism," he said while pointing to BJP members.

"The silence on Manipur is not unique, it is a reflection of this general continuity of colonialism. A national party like BJP will be comfortable with the silence on Manipur... If you hear the anxiety and pain in my voice please go back and see the 60,000 people languishing in relief camps in Manipur for more than a year."

"I will keep quiet the moment the Prime Minister opens his mouth, and the nationalist party [BJP] Day till then," he said.

Vikravandi byelection: DMK and PMK lock horns in high-stakes battle

S. Prasad
VILLUPURAM

The Vikravandi Assembly constituency is set to witness a high-stakes byelection, with the ruling DMK keen on retaining the seat amid an all-out effort by the PMK to draw on the caste arithmetic and mount a tough challenge.

The NTK is also in the fray, but it is yet to get a positive response on support from the AIADMK and the DMDK, which have chosen to boycott the July

byelection, necessitated by the death of DMK MLA N. Pugazhenthi. Its caste composition is predominantly Vanniyars, followed by Dalits, and other intermediate castes.

All the three candidates in Vikravandi belong to the dominant Vanniyar community. The DMK has fielded Annaiyur Siva, the secretary of the party's agricultural labourers' wing, while the PMK, as part of the NDA, has given ticket to C. Anbumani. The NTK has fielded Abinaya.

The DMK has deployed a battery of Ministers for campaigning in the constituency. Against the backdrop of the hooch tragedy in the neighbouring Kallakurichi district that has claimed 65 lives so far, the DMK is banking on the implementation of its welfare schemes.

The PMK, which has been in a precarious position following a drubbing in the recent Lok Sabha election, has been trying to win popular support by blaming the DMK govern-

ment for not conducting a caste census, thereby denying Vanniyars internal reservation in government jobs and higher education.

The PMK, headed by Anbumani Ramadoss, has launched an intensive door-to-door campaign, banking on the support of the Vanniyar community, and highlighting the delay by the DMK in implementing the 10.5% internal reservation sought by the PMK long ago.

Mr. C. Anbumani had contested from Vikravandi

who has been leading the campaign, is confident of a win by a big margin. At most public meetings, he emphasises that the DMK has executed several welfare schemes, and development is a key issue here.

Mr. Siva told *The Hindu* that Pugazhenthi had contributed immensely to the constituency's development. "I will implement the works that have been left out." Mr. C. Anbumani said he would focus on fulfilling the basic needs of the constituency.



Poll issue: The upgrading of the Primary health centre at Vembu panchayat is a major demand of voters of Vikravandi. S.S. KUMAR

IN BRIEF**Assam flood situation turns grim, death toll rises to 38**

The flood situation in Assam turned grim on Tuesday affecting more than 11.34 lakh people across 28 districts in the State with Lakhimpur being the most affected due to the fast-flowing rivers in the area. Officials of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) said two waves of floods – the second began on June 16 – have killed 38 people since May. "The number of flood-affected districts increased from 19 to 28 in the span of 24 hours. Three people, two in Tinsukia and one in the Dhemaji district, drowned during this period," an ASDMA spokesperson said. Lakhimpur continued to be the worst-affected district.

IAF chief inaugurates weapon systems school in Hyderabad

Indian Air Force chief Air Chief Marshal V.R. Chaudhari on Tuesday inaugurated the newly established Weapon Systems School at Air Force Station, Begumpet, Hyderabad. This follows the approval for the creation of a new Weapon System branch in 2022. "The new branch will have four streams; flying stream to operate the weapons and systems in airborne platforms like the Sukhoi-30 MKI and C-130J; remote stream to operate remotely piloted aircraft; mission commanders and operators for Surface to Air and Surface-to-Surface weapon systems, and intelligence stream for handling space-based intelligence and imagery," the IAF said.

Woman cuts off man's genitals for refusing to marry her

A woman in Saran district of Bihar on Monday allegedly cut off the genitals of a man and flushed them down the toilet after he refused to marry her, the police said on Tuesday. The 26-year-old woman was said to be in a relationship with the 30-year-old victim for the past five years. The woman claims to be a medical practitioner and runs a nursing home in the Marhaura police station limits in Saran. The man is a ward councillor in the Marhaura Nagar Panchayat. The woman has been arrested. "A case has been registered under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita (BNS) on July 1," Saran Superintendent of Police Kumar Ashish said.

Five die, 30 fall ill at children's home; investigation ordered

At least five children have died and 30 more have fallen ill at a children's home in Madhya Pradesh's Indore in the past three days, district officials said on Tuesday. All the deceased children are aged under 14 and they were residing at the Bal Ashram of Shri Yugpurush Dham in the Malharganj police station area of the city. While the cause of deaths is yet to be officially ascertained, an official said that it was suspected to be food poisoning in four cases. Indore District Magistrate Asheesh Singh said that the food was prepared at the kitchen of the children's home and samples have been collected and sent for examination.

Five Naxals killed in Chhattisgarh, say police

Press Trust of India
NARAYANPUR

Five Naxalites were killed in an encounter in Narayanpur district of Chhattisgarh on Tuesday, the police said.

The gunfight took place in a forest in Abujhmad, a hilly forest area, when a joint team of personnel from different security forces was out on an anti-Naxal operation, a senior police official said. "The search operation is still under way," he said, adding that security personnel were reported to be safe.

The operation, involving personnel of the District Reserve Guard, Special Task Force, Border Security Force and Indo-Tibetan Border Police from different districts, was launched on Sunday, the police said.

138 dead so far

With the latest incident, the number of Naxalites killed so far this year in separate encounters with security forces in the State has risen to 138.

While 136 Maoists were gunned down in the Bastar division that comprises seven districts, including Narayanpur, two others were killed in Dhamtari district under the Raipur division.

Fact-check unit needed to protect people from fake news: Centre in Bombay HC

The petitioners have contended that the purpose of the FCU is to bring total censorship on anything that the government does not want people to know, discuss, debate, or question

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Tiebreaker judge Justice A.S. Chandrakar of the Bombay High Court on Tuesday continued hearing the arguments by the Union government in the petitions filed by comedian Kunal Kamra and others challenging Rule 3(l)(b)(v) of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.

The Rule empowers the government to establish a fact-check unit (FCU) to identify fake, false, and misleading information about its business on social media.

Defending the FCU, the Union government, through Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, said it will prevent people from false information. Mr. Mehta contended that the right to know and the right to not be misled are equally important as the right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(l)(a).

Citing multiple exam-



QQ Many State governments have FCU, such as Kerala and Uttarakhand ... If we [the Union government] do not fact-check, it will be a dereliction of duty

TUSHAR MEHTA
Solicitor-General

ples of fake news and misinformation floating on social media, Mr. Mehta said, "Many State governments have FCU, such as Kerala and Uttarakhand. In fact, even private firms have FCU, including news organisations who partner with intermediaries to flag false information. If we [the Union government] do not fact-check, it will be a dereliction of duty."

Mr. Mehta said that a fake news about the Election Commission had floated on social media saying that the poll body would deduct ₹350 from the accounts of people who chose not to vote.

"It is a serious matter and can lead to serious consequences. What ob-

jection do the petitioners have here? The petitioners have contended that this will have a chilling effect as intermediaries will take things down out of fear. But there are several things that ought to have been taken down, but they have not been. We have written to YouTube but they have not taken it down citing their community guidelines. There is no chilling effect. And all these accounts are monetised accounts that work on the model of number of subscribers," he added.

The Solicitor-General also mentioned how the U.S. suffered during the pandemic with misinformation and fake news being spread on social media.

"We (government) are not the final arbiter here. Just like individuals, the government can also intimidate. The FCU is a methodical way of doing that. And being a statutory regime, it has consequences. We are not the arbiter. The first arbiter is the intermediary, the final arbiter is a court of competent jurisdiction.

Right to be informed correctly is necessarily inherent in my right under Article 21. Because, if somebody's freedom of speech incites violence or threatens public order, it directly infringes my right under Article 21," he added.

The Centre will continue its arguments on July 24 and 25, while the petitioners' rejoinder is scheduled on July 29, 30, and 31.

In April, the petitioners concluded their arguments contending that the purpose of the FCU was to bring total state censorship on anything that the government does not want people to know, discuss, debate, or question.

HC seeks CBI's response on Kejriwal's plea against arrest

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday sought response from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on a plea by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal challenging his arrest in a corruption case related to the excise policy 'scam'.

Justice Neena Bansal Krishna issued notice to the CBI and asked it to file its reply within seven days. The High Court posted the case for arguments on July 17.

The Aam Aadmi Party national convener has also challenged a June 26 order of the trial court, which remanded him in the CBI's custody for three days. The court had on June 29 extended Mr. Kejriwal's judicial custody till July 12, saying his name had surfaced as one of the main conspirators.

It had also remarked that his further custodial interrogation might be required as the investigation is under way.

The CBI arrested Mr. Kejriwal on June 26 from the Tihar Jail, where he was remanded till July 3 in a related money-laundering case being investigated by the Enforcement Directorate.

Courts subservient only to the might of Constitution and no other authority: CJI

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud on Tuesday said courts should bow to the might of no authority other than the Constitution, and serve no one but litigants.

"The foundation of a court must be sound – both in its structural and philosophical capacity. It must subserve no might but the Constitution and be in service of no one but the litigants. Our courts are not merely sights of sovereign power but are also essential public service providers," the Chief Justice noted.

The Chief Justice warned judges against delivering "rough, ready and handy justice", but to cherish the rule of law and procedural guarantees.



Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud at the foundation stone laying ceremony of court buildings in New Delhi. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Chief Justice Chandrachud said climate change could no longer be ignored, while referring to the intense heatwaves followed by deluge suffered by the national capital.

"This year, Delhi experienced the hottest recorded weather. We have experienced two heatwaves followed by record breaking rain in a single day. Our

infrastructure must reflect the reality we live... One crucial step is to incorporate a green lifestyle into our daily lives, which includes reducing carbon emissions," the Chief Justice Chandrachud said at the foundation stone-laying ceremony of the new court buildings at Karkardooma, Shastry Park and Rohini.

Advanced medium combat aircraft prototype expected to be ready by 2028-29

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

As the project for the design and development of the indigenous fifth generation fighter aircraft (FGFA), Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA), makes progress, the Defence Ministry is working out a model for bringing in the private sector in a big way, which is important for timely execution of the project, according to official sources. The first prototype is expected to be ready by 2028-29.

"The design of the AMCA is ready. The prototype is expected to roll out by 2028-29 and the production is expected to begin from 2032-33. The target is to have it ready for induction in 2034, a decade from project sanction," an official source said. In

preparation to have the manufacturing and deliveries on track, there is significant private industry involvement that is being envisaged. "We have to decide a model for private sector involvement. A model is expected to be worked out in the next six months," an official source said.

The Defence Ministry has already issued an Expression of Interest (EoI) to the industry and three responses were received. The target is to have the AMCA ready for induction by 2034.

The AMCA project is particularly critical as it is India's only FGFA that is planned for induction at a time when a series of such FGFA development projects are making progress worldwide. China, which has made great progress in

the development and deployment of FGFA, has recently deployed its twin-engine J-20 FGFA in Tibet bordering India.

CCS clearance

The AMCA project got sanction from the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) in March. It is envisaged as a 25-tonne twin-engine stealth aircraft with internal weapons bay and diverterless supersonic intake which has been developed in India for the first time.

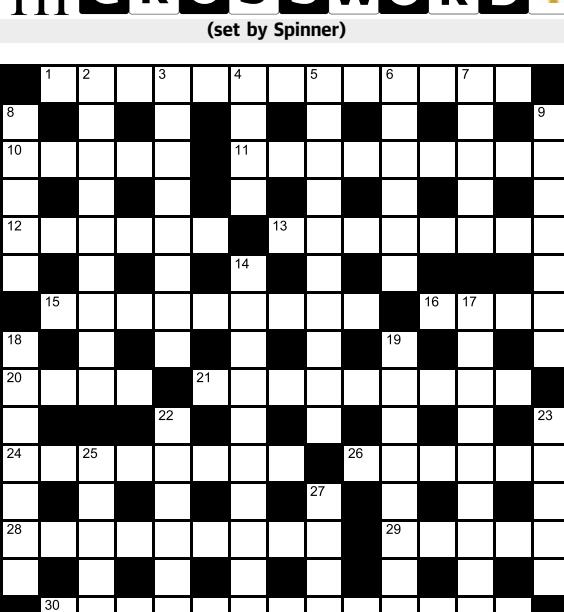
It is intended to have an internal carriage of 1,500 kg of payload and 5,500 kg of external payload with 6,500 kg of internal fuel. Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), which is the production agency for the project, has already initiated manufacturing activities.

FAITH**Aim is to establish dharma**

The avatars of Lord Vishnu such as Matsya, Koorma and Varaha were for specific reasons and hence called Amsavathara. The manifestations of the Lord as Sri Rama and Sri Krishna were to establish dharma, protect righteous men and destroy unrighteous and impious (*Parithranaya Sadhunam*) and hence called *Purnavathara* (complete and total).

Dr. Sudha Seshaian said in a discourse the state of enjoying the divine bliss is called *Paramanandham*. The sloka *Vasudeva Sutham devam* says Sri Krishna's mother Devaki derives *Paramanandham*. Usually, a mother would be happy when giving birth to a child. But Devaki, while in prison, was afraid towards her brother Kamsa, who was eager to kill her yet-to-be-born eighth baby. How could she derive *Paramanandham* under such a precarious situation? Lord Krishna did not cry when He was born and showed His divine form to Devaki, holding a disc, conch, mace, and lotus in four hands. That moment was Devaki's enjoyment of divine bliss. By His conduct and behaviour, Lord Krishna portrayed Himself as the best Karmayogi. At the end of each day during the Mahabharatha war, Sri Krishna, as a charioteer, had done his duty of feeding, nursing and bathing the horses before leaving them in the stable and had not delegated to anyone.

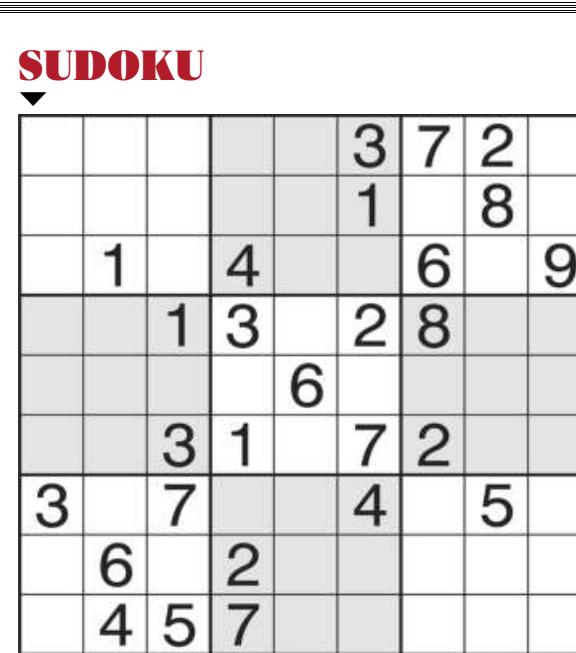
Another name for Arjuna is Partha, the son of *Pruthai* (another name of Kunthi). Lord Krishna, the charioteer of Partha, is called Parthasarathy to protect Arjuna. We are also called *Parthas*, the children of *Prithvi* (Mother Earth), and the Lord will protect us.

TH CROSSWORD + 14217

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ <https://qrgo.page.link/jppTn>



- 13 Guess English's complicated, at times! (8)
15 Line-up comes before kick-off, as time runs out in front of essentially tempestuous audience! (9)
16 Dealing with love, silly! (2,2)
20 Female choir's reverberation (4)
21 Get shot by mistake while not being the intended target? (9)
24 Dodgy check is caught in large heist upfront (8)
26 Deceitful U-turn awkwardly exposed leader (6)
28 Support side finally with new captain, as old as you and me! (9)
29 Intense performance about upper-class eccentricities, primarily (5)
30 Caution : Spinner's returning with power and will! (13)
Down
2 Doctor hails best form (9)
3 Publicity over channel beginning to sell goods! (8)
4 Scientist not working for slippery customer? (4)
5 Clarify incorrect American cess trapping top taxpayers (10)
6 Mischief-maker swaying without taking either side (6)
7 Patriarchy shackles parts of the heart (5)
8 Faithfully obedient after troubling at first (5)
9 Basically adds forced stress? (7)
14 Fanaticism perhaps unseats him? (10)
17 Main menu cooked with complete, unending love (6,3)
18 Accepts sender's first letters randomly with no address, essentially! (7)
19 Every association worker is rich (8)
22 Set clues having a catch! (6)
23 Enjoy part of movie featuring chief villain (5)
25 Hoard auditor's money (5)
27 Spotted rival players getting exercise on the sides (4)

SUDOKU

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

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Solution to previous puzzle

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

SCIENCE

Two vaccines that brought us to the brink of eradicating polio

While the poliovirus is today restricted to rural pockets of Afghanistan and Pakistan, it is beginning to reappear in big cities in these two countries thanks to vaccine hesitancy. The WHO's Global Polio Eradication Initiative is thus set to miss its deadline of eradicating polio by the end of 2024

Arun Panchapakesan

In 1948, microbiologists John F. Enders, Thomas Weller, and Frederick Robbins were trying to find a method to grow different viruses in cell cultures. In a routine experiment involving human muscle and skin cells, they decided to test one more virus along with the ones they were already testing, since a vial containing that virus was in their freezer. To their surprise, the virus proliferated and grew well with their method. Their work eventually solved one of the most important scientific problems of the time. They had just managed to find a way to grow the poliovirus in non-nerve cells.

A major roadblock

In the mid-20th century, researchers widely believed the poliovirus could only be grown in cultures of nerve cells. This misconception was propagated by their inability to infect rhesus macaques by the oral route, and only by directly injecting the virus into the nervous system. At the time, they didn't know the problem was with the poliovirus strains they were using.

The poliovirus has only one natural host – humans – and many of the early strains of the virus were isolated from humans and wouldn't infect non-human primates. Since scientists kept passing the virus through the brain tissues of macaques, it adapted to that mode of infection.

The inability to culture polio in non-nerve cells was a major roadblock to developing a polio vaccine. But thanks to Enders and his team, the poliovirus could now be mass-produced for vaccine research.

