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Prime accused among four held in Kolkata

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## INSIDE



85 killed while trying to reach aid sites in Gaza

DEIR AL-BALAH  
At least 85 Palestinians were killed while trying to reach aid at locations across Gaza on Sunday, the territory's Health Ministry said. The largest toll was in northern Gaza, where 79 Palestinians were killed while trying to reach aid, the Ministry added. Some witnesses said Israel's military shot at the crowd. » PAGE 14

YSRCP MP sent to judicial remand until August 1

VIJAYAWADA  
The Anti-Corruption Bureau Special Court in Vijayawada on Sunday sent YSR Congress Party leader and Rajapet MP P.V. Midhun Reddy to judicial remand till August 1 in the alleged multi-crore liquor scam case. Following the order, the Special Investigation Team personnel began the process of shifting Mr. Midhun Reddy to the Rajamahendravaram Central Prison amid tight security. » PAGE 3

Syria truce holds after clashes that left 1,000 dead

SWEIDA  
Calm returned to southern Syria's Sweida province on Sunday, after a week of sectarian violence between Druze fighters and rival groups that killed more than 1,000 people. A ceasefire announced on Saturday appeared to be holding after earlier pacts failed to end fighting between the long-time rivals the Druze and the Bedouin that spiralled to draw in the Islamist-led government. » PAGE 14

## 'Open to debate in House on Operation Sindoor'

Opposition insists on PM's response on Operation Sindoor and after-effects during Monsoon Session

Sobhana K. Nair  
NEW DELHI

The Centre is open to discussing all issues of national importance, including Operation Sindoor, in Parliament, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said here on Sunday.

The government said this at an all-party meeting held ahead of the Monsoon Session beginning on Monday. At the same time, it cautioned the Opposition that any debate on the subject had to be held within the laid-down rules and procedures.

The Minister emphasised that "niyam (rules)" and "parampara (conventions)" are important for the government.

The Minister made it clear that the final call on discussions in Parliament would be taken by the Business Advisory Commit-

tee and Pakistan. They demanded a discussion on the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar.

### 'Not shying away'

"We are very open to a discussion on important issues like Operation Sindoor. These are issues of great national importance. The government is not shying away and will never shy away, but is open to discussions within rules, conventions," Mr. Rijiju told presspersons after the all-party meeting.

The Minister emphasised that "niyam (rules)" and "parampara (conventions)" are important for the government.

The Minister made it clear that the final call on discussions in Parliament would be taken by the Business Advisory Commit-

tee of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. The Houses of Parliament will have 21 sittings during the session.

On the Opposition's demand for Mr. Modi to make

Minister says any debate on the subject should be held within laid-down rules and procedures

At least four questions filed in connection with the Pahalgam attack have not been listed: CPI(M) MP

pond to the issues concerning their Ministries.

### Poll fairness

The Congress, however, maintained that it is the Prime Minister's moral responsibility to give a statement in Parliament on key issues.

"We hope that the PM will fulfil his moral duty," Congress Deputy Leader in the Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi told presspersons at the end of the meeting.

He warned that if the government failed to answer the questions that had been raised about the SIR and the Election Commission, it would cast a shadow of doubt on the fairness of the poll process and future elections.

At the meeting, according to sources, Communist Party of India (Marxist) Parliamentary Party leader John Brittas questioned the

government's intention to discuss all aspects of Operation Sindoor. At least four questions that he had filed in connection with the Pahalgam incident have not been listed, he said.

An argument reportedly broke out during the meeting, when Opposition leaders from Maharashtra – Supriya Sule of the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar), and Arvind Sawant of the Shiv Sena (UBT) – flagged the ongoing language debate in the State, accusing the Centre of trying to impose Hindi. At this point, a Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) MP hit back at them, accusing the Opposition parties of targeting Hindi-speaking migrant workers from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

V-P CALLS FOR BONHOMIE  
» PAGE 5



Setting the stage: Union Ministers J.P. Nadda and Kiren Rijiju with Congress leader Jairam Ramesh and others after the all-party meeting on Sunday ahead of the Monsoon Session. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

a statement on the Pahalgam attack and other issues, Mr. Rijiju said: "I want to make it clear that the Prime Minister remains in Parliament except during foreign travel. The

Prime Minister always remains in Parliament, but the Prime Minister does not remain in the House all the time." He said Cabinet Ministers were always present in both Houses to represent in

## Saffron wave



Congestion on the Delhi-Haridwar Expressway in Haridwar on Sunday, due to the ongoing Kanwar Yatra. With hundreds of pilgrims on the move, authorities have increased security and issued traffic advisories for Delhi and nearby regions. ANI

## Minimum support gained to move for removal of Justice Varma: Rijiju

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Sunday said over 100 MPs had already signed a notice to bring a motion in Parliament for the removal of Justice Yashwant Varma of the Allahabad High Court, which is the minimum support required for tabling the impeachment exercise in the Lok Sabha.

"The signature [exercise] is under way and it has crossed 100 already," Mr. Rijiju told presspersons after the all-party meeting. He said that the Business Advisory Committee will decide when the motion is moved.

A motion for a judge's removal has to be signed



The signature [exercise] is under way and it has crossed 100 already... until the matter is passed by the BAC with the Chair's approval, it is difficult for me to make an announcement outside

KIREN RIJU  
Parliamentary Affairs Minister

he refused to resign.

Justice Varma, who was subsequently repatriated to the Allahabad High Court and kept off judicial work, had protested his innocence and moved the top court against the committee's findings.

### Pending motion

On Saturday, Rajya Sabha member John Brittas of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the CPI's P. Sandosh Kumar had flagged the Opposition's pending impeachment motion against Justice Shekhar Yadav of the Allahabad High Court for his alleged communal remarks, saying it was a test of Parliament's commitment to the constitutional value of secularism.

Nepal Ministry says PM Oli will visit India in September

Press Trust of India  
KATHMANDU

Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli will pay an official visit to India towards mid-September, Nepal's Foreign Ministry said on Sunday. "Preparations for the upcoming visit of the Prime Minister are underway. However, the date and the detailed schedules of the visit are yet to be finalised," Foreign Ministry spokesman Lok Bahadur Chhetri said.

However, sources at the Prime Minister's office said he will embark on his visit on September 16, and the visit will be short this time.

FULL REPORT

» PAGE 4

a fire in March. A committee of three High Court judges appointed by then-Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna before his retirement had indicted him. The former Chief Justice of India had referred the matter to President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, recommending Justice Varma's removal after

## Kailash Manasarovar Yatra giving a new impetus to ties, says Chinese envoy

Suhasini Haidar  
NEW DELHI

China is prepared to discuss "refining border management and control rules" to resolve issues around its disputed boundary with India after the four-year military stand-off ended at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Chinese Ambassador to India Xu Feihong said on Sunday.

He expressed optimism that the revival of the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra would "inject impetus" to ties and that direct flights would be launched soon.

Rejecting criticism of China's support to Pakistan during Operation Sindoor, Mr. Xu said that bilateral ties were not targeted at a third country. He warned that comments by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju and other Indian officials supporting the Dalai Lama's statement on his successor could cause friction within India-China bilateral ties.

In written responses to questions posed by *The Hindu*, the Mr. Xu pointed to a flurry of high-level visits from India to Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meetings over the past month as proof of improving ties. They include visits by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar. Mr. Xu noted the possibility of Prime Minister Narendra Modi travelling to China for the SCO Summit on August 31 and September 1, which would be his first visit since the Galwan clashes.

"In the next stage, China is willing to maintain communication with India through diplomatic and military channels, and in the spirit of equal consultation and mutual security, further refine the border area management and control rules... so as to achieve sustainable peace and tranquillity in the border areas

XU FEIHONG  
Chinese Ambassador to India

their positions but "should avoid bringing bilateral conflicts" to discussions, in a reference to India-Pakistan tensions. Asked about the statement of India's Deputy Chief of the Army Staff, Lieutenant-General Rahul R. Singh, about China's support to Pakistan during Operation Sindoor in May, Mr. Xu said that China-Pakistan ties did not "target any third party". In his comments, Lieutenant-General Singh had suggested that China had "used the neighbour [Pakistan] to cause pain" to India, in the manner of a "blow-row knife."

While side-stepping another question about whether China's trilaterals with other countries in South Asia – including a recent China-Bangladesh-Pakistan initiative on trade, and a China-Pakistan-Afghanistan initiative on infrastructure – were a way of "cutting India out" of the SAARC region, Mr. Xu said that India was welcome to join any of the initiatives. He claimed that in the past 12 years since the launch of China's Belt and Road Initiative, which India has refused to join, trade between China and South Asian countries "doubled from less than \$100 billion to about \$200 billion".

Currently, the government departments of China and India, as well as major airlines, have done a lot of work for the resumption of direct flights," he added.

While the Defence Minister had visited Beijing and held bilateral talks, India had said that the SCO Defence Ministers meeting failed to find consensus as one country – referring to Pakistan – had held up the language on terrorism in a proposed joint statement. The Chinese Ambassador did not respond to a specific query about why the SCO had not included India's concerns over the Pahalgam terror attack, pointing instead to an SCO "code of conduct" that members could express

## IN BRIEF



## World's oldest marathoner cremated with state honours

World's oldest marathoner Fauja Singh, known by the nickname 'Turbaned Tornado', was cremated on Sunday with full state honours at Beas, his native village in Punjab's Jalandhar district. Governor Gulab Chand Kataria, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Minister Mohinder Bhagat and several other politicians attended the funeral. Fauja Singh's son Harvinder Singh lit the funeral pyre. The Punjab Police gave a gun salute before the pyre was lit. Mr. Fauja Singh was 114 when he was hit by an SUV on July 14. He was crossing the Jalandhar-Patiala highway when the incident occurred. He later succumbed to his injuries. PTI

## Sharad Pawar's grandnephew booked for alleged misconduct

The Mumbai Police on Sunday filed a case against Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar) MLA Rohit Pawar for allegedly obstructing public servants from performing their duties, following an altercation with a police officer at Azad Maidan police station. Mr. Rohit, grandnephew of NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar, reportedly got into a heated exchange with a Sub-Inspector during a visit to the police station on Friday. The incident unfolded when Mr. Rohit and fellow party MLA Jitendra Awhad arrived at the station to check on an injured party worker. The worker had reportedly sustained injuries during a clash in the Assembly premises on Thursday.

## Five, including three children, found dead in Ahmedabad

The bodies of a couple and their three minor children were found at their rented home in Bagodara village of Ahmedabad district in the early hours of Sunday, police said. The victims have been identified as Vipul Vaghela (32), his wife Sonal (26), and their children Kareena (11), Mayur (8), and Princess (5). Ahmedabad (Rural) Superintendent of Police Om Prakash Jat said police were informed about the incident around 2 a.m. "Prima facie, it appears that the family members died after consuming a toxic substance. The exact circumstances leading to the deaths are under investigation," he said.

*Those in distress may contact Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health suicide prevention helpline: 011-40769002.*

## Previous regimes neglected welfare of OBCs: Haryana CM

The Hindu Bureau  
CHANDIGARH

Taking a dig at Opposition parties that previously held power in Haryana, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Sunday accused them of having neglected the interests and welfare of communities from the Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

Mr. Saini blamed successive previous governments for adopting an "anti-OBC" attitude, alleging that they had never demonstrated intent to work towards the welfare of OBC communities.

He further alleged that Opposition parties, including the Congress, were engaged in spreading propaganda against the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and urged people not to "fall for the Opposition's propaganda".

"The people of the State have formed a 'non-stop government' for a record third time, and our government will leave no stone unturned in ensuring development," he said, while addressing members from OBC communities, who had gathered to express gratitude for the government's schemes aimed at their welfare.