Eradication target missed

Polio eradication is one of the top priorities of the World Health Organisation (WHO). Since Africa was declared polio-free in August 2020, the wild poliovirus has been restricted to rural pockets of Afghanistan and Pakistan. But according to a recent report in *Science*, the virus is beginning to reappear in big cities in these two countries.

This reemergence is a result of vaccine hesitancy due to misinformation, conflict, poverty, and limited access to these isolated regions. The WHO's Global Polio Eradication Initiative is thus set to miss its deadline of eradicating polio by the end of 2024.

The initiative's failure in Afghanistan and Pakistan casts a long shadow on an otherwise remarkable achievement: polio having been eradicated everywhere else. This feat was driven by two vaccines, both



A health worker (right) administers polio vaccine drops to a child during a vaccination campaign in Karachi. AFP

invented within a year of each other. They are administered differently, provide distinct levels of protection, contain different components, and target different compartments of the immune system. Yet they both played equally invaluable roles in the global fight against polio.

The systemic and the mucosal

In late 1949, Enders received a letter requesting the starting material and the procedure his team had perfected to grow the poliovirus in culture. At the time, Enders & Co. were discussing their own future work. While his younger colleagues, Weller and Robbins, wanted to use the method to foray into vaccine research, Enders said such a job was ill-suited for basic science researchers like themselves. They handed over the sample and the procedure to the letter's author, the director of the Virus Research Laboratory at the University of Pittsburgh, Jonas Salk.

Salk made the first successful vaccine for polio. He grew the virus using the method Enders and his team had developed, inactivated it by treating it with formaldehyde, and injected it into his test subjects. The fragments of the inactivated virus were able to induce immunity in their bodies. Importantly, since the vaccine was introduced into the muscle, it generated systemic immunity.

The immune system has two main parts: the systemic and the mucosal. The systemic component includes the blood, the brain, and all other organ systems. The mucosal component includes the



John F. Enders, Thomas Weller, and Frederick Robbins solved one of the most important scientific problems of their time. They managed to find a way to grow the poliovirus in non-nerve cells

inner linings of the digestive and respiratory systems, the urogenital tract, and the eyes. These regions are lined with mucous membranes that provide an additional layer of protection, as they frequently come into contact with the external environment.

Striking at ground zero

Soon after Salk made his inactivated polio vaccine (IPV), Albert Sabin developed another vaccine that contained live polio strains weakened by growing them serially in macaque cells, making them unfit for human infection. Since Sabin's vaccine contained live virus particles, it had to rely on its natural mode of infection and was therefore administered orally. This was the oral polio vaccine (OPV).

Since the OPV went into the stomach, it induced a powerful protective mucosal immune response right where the virus would have to begin its infection.

The OPV had multiple advantages over the IPV. First, the vaccine induced a protective response at the viral entry site – the gut – allowing it to provide a much

greater degree of protection relative to the IPV. Second, the OPV was administered orally and didn't require syringes or trained personnel for its administration.

A one-two punch

But there was a catch. Occasionally, the weakened virus in the OPV would revert, and do the very job it was designed to prevent: cause polio. On the other hand, the IPV, while being a less potent vaccine, contained inactivated virus particles and carried no risk of causing vaccine-induced polio.

The world has used both vaccines in the fight against polio. While some countries, such as Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland, relied exclusively on the IPV, most countries have used a combination of the two. The latter countries prefer the OPV for its superior protection and ease of administration. When the number of natural polio cases drops to zero, they switch to IPV for its enhanced safety.

Despite the many differences between the Salk and Sabin vaccines, they share one crucial feature that armed the WHO in its fight against polio: both Jonas Salk and Albert Sabin chose not to patent their vaccines. When asked who owned the patent on his vaccine, Salk famously replied: "Well, the people, I would say. There is no patent. Could you patent the sun?"

(Arun Panchapakesan is an assistant professor at the Y.R. Gaithonde Centre for AIDS Research and Education, Chennai.)

THE GIST

The inability to culture polio in non-nerve cells was a major roadblock to developing a polio vaccine. Enders and his team made it possible for the poliovirus to be mass-produced for vaccine research

Salk made the first successful vaccine using Enders' method to grow the virus. He inactivated the virus by treating it with formaldehyde, and injected it into his test subjects. The fragments of the inactivated virus were able to induce immunity

Albert Sabin developed the OPV that contained live polio strains weakened by growing them in macaque cells. Since Sabin's vaccine contained live virus particles, it had to rely on its natural mode of infection and was therefore administered orally

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BIG SHOT



A pier at high tide after the passage of Hurricane Beryl in Oistins near Bridgetown, Barbados, on Monday. Hurricane Beryl brought devastating winds and heavy rain to several Caribbean islands on the day as the earliest-ever Category 4 storm on record churned westward. AFP

QUESTION CORNER

How we grow taller at night

The Hindu Bureau



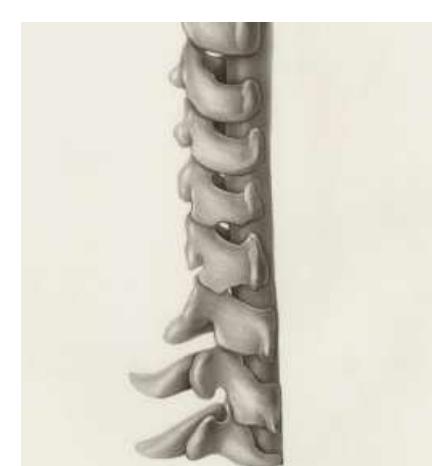
Q: Are we measurably taller in the morning than when we go to bed?

A1: We are all indeed taller in the morning. There are two

components to this. In a growing child, the growth hormone is secreted in pulses overnight. This acts through several intermediary steps to cause lengthening of the bones at the epiphyses. Accurate measurements of the forearm or lower leg using specialised apparatus or X-rays can record this night-time growth.

The most marked effect, however, which occurs even after growth has ceased, is caused by postural compression of the spine under the effect of gravity. This was recognised in mediaeval French folklore: it was common practice to apply for recruitment to the army first thing in the morning in order to appear taller. In 1724, Reverend Joseph Wasse from Aynho in Northamptonshire, U.K., measured a loss of up to 15 mm through the day. This was more marked in young and active labourers.

A2: Another factor concerns the inherent curvatures of the spinal column. This has a convexity backwards in the thoracic or chest region, called a kyphosis, and a concavity in the lumbar region or base of the back called a lordosis. These



A pencil illustration of the vertebral column and the spinal cord. H.G. WETSELAAR, UNIVERSITAIRE BIBLIOTHEKEN LEIDEN

curves vary with body weight and position. As a result, the spinal column tends to press downwards when in an upright position, altering these curvatures, and hence shortening the spinal length. When lying down, the reverse happens and the column lengthens again.

The combination of disc and curvature factors causes height change and is about 16 mm during the course of the day in the average adult.

For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to science@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Daily page'



A INX



Mixed signals

India needs to strengthen momentum in the key industrial sectors

Output data for May from the eight core infrastructure sectors show broad industrial activity slowed under the onslaught of a heatwave that left homes, offices and factories countrywide using more power to run their fans and cooling systems. Only coal, to fuel the power plants, and electricity generation posted double-digit output growth, expanding by 10.2% and 12.8%, respectively, as per provisional data on the Index of Eight Core Industries released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on June 28. And production in crude oil, fertilizers and cement shrank from their year-earlier levels, while output expansions decelerated in the remaining three sectors of natural gas, refinery products and steel. The heatwave's impact on economic activity in May was particularly prominent in India's northern parts, as it forced afternoon breaks at construction sites and daily peak power demand at the Northern Regional Load Despatch Centre consistently hovered around or exceeded 75 gigawatts. Demand for cement and steel weakened as construction activity was understandably curbed by the temperatures, with both the key building materials also posting sequential declines in output. The year-on-year contraction in fertilizers for a fifth straight month in May is a cause for concern as it signals persisting weakness in the rural hinterland's mainstay agriculture sector. A smart uptick in May's index number for the farm input, from the revised reading for April, however, offers a glimmer of hope.

Official data for the core sector as well as the Index of Industrial Production, to which it contributes more than 40% weight, however, suffer from the infirmity of coming with a lag of more than a month. Meanwhile, the private sector, survey-based HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for June suggests that activity at factories rebounded last month from May's heatwave-hit three-month low. June's PMI reading of 58.3 was 0.8 percentage points higher than May's 57.5, and, according to HSBC India, "comfortably above its long-run average". The survey also indicates that manufacturers stepped up output and buying to meet buoyant demand, and stepped up hiring to the fastest pace "seen in more than 19 years of data collection". However, both the job creation and demand were also accompanied by an intensification of increases in staff expenses and material and transportation costs that led to manufacturing companies raising their selling charges by the greatest extent in more than two years. The inflationary trend, coupled with survey respondents' overall confidence in future output sliding to a three-month low, signals the economy still faces speed bumps. Policy-makers have a chance to use the upcoming Union Budget to make policy tweaks to help strengthen momentum in the key industrial sectors.

Open court

For the first time in two decades, the Big Four are not among favourites

Wimbledon 2024 has begun with world tennis in the middle of a generational transition. There is no Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal, with the former having retired and the latter on a long waledictory lag which does not have SW19 as a pit stop. The 37-year-olds in Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray are closer to the end of their careers, and have arrived in London with broken bodies. Djokovic is recovering from a knee surgery while Murray went under a surgeon's scalpel to mend his back barely days ago. At what is set to be his Wimbledon swansong, Murray will only compete in doubles with his brother Jamie. Thus, the stranglehold the 'Big Four' had established by winning 19 of the 20 editions from 2003 to 2023 is likely to be loosened. Among women, this will be the first time since 1996 that neither of the famed Williams sisters will be in action. Starting from 2000, Venus and Serena won 12 singles titles and finished runner-up on eight occasions. Venus has not played since March 2024 and Serena since September 2022. In the year or two preceding their last matches, they were far from tournament-winning form. Yet, such has been their overarching excellence that they are the benchmark indices against which every grass-court career is measured.

As the stage appears set to identify the next era's tennis greats, Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz has staked claim most authoritatively. As a 20-year-old, he won Wimbledon in 2023 for his second Major (US Open 2022, the first), beating Djokovic over five pulsating sets, and last month he graduated further by claiming the French Open. In close proximity is Jannik Sinner, the lanky Italian who won the Australian Open in January and has since meteorically risen to the top of the singles rankings. A quarterfinalist and a semifinalist in his last two visits to Wimbledon, the 22-year-old recently proved that he was a serious challenger on the slick lawns by winning in Halle (Germany), his first title on grass. Sinner's credentials will however be put to test as early as the second round against 2021 finalist and the quintessential grass-court Matteo Berrettini. While the passing of the baton appears seamless among men, the battle of succession among women has multiple contenders. Five-time Slam winner Iga Swiatek is the undisputed No.1 but her grass-court nous is yet to fully develop. Second seed Coco Gauff's best at Wimbledon is fourth round, which she first reached in 2019 as a 15-year-old qualifier. And with the withdrawal of Aryna Sabalenka – third seed and a two-time semifinalist – the field is open.

The object of politics, as of philosophy, is to perceive unity in diversity, where contradictions meet and merge in a multi-racial society. To rise to that highest knowledge of widespread concord is to reach to the intellectual equivalent of an intimate structure of a subjective and idealist state that works on the ideology of coexistence and welfare of all. But the compelling global history of the fate of democracy leaves a glaring blemish on the very idea of liberalism which faces threats from across the spectrum.

The battering of liberalism, a political order that keeps power in check and safeguards our fundamental rights, is nothing new. The pressing issue before the state in times of rampant sectarianism has always been: Who has the 'rights to have rights' – a question that defines civil discrimination, racist politics and xenophobic bigotry. The growth of right-wing nationalism, the global problem of refugees and migrants throws light on the fissures that vividly exist in societies and in ideologies.

Electoral outcomes

In the context of liberalism facing an existential crisis, the recent swing towards the right in the European Parliament, points towards public opinion veering in favour of climate scepticism, anti-migration sentiment and the rising tide of divisiveness as a result of fervent nationalism. A similar victory of the right-wing conservative forces seemed to be the logical outcome in the recent general election in India. But the awakened and alert electorate took on the challenge and sent an unambiguous message to the world that the voter in India stands tall in stridently conveying her indignation at the rise of creeping insidious authoritarianism and sullied politics.

The outcome has redeemed the very forte of democracy by rightfully checking the overwhelming avalanche of smothering oppression combined with unbridled communalism that had brought the Muslim community under a cloud of fear and insecurity. Though one wavers between moods of hope and despair, one could optimistically look towards a robust Opposition with the government in power ready to listen and debate. One only hopes that existing democratic institutions will continue to facilitate the procedures of the defence of our fundamental rights and the promotion of a diverse civil society.

A new way of connecting to each other by understanding the distinctions between private religious faith and public, politicised way of life,



Shelley Walia
taught cultural theory
at the Panjab University

will not diminish any one. It is in such a political milieu that a conversation has to begin between the overzealous conservatives and the beleaguered left. Readiness to legislate and execute with rationality and justice, and having the responsiveness to intervene in the dilemma of the marginalised, hungry, unemployed masses is all that the polity of a country longs for. Human rights that are bestowed by the nation-state on some, while excluding others through forced assimilation, ethnic cleansing or even genocide, principally explains the origins of many of today's crises. The Indian voter has indeed woken up and given a resounding blow to the indomitable regime that set out to create a toxic imbalance between various political parties in an environment despondently sunk in hatred and ethnic violence. It is indeed heart warming to see the emergence of a collective effort to forge an opposition that, hopefully, will keep the now downsized government on its toes.

Verdict and the advent of hope

This is a splendid verdict when the primacy of democracy is gradually fading away as nations weave their way in the labyrinths of lies, deception and deceit couched in the most debased language one can think of, particularly, when used as a histrionic craft of rhetorical hypnosis that leaves many in a state of discombobulation. Crapulously drunk on power, bragging about its performance and its omnipresence, the ruling right-wing dispensations across the world throw rationality to the wind, ready to issue opprobrium on all who speak truth to power, all who dare to divulge the non-constitutionality of the subtext of a political statement. As is expected within civil societies, political speeches must show some form of dignity and eloquent reasoning, not expediently perpetuate an environment of authority and oppression through the intimidating use of media and the state apparatus. I only hope that the ruling dispensation begins now to discreetly embrace a tempered liberalism, leaving behind its illiberal tactics. And, I hope that the Opposition alliance comes up to the expectations of millions and charts a road map that celebrates humility, pluralism and modesty.

Take for example the clash between the natural order and the civil. As the philosopher Baruch Spinoza wrote in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, the maturest of his writings on liberal and democratic hopes, the natural order allows you to "consult only your own

advantage, and determines who is good or bad according to your own fancy". On the other hand, in a civil setup, "each one holds himself responsible to the state" and is therefore held guilty of acts that spread "hatred, anger, treachery, or, in general, anything that appetite suggests". The lawlessness of nature is clearly pitched against the predetermined order of the state, where only law and morality prevail merely because we live in a state governed by accepted beliefs and rationality, a common recognised system designed collectively.

Spinoza, therefore, has in mind the workings of the natural order where all are free to act unlike societies that evolve into organised arrangements where it is imperative to go by the book and abide by a moral order. Living in a social system, therefore, demands that no human reverts to the disorder of nature, thereby permitting the rights of the state to capriciously metamorphose into the "might" of the state. Such has been the tragedy of history that allowed the rise of anti-liberal tendencies. Reflection on such an eventuality becomes necessary at a juncture when democratic institutions across the globe stand bruised by a leadership that cares little for political wisdom necessary for shaping its attitude towards the world.

Like many of us, India too tantalisingly swings between hope and scepticism in the face of the unfathomable results of its general election. It is a moment or a mood that will dictate the trajectory of its democracy in the coming years as well as trigger and sustain philosophical reflections on the lack of political astuteness and dignified statesmanship that seems to be the most conceivable malaise infesting our world today. Cohabitation and reaching out to opposing political players is an abiding expectation.

I write with a sense of anguish at the return of McCarthyism, giving many a taste of the ordeal of the depression of a disenchanted and overbearing world. But there is some hope in the idea that democratic forces always remain alive, though often latent, and, at the right moment, strike at the roots of any antagonistic political aberration that may hinder the regeneration of institutions and full-bodied political thinking for the empowerment of each individual and his rights, underpinned by a sustainable consensus. The very complexion of Indian politics must change to show to the emerging hard right wing that democratic forces are up and kicking when human dignity is in question. Our impetus into the future is not only about personal liberty or democratic self-rule based on our Constitution; it is also steeped in moral significance.

Great expectations, liberalism in dark times

The object of politics, as of philosophy, is to perceive unity in diversity, where contradictions meet and merge in a multi-racial society. To rise to that highest knowledge of widespread concord is to reach to the intellectual equivalent of an intimate structure of a subjective and idealist state that works on the ideology of coexistence and welfare of all. But the compelling global history of the fate of democracy leaves a glaring blemish on the very idea of liberalism which faces threats from across the spectrum.

The battering of liberalism, a political order that keeps power in check and safeguards our fundamental rights, is nothing new. The pressing issue before the state in times of rampant sectarianism has always been: Who has the 'rights to have rights' – a question that defines civil discrimination, racist politics and xenophobic bigotry. The growth of right-wing nationalism, the global problem of refugees and migrants throws light on the fissures that vividly exist in societies and in ideologies.

Electoral outcomes

In the context of liberalism facing an existential crisis, the recent swing towards the right in the European Parliament, points towards public opinion veering in favour of climate scepticism, anti-migration sentiment and the rising tide of divisiveness as a result of fervent nationalism. A similar victory of the right-wing conservative forces seemed to be the logical outcome in the recent general election in India. But the awakened and alert electorate took on the challenge and sent an unambiguous message to the world that the voter in India stands tall in stridently conveying her indignation at the rise of creeping insidious authoritarianism and sullied politics.

The outcome has redeemed the very forte of democracy by rightfully checking the overwhelming avalanche of smothering oppression combined with unbridled communalism that had brought the Muslim community under a cloud of fear and insecurity. Though one wavers between moods of hope and despair, one could optimistically look towards a robust Opposition with the government in power ready to listen and debate. One only hopes that existing democratic institutions will continue to facilitate the procedures of the defence of our fundamental rights and the promotion of a diverse civil society.

A new way of connecting to each other by understanding the distinctions between private religious faith and public, politicised way of life,

There is some hope in the idea that democratic forces always remain alive, striking at the right moment at the roots of any antagonistic political aberration

Even though Generative AI (GAI) stands as a transformative force, wielding power to revolutionise society in ground-breaking ways, existing legal frameworks and judicial precedents that have been designed for a pre-AI world may struggle to effectively govern this rapidly-evolving technology.

Safe harbour and liability fixation

One of the most persistent and contentious issues in Internet governance has been the fixing of liability on "intermediaries" for content hosted by them. The landmark Shreya Singhal judgment addressed this by upholding Section 79 of the IT Act which grants intermediaries 'safe harbour' protection against hosting content, contingent upon meeting the due diligence requirements outlined in Section 3(l)(b) of the Information Technology (Intermediaries Guidelines) Rules. However, its application to Generative AI tools remains challenging.

There are contrasting views on the role of GAI tools. Some argue that they should be considered intermediaries since they are used almost like a search engine even though they do not host links to third-party websites. Others argue that they are mere "conduits" for user prompts, where altering the prompt leads to changes in output – essentially making the generated content akin to third-party speech, and, therefore, attracting liability for the content generated.

In *Christian Louboutin Sas vs Nakul Bajaj and Ors* (2018), the Delhi High Court held that safe harbour protection applies solely to "passive" intermediaries, referring to entities functioning as mere conduits or passive transmitters of information. However, in the context of Large Language Models (LLMs), making a distinction between user-generated and platform-generated content is increasingly challenging. Additionally, liability in the case of AI chatbots arises once the information is reposted on other platforms by the user; mere response to a user prompt is not considered dissemination.

Generative AI outputs have already led to legal conflicts in various jurisdictions. In June 2023, a



Amar Patnaik
a former Member of
Parliament (Rajya
Sabha) from Odisha
and now an advocate
by profession. He was
a former CAG
bureaucrat

radio host in the United States filed a lawsuit against Open AI, alleging that Chat GPT had defamed him. The ambiguity in classifying GAI tools, whether as intermediaries, conduits, or active creators, will complicate the ability of courts to assign liability, particularly in user reposts.

The copyright conundrum

Section 16 of Indian Copyright Act 1957 specifically provides that "no person" shall be entitled to protection of copyright except by the provisions of the Act. As in India, reluctance persists regarding the provisions of copyright protection to works generated by AI globally.

The critical questions are: should existing copyright provisions be revised to accommodate AI? If AI-generated works gain protection, would co-authorship with a human be mandatory? Should recognition extend to the user, the programme itself, and by extension, the programmer, or both? The 161st Parliamentary Standing Committee Report found that the Copyright Act of 1957 is "not well equipped to facilitate authorship and ownership by Artificial Intelligence".

Under current Indian law, a copyright owner can take legal action against anyone who infringes on his/her work with remedies such as injunctions and damages. However, the question of who is responsible for copyright infringement by AI tools remains unclear. As previously argued, classifying GAI tools, whether as intermediaries, conduits, or active creators, will complicate the courts' ability to assign liability. ChatGPT's 'Terms of Use' attempt to shift liability to the user for any illegal output. But the enforceability of such terms in India is uncertain.

The landmark K.S. Puttaswamy judgment (2017) by the Supreme Court of India established a strong foundation for privacy jurisprudence in the country, leading to the enactment of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (DPDP). While traditional data aggregators or consent managers raise privacy concerns during the collection and distribution of personal

This rapidly-evolving technology does pose a challenge to existing legal frameworks and judicial precedents that have been designed for a pre-AI world

information, Generative AI introduces a new layer of complexity.

The DPDP Act introduces the "right to erasure" as well as "right to be forgotten". However, once a GAI model is trained on a dataset, it cannot truly "unlearn" the information it has already absorbed. This raises a critical question. How can individuals exercise control over their personal information when it is woven into the very fabric of a powerful AI model?

Steps to pursue

First, learning by doing. Consider granting GAI platforms temporary immunity from liability following a sandbox approach. This approach allows responsible development while gathering data to identify legal issues that could inform future laws and regulations.

Second, data rights and responsibilities. The process of data acquisition for GAI training requires an overhaul. Developers must prioritise legal compliance by ensuring proper licensing and compensation for the intellectual property used in training models. Solutions could include revenue-sharing or licensing agreements with data owners.

Third, licensing challenges. Licensing data for GAI is complex as web-data lacks a centralised licensing body similar to copyright societies in the music industry. A potential solution is the creation of centralised platforms, akin to stock photo websites such as Getty Images, which simplify licensing, streamline access to necessary data for developers and ensure data integrity against historical bias and discrimination.

The jurisprudence around Generative AI (GAI) is hazy and yet to be evolved. It demands a comprehensive re-evaluation of existing digital jurisprudence. A holistic, government-wide approach and judicious interpretations by the constitutional courts are essential to maximise the benefits of this powerful technology, but safeguarding individual rights and protecting them against unwelcome harm all the while.

The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The return of debate

It was a pleasant revelation for those who believe in democracy to see such poise and forbearance in our legislators across both sides of the aisle in Parliament. A stronger Opposition seems to have found its lost voice. The government is perhaps discovering the value of debate, which it had mislaid in a hubris of its brute numbers. The Speakers in

both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha too, in a significant departure, showcased their real role, that of a moderator, to further the essence of parliamentary democracy. There was debate and a willingness to listen. The onus is on the government and the Opposition to perpetuate this democratic ethos.

R. Narayanan,
Navi Mumbai

The heated debates on the floor of the Houses were riveting and have ignited the proper working of Parliament. Judging by the Opposition's attitude, things seem to be moving the right way after a decade. Debate and healthy discussions will benefit the people.

Kirti Wadhawan,
Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh

Medha Patkar's conviction
It is sad that Medha Patkar,

an icon for tribal rights, has been sentenced to five months simple imprisonment for making certain remarks against the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, V.K. Saxena. It was only recently that the same L-G had granted sanction to prosecute renowned author Arundhati Roy, under the draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, for having called for an independent Kashmir. Since

2014, instances of civil and social rights activists who have been critical of the BJP government being targeted have multiplied. In fact, the Supreme Court of India pulled up former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalithaa for misusing the defamation law. Taking a cue from this, the ruling party at the Centre should develop a thick skin. Politicians should vindicate their points of view in

public and should not use courts to settle political scores and stifle criticism. In any democratic society, there should be space for dissent. Otherwise, we would be heading towards an authoritarian state.

N.G.R. Prasad,
Chennai

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

France: India's steady partner in green growth

In July 14, 2023, in Paris, President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Narendra Modi elevated the 'Partnership for the Planet' as one of the three pillars of the Indo-French Horizon 2047 Roadmap. This decision reflects the intensification of Indo-French cooperation over the past few years on issues such as climate change, biodiversity, health, and environment. It also shows a deep convergence of views between France and India: our two countries champion the idea that socioeconomic development and environmental protection can go hand in hand, are committed to bridging North-South divides, and believe that we can together find sustainable solutions for the world and for our own green transitions. This has led to high-profile joint initiatives on the world stage, such as the International Solar Alliance. But the 'Partnership for the Planet' is more than that: it is made up of tangible projects in India, which advance a greener, more inclusive future.



Thierry Mathou
Ambassador of France to India

transition, sustainable urban development, biodiversity conservation and resilience of territories, and reduction of inequalities. Since 2008, the AFD Group has committed more than €4 billion for nearly 100 projects in India, which are implemented by Indian public and private partners. That makes India the number one partner of the AFD in terms of financial exposure. A whopping 83% of its portfolio contributes to climate change mitigation and adaptation, and 63% addresses gender equality.

During my official visits across India, I have seen some of the AFD Group-financed achievements and heard the feedback from their Indian partners. They have all spoken of the true spirit of partnership in their relations with AFD or Proparco, which has led to building bridges between our two countries through the exchange of knowledge and expertise.

In 2023 alone, AFD approved four new loans in India totalling nearly €400 million for climate change projects: two credit lines to Indian public banks; a policy loan for Himachal Pradesh to boost its disaster risk management capacities; and a national programme for increased resilience in urban water

management and sanitation in 20 cities to be selected through a challenge. Further, four environment protection projects were signed in 2023 and their implementation started. One is a project with Rajasthan for increasing forest cover, creating better conditions for wildlife to live and reproduce, while sustaining livelihoods of local communities. Another aims at improving sanitation in the small towns of Himachal Pradesh. The third seeks to improve solid waste management in 18 cities as part of CITIIS, India's flagship circular economy programme. Last, a green credit line with the State Bank of India was disbursed for electric buses and energy-efficient housing. Two projects, which were chalked out a few years ago, were commissioned in 2023: the

Nagpur and Pune metro rails. I am proud of these joint achievements that will translate into real benefits for the people and the planet.

Private sector-led projects

Supporting private sector-led projects is also key in delivering real impact for local communities. One such example is Proparco's investment, along with other co-investors, of €11.2 million as growth capital in Sahyadri. It is the first international equity investment in a farmer-led organisation in India. The project will help 15,000 farmers reduce farm losses and the use of pesticides and fertilizers, as well as enable them to increase yields and the quality of their produce. In the health sector, Proparco approved in 2023 a €33 million equity investment in Quadria, an Indian private equity firm focused on investments in healthcare mid-caps across South and Southeast Asia. The project seeks to reduce the imbalance between affordable quality healthcare and the growing demand in underserved regions. These two projects showcase the private sector's role in achieving SDGs.

I see this partnership growing into two new areas. First, our bilateral initiatives are increasingly acquiring an Indo-Pacific dimension. This is already the case in our Indo-Pacific Parks Partnership, which pools expertise in biodiversity protection from France, India, and other partners in the region. Our next endeavour is the creation of a joint fund for scaling up green technologies being developed in the region. Second, innovation is increasingly at the heart of AFD's approach to India. AFD is always looking for innovative ideas that blend social inclusion with sustainability. The Indo-French Year of Innovation in 2026 will be a special moment to spotlight some of these solutions. Thanks to AFD and Proparco's commitments to India, France is proud to be India's steadfast partner in its journey towards a more resilient and equitable future.

A priority partner
What do one-horned rhino protection in Assam, Pune's metro system, and Chandigarh's future water supply system have in common? Behind each of these projects stands the French Development Agency (AFD), India's steadfast partner to achieve its sustainability goals. The AFD Group is the operational arm of France's international partnership strategy. It comprises AFD, its private sector arm Proparco, and the technical cooperation agency Expertise France. It pursues a holistic approach to development, seeking to harmonise growth with the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is engaged in over 4,200 projects across more than 150 countries. Last year alone, the AFD Group approved more than 1,000 new projects worth €13.5 billion.

India has long been a priority partner for AFD, which is active in four strategic sectors: energy

India has long been a priority partner for the AFD Group, which has committed more than €4 billion for nearly 100 projects in India since 2008

Many obstacles before take off

The government has several hurdles to overcome in its Hosur airport project

STATE OF PLAY

Sanjay Vijayakumar
sanjay.v@thehindu.co.in



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin's ambitious proposal for an international airport in Hosur in Krishnagiri district, which shares a boundary with Bengaluru, has brought cheer to the industrial community in the town.

However, some people have raised doubts about the proposal as a concession agreement signed between the Centre and the Bangalore International Airport Ltd (BIAL), the operator of Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru, contains a clause against setting up a new airport within a 150-kilometre radius of the greenfield airport till 2033.

In the recently concluded Legislative Assembly session, Mr. Stalin said the proposed airport would be established on 2,000 acres of land in Hosur with a capacity to handle 3 crore passengers annually.

In recent years, Hosur has emerged as a nucleus for auto and electric vehicle manufacturing and electronics. It is a favoured investment destination by virtue of its proximity to the Electronic City. The State government has been implementing schemes to turn Hosur into a major economic hub. Mr. Stalin has said that the airport is essential to improve the socio-economic status of Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri districts.

Soon after the announcement of the new airport, Bharatiya Janata Party State (BJP) president K. Annamalai and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) Rajya Sabha MP P. Wilson had a heated debate. Mr. Annamalai dubbed it a "publicity stunt". He cited the res-

ponse of then Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation, General (retired) V.K. Singh, to a question raised in the Rajya Sabha by Mr. Wilson on the airport in Hosur. Mr. Singh had said that no airport could be constructed within a 150-km radius of the Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru for 25 years starting 2008, in accordance with the agreement signed between the Centre and BIAL. Besides, the guidelines released by the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation for setting up a new greenfield airport also state that new airports are not allowed to come up within an aerial distance of 150 km of an existing civilian airport.

Mr. Wilson, however, pointed out that he had requested the then Minister to ignore the concession agreement and termed it void ab initio and against public interest. The Union government cannot unilaterally agree with a private body on commercial interests, without the State's consent, while sacrificing the interests of the people of Tamil Nadu and their rights of free movement, he said.

Mr. Wilson said that the Chief Minister has rightly asserted the rights of the people of Tamil Nadu by announcing the airport project. The announcement demonstrates the constitutional rights of free movement, development, and federalism, he added.

Mr. Wilson also said that

Mr. Annamalai only referred to clause 8.1(a) of the Ministry of the Civil Aviation Guidelines (policy for setting up greenfield airports) to point out that a new airport cannot be established within 150 km of an existing airport. However, clause 8.1(b) of the policy clearly states that airports can be set up within a 150 km distance on a case-by-case basis, he pointed out.

As per the guidelines, if the application seeks to set up a greenfield airport within 150 km of an existing civilian airport, it would be considered by the Steering Committee. The Committee would consider all the relevant facts and circumstances including contractual liabilities, if any, and make suitable recommendations to the Central government. In 2017, the Centre had given approval for a greenfield airport at Jewar in Greater Noida, located 72 km from the Indira Gandhi International Airport, based on the recommendations of the Steering Committee.

Reportedly, Tamil Nadu has initiated talks with BIAL for the airport in Hosur. The move also comes at a time when Karnataka is looking for construction of a second airport in Bengaluru.

While there might be compelling reasons for setting up Hosur airport, the government has many hurdles to overcome. The DMK, which is part of the Opposition INDIA bloc, needs to bargain hard to get the nod from the Centre. Already, the relationship between the Centre and Tamil Nadu government has not been cordial on issues such as devolution of taxes.

For the proposal to come through, the government will need to overcome regulatory hurdles, develop the necessary infrastructure, and make it viable for all stakeholders.

Is the bad loan problem shifting to individuals from industries?

Though Indian banks are in the pink of health, the RBI is worried about slippages and delinquencies

DATA POINT

Vignesh Radhakrishnan

Until the mid-2010s, banks used to lend massive loans to big industries. When these businesses failed, their loans turned sour. Such bad loans stayed hidden for sometime. In 2015, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) carried out a review, following which skeletons tumbled out of the closet. The share of bad loans reached as high as 10% in 2017, which meant that nearly one in every 10 loans had turned bad. A variety of debt recovery channels including the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016, were used to recover the money. Given the relatively high amount of loans lent to well-known companies, the failures to repay the loans were widely publicised.

Following this debacle, banks started offering fewer loans to industries. They also managed to recover more and more bad loans. As a result, banks reached the pink of health in 2024. The latest Financial Stability Report (FSR) of the RBI shows that Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) was at a decadal-low in March this year (**Chart 1**). NPA is the share of total loans that are overdue for more than 90 days.

However, reducing loans to industries meant that banks had to look elsewhere to lend and earn. The mid-2010s also saw an increase in loans given to the retail sector. These included personal loans, credit card receivables, housing loans, and similar products. The period also saw a proliferation of instant loan apps, which enticed unsuspecting consumers, especially those younger and more digitally savvy, to take more loans, leading to a debt trap.

The share of retail loans grew so much that the sector surpassed both industries and services to have the most outstanding loans.



The charts are based on data sourced from the Financial Stability Report - June 2024, the Trend and Progress of Banking in India, the press releases of the Reserve Bank of India, and the Rajya Sabha

Chart 1: The Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) was at a decadal-low in March this year. NPA is the share of total loans that are overdue for more than 90 days

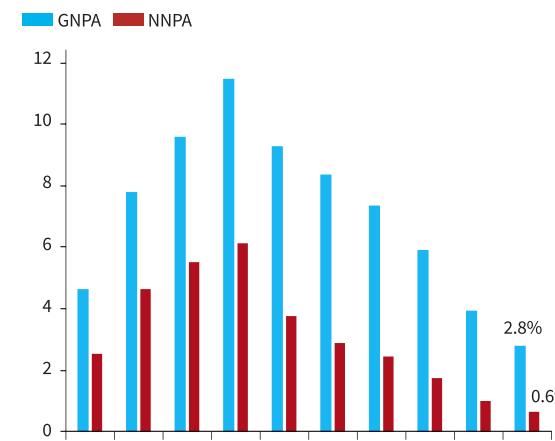


Chart 3: The bank-type wise split of the share of slippages from retail loans in the overall new additions of NPAs. The chart excludes slippages in home loans. Slippages are fresh additions of bad loans in a year

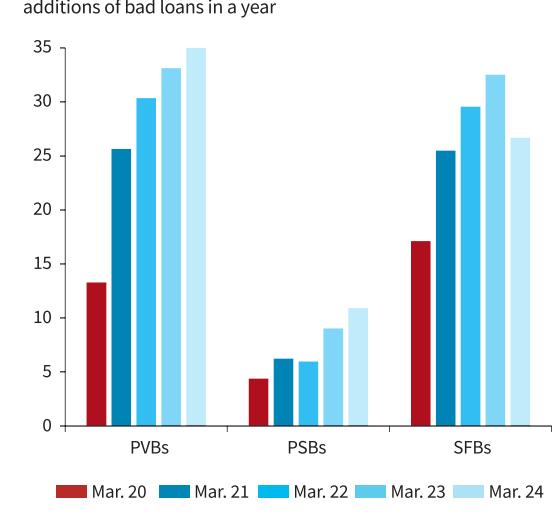


Chart 2: The GNPA ratio of personal loans has been reducing consistently, reaching 1.2% in March 2024 — the lowest across sectors and within the segment

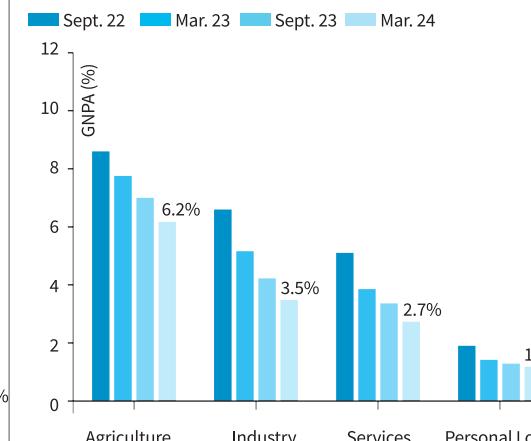
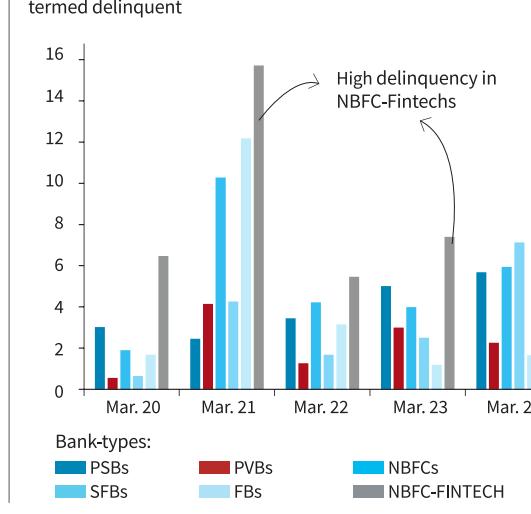


Chart 4: The delinquency levels for personal loans below ₹50,000 are persistently high in small finance banks and NBFC-Fintechs. Even if dues are overdue for a day, an account can be termed delinquent



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 3, 1974

Alarming rise in malaria incidence in south

Bangalore, July 2: The Health Minister of Karnataka, Mr. H. Siddaveerappa, has drawn the attention of the Central Government to what he characterised here-to-day as the 'alarming' rerudescence of malaria not only in Karnataka but also in the entire South including Goa, and has asked for immediate remedial measures under the National Malaria Control and Eradication Programme.