*In previous governments, vacancies reserved for OBCs were left unfilled under the excuse of 'no suitable candidates', but the current government has appointed professors, doctors, and engineers from OBC communities, proving that they have always been capable. The problem earlier was the lack of intent by the previous regimes," Mr. Saini said.*

*"With recruitment now being done on a merit basis, the system is being reformed," he said.*

Regarding the upcoming Common Eligibility Test scheduled for July 26 and 27, Mr. Saini said the government would provide free transportation for candidates from their homes to the examination centres and back.

## Tejashwi reaches out to leaders across party lines to oppose SIR in Bihar

Exercise resulting in large-scale disenfranchisement, states letter to 35 leaders, including Nitish, Chirag; if we don't raise our voices, it will be carried out in other States as well, says RJD leader

Amit Bhelari  
PATNA

Bihar Leader of the Opposition Tejashwi Yadav on Sunday shared the letter which he has written to 35 leaders seeking their support against the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) alleging large scale disenfranchisement. The Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader has posted the letter on social media platform 'X'.

Along with Opposition leaders at the national level, Mr. Yadav has also written letter to ruling party leaders, including Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) national president Chirag Paswan, Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) founder Jitan Ram Manjhi, Telugu Desam Party (TDP) national president N. Chandrababu Naidu, All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) president Sudhesh Mahto, Apna Dal (Sonayal)



The farce of the ongoing SIR in Bihar is shaking the very foundation of democracy, stated RJD's Tejashwi Yadav in the letter. FILE PHOTO

president Anupriya Patel besides Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, CPI-(ML) general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya and others.

In the letter, Mr. Yadav said that he was writing the letter with a deep sense of anguish and urgency.

"The farce and tragedy of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) going on in Bihar is shaking the very foundation of democracy through large-scale disenfranchisement. It is a clear indication of how the 'independent institution of

the Election Commission of India (EC) is adamant about eroding public trust in the integrity of our electoral process," Mr. Yadav said.

Expressing apprehension, Mr. Yadav said that now lakhs of voters, for no fault of theirs, are being disempowered and humiliated.

"According to the ECI Press Notes dated 16 July 2025, around 4.5% of the population is already out in the name of 'electors not found at their addresses'. This is in addi-

tion to the 4% who have "probably" deceased or permanently shifted. Going by these numbers, journalists on the ground and political scientists who are closely observing the exercise peg the disenfranchisement at a whopping 12% to 15%. This is unprecedented in the history of our country," he said.

Questioning the timing of the revision, Mr. Yadav pointed out that the timing, as even the Supreme Court alluded to, is suspect. The experiences of the Maharashtra Assembly Elections are still fresh in the memories, he said, adding that he was still waiting to receive a good-faith and substantive response from the EC.

"Now it is Bihar's turn. This needs to be resisted in the strongest terms possible. Because if we do not raise our voices and register our strong protest, the same will be carried out in other states as well," Mr. Yadav said.

## Centre to form team to assess disaster vulnerability in H.P.

The Hindu Bureau  
CHANDIGARH

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has directed the formation of a multi-sectoral central team in view of the rising frequency and intensity of natural disasters in Himachal Pradesh, an official statement said on Sunday.

The team will include experts from the National Disaster Management Authority, Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee; Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune; Indian Institute of Technology, Indore, and geologists, the statement said.



The aftermath of a cloudburst at Thunag in Mandi district of the State this month. FILE PHOTO

of Himachal Pradesh, the Central government has already deputed an Inter-Ministerial Central Team (IMCT) in advance for on-the-spot assessment, without waiting for a formal memorandum from the State. The IMCT is currently visiting the affected areas, the statement added.

## Aid approved

Further, a high-level committee chaired by Mr. Shah has approved an outlay of ₹2,006.40 crore for the State for recovery and reconstruction in areas impacted by disasters during 2023. Of this, the first instalment of ₹451.44 crore was released on July 7.

## Mafia rule in Haryana, says Cong.; allegations are baseless: BJP govt.

The Hindu Bureau  
GURUGRAM/CHANDIGARH

Congress Rajya Sabha MP Ranjeet Surjewala on Sunday said that Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Saini, who is also the State Home Minister, is a "complete failure" and should step down immediately, alleging that "organised crime is the biggest industry in the State today".

Holding a press conference in Chandigarh on the law and order situation in

In a statement, the State

government said that under its 'zero tolerance for crime' policy, it has taken significant and effective measures to strengthen law and order in Haryana, adding that against previous years, the crime rate has witnessed a marked decline in the State.

**'Bid to spread fear'**  
It termed the Opposition's remarks as "an attempt to spread fear among the public and misguide the citizens".

In a statement, the State

## Will take action against people defaming kanwar yatraris: U.P. CM

Press Trust of India  
MEERUT

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said some people are trying to defame the kanwar yatra on social media and urged every "kanwar sangh" to expose such troublemakers.

Addressing an event here, he said, "Troublemakers have resorted to defaming this holy pilgrimage... We have CCTV footage of all of them. We

are going to paste their posters after this [kanwar yatra] is over." Social media is replete with videos purportedly showing kanwariyas, wearing saffron clothes, creating ruckus on roads, ransacking hotels, damaging vehicles, and beating civilians. Mr. Adityanath claimed these are "miscreants" who infiltrate kanwar groups and bring them a bad name.

Meanwhile, three kanwariyas were arrested for allegedly assaulting a CRPF

jawan following an argument over train tickets at U.P.'s Mirzapur railway station, the Government Railway Police said on Sunday.

## CRPF jawan attacked

The jawan was going to catch the Brahmaputra Express, while the kanwariyas also wanted to buy tickets for the same train to go to Baidyanath Dham in Jharkhand. An argument broke out over purchasing tickets. They were later released on bail, officials said.