Highlighting the growing incidence of malaria in Karnataka in particular, Mr. Siddaveerappa told pressmen here-to-day that while there were only 768 attacks of malaria in the State in 1962, the number rose to 72,000 in 1973 and upto the end of May 1974, the attacks totalled 30,500. In Tamil Nadu the incidence had risen from 1,596 cases in 1964 to 4,400 in 1973, while the Kerala figures were 27 in 1964 and 689 in 1973 and 117 upto the end of May 1974.

It looked as if the malaria cycle had taken a reverse turn, Mr. Siddaveerappa said and feared that it might take at least ten years to reverse the trend and eradicate malaria all over again.

R.D. Roy, Deputy Director of the Regional Co-ordinating Organisation, National Malaria Eradication Programme also said here-to-day that the scourge of malaria was causing serious concern in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and warned that if it were not contained it might harm hundreds of lives.

Mr. Siddaveerappa attributed the rerudescence of malaria largely to the shift in accent from the preventive to the curative aspect of public health and also to the paucity of funds to organise trained and elaborate staff to fight malaria. The malaria mosquitoes were breeding in a prolific manner because of the neglect of sewerage systems particularly in the urban areas and the general lack of appreciation of the importance of sanitation.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 3, 1924

Indian Emigration

Allahabad, July 2: The "Pioneer" understands that Kunwar Maharaj Singh has been provisionally selected to be the officer to be deputed by the Government of India to study the conditions in Mauritius with reference to the proposed reopening of the Indian immigration, subject to the acquiescence of the Mauritius Government.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

The share of citizens saving passwords in an unsafe manner

17 in per cent. Nearly a sixth of Indians have been found storing important financial passwords of ATMs, debit or credit cards, bank accounts and app stores in an unsafe manner, findings of a recent survey by Localcircles revealed. PTI

The increase in coal production in the month of June

14.49 in per cent. India's coal production rose to 84.63 million tonne (MT) in June. The country's coal output was 73.92 MT in June last fiscal, according to provisional figures of the government. PTI

Countries that lowered their premature death count

8 Even as premature deaths due to cancer have come down across three-fourths of the world, less than 10 countries are likely to meet the related United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Target 3.4, according to a study in *The Lancet Oncology*. PTI

The endosulfan victims whose details will be re-examined

1,031 The Kerala government said that people excluded from the endosulfan victims' list in Kasaragod district will be re-examined and those found eligible will be included in the final list. PTI

Amount provided by the U.S. administration to support tech hubs

504 in \$ million. The Biden administration said that the funds were provided in implementation grants for a dozen technology hubs in Ohio, Montana, and Nevada, among other locations. AP
COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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On improving rural mobile connectivity

Even though cellular networks seem omnipresent, their deployment and use vary significantly between urban and rural areas. According to the latest Telecom Subscription Data, urban tele-density in the country is 127% while rural tele-density is 58%

EXPLAINER

Pranav Jha

Mobile devices have become an integral part of our lives. We use them to communicate with our friends and family, conduct financial transactions through UPI, connect to the Internet, etc. The connectivity for these devices is enabled via a cellular (mobile) wireless network. A cellular network, such as a 5G network, includes a set of network equipment connected by communication links. They work together to move data between different devices and to other networks such as the Internet. A cellular network can be divided into two sub-networks: the Access Network (AN) and the Core Network (CN).

What are access and core networks? The AN consists of base stations that provide wireless connectivity to mobile devices in a limited geographical area, called the coverage area. A network operator usually installs base stations across the length and breadth of the region to be covered. These stations can be seen in the form of towers with boxes with antennae on top.

The CN of a cellular network has equipment that provides connectivity to other networks, such as the Internet. Unlike AN base stations, the CN operates in a central location, and possibly far from any of the base stations. The CN is linked to a base station by an optical fibre link called the backhaul. Data from a user's device must pass through both a base station and the CN to reach its desired destination, such as the Internet or another user's device. Even if two users are nearby and are connected to the same or adjacent base stations, the data must pass through the central CN. The CN is essential to support user mobility, a key feature offered by cellular networks.

What impedes rural connectivity? Even though cellular networks seem omnipresent, their deployment and use vary significantly between urban and rural areas. This is especially true in developing countries like India. According to the latest Telecom Subscription Data from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, urban tele-density in the country is 127% while rural tele-density is 58%. Put another way, on average, an urban user has one or more mobile connections (1.27) whereas only one out of two rural users (0.58) is connected. This data suggests an urban-rural digital divide. The situation in most other developing countries is similar or worse.

An important factor impeding the deployment and/or use of cellular networks in rural areas is the relatively lower income of the people here. A big chunk of the rural population finds mobile services unaffordable. Other relevant characteristics of rural areas are lower population density, populations distributed in clusters (villages) often separated by vast empty spaces, and remoteness. Taking fibre infrastructure to a far-off village, say, in the Himalayas, to connect the base station there may neither be cost-effective nor easy.

These features of the rural landscape require a communication system that can efficiently cover a large geographical area – yet there has been limited research focus on these factors.

Most existing cellular networks cater to urban populations in economically developed countries, for example, the 5G network focuses on providing 10 Gbps data rate and 1 ms latency. Rural

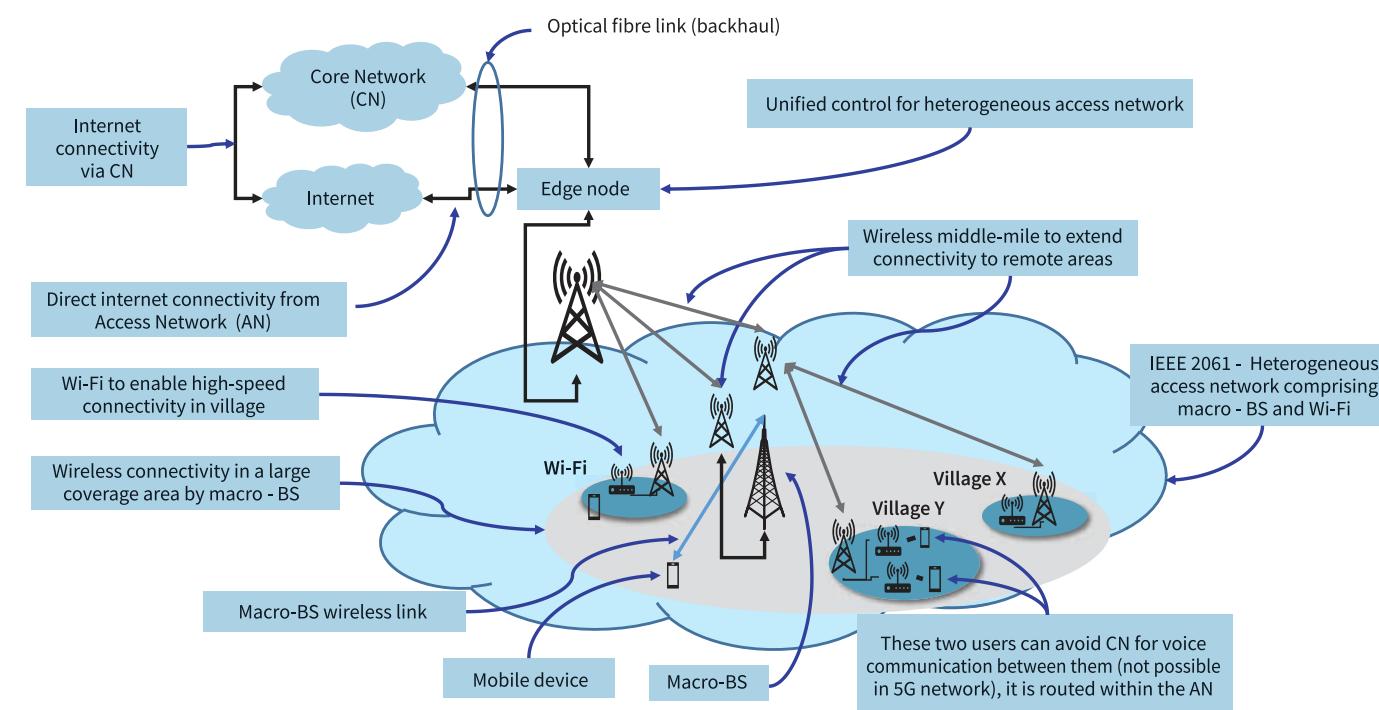
Connecting to the remote

The IEEE 2061-2024 standard defines a wireless network architecture for affordable broadband access in rural areas. It was approved on June 6 by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE)



No signal: A boy looks for a mobile network from his tree house in Baromile village in the Karbi Anglong district of Assam on June 11, 2020. RITU RAJ KONWAR

IEE - 2061 Network (Frugal 5G network)



connectivity lags far behind.

What is the IEEE 2061-2024 standard? Our research group at IIT Bombay, led by Professor Abhay Karandikar, has been working on affordable rural connectivity for many years and some of the solutions developed in our lab form the basis of the 2061-2024 standard. The standard defines a wireless network architecture for affordable broadband access in rural areas. It was approved on June 6 by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE).

The IEEE-2061 network also includes a CN and AN similar to cellular networks. However, the IEEE-2061 AN is heterogeneous wherein different types of base stations coexist: it includes base stations covering large coverage areas – called macro-BS – supplemented by small coverage area Wi-Fi. It is different from the 5G network, where the AN is homogeneous comprising base stations of the same type and typically smaller coverage area.

The macro-BS in IEEE-2061 can be built with any cellular technology that can support a large coverage area. While the macro-BS provides large-area coverage but possibly lower data rate, Wi-Fi is deployed within villages to provide high-speed connectivity. A key capability

of the system is that it allows a device to move from a Wi-Fi based connectivity to a macro-BS connectivity without any service disruption. This is enabled by an integrated AN control functionality in the IEEE-2061 network. As wireless systems evolve, both legacy and new technologies – including 4G, 5G, 6G, Wi-Fi and networks – will coexist and complement each other. In such a heterogeneous network, an integrated AN control functionality like the one included in the IEEE-2061 standard will help avoid issues like call drops.

What is a middle-mile network? Further, the IEEE-2061 standard proposes the use of a multi-hop wireless middle-mile network to extend connectivity to areas where optical-fibre links are not available. A multi-hop wireless middle-mile provides cost-effective connectivity over long distances, eliminating the need for costly and difficult-to-deploy optical fibres. An IEEE-2061 network can flexibly use one or more technologies like satellites, or long-range Wi-Fi for the middle-mile.

The IEEE-2061 AN also has a direct and alternate path to the Internet, unlike the (4G/5G) network, where Internet connectivity is possible only via the CN. As mentioned earlier, the CN in cellular

networks is required to support user mobility. But many mobile network users today are stationary, this is all the more characteristic of rural areas. Therefore, a direct connection to the Internet from an AN, avoiding the centralised CN, would be a more optimal solution for such users. Unlike the 4G/5G networks, an IEEE-2061 network can also avoid the CN for communication between nearby users, which can be directly routed within AN instead. This is like going directly from Belagavi to Hubballi (AN to AN) instead of going to Bengaluru first and then to Hubballi (AN-CN-AN).

In sum, the IEEE 2061-2024 is the second IEEE standard to come out of the research efforts of Prof. Karandikar's lab at IIT Bombay. It follows on the heels of IEEE 1930.1-2022, a standard on "beyond 5G networks", which also incorporated some of our research ideas as its key elements.

If adopted, IEEE 2061 can help provide affordable connectivity to rural populations. Its novel concepts, including the CN bypass, and integrated AN control may also pave the way towards a scalable mobile network in the future.

Pranav Jha is a scientist with IIT Bombay and the chair of the IEEE working group 'Frugal 5G Networks', which developed the IEEE-2061-2024 standard.

THE GIST

An important factor impeding the deployment and/or use of cellular networks in rural areas is the relatively lower income of the people here. A big chunk of the rural population finds mobile services unaffordable.

The IEEE-2061 standard proposes the use of a multi-hop wireless middle-mile network to extend connectivity to areas where optical-fibre links are not available.

If adopted, IEEE 2061 can help provide affordable connectivity to rural populations. Its novel concepts, including the CN bypass, and integrated AN control may also pave the way towards a scalable mobile network in the future.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Iran: limited democracy, unlimited theocracy

Iran's political system – which has been designed in such a way that the Shia clergy has ultimate authority in all critical matters related to the state, even as elections are held in regular intervals – is a child of revolution

Stanly Johny

There's only a walking distance from the Imam Khomeini Square, the Qajar-era 19th century neighbourhood of the Iranian capital which used to be called Maidan-e-Toopkhaneh, to Ebrat Museum on Yarjani Street. A three-storey structure with torture wings, countless cells, echo corridors and iron doors, the building, designed by German engineers in the 1930s, was the headquarters of a section of the Shah's infamous secret police, SAVAK, before the 1979 revolution. All the dark corridors lead to a circular, roofless inner courtyard that's awash in sunlight. Sculptures of prisoners are hung from the iron grills of the courtyard. SAVAK used to hang prisoners on the grills and torture them – their screams would echo across the corridors and their suffering would be displayed for those in the courtyard. The museum has the images and names of the hundreds of inmates it once held – one of them was Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the current Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic.

History repeats

The Iranian authorities turned the prison into a museum in 2002, to showcase the brutalities of the Shah's royal dictatorship. For the regime, the museum is a microcosm of all the evils of the monarchy from which Iranians were "liberated" by the Islamic Revolution. But four decades after the revolution, repeated protests accuse the Islamic regime of the same repressive reign from which it claims to have liberated the Iranians. When discontent grew at home, the system's legitimacy was questioned. Voters' turnout in Iran's presidential and parliamentary elections started shrinking to new lows. In the 2021 presidential elections, in which hardliner Ebrahim Raisi won, voters' turnout was 48%, a record low. The country was forced to hold a snap presidential election in June after President Raisi was killed in a helicopter crash. While Mr. Khamenei asked Iranians to overwhelmingly participate in the elections, the turnout fell to 39.9%, down from over 80% in 2009.

A unique system

Iran's unique political system – which has been designed in such a way that the Shia clergy has ultimate authority in all critical matters related to the state, even as elections are held in regular intervals – is a child of the revolution. While it's popularly called the "Islamic revolution", the anti-Shah popular movement was not only Islamic. True, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who, while in exile in Iraq's Najaf, had called for the Shah's ouster, and became the embodiment of the mass agitations in the 1970s. But Iranians from different political sections, including nationalists, liberals, leftists and trade unionists, had actively joined the movement, seeking freedom from the Shah's dictatorship.

The Shah, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, who had to briefly flee the country in the early 1950s and was restored after the CIA helped the monarchists orchestrate a coup against the democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh,



Complete control: A woman walks past posters of Iranian presidential candidate Masoud Pezeshkian in Tehran on July 2. AFP

was more or less detached from the political reality on ground. He orchestrated grand ceremonies celebrating the monarchy (such as the extravagant 1971 celebration of "the 2,500th year of the Iranian monarchy" spending some \$100 million), banned all political parties except the monarchist Resurgence Party (Hezb-e-Rastakhiz) and assumed himself the title of Aryan Sun (Aryamehr) – apolitical and spiritual guide of Iran. When an increasingly isolated Shah tried to consolidate more and more powers in his hands, SAVAK ran amok in the country, rounding up political dissidents.

Iranians are no strangers to political rebellion and defiance. In 1896, Naser al-Din Shah, the fourth Shah of Qajar Iran, was assassinated inside a mosque in Tehran. The assassination and its aftermath would eventually lead to the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911, which led to the establishment of a Parliament in Persia. Reza Shah Pahlavi ignored this history of rebellion when he unleashed his forces on increasingly disgruntled protesters, which eventually led to his own downfall. When the Shah fled the country in January 1979, Khomeini was in Paris. He landed in Tehran's Mehrabad airport, which was controlled by the revolutionaries, on February 1, 1979. They turned a disused

girls' school in central Tehran into a make-shift headquarters of the Revolutionary Council. And one of the first things Khomeini did was to form a paramilitary force – the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. But the Islamists could not ignore other sections of the revolution completely. So, Khomeini ushered in a new system that would have an elected President and Parliament, while the clerics would remain firmly in control. He promised an Islamic revolutionary government based on Sharia, a model which he called Vilayat-e Faqih (Guardianship of the Faqih, or the Islamic Jurist).

Clerical control

Iran's state has both elected and unelected branches and the unelected branch is more powerful than the former. The President, Parliament (Majles) and the Assembly of Experts are directly elected, while the Supreme Leader, the Guardian Council and the Expediency Council are appointed by the clergy. The President is the head of the government, which is in charge of running the day-to-day affairs of the country, but is not the head of the state. The Supreme Leader is the most powerful person in the country and is both the political leader and spiritual guide of the Islamic Republic.

The presidential term is four years and Presidents cannot have more than two consecutive terms. The election process itself is largely considered fair (though there were disputes, such as the 2009 elections), but all the candidates are vetted by the Guardian Council, which usually disqualifies an overwhelming majority of the candidates. The 290-member Islamic Consultative Assembly (Majles) has the authority to legislate. But all the Bills the Majles passes should go to the unelected Guardian Council, which would vet whether the Bill is in compliance with the Islamic Constitution and values. The powerful Guardian Council has 12 members, a combination of six religious experts, who will directly be appointed by the Supreme Leader, and six Islamic legal jurists, nominated by the Chief Justice (who in turn is appointed by the Supreme Leader). So the Supreme Leader's office has direct or indirect control over the Guardian Council, which oversees the elections, vets the candidates and has a veto over Parliament.

Absolute authority

Unlike the President, the Supreme Leader doesn't have any fixed term. Since the 1979 revolution, Iran has had only two Supreme Leaders – Khomeini (who died in 1989) and Khamenei. The Constitution mandates the 88-member Assembly of Experts to elect the Supreme Leader. The Assembly, which also has the authority to oversee and dismiss the Supreme Leader, is directly elected, but the candidates are strictly vetted by the Guardian Council, whose members are directly or indirectly picked by the Supreme Leader. If there are legal disputes between the elected Majles and the unelected Guardian Council, the 45-member Expediency Council, which advises the Supreme Leader, will have ultimate adjudicating powers. And all 45 members of the Council are appointed by the Supreme Leader, who is also the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. In essence, the Islamic Constitution ensures that the Supreme Leader and the clerical establishment stay firmly in charge of all branches of the state.

Principalists and reformists

Iran's political class is broadly divided into two categories – principalists (also hardliners) and reformists. The principalists make up the conservative bloc that enjoys the support of the clergy, whereas reformists advocate political and social reforms from within. The election of Mohammad Khatami as President in 1997 was a critical moment for reformist politics. But Mr. Khatami, an influential and popular reformist, failed to usher in any major changes in the system. Hassan Rouhani, the former President, was also a reformist, while his incumbent, Ebrahim Raisi, was a principalist. As no candidate won 50% vote in the first round of the presidential election on June 28, Iran will have a run off between the top two vote-getters-reformist Masoud Pezeshkian and conservative Saeed Jalili on July 5.

When Khomeini established his clerical rule after the revolution, many expected the new regime to collapse. On the contrary, Khomeini purged internal dissent and consolidated the clergy's grip when the country was fighting an eight-year long war with Iraq. Four decades later, the system the Ayatollah built has started showing signs of age, with repeated mass protests, state violence, and declining public interests in the electoral process, overshadowed by an unending economic crisis. But Iran's rulers seem undeterred, and try to project stability and continuity.

The article, published on September 28, 2022, has been updated.

**KEYWORD**

How can state capacity be measured?

Prashanth Perumal

State capacity refers to the ability of any state to successfully deliver what are generally considered to be public goods and services to its citizens. State capacity is considered by many public policy experts to be the major factor that explains why some countries are rich or developed while other countries remain underdeveloped.

The most common way in which the capacity of a state to deliver on its commitments is measured is by the way of its ability to collect a sufficient amount of tax revenues. This is because any state requires tax revenues to deliver public goods and services. By this measure, countries with a higher tax to GDP ratio, which typically turn out to be rich countries, may be considered to possess greater state capacity than other countries with lower ability to generate tax revenues. Many also urge developing countries like India to boost their tax to GDP ratio so as to build state capacity.

Power in numbers

Public policy experts may also look into other indicators such as the number of people employed by a certain state to measure its capacity. So, for example, the number of police officials per capita could be seen as an indicator of the capacity of the state to maintain law and order. States with a very low number of police officials per capita, it is believed, may be unable to establish monopoly of violence in their territory, leading to instability that adversely affects their economy. Similarly, the number of courts and judges per capita can be seen as an indicator of how well a state can deliver justice to citizens.

Some critics, however, caution against the definition of state capacity in terms of the ability of a certain state to collect tax revenues or the number of staff it can hire to deliver essential public goods and services to its citizens. This is because more efficient states may be able to deliver essential public goods with lower taxes and fewer staff than less efficient ones. Critics, therefore, argue that the number of people employed by a certain state and the amount of taxes collected by it only reflect its size and not the state's effectiveness in delivering essential public goods and services.

Critics such as U.S. economist Bryan Caplan also point out that state capacity, as defined by the size of the state, is claimed by public policy experts to be the reason behind the success of certain countries without establishing the necessary causal link between the two. In other words, they argue that the success of rich countries is tautologically attributed to strong state capacity the same way that the failure of poor countries is attributed to weak state capacity. They point out that it could well be that strong economic growth allowed developed countries to fund states that are large in size; in that case, the economic success of the developed world cannot really be attributed to a larger state. A better way to measure state capacity, critics believe, is to gauge the ability of a certain state, regardless of its size as measured by its tax collections or headcount, to uphold the rule of law by delivering efficient justice to citizens.

THE DAILY QUIZ

Here is a quiz on some of the important events that happened on July 3

Sindhu Nagaraj**QUESTION 1**

This movie, directed by Robert Zemeckis and starring Michael J. Fox as Marty McFly, was released in American theatres on this day. It went on to become a huge hit. Which was the film?

QUESTION 2

This American singer and songwriter died on July 3, 1971. He was also the lead vocalist of the rock band 'The Doors'. Name the singer.

QUESTION 3

On very similar lines, another musician was

found dead on this day in 1969. He was the founder of the band 'The Rolling Stones'. Name the musician.

QUESTION 4

This American actor, considered a Hollywood icon was born on this day in 1962. He is known for action and sci-fi films, often performing his own risky stunts. Name the actor.

QUESTION 5

On this day in 1973, this singer retired his stage persona Ziggy Stardust with the surprise announcement that it is "the last show that we'll ever do" on the last day of the Ziggy Stardust Tour. Who was the singer?

**Visual question:**

This celebrated writer was born on this day in 1883. Identify him. There is a term that entered English to describe absurd situations like those depicted in his writing. What is it called?

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:

1. This Speaker of the Lok Sabha served twice but neither term was completed fully.

Ans: G. M. C. Balayogi

2. The first Speaker of the Lok Sabha to serve two terms. **Ans: Balram Jhakar**

3. This former Speaker became the President of India. **Ans: Neelam Sanjeev Reddy**

4. This person presides over the Speaker's office if the Speaker isn't present. **Ans: Deputy Speaker**

5. Can the Speaker vote for any legislative business? **Ans: The Speaker does not vote in the first instance but exercises a casting vote in case of a tie**

6. This politician from Tamil Nadu has served as the Deputy Speaker twice.

Ans: Thambidurai

Visual: The first woman Speaker of Lok Sabha. **Ans: Meira Kumar**

Early Bird: Seema Das

Word of the day**Truculent:**

defiantly aggressive

Usage: It was a truculent speech against the new government.

Pronunciation: bit.ly/truculentpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /tuːkjuːlənt/

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

IN BRIEF



TAFE inks pact with Deutz AG to grow ICE business in India

TAFE Motors and Tractors Ltd. said it had signed a pact with Germany-based internal combustion engine (ICE) maker Deutz AG to jointly manufacture Deutz range of engines in India. Deutz has signed a long-term cooperation with TAFE Motors, the subsidiary of the leading tractor maker TAFE Ltd., that allows the former to expand its business in India. The engines will be produced in TAFE Motors' facility at Alwar, TAFE Motors said.

Rane Holdings to buy balance 51% from JV partner NSK

Rane Holdings Ltd. (RHL) said it had decided to buy out the remaining 51% stake from its joint venture partner NSK Ltd. in Rane NSK Steering Systems Pvt. Ltd. for a total cash consideration of ₹45 crore. Post-acquisition, the company will become a wholly owned subsidiary of RHL and will be named as Rane Steering Systems Pvt. Ltd. (RSSL), subject to necessary approvals, the Rane group firm said in a statement. The transaction is expected to be completed by September.

Coal production rose 14% to 84.63 MT in June: Ministry

The country's coal production rose by 14.49% to 84.63 million tonne (MT) in June. The country's coal output was 73.92 MT in June last fiscal, according to provisional figures of the government. In June, Coal India Ltd.'s (CIL) production was at 63.10 MT, registering a rise of 8.87% compared with the same period last year, the coal ministry said in a statement. India's coal dispatch in June was at 85.76 MT, up by 10.15% compared with the same period last year. PTI

RBI proposes rationalising norms on EXIM deals

Press Trust of India

MUMBAI

The RBI on Tuesday proposed rationalising regulations that cover export and import transactions to promote ease of doing business and empower banks to provide more efficient service to their foreign exchange customers.

The central bank has issued 'Regulation of Foreign Trade under Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999 - Draft Regulations and Directions'.

As per the draft, every exporter should furnish to the specified authority a declaration specifying the amount representing the full export value of the goods or services.

Stock broking firms tumble on SEBI order

Press Trust of India

Shares of stock-broking firms slid on Tuesday, a day after markets regulator SEBI directed stock exchanges and market infrastructure institutions (MIIs) to implement a uniform and equal charge structure for all members rather than varying charges based on their volume or activity.

At the close of trade, the stock of Angel One tanked 8.72%, Geojit Financial Services 6.83%, Motilal Oswal Financial Services 4.19%, SMC Global Securities 2.81%, Dolat Algotech 2.28% and Spaisa Capital 0.05% on the BSE.

The regulator instructed stock exchanges, clearing corporations, and depositories constituted as MIIs



to ensure that any charges recovered from the end client are 'True to Label'. It means if a certain charge is levied on the end client by members – stock brokers, depository participants, clearing members – it should be ensured by MIIs the same amount is received by them. SEBI has asked MIIs to comply with the directive while designing processes for charges levied on their members.

Murugappa firm signs water-devices pact with Jiva

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

Murugappa Water Technology and Solutions (MWTS) has signed a MoU with Jiva Water to integrate Jiva Water Devices into its solutions portfolio to offer benefits of quality water.

"By incorporating Jiva Water Devices into our solutions, we will significantly enhance water quality at our customer/end-use applications," MWTS Chief Executive Jayateerth Nadigar," said in a statement.

Jiva Water devices cater to consumer, industrial and agricultural segments. The product capacities are based on application and usage," said Co-founder Srinivasan Vitoba.

Manufacturing inputs – China and Vietnam's tariffs apply on fewer components and are of lower rates – saying domestic component makers were raising prices to just below net prices of inputs to take advantage of the situation.

With sustained increase in production, India has entered a phase where the growth of the mobile-phone sector depends not on domestic demand but on demand in the global market," the ICEA said in a report prepared for the Finance Ministry.

Pankaj Mohindroo, the ICEA's President, argued against the relatively high tariffs India imposed on

India explores new sources of coking coal, plans own pricing tool

Abhishek Law

NEW DELHI

The Steel Ministry is looking to diversify its sourcing of coking coal, with Russia and Mongolia identified as key new markets, while plans are underway to establish the country's own mechanism for determining coking coal prices and creating an index.

India, the world's second-largest steelmaker, is the largest importer of coking coal. Australia accounts for 70% of supplies.

After discussions with industry on Monday, it has been decided trial runs for two shipments of coking coal from Mongolia – around 3 lakh tonne – will be considered over the next three-to-six months, senior officials who took part in the meetings told *businessline*. The Trans-Siberian-Mongolian railway will be tapped.

Under consideration is the 'one nation, one buying' of coking coal, on the lines of Japan and China. The industry is yet to come on board.

"Some points relate to securing coking coal by tapping new geographies, and determining the right price for coking coal. Tapping Mongolia for supplies and having own price mechanism are being considered for immediate implementation," a person at the meeting said.

One point that came up was the need to have a "more realistic" price discovery mechanism for coking coal. India does not have its price discovery mechanism.

(The writer is with *The Hindu businessline*)

Firms fret over Form 16 delays

Vikas Dhoot

NEW DELHI

Ahead of the looming July 31 deadline for filing I-T returns, some employers are struggling to issue Form 16 certificates to staff on processing delay and technical glitches in the I-T portal as well as challenges arising from new norms related to PAN-Aadhaar link, as per tax practitioners.

Companies file fourth-quarter returns for taxes withheld on behalf of staff by May 31, and individual staff's Form 16 reflecting income and tax deductions for a year, are subsequently generated on the I-T department's TRACES portal.

"There have been some technical glitches on the TRACES portal over the last one month and as a result, it is seen the quarterly TDS returns filed are not timely processed, which is generally processed within two days," said chartered accountant Suresh Surana.

Filing of returns hit

Due to the processing delays, some deductors were not able to timely generate Form 16 and share them with the staff. While this could hamper I-T returns filing for affected taxpayers, a recent tax department mandate for employers to deduct tax at a higher rate if an employee's PAN is not linked with Aadhaar by May 31, with retrospective effect, is adding to the challenge.

Akhil Chandra, partner, Grant Thornton Bharat, pointed to numerous issues with the portal. He attributed delays in the pro-



cessing of returns to high request volumes, a backlog, or technical issues on the TRACES portal.

"Recently, we have noticed the TRACES portal is taking more than 30-35 days to process returns. Further, in cases where the PANs are inoperative as they have not been linked with Aadhaar, the system is raising tax demand on the employer even in cases where salaries are below the threshold limit," Anita Basrur, partner, direct tax at Sudit K Parekh & Co. LLP, told *The Hindu*.

"This is putting tremendous pressure on deductors and employers as they are unable to issue the certificates in a timely manner."

"In one of the cases, it took around two weeks for the e-TDS return to get processed due to technical issues on the portal, even after continuously filing it up with the tax department," Mr. Chandra said. He also termed the inoperative PAN issue as a significant challenge for employers as it triggered a default in e-TDS returns.

Ms. Basrur pointed out the situation was trickier if a tax deductor needed to revise the withholding tax returns filed.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

| | TUESDAY | % CHANGE |
|-----------|---------|----------|
| Sensex | 79,441 | -0.04 |
| US Dollar | 83.48 | -0.04 |
| Gold | 74,250 | 2.62 |
| Brent oil | 86.78 | 0.66 |

NIFTY 50

| | PRICE | CHANGE |
|-------------------|----------|---------|
| Adani Enter. | 3153.20 | -30.60 |
| Adani Ports | 1474.85 | 0.35 |
| Apollo Hosp. | 6097.60 | -42.90 |
| Asian Paints | 2925.60 | -2.20 |
| Axis Bank | 1253.40 | -8.50 |
| Bajaj Auto. | 9401.25 | -131.15 |
| Bajaj FinServ | 1579.45 | -0.45 |
| Bajaj Finance | 7165.60 | -111.15 |
| Bharti Airtel | 1418.95 | -35.05 |
| BPLC | 304.40 | -0.15 |
| Britannia Ind. | 5401.65 | -74.85 |
| Cipla | 1488.65 | 9.55 |
| Coal India | 479.10 | 4.30 |
| Divis Lab. | 4571.25 | -30.65 |
| Dr Reddy's Lab. | 6370.25 | 16.55 |
| Eicher Motors | 4625.75 | -9.80 |
| Grafix Ind. | 2742.95 | 16.55 |
| HCL Tech. | 1480.80 | -11.95 |
| HFDC Bank | 1730.60 | 25.40 |
| HFDC Life | 589.80 | -10.95 |
| Hero MotoCorp | 5567.10 | -36.00 |
| Hindalco | 694.50 | 4.90 |
| Hindu Unilever | 2485.15 | -19.95 |
| ICICI Bank | 1190.60 | -21.25 |
| IndusInd Bank | 1429.45 | -27.45 |
| Infosys | 1621.05 | 30.25 |
| ITC | 425.50 | 3.55 |
| JSW Steel | 938.25 | -5.65 |
| Kotak Bank | 1769.60 | -38.50 |
| L&T | 3626.50 | 99.95 |
| LTIMindtree Ltd. | 5474.00 | 26.50 |
| M&M | 2865.15 | -10.70 |
| Maruti Suzuki | 12042.60 | -66.05 |
| NestleIndia | 2544.45 | -23.65 |
| NTPC | 370.40 | 0.65 |
| ONGC | 274.85 | 1.90 |
| PowerGrid Corp | 330.80 | 1.20 |
| Reliance Ind. | 3130.35 | 10.05 |
| SBI Life | 1494.90 | -6.95 |
| State Bank | 826.15 | -15.80 |
| Shriram Finance | 2824.90 | -99.35 |
| Sun Pharma | 1524.05 | 3.95 |
| TataConsumerProd. | 1105.00 | 10.45 |
| Tata Motors | 981.30 | -20.75 |
| Tata Steel | 174.54 | 0.47 |
| TCS | 4017.40 | 39.20 |
| Tech Mahindra | 1472.15 | 0.05 |
| Titan | 3399.65 | -31.80 |
| UltraTech Cement | 11853.95 | -50.70 |
| Wipro | 538.20 | 10.85 |

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on July 02

| | TT BUY | TT SELL |
|--------------------|--------|---------|
| US Dollar | 83.31 | 83.63 |
| Euro | 89.27 | 89.62 |
| British Pound | 105.26 | 105.67 |
| Japanese Yen (100) | 51.53 | 51.73 |
| Chinese Yuan | 11.46 | 11.5 |
| Swiss Franc | 92.14 | 92.51 |
| Singapore Dollar | 61.31 | 61.56 |
| Canadian Dollar | 60.67 | 60.9 |
| Malaysian Ringgit | 17.64 | 17.72 |
| Australian Dollar | 55.43 | 55.64 |

Source: Indian Bank

'Ashok Leyland ready to offer full suite of clean energy vehicles'

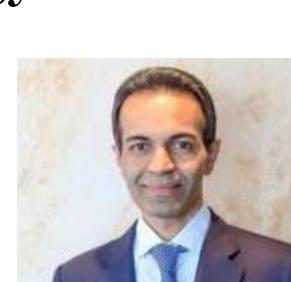
N. Anand

CHENNAI

Commercial vehicle manufacturer Ashok Leyland Ltd. is fully geared up to offer clean energy options beyond electric propulsion, said Executive Chairman Dheeraj Hindujia.