## BJP subverted proceedings of panel on Maharashtra security Bill: Cong.

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit  
MUMBAI

MLAs from the MVA submitting a memorandum to the Maharashtra Governor to review the public security Bill in Mumbai on July 18. ANI

ment for reconsideration. Some of the signatories were members of the joint select committee.

The panel, headed by Revenue Minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule, was formed in December 2024 and consisted of 25 members. It included several Opposition leaders from the MVA. The committee held five meetings before unanimously approving the revised draft of the Bill.

The State government said none of the members gave any dissent note.

State Congress chief Harshwardhan Sapkal told *The Hindu* that the proceedings of the panel were not carried out properly. "Only two meetings were held as per the schedule. The government kept changing the dates and timings of the meetings. It

was to make sure that the Opposition members were not able to attend the meetings," he said.

Mr. Sapkal said the party leaders raised several valid objections to the Bill when it was being discussed in the committee. However, owing to the date of the meeting being advanced at the last minute, the party could not submit a dissent note, he said.

## Minister refutes claims

Mr. Bawankule refuted the claims. "There was no dissent note given by any of the Opposition legislators who were members of the committee. The Bill was cleared by everyone unanimously," he said.

When the Bill was passed by the Assembly, the Congress and the Shiv Sena (UBT) did not oppose

it. However, when it was introduced in the Legislative Council, the parties staged a walkout and later handed over an eight-page dissent note to the Chairperson of the House.

"We are upset with what happened in the Assembly. We had been working with the Opposition leaders for months, since the beginning of the joint committee proceedings. We had expected them to take a strong stand against this anti-democratic Bill. Instead, they gave mild speeches," said Ulka Mahajan, civil society activist and State convenor of the Bharat Jodo Abhiyan.

When asked why the Congress leaders who were part of the committee did not oppose the Bill in the Assembly or submit a dissent note to the Speaker, committee member and senior Congress leader Nana Patole said, "We were told that as per the procedures, the members of the committee cannot speak on the floor of the House and oppose the Bill. It was wrong information."

(Watch full coverage of the Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill, 2024 on 'Pulse Maharashtra', a special show on Maharashtra Tube on The Hindu's YouTube channel.)

## Punjab Police bust BKI module linked to Patiala grenade attack

The Hindu Bureau  
CHANDIGARH

DGP Gaurav Yadav said initial probe revealed that the module was planning further attacks.

The Punjab Police on Sunday claimed to have busted a Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) terror module, allegedly operated by foreign-based handlers Maninder Billa and Manu Agwan, with the arrest of three individuals accused of carrying out grenade attacks on police posts at Badshahpur in Punjab's Patiala district and Ajimgarh in Haryana.

Punjab Director-General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav said the operation was carried out jointly by the Counter Intelligence (CI) unit in Patiala and the State Special Operation Cell, Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar.

"Those arrested have been identified as Sandeep Singh alias Deepu, a resident of Badshahpur in Patiala; Harpreet Singh alias Jagga, a resident of Harmandipura in Patiala; and Harmanpreet Singh alias Preet, a resident of Gurdialpura in Patiala," Mr. Yadav said.

Providing further details, Patiala Additional Director-General of Police Simrat Kaur said during interrogation, the arrested individuals confessed that the attacks were masterminded by their associate Gurpreet Singh alias Babu, who is currently lodged in Patiala Jail and remains in police custody.

## Kerala CM pays a visit to Raj Bhavan, raises issues with Governor

**The Hindu Bureau**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM



Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan called on Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar at the Raj Bhavan here on Sunday.

The meeting, which lasted an hour, came at a time when the State's higher education sector has been witnessing deep administrative turbulence.

A range of pressing issues, primarily centred on the ongoing crisis involving various State universities, including Kerala University, which remains embroiled in a prolonged administrative stand-off, are learnt to have figured in the discussions.

Mr. Vijayan also reportedly handed over a panel of nominees for the appointment of interim Vice-Chancellor at the Digital University Kerala. He also urged the Governor to expedite the appointment of an interim Vice-Chancellor for APJ Abdul Kalam Technological University.

**Pending Bills discussed**  
The meeting also saw discussions on several pending Bills, including the Private Universities Bill, which at present awaits the Governor's assent.

The meeting marks the first formal interaction between the Chief Minister and the Governor since the 'Bharat Mata' controversy flared up. The row had led to tensions at Kerala University and the suspension of Registrar K.S. Anil Kumar by Vice-Chancellor in-charge Mohanan Kunnum-

Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar welcoming Pinarayi Vijayan at the Raj Bhavan on Sunday.

mal. However, there is no official word yet on whether the issue was raised during the conversation.

Mr. Arlekar is understood to have assured the Chief Minister of his full cooperation in facilitating the government's administrative initiatives. Mr. Vijayan is also said to have extended an invitation to the Governor and his family to attend the official Onam celebrations to be hosted by the government.

Law and Industries Minister P. Rajeeve, who spoke to presspersons, said there was nothing unusual about the meeting, which is an essential component of the democratic governance system.

"Under such a framework, both the government and the Governor are entrusted with undertaking their assigned duties. Constant interactions are necessary to ensure smooth coordination," the Minister said.

Higher Education Minister R. Bindu recently indicated that the government had commenced efforts to restore normalcy in the functioning of universities by ironing out differences.

## Midhun Reddy, MP, sent to judicial remand till August 1

The YSRCP leader was arrested in the ₹3,500-crore liquor scam case and will be moved to the Rajamahendravaram Central Prison; party president Jagan Mohan Reddy slams 'illegal arrest'

**The Hindu Bureau**  
VIJAYAWADA

The Anti-Corruption Bureau Special Court in Vijayawada on Sunday sent YSR Congress Party leader and Rajampet MP P.V. Midhun Reddy to judicial remand till August 1 in the alleged multi-crore liquor scam case.

Following the order, the Special Investigation Team (SIT) personnel began the process of shifting Mr. Midhun Reddy to the Rajamahendravaram Central Prison amid tight security.

### Bail plea rejected

With the Andhra Pradesh High Court and later the Supreme Court rejecting Mr. Midhun Reddy's anticipatory bail plea in the case, the YSRCP leader, who was named accused no. 4, had visited the SIT office here on Saturday for questioning.

After about seven hours of questioning, the SIT had announced his arrest. On Sunday, after medical examination at the Government General Hospital in Vijayawada, Mr. Midhun Reddy was produced in the court.

The police have so far arrested 12 persons in the alleged ₹3,500-crore liquor scam, which was committed during 2019-2024.

YSRCP president Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has condemned the "illegal arrest" of his party leader and MP in the case.



P.V. Midhun Reddy comes out of Government General Hospital after a medical check-up before being produced in court on Sunday. G.N. RAO

In a post on X, Mr. Jagan Mohan Reddy termed it a "political conspiracy to silence leaders who stand with the people".

He said that Mr. Midhun Reddy, a three-time MP, was falsely implicated through coerced confessions, and accused the NDA government of resorting to vendetta to distract people from its failures and scams.

Calling the liquor scam a fabricated narrative designed for media theatrics, the former Chief Minister said the case was based on statements "extracted through pressure, threats, and inducements".

### Case against Naidu

"Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu is on bail in the case pertaining to the liquor policy framed during his term between 2014-19, and yet he seeks to attack the YSRCP's policy reforms," Mr. Jagan Mohan Reddy said.

The National Democratic Alliance government in the State had revived the corrupt liquor practices the YSRCP dispensation had dismantled, such as belt shops, illegal outlets, and prices higher than the MRP, he alleged.

Alleging corruption in liquor licence allotments and procurement processes, he criticised Mr. Naidu for "using State agencies and yellow media" to target Opposition party leaders, while stalling probes against himself.

"The TDP's goal is to use the SIT to jail YSRCP leaders indefinitely, even without trial. But once the trial begins, the truth will surface," he observed.

"This is not a legal process, but a political witch-hunt," he added.

**My son will come clean and prove the rulers wrong**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
TIRUPATI

YSRCP Rayalaseema regional coordinator and Punganur MLA Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy has accused the NDA government of harassing his son and Rajampet MP, P.V. Midhun Reddy, by arresting him in the liquor case.

"My son will come clean from the case and prove the rulers wrong," Mr. Ramachandra Reddy said while addressing presspersons at his camp office here on Sunday.

He called the arrest a case of political vendetta, and accused Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, HRD Minister N. Lokesh and Deputy Chief Minister K. Pawan Kalyan of hatching a conspiracy. "The liquor scam case, in which he has no role whatsoever, will fall flat," he said.

Expressing anguish at the continued attack on his party members, and more particularly on him and his family, Mr. Ramachandra Reddy said that the case against Mr. Midhun Reddy would leave an indelible scar on the image of Mr. Naidu.

## T.N. Police to launch mobile app to collect mandatory evidence

**R. Sivaraman**  
CHENNAI

A new mobile phone application, called e-Sakshaya, will be rolled out soon for police personnel in Tamil Nadu to collect audio-visual evidence, upload photographs of crime scenes or witnesses, and generate immutable SID packets (secure, geo-tagged, timestamped evidence with hash verification).

This will strengthen the chain of custody and admissibility of evidence, according to a senior police officer.

The application was developed by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs to capture audio and video evidence and generate hash reports with timestamp. It has an inbuilt system for generating certificates in the prescribed format. This is being implemented through the State Crime Records Bureau (SCRB) for the use of investigation officers.

Every investigation officer should record all video evidence, along with audio evidence, wherever necessary, and photo evidence as required under provisions of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, the police officer said. The application is loaded in the mobile phones of all investigation officers. All of them have been trained in using the application, he added.

Block chain technology is being used to ensure data integrity and trustworthiness. The application records

photographs, and witness details on the scene of crime, and search and seizure by a police officer. The proceedings of the search would be recorded and forwarded to courts.

Whenever eSakshaya is unavailable owing to unforeseen situations such as lack of connectivity, the audio-video recording should be carried out through other available means. In such cases, Part-A certificate should be issued manually by the police personnel or the videographers who recorded the video and Part-B certificate should be issued by an expert notified under Section 329 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, according to the Tamil Nadu Criminal Procedure Rules.

The investigation officer should link SID packets with the First Information Report number/General Diary (GD) number and the case number register (CNR) number. The evidence, once uploaded, would go to the magistrates concerned and the courts may view the evidence in the case information system application/Sakshya portal on the Inter-Operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS), officials said.

## Bonalu buzz



**Seeking blessings:** Devotees carry pots with neem leaves and cooked rice as ritual offerings to Goddess Kali during the Bonalu festival at Lal Darwaza Simhavahini Mahankali Temple in Hyderabad on Sunday. G. RAMAKRISHNA

**Karnataka govt. forms SIT to probe Dharmasthala burials case**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BENGALURU

The Karnataka government on Saturday constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) led by Director-General of Police, (DGP) Internal Security Division and Cyber Command, Pronab Mohanty, to probe allegations of a series of murders and burials at Dharmasthala in Dakshina Kannada district.

This move comes amid demands for an SIT from several sections of society, including the Karnataka State Commission for Women. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, speaking to presspersons recently, had suggested that the government would take a decision on forming an SIT only after a police report.

### Murders and burials

The case springs from a former sanitation employee in the area, who has turned whistle-blower, claiming to have buried multiple bodies of people allegedly "raped and murdered" at Dharmasthala over the past several years.

An FIR was registered based on the complaint and his statement was recorded before a magistrate.

The local police investigating the case had sought permission from the court to conduct a brain mapping and narco analysis on the complainant, and claimed that the investigation officer would decide as to when the bodies should be exhumed.

This had drawn the ire of many activists, strengthening demands for the formation of a SIT.