"The CNG and LNG trucks and buses are already operational, initiatives in methanol as a new energy fuel is well underway, and the prototype green hydrogen trucks have been deployed in actual operating conditions," he said in the chairman's message to shareholders.

ALL is future-ready to



offer a full suite of clean energy vehicles, he said.

Cut input tariffs on electronic production'

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Indian Cellular & Electronics Association (ICEA), which represents domestic electronics manufacturers, called for a reduction of import duties as a key Union budget demand.

"With sustained increase in production, India has entered a phase where the growth of the mobile-phone sector depends not on domestic demand but on demand in the global market," the ICEA said in a report prepared for the Finance Ministry.

Pankaj Mohindroo, the ICEA's President, argued against the relatively high tariffs India imposed on



manufacturing inputs – China and Vietnam's tariffs apply on fewer components and are of lower rates – saying domestic component makers were raising prices to just below net prices of imports to take advantage of the situation.

Since much of the fresh production of phones in India is being exported, duties should

Kotak MF lifts curbs on small cap scheme



Tough time: It was challenging to handle continuous flows amid elevated valuations. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

Suresh P. Iyengar

MUMBAI

Kotak Mutual Fund lifted the restriction on investment in its small-cap fund after four months as the fund house saw earnings growth in this sector.

"We are resuming the subscription of units in Kotak Small Cap Fund, effective July 2. Political uncertainties around India's elections are behind us. This has reduced market volatility, making the market more stable for small-cap stocks," said Kotak Mutual Fund. The fund house believes that earnings growth of small-caps is expected to improve and companies are poised for robust earnings growth. As the economy continues to expand, smaller businesses are well-positioned to benefit, potentially supporting valuations, it said.

Flows capped

Kotak MF added while small caps performed well in the past, it is important to set realistic expectations. The returns seen recently are unlikely to continue at the same pace and may become more normalised.

Hence, avoid the temptation to over-allocate based on the recent performance, it added.

Kotak MF restricted flows into its small-cap scheme from March 4, joining Nippon MF and Tata MF in limiting investments. Fund managers found it challenging to handle continuous flows amid elevated valuations.

In February, the fund house said in a notice fresh subscriptions through lump-sums will be restricted for each investor to ₹2 lakh per month.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

To cut or not to cut



Wait and watch: The U.S. central bank still needs more data before cutting interest rates to ensure that recent weaker inflation readings give a true picture of what is happening to underlying price pressures, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said on Tuesday. REUTERS

Italian firms bridge skills gap with own schooling

NEWS ANALYSIS

Reuters
ROME

After years of informal work as a farm labourer, Federico Olivieri, 29, could not believe it when a huge building site appeared next to his home in Sicily with training on offer for many specialised jobs required.

The programme by Italy's largest construction group Webuild is among a growing number of 'academies' run and financed by companies frustrated by many job-seekers lacking the know-how.

"We are being proactive about the problem. If the skills aren't there, then we will create them ourselves," Webuild's Chief

HR, Organisation & Systems Officer Gianluca Grondona told Reuters of the group's programme.

Skill mismatches are an international problem but for Italy, with the lowest employment rate in the EU and productivity that has stagnated for more than two decades, it is acute.

Vacancy rates

Despite a large pool of people seeking work or outside the labour market, vacancy rates stood at 2.5% in the first quarter of 2024, in line with the EU average, data from European Union statistics agency Eurostat shows. This compares with 2.8% in France and 0.9% in Spain in the same period.

Vocational schools and colleges are fewer and less popular in Italy than in



Huge deficiency: Vocational schools fail to produce students with the right expertise. VIA REUTERS

most European countries, think-tank Prometeia highlighted in a June report, and even those that there are fail to produce students with the right expertise.

At the same time, too

many young people are still studying subjects with lower market demand, such as humanities, it said.

The problem has become more severe with the rapid development of new

technologies, as Rome invests in EU-backed infrastructure projects as part of its post-COVID recovery plan, worth about €200 billion (\$214 billion).

Big firms like Webuild,

shipbuilder Fincantieri, and State railway group Ferrovie dello Stato (FS) are taking matters into their own hands. On top of apprenticeships, FS liaises with universities and schools to offer students more targeted courses.

Digital, AI job skills

"As the company changes, skills change and we need specific capabilities, particularly when it comes to digital and artificial intelligence-based jobs," said Adriano Mureddu, its Chief Human Resources Officer.

Mr. Olivieri joined Webuild's programme this year and now works with tunnel-boring machines at its site on Sicily's eastern coast. "The courses are an incredible opportunity for those who are willing to

learn something new ... you can't miss a chance like this," he said.

Webuild aims to source from its work academies some 3,000 people out of 10,000 new hires it envisages over the next three years. The academies are close to its infrastructure work sites, mainly in southern regions where unemployment is high.

Lorenzo Esposito Corcione, a 19-year-old who studied at nautical school in Genoa, is one of 80 people hired by Fincantieri after being trained under its 'Masters of the Sea' programme. The programme drew 17,000 applicants.

"Without the course I wouldn't be here," Mr. Esposito Corcione told Reuters at the end of his shift as an electrics fitter in the

shipyard of the north-eastern port of Monfalcone.

Numbers dilemma
Italy faces a problem not only of skills but also of numbers. It has one of the world's oldest populations and lowest fertility rates at 1.2 children per woman and the baby-boomers of the 1960s are now retiring. This means in the next five years, Italy will need 3.1 to 3.6 million new workers, business group Unioncamere estimates.

By 2050, Italy will have almost five million fewer people, and more than a third of them will be over 65, national statistics office ISTAT predicts. Younger blood is badly needed in a host of industries, from construction and tourism to agriculture.

Echoes of dotcom bubble haunt AI-driven American stock market

While various metrics show stock valuations, investor exuberance have yet to hit peaks reached at turn of the century, the similarities are easy to spot; a small group of tech stocks, including AI chipmaker Nvidia, symbolise today's market recalling 'Four Horsemen' of 1990s: Cisco, Dell, MS, Intel

NEWS ANALYSIS

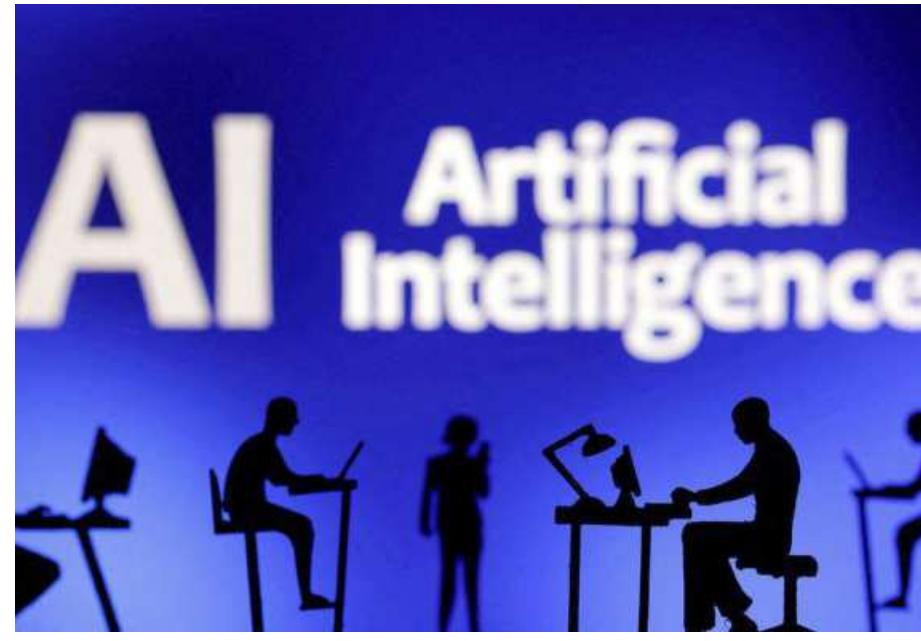
Reuters
NEW YORK

A U.S. stock rally supercharged by excitement over Artificial Intelligence (AI) is drawing comparisons with the dotcom bubble two decades ago, raising the question of whether prices have again been inflated by optimism over a revolutionary technology.

AI fever, coupled with a resilient economy and stronger earnings, has lifted the S&P 500 index to fresh records this year following a run of more than 50% from its October 2022 low. The tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite index has gained over 70% since the end of 2022.

While various metrics show stock valuations and investor exuberance have yet to hit peaks reached at the turn of the century, the similarities are easy to spot. A small group of massive tech stocks, including AI chipmaker Nvidia, symbolise today's market, recalling the "Four Horsemen" of the late 1990s: Cisco, Dell, Microsoft and Intel.

The dizzying run in shares of Nvidia, which gained nearly 4,300% in a recent five-year period, stirred memories of how network equipment maker Cisco surged about 4,500%



Bubble in making: Investors are wary metrics could stretch even more in the coming months. REUTERS

over five years leading up to its peak in 2000, according to a BTIG comparison of the two stocks.

Valuations have grown as well, though many tech champions appear to be in far better financial shape than their dot-com counterparts of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Other measures, such as investor bullishness, have yet to reach the frothy heights of the turn of the century.

The concern is that the AI-driven surge will end the same way as the dot-com boom – with an epic crash. After nearly quadrupling in just over three years, the Nasdaq Composite plunged almost 80% from its March 2000 peak

AI fever, coupled with a resilient economy and stronger earnings, lifted the S&P 500 index to fresh records this year following a run of more than 50% from its October 2022 low

to October 2022. The S&P 500, which doubled in a similar timeframe, collapsed nearly 50% in that period.

While Internet stocks such as Amazon survived and eventually thrived, others never recovered.

"No one exactly knows what will happen with ar-

tificial intelligence," said Sameer Samana, senior global market strategist at the Wells Fargo Investment Institute, noting the same uncertainty about the eventual long-term winners.

Similar to dotcom boom

Echoing the dot-com boom, the information technology sector has swelled to 32% of the S&P 500's total market value, the largest percentage since 2000 when it rose to nearly 35%, according to Datastream.

Forward earnings per share in sectors containing today's market leaders – tech, communication services and consumer discretionary – have been growing faster since early 2023 than the rest of the market, a Capital Economics analysis showed.

By contrast, expected earnings in the sectors grew at a similar pace to the rest of the market in the late 1990s and early 2000s, while their valuations soared faster than for other stocks.

More broadly, the S&P 500's price-to-earnings ratio of 21 is well above its historical average but below the roughly 25 level reached in 1999 and 2000, according to Datastream.

The difference is clear in the valuations of Nvidia and Cisco, a key provider of products supporting Internet infrastructure, whose stock has yet to recapture its peaks of the dot-com boom.

While both stocks have soared, Nvidia trades at 40 times forward earnings estimates, compared to Cisco's 131 level reached in March 2000, according to Datastream.

Earnings outlook rally
Capital Economics analysts also note that the current rally is being fuelled more by solid earnings outlooks rather than growing valuations, a sign that fundamentals are more of a driver this time.

Forward earnings per share in sectors containing today's market leaders – tech, communication services and consumer discretionary – have been growing faster since early 2023 than the rest of the market, a Capital Economics analysis showed.

While an AI bubble is not a foregone conclusion, many investors are wary that metrics could become even more stretched in coming months if U.S. growth remains robust and tech stocks continue charging higher.

"There are a lot of similarities," said Mike O'Rourke, chief market strategist at JonesTrading. "When you have a bubble, usually it's rooted in ... some true, positive, fundamental development that is behind it and that creates that enthusiasm for people to pay any price for things."

Inflation is down in Europe but ECB in no hurry to make more rate cuts

Associated Press
FRANKFURT

Inflation in the 20-nation eurozone crept lower to 2.5% in June, but remained stuck above the level favored by the European Central Bank (ECB), which is in no hurry to add more rate cuts after a first tentative reduction in its benchmark rate.

The figure released Tuesday was down from 2.6% in May, welcome news as inflation continues to fall from its peak of 10.6% that robbed consumers of spending power and mired the European economy in months of near-zero growth.

But key indicators Tuesday remained at levels that

suggest inflation may remain stuck between 2% and 3% for a while yet. Inflation in services prices fell at 4.1%, unchanged from the month before.

The ECB's caution in making sure inflation is under control comes as the

U.S. Federal Reserve holds off on cutting rates from current highs. The central banks don't want to belatedly discover that inflation is more stubborn than they thought and reverse course.

High rates aim to squelch inflation by making it more expensive to borrow money to buy goods or invest in new factory equipment. That relieves pressure on prices – but can also dampen growth. That's the tightrope the ECB and the Fed are trying to walk: make sure inflation is contained, without pushing their economies into recession.

ECB President Christine Lagarde said the bank needed to make sure inflation was firmly under control before cutting its key rate again after a first, quarter-point cut on June 6 to the current 3.75%.

Central banks don't want to find inflation is more stubborn than they thought and reverse course.

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THE HAGUE

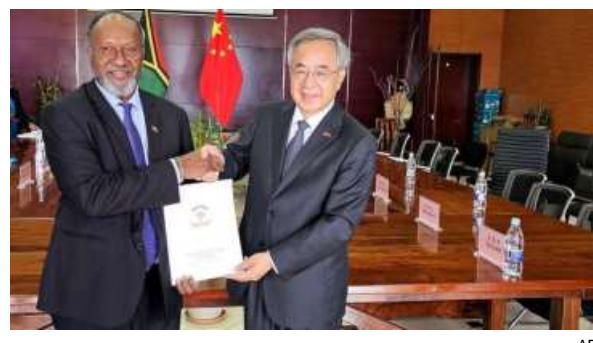
New Dutch PM sworn in 7 months after far-right party won elections



In Dick Schoep, the Netherlands has a different PM for the first time in 14 years as he swore in on Tuesday, more than seven months after elections dominated by a far-right, anti-Islam party. The anti-immigration party of Geert Wilders won the maximum seats in elections last year but it took 223 days to form a government. AP

SYDNEY

China builds new presidential palace in Pacific's Vanuatu



The government of cash-strapped Vanuatu will soon settle into a suite of new buildings funded by China, a move likely to reignite concerns about Beijing's reach in the South Pacific nation. At an official handover ceremony, Vanuatu Prime Minister Charlot Salwai announced the opening of the new presidential palace. AFP

GENEVA

Russia violated international law by imprisoning WSJ reporter: UN



UN human rights experts say Russia violated international law by imprisoning *Wall Street Journal* reporter Evan Gershkovich and should release him "immediately." The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention said there was a "striking lack of any factual or legal substantiation" for spying charges levelled against Gershkovich. AP

NEW YORK

Former New York Mayor Giuliani disbarred for 2020 election lies



Former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani was disbarred on Tuesday for repeatedly making false statements about the 2020 presidential election lost by Donald Trump. The sanction of the 80-year-old Giuliani, who led Trump's legal efforts to overturn his election defeat, was handed down by a state appeals court in New York. AFP

Nepali Congress, CPN-UML arrive at agreement to oust Prachanda as PM

Deuba's NC has 89 seats, while Oli's CPN-UML has 78, totalling 167 which exceeds the majority mark of 138 in the Lower House; Prachanda vows not to quit, will face vote of confidence instead, marking his fourth one since coming to power

Press Trust of India
KATHMANDU

Embattled Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' has decided not to resign from the post despite an agreement reached between the country's largest parties – Nepali Congress and CPN-UML – to form a new coalition government.

In a meeting of the office-bearers of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist-Centre), held in Baluwatar, Prachanda said he would rather face a vote of confidence in parliament than resign from the post, party Secretary Ganesh Shah said.



Musical chair: NC leader Sher Bahadur Deuba, centre, talks to CPN-UML's K.P. Sharma Oli in Kathmandu on Tuesday. AFP

Prachanda, 69, a former guerrilla leader, has won four votes of confidence in parliament during his one-and-a-half-year term. The Nepali Congress,

sufficient for a majority of 138 seats in the lower House. Mr. Prachanda's Maoist party has 32 seats.

Rotating PM

According to the agreement, finalised between Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba and Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML) chairman K.P. Sharma Oli, the leaders will share the Prime Ministerial position on a rotation basis for the rest of the term of Parliament.

Nepal has had 13 governments in the last 16 years, indicating the fragile nature of the Himalayan nation's political system.

Mr. Oli and Mr. Deuba

agreed to form a new government, amend the Constitution, and work out a power-sharing formula, which they reportedly shared with a few confidants, media reports said.

The Ministers belonging to the CPN-UML in the Prachanda-led Cabinet are likely to resign en masse, sources close to the CPN-UML said.

Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Ravi Lamichhane accused the Nepali Congress and the CPN-UML of forming the new alliance after the Prachanda-led coalition government started opening the files of corruption cases involving political leaders.

Beijing, Manila hold talks after maritime stand-off

Associated Press
MANILA

China and the Philippines held a crucial meeting on Tuesday to ease escalating tensions following their worst confrontation in the disputed South China Sea that sparked fears of a wider conflict that could involve Manila's ally, the U.S.

There was no mention of any major agreement to try to prevent a repeat of the chaotic June 17 clash at Second Thomas Shoal that caused injuries to Filipino navy personnel and damaged two military boats.

Differences remain The Chinese and Philippine delegations "affirmed their commitment to de-escalate tensions without prejudice to their respective positions," the Department of Foreign Affairs in



Cooling off: Theresa Lazaro and Chen Xiaodong shake hands during their South China Sea meeting in Manila. AFP

Manila said in a statement late on Tuesday. "There was substantial progress on developing measures to manage the situation at sea, but significant differences remain."

An agreement was signed to improve communications during emergencies at sea and both sides agreed to continue talks on enhancing ties between their coast guards but no details were provided.

Six passengers of turbulence-hit plane still in Brazil hospital

Agence France-Presse
MONTEVIDEO

Six passengers among dozens injured in severe turbulence on a flight from Madrid remain hospitalised in Brazil, where their plane had to make an emergency landing, Air Europa said on Tuesday.

Of the rest, 303 have made it safely to their destination of Montevideo more than a day after the rattling experience on Monday, it added.

The Uruguay-bound plane, a Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner with 325 passengers on board, was diverted in the early morning hours of Monday to the airport of Natal in northeast Brazil after experiencing "severe turbulence," according to the airline.

Forty passengers were

taken to hospitals and clinics in Natal for treatment of "abrasions and minor traumas". Air Europa said most of the injuries were "bruises and contusions."