## Kerala judicial officers move contempt plea against State govt. in top court over payments and benefits

**K.S. Sudhi**  
KOCCHI

Judicial officers in Kerala have moved a contempt of court plea in the Supreme Court against the State government for allegedly failing to implement the court's directives on various allowances payable to them.

In his petition, A.B. Anand, secretary of the Kerala Judicial Officers' Association, blamed the government for "obstructing the course of administration and implementation of justice" by failing to implement the court's directives on payments and benefits.

Though the Supreme Court had ordered that all States and Union Territories shall disburse the salary arrears, pension, and other allowances due to

### Plea alleges that the govt. failed to carry out court's directives on many allowances payable to them

both judicial and retired judicial officers and family pensioners before February 29, 2024, the State failed to comply with the order. It displayed wilful and deliberate disobedience of the orders, which is contemptuous, according to the officers.

They accused the State government of diluting, negating, and effectively defeating the purpose of the top court's binding

judgment. The State had not implemented the court order to provide three increments to officers with higher educational qualifications. The benefit had been denied to over 100 officers, they said.

The officers listed out the various benefits that had been denied by the State government, including the revised conveyance allowance.

They objected to the government's insistence on recovering money for using official vehicles for private purposes up to 300 km a month, and withholding fuel cost reimbursement in eligible cities, reimbursement for furniture and air-condi-

tions, 8% interest on soft loans for vehicle purchase, and 30-day rent-free accommodation in government guest houses for judicial officers transferred to new locations, which, according to them, had been sanctioned by the Supreme Court.

The State had also arbitrarily denied conveyance allowance to judicial officers who used eco-friendly vehicles.

They objected to the government's insistence on recovering money for using official vehicles for private purposes up to 300 km a month, and withholding fuel cost reimbursement in eligible cities, reimbursement for furniture and air-condi-

## Yogam chief must be held accountable for communal speeches'

**The Hindu Bureau**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Congress and the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) in Kerala sought to mount pressure on the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government on Sunday to hold Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNPD) Yogam general secretary Velappally Natesan accountable for allegedly stoking religious schisms in society through "communal and caste grievances."

Almost synchronously, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] ap-

peared to scramble to distance itself from the Hindu backward class organisation leader's contentious remarks. It seemed not lost on the CPI(M) that Mr. Natesan headed the LDF-backed Renaissance Protection Samiti, a collective formed in 2019 ostensibly to further progressive and secular values to counter a perceived right-wing drift towards identity politics.

The CPI(M) said social organisations were free to raise any issue concerning the people. However, it should not be in a manner that created religious divisions and hate.

Perilous path: A view of the trekking route to Sabarimala from Pampa, which becomes slippery during heavy rain. LEJU KAMAL

team from Pampa rushed to the spot and stopped trekking via the Neelimala route.

along the trekking path from Pampa to Marakkottam.

**Alternative route**  
The devotees, meanwhile, are now being permitted to move through the Swami Ayyappan Road for the time being.

Confirming the development, TDB President P.S. Prashanth said steps were in place to commence work to improve the grip on the granite stones laid

Following this, a police

team from Pampa

rushed to the

spot and

stopped

trekking

via the

Neelimala

route.

The

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## Petition in SC seeks 'effective, meaningful' probe into judge case

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**  
NEW DELHI

A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court criticising the Centre for not initiating "an effective and meaningful investigation" into allegations of discovery and removal of "burnt" cash from the residential premises of High Court judge, Justice Yashwant Varma, in Delhi following a fire in March.

The Central government, which is in charge of the Delhi Police, on it being reported that there has been an incident of huge volumes of currency notes, burned and partially burned, being found and clandestinely removed from the official residence of Justice Varma, was duty-bound to direct the Delhi Police to register an First Information Report (FIR). It amounts to a great failure in the discharge of its sovereign function, nay, duty to investigate crimes and secure punishment to those who violate the law," advocate Mathews J. Nedumpara, petitioner-in-person, submitted in a pe-

**The plea echoes the inquiry panel report which also criticised the Delhi Police for lack of quick action**

tition before the top court. In fact, the petition echoed the very report of the in-house inquiry committee constituted by former Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna, which had also criticised the Delhi Police for its lack of quick action. The panel had concluded that the police were "slipshod" for not lodging an FIR or preparing a seizure memo recording exactly what they came across at the scene of the fire.

Justice Varma, who has himself approached the top court anonymously in a petition, has focused his defence on the lack of any material evidence to base the allegations raised against him.

Mr. Nedumpara's petition is the third in a series filed by the advocate in the top court for registration of an FIR.

Modi is expected to unveil India-U.K. trade pact that was announced in May; he has been invited to Maldives for Independence Day celebrations; maritime security talks on the cards with Muizzu

to

**Kallol Bhattacharjee**  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will embark on a two-nation visit to the United Kingdom and the Maldives from July 23 to 26, the External Affairs Ministry announced on Sunday.

During the visit to the United Kingdom, the Prime Minister is expected to unveil the bilateral trade agreement that was announced by both sides on May 6.

During the visit, Prime Minister Modi will hold wide-ranging discussions with Prime Minister [Keir] Starmer on the entire gamut of India-U.K. bilateral relations. They will also exchange views on issues of regional and global importance," the Ministry said in a statement. The visit will also include a meeting with King Charles III.

Mr. Modi had announced the trade deal on May 6, describing it as "ambitious and mutually beneficial". The announcement followed a telephone conversation with Mr. Starmer.

Negotiations for the agreement, which began in 2022, witnessed several delays due to changes in government in the U.K. The British government



**On agenda:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his U.K. counterpart, Keir Starmer, at the G20 Summit last year. PTI

review of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) between the two countries, "with a specific focus on trade and economy, technology and innovation, defence and security, climate, health, education and people-to-people ties," the External Affairs Ministry said.

### Guest of Honour

Following the U.K. leg of the tour, Mr. Modi will travel to the Maldives on July 25 at the invitation of President Mohamed Muizzu. He will be the Guest of Honour at the 60th Independence Day celebrations of the Maldives on July 26.