Brazilian authorities have said that nationals of Spain, Argentina, Uruguay, Israel, Bolivia and Germany were among the injured.

In May, a 73-year-old British man died and several other passengers and crew suffered skull, brain and spine injuries when a Singapore Airlines-operated Boeing 777 hit severe turbulence on a flight from London and was forced to make an emergency landing in Bangkok.

A week later, 12 people were injured during turbulence on a Qatar Airways Boeing 787-9 flight from Doha to Ireland.

Swelling anger



Syrians attend the burial of a man killed during clashes with Turkish troops in Afrin in northern Syria on Tuesday. Four persons were killed after armed protesters and Turkish forces clashed in Syria's Ankara-controlled northwest on Monday. AFP

Norway arrests man over attempted spying for China

Agence France-Presse
OSLO

Norway's security service on Tuesday said it arrested a Norwegian man suspected of trying to spy on behalf of China.

The suspect was detained on Monday at Oslo's international airport as he returned from China, Thomas Blom, a spokesman for the service's counter-espionage unit, told reporters.

An Oslo court placed him in four-week pre-trial detention with a ban on communicating with the outside, and with the first two weeks to be spent in isolation.

According to the Norwegian media, the suspect is a man in his thirties, living in Oslo and politically active in a local branch of Norway's incumbent Labour Party.

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way's incumbent Labour Party.

A lawyer for the man, whose identity has not been revealed, said he denied the charges against him.

"He says he is innocent and that he is not an agent for China," the lawyer, Magnus Dietrichson, said.

He said he could not provide further details because of the sensitive nature of the accusations.

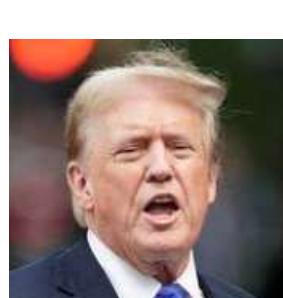
The security services have not provided details on what information the suspect might have provided to China.

Prosecutors in Trump hush money case not opposed to delaying his sentencing

Associated Press

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON

Manhattan prosecutors said on Tuesday they would not oppose former U.S. President Donald Trump's request to delay the sentencing in his hush money trial as he seeks to have the conviction overturned following a Supreme Court ruling that granted broad immunity protections to Presidents.



Donald Trump

office said they would be open to a two-week delay in the July 11 sentencing in order to file a response to Mr. Trump. "Although we believe defendant's arguments to be without merit, we do not oppose his re-

quest" to delay the sentencing pending determination of the motion, the prosecutors wrote.

The letter came one day after Mr. Trump's attorney requested the judge delay the sentencing as he weighs the high court's decision and how it could influence the New York case.

Trump's argument

The lawyers argue that the Supreme Court's decision confirmed a position the defense raised earlier in the case that prosecutors should have been precluded from introducing some evidence the Trump team

said constituted official presidential acts, according to the letter.

If a delay is indeed granted, it would push a sentencing decision past the Republican National Convention, which will kick off in Milwaukee on July 15.

That means that Mr. Trump, now the presumptive GOP nominee, could become the Republican presidential candidate while it remains unknown what sentence he will face.

Mr. Trump's campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Israel pounds Gaza following evacuation order which will affect 2.5 lakh residents

Agence France-Presse

GAZA STRIP

Israeli forces carried out deadly strikes on Tuesday on southern Gaza and battled militants after issuing an evacuation order which a UN agency said would impact 2,50,000 Palestinians.

Witnesses reported intense bombing and shelling around Khan Younis, southern Gaza's main city, from which Israeli troops withdrew in early April after a devastating months-long battle.

A hospital source in the city said shelling killed



Dystopian land: Displaced Palestinians from eastern areas of Khan Younis arrive in the main city on Tuesday. AFP

eight persons and wounded more than 30 others.

The bombardment came after a rocket barrage at southern Israel on Mon-

day morning claimed by the militant group Islamic Jihad, which has fought alongside Hamas.

This was followed by an

order to evacuate most areas east of Khan Younis and in Rafah along the borders with Israel and Egypt.

The UN agency supporting Palestinian refugees estimated on Tuesday that a quarter of a million people had been impacted since Israel's Army issued a new evacuation order for parts of southern Gaza a day earlier.

The agency "estimates that around 2,50,000 people have been impacted by these orders", UNRWA spokeswoman Louise Wateridge said, adding: "We expect these numbers to grow".



A former student makes drinks at a restaurant in Bangkok, after leaving Myanmar to avoid conscription by junta. AFP

Myanmar youth flee into Thailand to avoid forced service

Agence France-Presse

CHIANG MAI

When Myanmar's junta announced a conscription law to help crush a popular pro-democracy uprising, Khaing knew there was only one way to escape its clutches, and began planning her escape.

Weeks later the former teacher was hidden in a smuggler's van heading into Thailand with little more than some clothes, cash and an ID card, not knowing when she would be able to return.

She is one of tens of thousands of young people who rights groups estimate have fled Myanmar since the military introduced conscription in February to shore up its depleted ranks.

The junta is battling widespread armed opposition to its 2021 coup and its soldiers are accused of bloody rampages and using air and artillery strikes to punish civilian communities.

It says it wants to enlist 5,000 people aged between 18-35 a month, but details on how they will be chosen, and where and how they will serve are vague.

Media reports of young men being dragged off the streets and into the army – which the military denies – have further added to the panic.

Shortly after enacting the law, the junta tightened requirements for people crossing Myanmar's land borders, and temporarily halted issuing foreign work permits for young men.

Thailand has long been home to a sizeable Myanmar community, with a bustling market in Bangkok and towns along the border.

The conflict has made it difficult to conduct surveys or verify how many young people had fled abroad to escape conscription, said an official from the International Labour Organisation.

Critics of Burkina Faso junta recall days of torture by military after conscription

Rights group have accused the junta in the West African country of kidnapping and conscripting some of its critics; an anaesthesiologist who was relieved from duty after a month of forced service in September is missing since the start of June, the national order of doctors said in a statement

Reuters
DAKAR

Arouna Loure, a vocal critic of Burkina Faso's ruling military junta, received a conscription order on September 7 last year requesting that the anaesthesiologist start a month of military service four days later.

The order did not specify a date or location for the doctor to report for duty. Days later, on September 13, two armed men intercepted Mr. Loure between operating theatres at a hospital in the capital Ouagadougou, forced him into a vehicle, and drove to a military camp near the northern city of Kaya, he said.

Mr. Loure, 38, had denounced the violence linked to Burkina Faso's almost a decade-long fight against Islamist insurgents in the West African country.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW) have accused Burkina Faso's junta of kidnapping and conscripting some of its critics, citing victims and civil society groups.

Reuters could not find any public response by authorities to the reports and the junta did not reply to requests for comment.

Mr. Loure, who was released after three months of forced military service, said he was conscripted at the same time as eight other government critics and



Whereabouts unknown: An undated picture shows Arouna Loure, an anaesthesiologist conscripted into the Burkina Faso military, standing next to a police sign holding a gun. REUTERS

activists at the Kaya camp.

"They want to silence us," he said during a telephone interview in March. "These conscriptions are arbitrary and punitive."

In the beginning of June, the national order of doctors in Burkina Faso issued a statement saying Mr. Loure had gone missing again. Two civil society sources confirmed the information. He has not reappeared since.

Four victims who spoke after their release said they were snatched from their workplace or the street by armed police or military officials. Their kidnappers were either wearing Burkina Faso Army uniforms or

were men in civilian clothing who verbally identified themselves as police or military, they said.

When Mr. Loure arrived at the military camp in Kaya in September, there were five other conscripted activists already there and three more were brought in during his five-week stay at the camp.

Three of the activists spoke to Reuters after they were discharged from the military on condition of anonymity, citing fears of retribution. They said that, before they arrived in Kaya, men in military uniform tortured them for days in an ex-ministerial villa in the Ouaga 2000 neighbourhood of Ouagadougou.

They saw other prisoners during their stay, some with severe injuries. Reuters was not able to confirm independently the details of their accounts.

Tearing up, one activist said soldiers held his nose and mouth under an open faucet and tied plastic bags over his face.

During torture sessions, all were accused of conspiracy against the state and plotting to overthrow the junta.

Once at the Kaya base, they were made to clean toilets, do laundry and wash dishes. Soldiers bullied and fired guns at some of them. They suffered daily humiliation and exhausting sports drills the older conscripts struggled to follow, they said.

"They treated us like animals," one of them said.

Junta spokesperson Jean-Emmanuel Ouedraogo, Interior Minister Emile Zerbo, State Minister Basolma Bazie and Army spo-

kesperson Isidore Noël did not respond to several requests for comment on the testimonies.

The abductions are part of junta leader Ibrahim Traore's efforts to silence critics since he seized power in a September 2022 coup – the second that year – with a promise to restore security, analysts said.

'Authoritarian drift'

"The regime's authoritarian drift is clear," said Mathieu Pellerin, a Sahel expert for the International Crisis Group. He said the government was hardening its stance towards internal critics as its position became more "fragile".

Burkina Faso's Army has only made incremental gains despite spending millions of dollars on the war and boosting its ranks with thousands of volunteer auxiliaries known as VDPs, analysts and humanitarian groups said.

Frustrations about authorities' failure to shield civilians from the insurgency stoked the first military coup that ousted President Roch Kabore in January 2022, and then the toppling of Mr. Traore's predecessor eight months later.

In Burkina Faso, more than 6,500 civilians have been killed since the start of 2020, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data, a global source of data on political violence. More than half died

under the current government.

Earlier this year, the junta suspended several foreign media outlets for covering a HRW report accusing the Army of extrajudicial killings.

The conscription of junta critics began in March 2023 with Boukare Ouedraogo, the visually-impaired president of a civil society group in Kaya.

Mr. Ouedraogo, 32, had spoken at a press conference that month about feeling let down by Mr. Traore.

Five days later, Mr. Traore visited Kaya, summoned Mr. Ouedraogo and ordered his arrest, said Moussa Sawadogo, a colleague who attended the meeting.

Just after Mr. Ouedraogo's arrest, in April 2023, the junta issued an emergency decree that grants authorities the right to conscript citizens above its age of 18.

"It marked the start of a trend," said Ousmane Lankoande of the Balai Citoyen, a prominent citizens movement that played a key role in 2014 protests that ousted president Blaise Compaore, who had ruled Burkina Faso for nearly three decades. "We used to feel so hopeful about the future," Mr. Lankoande said, describing the mood after the 2014 uprising restored civil liberties. "Today that freedom has been stolen."

Iran prepares for run-off polls as voters grow disenchanted

Associated Press

DUBAI



sions with the West remain high as Iran enriches uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels.

Now, hard-line former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili faces the reformist Masoud Pezeshkian, a heart surgeon who likely needs a widespread turnout to win the presidency. Mr. Pezeshkian's supporters warn of dark days ahead under Mr. Jalili. Meanwhile, many people are unconvinced that their vote even matters.

Iranian election law requires a candidate to get over 50% of the vote to avoid a run-off. In results released on Saturday, Mr. Pezeshkian got 10.4 million votes while Mr. Jalili received 9.4 million. Parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf came in third with 3.3 million, while Shiite cleric Mostafa Pourmohammadi had over 206,000.

Meanwhile, public rage simmers after years of Iran's economy cratering to new lows, along with bloody crackdowns on dissent, including over the mass protests sparked by the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini after her detention by the country's morality police allegedly over not wearing her headscarf according to the rules. Ten-

Embers of protest



More shots: A Kenyan police officer fires a tear gas canister towards protesters during an anti-government demonstration called following deadly nationwide protests over tax hikes and a controversial now-withdrawn tax Bill in downtown Nairobi, on Tuesday. AFP

U.S. to bring in rule to address excessive heat in workplace

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

The Biden administration proposed a new rule on Tuesday to address excessive heat in the workplace, as tens of millions of people in the U.S. are under heat advisories due to blistering temperatures.

If finalised, the measure would protect an estimated 36 million U.S. workers from injuries related to heat exposure on the job – establishing the first major federal safety standard of its kind. Those affected by excessive heat in the workplace include farmworkers, delivery and construction workers, landscapers and indoor workers in warehouses, factories and kitchens.

President Joe Biden planned to highlight the rule on Tuesday when he gets a briefing on extreme weather and delivers remarks.

Under the proposed rule, employers would be required to identify heat hazards, develop emergency response plans related to heat illness, and provide training to employees and supervisors on the signs and symptoms of such illnesses. They would also have to establish rest breaks, provide shade and water, and heat acclimatization – or the building of tolerance to higher temperatures – for new workers.

Penalties for heat-related violations in workplaces would increase significantly, in line with what workplaces are issued for violations of Occupational Safety and Health Administration rules, a senior White House administration official said.

Google's search engine algorithm tweak affects small businesses

Agence France-Presse

PARIS

website with her husband, and they had been building a healthy niche in product reviews for air purifiers since 2020.

There were no ads, no product placements and no soft-peddling – if a product was bad, the site's reviewers would say so. They earned commissions from clickthroughs to Amazon.

But Google's update changed all of that.

Missing site

"We found that we went from ranking number one – because we were one of the only people who had actually done a review – to not even showing up," she said.



HouseFresh used to get around 4,000 referrals from Google search a day, but this has since collapsed to around 200.

The dropoff in business has been so bad that Ms. Navarro said she had been advised to shutter the site and start over with a new domain name.

Underpinning the frustration for Ms. Navarro and many others is the lack of clarity over how Google ranks results.

The U.S. firm is notoriously secretive about its algorithms – so much so that an entire industry known as "search engine optimisation" (SEO) has grown up trying to game

the algorithm to get more clicks.

The latest update sent SEO experts into a tailspin, desperately trying to unpack why some sites were

boosted and others getting dethroned.

Google said in an email that its update was designed specifically to give users "fewer results that appeared to be AI-generated or SEO-maximised."

Other material boosted by Google's update included user-generated content from websites like Reddit and Quora.

feel made for search engines".

"The only changes we launch are ones that our experiments have shown will meaningfully improve results for people. And we do believe that these updates have been helpful," Google said.

Yet Ms. Navarro showed in a widely shared blog post in May that people searching for product reviews were increasingly being fed ads and content that appeared to be AI-generated or SEO-maximised.

Online businesses have been left considering layoffs and even site closures after Google's upgrade led to drops in traffic. REUTERS

Google defended this approach saying "people often want to learn from others' experiences", adding: "We conduct rigorous testing to ensure results are helpful and high quality."

But staff at one European news website said their articles were now being routinely outranked by largely irrelevant content from Reddit.

The site publisher, who asked for anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the topic, said referrals from Google had plummeted by between 20% to 30% since the update – and cutbacks would be inevitable.

IN BRIEF**Empoli becomes 13th Serie A club to change coach**

Empoli became the 13th Serie A club to change coaches for the new season after it announced the arrival of Roberto D'Aversa as the boss on Tuesday. Italian D'Aversa returns to manage Empoli, which finished 17th out of 20 last season, after being sacked by Lecce in March for headbutting an opposition player. The 48-year-old has also had spells in charge of Sampdoria and Parma having come through AC Milan's youth academy as a player.

Frankfurt ropes in 18-year-old forward Can Uzun

Eintracht Frankfurt has signed 18-year-old Turkiye forward Can Uzun on a five-year contract. Uzun, who was born and raised in Germany, scored 19 goals in 32 games for second-division Nuremberg last season. "Can Uzun is one of the biggest talents in Germany," Frankfurt board member for sport Markus Krosche said in a statement.

Chelsea signs Leicester midfielder Dewsbury-Hall

Chelsea has signed Leicester midfielder Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall, the Premier League club announced on Tuesday, for a reported fee of £30 million. The 25-year-old has agreed a six-year contract at Stamford Bridge and his move means he will be reunited with new Chelsea boss Enzo Maresca, after they worked together last season.

Gray goes to Tottenham as Rodon returns to Leeds

Tottenham has completed the signing of Leeds midfielder Archie Gray in a player-plus-cash deal which sees Joe Rodon return to Elland Road, it was announced on Tuesday. The 18-year-old Gray won plaudits in an impressive breakout season at Leeds and Brentford had a reported £35 million bid rejected last weekend. That allowed Spurs to come in for the England under-21 international, who has signed a six-year deal. No fee has been disclosed. Wales international Rodon is now headed in the other direction, bringing to an end his four-year stay at Spurs. Rodon signed from Swansea in 2020 but only played 24 times for Tottenham.

Hockey India to host first-ever Masters Cup

Hockey India (HI) on Tuesday announced the inaugural Masters Cup, a pioneering tournament which will feature veteran players in both the men's and women's categories. All HI affiliated state member units are eligible to participate and all veterans, aged around and above 40, who want to participate in the tournament will have to contact their respective member units and register through the HI Member Unit Portal. The dates and venues will be announced soon.

**BETWEEN WICKETS**

Suresh Menon

Perhaps it is a continuum – and the cricket team is merely a part of it. Is a sense of insecurity built into our system? A wariness about the few and the less powerful turning the tables on the many and the powerful? India, one of two finest all-format teams were in all three finals in the space of a year, losing two of them to the other top team, Australia.

Yet the Board of Control for Cricket in India, the most powerful body in the game, feels it necessary to provide artificial aid. Rohit Sharma and his fine band of men deserve better than this; they are good enough to win without the BCCI's embarrassing help.

In the 50-over World

Cup at home, the BCCI sailed close to the wind by changing the pitch ahead of the semifinal without the knowledge of the International Cricket Council, whose tournament it is. It was a "used surface" instead of a fresh one, as the New Zealand captain pointed out.

No mollycoddling
This was unnecessary. India don't need to be mollycoddled so politicians can pump themselves up with self-importance and bask in their victory. In the last four World Cups (T20 and 50-over), India's final games in the league have been against Namibia, Zimbabwe, Netherlands and Canada. Coincidence? Perhaps. But mighty useful if they needed to bolster their Net Run Rate.

That Pakistan must be in India's group in all world tournaments, thus ensuring at least one meeting between the neighbours

has become a given. It pleases television at a time when bilateral series between the two are off the table; yet it says something for the integrity of the draw. India's selectors have come in for much praise for picking three spinners, all of whom played in the eleven in the West Indies once the T20 World Cup moved there. India were the only team which knew before they left the country where they would be playing the semifinal if they qualified, and chose their side accordingly.

The match was scheduled to start at 10.30 a.m. (for television back home) and there was no reserve day unlike at the first semi-final in Barbados. It was pointed out that it rains on an average 23 days in June in Guyana – and had the match been washed out, India would have qualified for the final because they topped their group.

India were by far the

most impressive team in the tournament; they didn't need outside (or in this case, inside) assistance. In fact Bumrah they had possibly the finest fast bowler to have played the white-ball game. Rohit is both an outstanding batter and a sound captain. Fortune, if not the national boards, favour the brave. Rohit might have delayed bringing on Bumrah in the final, but the great man delivered when he did come on, and Hardik Pandya rose to the occasion.

Cricket matches must be won and lost on the field of play; sometimes the best teams lose, as happened in Ahmedabad with the 50-over World Cup when India failed at the final hurdle. That is the nature of sport. And the earlier the BCCI realises this, the more seriously will they be taken as a sporting and not a political body.

That the three over-35s in the Indian squad, each of

whom has served the country magnificently, decided to call it a day after the T20 final was inevitable.

Virat Kohli finished his career with a strike rate similar to that of Chris Gayle, once known as the Bradman of the T20 game, and better than that of Brendon McCullum. When he began his T20 career, his final 76 of 59 deliveries (strike rate: 129) might have been seen as a top innings at a fabulous strike rate.

It is a measure of how far the format has come that today it is seen as a middling effort. He was at his best when he played his normal game; he might be the last of the greats in the format to do so.

The T20 team is in transition. The focus shifts to Zimbabwe where Shubman Gill leads a younger team. That is the future. Hopefully, one where the BCCI feels more secure and shows greater confidence in its team.

Sai Sudharsan, Shaw fail to convert starts**Press Trust of India**
LONDON

Sai Sudharsan and Prithvi Shaw failed to get big scores in their English county games for Surrey and Northamptonshire respectively.

In a home game at the Oval against Essex, Surrey scored 262 in its first essay with Sai Sudharsan coming in at No. 6 and making 14 off 47 balls with two boundaries.

In the game between Northamptonshire and Sussex, Shaw struck 13 boundaries across two innings – seven in a 22-ball-31 and another six in 37 off 41 balls, but failed to get a big score.

Shaw's score was the second highest in his team's 97 in a little over 20 overs.

USA crashes out in group phase as Uruguay and Panama advance in Copa America**Agence France-Presse**
KANSAS CITY

The United States crashed out of the Copa America on Monday after a 0-1 defeat to Uruguay, as Panama sealed its place in the quarterfinals with a 3-1 win over Bolivia.

The tournament host suffered an upset 1-2 defeat to Panama last week and went into Monday's final Group C game at the Arrocha Stadium here needing to match or better Panama's result against Bolivia to advance.

But US coach Gregg Berhalter's side never looked like doing enough to seriously threaten a well-drilled Uruguay which advanced to the last eight as group winner.

Hopes of a great escape for Berhalter's men faded

**Happy faces:** Olivera, centre, celebrates with teammates after scoring Uruguay's winner against USA. AP

inside the first 30 minutes as news filtered through that Panama had taken a 1-0 lead against Bolivia in Orlando.

US hopes were revived

early in the second half af-

ter Bolivia equalised, leav-

ing the host on course for

qualification, provided it

continued to hold Urugua-

y. Yet the US optimism

was punctured just mo-

ments later when Uruguay

took the lead in controver-

sial circumstances through

Mathias Olivera on 66

minutes.

Ronald Araujo's power-

ful header from Nicolas de

la Cruz's free-kick was par-

ried away by US goalkeeper Matt Turner, but only into the path of Olivera, who tucked away the rebound.

Replays appeared to show that Olivera was offside when Araujo first made contact with the ball, but despite a lengthy VAR review, Peruvian referee Kevin Ortega ruled that the goal should stand.

The mathematics of qualification looked even more bleak for the US after news that Panama had scored again through Eduardo Guerrero to regain the lead at 2-1, and the final nail in the coffin came when Cesar Yanis added a third for Panama in stoppage time.

The results: Bolivia 1 (Miranda 69) lost to Panama 3 (Fajardo 22, Guerrero 79, Yanis 90+1); USA 0 lost to Uruguay 1 (Olivera 66).

India are a superb team, they don't need artificial aid**Soha enters second round in Hillcrest****Sports Bureau**

India's Soha Sadiq beat Erin McKenzie 6-3, 7-5 in the first round of the \$25,000 ITF women's tennis tournament in Hillcrest, South Africa, on Tuesday.

Other results: First round:
\$15,000 ITF men, Hillcrest,
South Africa: Aryan Shah bt Luca Blatt (GBR) 6-4, 6-3; Connor Van Schalkwyk (Nam) bt Parth Aggarwal 7-6(2), 6-3.

\$15,000 ITF men, Ust-Kamenogorsk,
Kazakhstan: Egor Agafonov & Sergey Fomin (Uzb) bt Nitin Kumar Singh & Siddharth Vishwakarma 7-5, 6-4; Daniel Ibragimov & Karan Singh bt Bekhan Atlangeriev & Maxim Shin (Uzb) 6-3, 6-4.

\$15,000 ITF men, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Thailand: Kasidit Samrej (Tha) bt Dhakshinewar Suresh 6-2, 6-0.

\$15,000 ITF men, Monastir,
Tunisia: Youssef El Gueddafi (Tun) bt Amine Ben Youssef (Tun) 6-3, 6-2; Mohamed Ben Youssef (Tun) bt Hicham El Gueddafi (Tun) 6-3, 6-2.

\$25,000 ITF women, Hillcrest,
South Africa: Maddalena Giordano (Ita) bt Ashmita Eswaramurthy 6-2, 3-6, 6-0.

Durand Cup to kick-off in Kolkata on July 27

Press Trust of India
KOLKATA

Durand Cup, the domestic football season-opener, will be held from July 27 to August 31 across four venues with ISL, I-League and other invitational teams competing.

The 133rd edition of Asia's oldest tournament will see 43 matches being played in a round-robin league-cum-knockout format, with the opener and the final scheduled at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan (VYBK) here.

The 24 teams will be divided into six groups. Eight teams – group toppers and two best second-placed sides – will qualify for the knockouts. Two new cities – Jamshedpur and Shillong – have been added as venues.

Sport**Laxman-coached Indian team leaves for Zimbabwe**

Sai Sudharsan, Jitesh and Rana named as replacements for players who were part of the T20 WC squad; skipper Gill to link up with the team in Harare directly from the USA

INDIA IN ZIMBABWE**Press Trust of India**
MUMBAI

A young-Indian cricket team under National Cricket Academy head V.S. Laxman left for Zimbabwe to play a five-match T20I series starting in Harare on July 6. The team will be led by Shubman Gill while the likes of youngsters Riyan Parag and Abhishek Sharma have been rewarded for their exploits in the last IPL with maiden India call-ups.

Skipper Gill, who was on a break, will link up with the squad directly in Harare from the USA.

The BCCI took to X to post pictures of those who boarded the flight: Abhishek, Parag, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Avesh Khan, Ravi Bishnoi, Washington Sundar, Tushar Deshpande and NCA head Laxman.

Five members of the squad – Shivam Dube, Sanju Samson, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rinku Singh and Khaleel Ahmed – were either part of the T20 World Cup-winning team or were travelling reserves are stranded in Barbados due to Hurricane Beryl. They will join

**Big opportunity:** Abhishek and Jitesh will look to make most of the chance that has come their way.**The India squad for first and second T20Is:**

Shubman Gill (Capt.), Ruturaj Gaikwad, Abhishek Sharma, Rinku Singh, Dhruv Jurel (wk), Riyan Parag, Washington Sundar, Ravi Bishnoi, Avesh Khan, Khaleel Ahmed, Mukesh Kumar, Tushar Deshpande, Sai Sudharsan, Jitesh Sharma (wk), and Harshit Rana.

The schedule:

July 6, 7, 10, 13 and 14.
All matches at 4.30 p.m. IST.

It is, without doubt, my last Euro, says Ronaldo**Agencies**

HAMBURG

Cristiano Ronaldo has confirmed this year's European Championship will be the last of his career.

The 39-year-old Portugal superstar is playing at the Euros for a record sixth time and has helped his country reach the quarterfinals.

Speaking to Portuguese public broadcaster RTP after the penalty-shootout victory over Slovenia, Ronaldo said: "It is, without doubt, my last European Championship."

"But I'm not emotional about that. I'm moved by all that football means – by the enthusiasm I have for the game, the enthusiasm for seeing my supporters, my family, the affection people have for me."

Ronaldo, who is one of the most prolific scorers in football history and has a record 14 goals at European Championships, said his main motivation now was "making people happy."

He was reduced to tears during the Slovenia game after having a penalty saved in extra time. "It's not about leaving the world of football," he said. "What else is there for me to do or win? It's not going to come down to one point more or one point less."



"I will always do my best for this shirt, whether I fail or not, and I'm going to do this my whole life"

"I will always do my best for this shirt, whether I fail or not, and I'm going to do this my whole life," Ronaldo said.

"I've been doing this for 20 years – as you saw I missed the penalty, but I wanted to be the first to score. We have to take responsibility... you can't be afraid, I've never been afraid to face things head on, sometimes I get it right and sometimes I don't, but giving up is something you'll never hear attached to my name."

Replays appeared to show that Olivera was offside when Araujo first made contact with the ball, but despite a lengthy VAR review, Peruvian referee Kevin Ortega ruled that the goal should stand.

The mathematics of qualification looked even more bleak for the US after news that Panama had scored again through Eduardo Guerrero to regain the lead at 2-1, and the final nail in the coffin came when Cesar Yanis added a third for Panama in stoppage time.

Ronald Araujo's powerful header from Nicolas de la Cruz's free-kick was par-

ried away by US goalkeeper Matt Turner, but only into the path of Olivera, who tucked away the rebound.

Replays appeared to show that Olivera was offside when Araujo first made contact with the ball, but despite a lengthy VAR review, Peruvian referee Kevin Ortega ruled that the goal should stand.

Jasprit Bumrah a wizard at work

Even with a team replete with some of the most aesthetically bruising stroke-makers in the business, Rohit was aware that India's campaign at the T20 World Cup would hinge around how his principal hitman shaped up



GETTY IMAGES

R. Kaushik

Like a stalled racehorse waiting for the gates to open, he waits for the batter to settle into his stance. The unconscious twitching of the shoulders already out of the way, he gathers himself for a microsecond, then sets off on a brisk walk with the ball held above his head in both hands. After a few quick steps, he gathers momentum, exploding at the bowling crease with a hyperextended right elbow, a braced left knee. The orb that leaves his hand is now weapon of destruction. It could shape in the air, break away on pitching and hit top of off, like Reeza Hendricks found out. It could defy physics and tail in late, as Marco Jansen discovered to his utter shock.

It can also begin way outside off and keep coming in, homing in on toes and stumps as if radar-directed. Skeptical? Ask Ollie Pope. And it can grip and turn, delivered with a slight tweak of the fingers, pace taken off, and sneak through the defences to rattle timber. Phil Salt will nod his head, in grudging acceptance.

Is there anything Jasprit Bumrah can't do with the cricket ball? Maybe bowl left-arm wrist-spin, yes, for now. But with right arm and fingers and wrist, there's nothing he can't do. Not to the right-hander, not to the left-hander. Not with a new cherry, not with an old ball. Not in Test cricket, not in the limited-overs variants. Bumrah is the most perfect bowler of his generation, distinctly unique, incredibly skilled, and unbelievably hard-working.

Ace Marksman

Even with a team replete with some of the most aesthetically bruising stroke-makers in the business, Rohit Sharma was aware that India's campaign at the T20 World Cup would hinge around how his principal hitman shaped up. He had a maximum of 24 deliveries at his disposal in each outing, but those four overs could often be the difference between victory and defeat. And while he was allowed only 24 legal deliveries, their impact was such that around his overs, other bowlers would benefit. Not least Arshdeep Singh, Bumrah's new-ball partner and understudy, the joint leading wicket-taker of the tournament alongside Afghan Fazalhaq Farooqi, with 17 sticks.

Bumrah slotted in third in that chart, but he was the bowler of the tournament and, officially - as if confirmation was required - the Player of the Tournament. His 15 wickets came at an average of 8.26, a strike-rate of 11.86 and the fairly ridiculous economy of 4.17. He bowled 29.4 of a potential 32 overs in eight matches and conceded just 12 boundaries - 10 fours and two sixes - out of a total 124 runs scored off his bowling; 26% of those runs, stats reveal, were when the batters

were not in control.

These are cold, bland, mundane numbers, but even they tell a tale in themselves. What they don't elucidate is just how much having Bumrah in their ranks lifted India, how much it cowed oppositions down.

Need of the hour

Imagine being Rohit, able to summon Bumrah to the bowling crease when he needed control, or wickets. In T20 cricket, one is not any more significant than the other at most times. Sometimes, a 'control over' can be more damaging than a double-wicket maiden. Like in the final. Axar Patel's last over of what was otherwise a fantastic World Cup for him had gone for 24, Heinrich Klaasen embarking on a boundary-bashing spree. That humongous over brought the equation down to 30 needed off 30, six wickets in hand.

For most of the World Cup, Rohit has tended to use Bumrah maybe occasionally in the 16th, mainly in the 17th, and then reserved him for the 19th, which is generally delivered by the best bowler in the line-up. This time, after the Klaasen pyrotechnics, he needed breathing space. He needed someone who would bring about a modicum of sanity to the proceedings, a bankable option who would drag out the game, take the chase deeper. The option was a no-brainer.

Ask and he will deliver

Bumrah bowled a gun 16th. He knew his captain relied on him to pull things back. He knew the fate of the final hinged on how the 16th unfolded. He couldn't have won the final in those six balls, but for all the magic he had produced in the preceding seven games, and in his first two overs in the title clash, he could have lost it. If he didn't feel any nerves, he wouldn't have been human. But wait, maybe he isn't human, after all? Maybe he is super-human, above human, beyond human. Bumrah was on top

of his game, that over an event in itself. Just four singles. Four lopped off the target, but the ball was doing a little. Bumrah is dangerous even when the ball is doing nothing. When it's doing a little, well...

Bumrah couldn't have pulled it off all on his own. He could bowl just 25% of the 24 balls remaining, of which South Africa required 26. He needed help. He needed support. He needed more than one bowler to back him up. He found support in Hardik Pandya, and in Arshdeep, a protégé if there was one. But it was Bumrah who was the difference. By the proverbial country mile.

A lengthy gap between Bumrah's 16th and Hardik's 17th, to tend to Rishabh Pant's knee injury, must have set the nerves jangling in Klaasen, for there is no other explanation for his optimistic waft at a widish first ball from Hardik which took the edge on its way to Pant. 26 off 23, enter Jansen. The odds still in South Africa's favour, but the force and momentum with India, the despondency of ten minutes back replaced by the prospect of an astonishing heist. Danger man Klaasen gone, six Bumrah balls to go.

Rohit could have stuck to his template, brought Arshdeep on for the 18th, held Bumrah back for the next, but he went with gut. With instinct. With blind faith in his enforcer. Not for the first time, Bumrah didn't let him down.

If No. 16 was awesome, No. 18 was out of the world. *Out of This World*, as the tournament's catchline screamed from different parts of the ground. Two runs, Jansen packed off with a pearly, balance tilted, job nearly done.

More than a hitman

Bumrah is now eight and a half years young in international cricket, time enough for him to have graduated from just a bowler, no matter how complete, to a leader, to a mentor. He was done with the ball, yes, but he wasn't done as a competitor. Already, he had showcased his leadership skills by walking up to Axar for a high-five after the 24-run over. After Quinton de Kock had smashed Arshdeep

for six over long-leg, he thrice called out to the bowler from short third-man, and clapped furiously, encouraging his younger mate. A field change resulted in de Kock holing out to long-leg the next ball. Coincidence, for sure. Poor cricket from the Protean 'keeper, without a shadow of doubt. But Bumrah wasn't just thinking about his own bowling. He was looking out for his colleagues. No wonder then, that Arshdeep concedes that several of his 17 wickets came about because of the pressure Bumrah imposed at the other end, because of the liberty batters felt they had to take against him because they would get nothing, absolutely nothing, from Bumrah.

This isn't just romanticising the premier bowler in the world currently. If anything, words can't do justice to what Bumrah is unleashing these days, ball after searching ball, over after probing over. You have to be at the ground to experience the electricity when he is at the top of his bowling mark. You have to witness first-hand the slightly haunted look on the batter's face, never mind if he is Jos Buttler or Keshav Maharaj, David Warner or Naveen-ul-Haq, Babar Azam or Saurabh Netravalkar. They know they are in the crosshairs, and while Bumrah might be no Abhinav Bindra, he seldom misses.

A fortnight back, former Indian pacer Lakshmi Pathi Balaji had told this writer that Bumrah's legacy as the second best Asian fast bowler ever after Wasim Akram would be cemented if, like the great Pakistan in the 1992 World Cup final against England, he could single-handedly deliver India this World Cup. Balaji reflected on the similarities between Bumrah and Akram - generating pace and momentum and power from the upper body rather than the lower, like most conventional quicks do. Using the bowling hand and the shoulder and the wrist and the fingers to weave their magic. Taking the pitch out of the equation. Balaji, himself having fought back from a career-threatening back injury to make an India comeback, was in awe of how much Bumrah had gotten better after his back surgery last year.

"He is just the most complete fast bowler right now. Look at him - Test cricket, white-ball cricket, doesn't matter," the Tamil Nadu coach had gushed. "New ball, he will get the job done. Old ball, he can reverse it phenomenally. Middle overs in limited-overs games, his variations and his repertoire make him a wicket-taker, not someone who just contains the flow of runs. If there is a more versatile and dangerous fast bowler right now, I don't know who that is."

You are not alone, Bala, you certainly are not. There is just Bumrah, daylight, and then the chasing pack.

THE GIST

Bumrah is the most perfect bowler of his generation, distinctly unique, incredibly skilled, and unbelievably hard-working

The speedster bowled a gun 16th in the final. He knew his captain relied on him to pull things back. He knew the fate of the match hinged on how the over unfolded

Former Indian pacer Lakshmi Pathi Balaji noted that Bumrah's legacy as the second best Asian fast bowler ever after Wasim Akram would be cemented if he could single-handedly deliver India the 2024 T20 World Cup