"The two leaders will also take stock of the progress in the implementation of the India-Maldives Joint Vision for a 'Comprehensive Economic and Maritime Security Partnership,' adopted during the State Visit of the President of Maldives to India in October 2024," the Ministry said.

## Nepal Ministry says PM Oli will visit India in September

**Press Trust of India**  
KATHMANDU

Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli will pay an official visit to India towards mid-September, Nepal's Foreign Ministry said on Sunday.

"Preparations for the upcoming visit of the Prime Minister are under way. However, the date and the detailed schedules of the visit are yet to be finalised," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lok Bahadur Chhetri said.

However, sources at the Prime Minister's Office said that Mr. Oli will embark on his official visit to the southern neighbour on September 16. The visit will be short this time, probably for two days, the sources added.

Mr. Oli, the chairperson of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), had assumed the office of Prime Minister for the fourth time last July. He had chosen to visit China for his maiden foreign visit, breaking the tradition of visiting India as the first destination after



K.P. Sharma Oli

assuming the post of Prime Minister. Mr. Oli visited China in December last year at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart Li Qiang and met President Xi Jinping.

### 'Soured ties'

Amid speculation by some sections of local media that he didn't receive any invitation from India for an official visit, indicating that his relations with New Delhi had soured, Mr. Oli on Thursday said he will be visiting India and that ground work is under way on both sides for the trip.

He, however, did not specify any timeframe for the visit.

## DMK treats Vanniyars as merely vote bank during elections, says Anbumani

**The Hindu Bureau**  
VILLUPURAM

PMK leader Anbumani Ramadoss on Sunday charged the ruling DMK with treating the Vanniyar community merely as a vote bank during elections. He claimed that the party, and its president and Chief Minister M.K. Stalin were against Vanniyars and social justice.

Leading a demonstration at the municipal ground in Villupuram in Tamil Nadu to demand the implementation of 10.5% reservation for Vanniyars, Dr. Anbumani alleged that Mr. Stalin betrayed the Vanniyars by refusing to provide internal reservations for the community within the MBC quota. Though 1,208 days have passed since the Supreme Court struck down the Vanniyar reservations, the ruling DMK has been consistently misleading the people on the issue, he alleged. The apex court has observed that reservations



**Protest over quota:** Anbumani Ramadoss waves to the crowd during the demonstration in Villupuram on Sunday. M. SAMRAJ

for the Vanniyars or any other community can be given based on quantifiable data, he added.

Mr. Anbumani said the plea for reservation for Vanniyars had not been fulfilled for the last 45 years. Twenty-one persons lost their lives during the struggle demanding exclusive reservation for Vanniyars in 1989. He recalled that he and his father and party founder S. Ramadoss had met Mr. Stalin on several occasions to press for the implementation of the quota, but in vain.

"The DMK and the Chief

Minister betrayed the PMK by promising to give 10.5% internal reservation, and after four years, Mr. Stalin is now saying that reservation could be given only after the Centre conducts caste census. Mr. Stalin repeatedly uttered this lie while States such as Karnataka, Telangana, Odisha, and Bihar conducted caste surveys, and now again, Karnataka has announced they are going to conduct a second survey. While these States have the right to conduct the surveys, why does Tamil Nadu not have that power?" he asked.

## Statehood march foiled, Cong. leaders held in Jammu

**Peerzada Ashiq**  
JAMMU

The top leadership of the Congress in Jammu and Kashmir, including the party's national secretary G.A. Mir and its J&K president Tariq Hameed Karra, were detained in Jammu on Sunday, as the police foiled the party's street campaign for the restoration of "full statehood" to J&K.

The Congress leaders faced off with the J&K police when they began a protest in Jammu's Gandhi Nagar area on Sunday.

"In a blatant display of authority, the police under the control of the BJP and the Lieutenant Governor's administration arrested the party leaders," a Congress spokesperson said.

J&K party chief, Mr. Karra, slammed the police action.

"Our party's peaceful call for 'Jammu Chalo' to demand the restoration of statehood for Jammu & Kashmir was met with a massive show of force," he said.

## Prime accused, three more arrested in Kolkata for murder of Bihar gangster

**Moyurie Som**  
KOLKATA

The Special Task Force (STF) of the Kolkata Police on Saturday night arrested the prime accused and three more persons for the murder of Bihar gangster Chandan Mishra in Patna.

"In an intelligence-based operation by Kolkata Police STF, four persons involved in the Chandan Mishra murder case of Patna have been taken into custody. Bihar Police are taking necessary legal action to produce the accused before the competent court," the Kolkata Police said in a statement.

Mishra, out on parole, and was shot dead inside a private hospital in Patna on Thursday.

Those arrested included the prime accused, Tausif Khan, alias Badshah, and Nishu Khan.

The arrests were made around 10 p.m. during a raid at a guest house in Anandapur, a senior Kolkata

Police official told *The Hindu*. The accused were produced before the Alipore Police Court on Sunday and remanded in 48-hour transit custody.

"We tracked them down based on human and technical intelligence. Tausif has been identified as the possible lead of the hit team. He was the first to enter and the last to exit during the act," said the official.

While being taken into custody, Nishu told media persons at the Kolkata Pol-

ice lock-up that Tausif, a relative, had allegedly executed the killing on the instructions of Sheru Singh, a criminal he had reportedly met at the Beur Jail in Bihar.

The police official said it "seems likely" that the crime was carried out on Singh's instructions.

These arrests follow the apprehension of five other accused earlier on Saturday.

They were picked up from Sukhobrishti, a housing complex in New Town on the outskirts of Kolkata.

## Operation under way in Kishtwar, Army says

**The Hindu Bureau**  
SRINAGAR

An encounter between terrorists and security forces broke out on Sunday afternoon in the mountainous region of Kishtwar district, located in the Chenab Valley. Official sources indicated that three or four terrorists are believed to be trapped at the encounter site.

An Army spokesperson confirmed that under Operation Cherji, the Indian Army launched a search operation in the Hadal Gal area of Kishtwar Sector on Sunday. "The operation was based on specific inputs [about the presence of terrorists]," the Army spokesperson said.

The Army reported that contact was established with terrorists during the search operation, and intense gunfire was exchanged in the area. "The operation is currently in progress," the Army added.

These arrests follow the apprehension of five other accused earlier on Saturday.

They were picked up from Sukhobrishti, a housing complex in New Town on the outskirts of Kolkata.

## Early diagnosis, lifestyle changes can prevent GERD complications: experts

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

Doctors on Sunday stressed the need for early diagnosis and simple lifestyle changes to prevent further complications due to gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), a digestive disorder. They were speaking at a webinar on "GERD-Free Living: From Burn to Balance".

It was the final episode of the 15-part webinar series under the "Healthy India, Happy India" initiative by the Naruvi Hospitals, Vellore, and A.C. Arun, clinical lead, gastroenterology, at Lily Mission Hospital, Madurai, spoke on common concerns over



GERD. Explaining the digestive system and the role of oesophageal sphincter, Dr. Jacob said the sphincter acts as the gateway between the lower oesophagus and the stomach to prevent regurgitation. "When the gastroesophageal reflux happens multiple times in a week impacting quality of life, work and sleep and causes symptoms such as persistent heart burn, chest pain and called for practising intake portion control and weight management. "GERD mim-

ics heart issues, oesophageal disorders, stomach issues, anxiety episodes, and panic attacks; therefore, medical consultation is important," he added.

Sharing tips to manage GERD, he advised "elevating the head during sleep, keeping a gap of three to four hours between dinner and sleep, sleeping on the left side, and wearing loose clothes while exercising".

Dr. Arun spoke on how endoscopy helps to identify the complications and anatomical damage due to reflux episodes. "Leaving GERD symptoms untreated could lead to oesophageal ulcers and strictures making it difficult to swallow food, vomiting of blood and pre-cancerous condition," he said.

The webinar is available on <https://bit.ly/THNaruvi5>

## Tribunal upholds seizure of Chanda Kochhar's assets by ED under PMLA

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Appellate Tribunal under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act has found a "prima facie case" in the matter allegedly involving Chanda Kochhar, former chief executive officer of ICICI Bank, and others.

In a recent order partially confirming the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) asset attachment, while hearing the agency's appeal against the Adjudicating Authority's order dated November 6, 2020, the Appellate Tribunal observed: "It may be true that the issue will be determined by the trial court but we find a prima facie case against the respondents for commission of the offence of money laundering and, therefore, the provisional

attachment order is justified." The tribunal has found 'prima facie case' in the matter allegedly involving former ICICI Bank CEO Chanda Kochhar. FILE PHOTO

accordingly set aside other than for a sum of ₹10.5 lakhs attached by the appellant. The Provisional Attachment Order dated 10.01.2020 for the properties other than for ₹10.5 lakhs is confirmed".

After considering the submissions of both the sides, the Tribunal said: "...we cause interference in the impugned order passed by the Adjudicating Authority other than for attachment of ₹10.50 lakhs not confirmed by the Adjudicating Authority. It is

case is based on a first information report registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation on January 22, 2019.

The case was regarding sanction of loans to Videocon Group of Companies in contravention of the Rules and policies of the ICICI Bank.

**Wrongful losses**  
The allegations included criminal conspiracy, cheating, illegal gratification, criminal misconduct and abuse of official position by the public servant for sanction of loan to Videocon Group of Companies for a sum of ₹1,730 crores in contravention of the Rules and policies of the ICICI Bank, which resulted in wrongful loss to the bank and purported wrong gain to the borrowers and the accused persons.

# Girl set ablaze by miscreants in Odisha flown to Delhi AIIMS

Decision to shift the 15-year-old girl, who has sustained close to 75% burns, was taken after a team of specialist doctors at the AIIMS in Bhubaneswar observed some improvement in her condition; Opposition parties continue protest over incident

**Satyasundar Barik**

BHUBANESWAR

The 15-year-old girl who sustained over 75% burns after being set ablaze by unidentified miscreants in Puri district of Odisha on Saturday was flown to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi on Sunday for advanced medical treatment.

The decision to shift the girl to the New Delhi hospital was taken after a team of specialist doctors at the AIIMS in Bhubaneswar observed some improvement in her condition. Notably, despite being severely traumatised both mentally and physically, the girl was able to speak.

On Saturday, Chief Minister Mohan Majhi had said the State government would provide air ambulance support if doctors deemed her fit for transfer.

A green corridor was created between the AIIMS and the Biju Patnaik International Airport in Bhubaneswar to facilitate her swift transfer on a life-support-equipped ambulance. Additional forces had been



**On the move:** An ambulance with the 15-year-old burns victim heading towards the airport in Bhubaneswar to be flown to Delhi on Sunday. BISWARANJAN ROUT

deployed. The girl was accompanied by two family members and a team of doctors on the aircraft.

**Praying for recovery'** "I am deeply saddened by the incident that took place in Balanga, Puri district. The victim has been airlifted to Delhi AIIMS for the best treatment. The State government will en-

sure all necessary facilities for this. I personally pray to Lord Jagannath for the speedy recovery of the girl," Mr. Majhi said on the social media platform 'X'.

The AIIMS, Bhubaneswar, said a special bed and a team of doctors had been kept ready at the New Delhi institute for immediate attention of the victim. The State government also put

in a request for the creation of a green corridor in New Delhi so that there would not be any loss of time in transferring the girl to the premier medical facility.

The girl was on her way to her uncle's house when she was intercepted by three individuals and taken to the bank of the Bhargavi river, where she

was set on fire with an inflammable substance. A man from a nearby house came to her aid and managed to douse the flames.

Police sources said eight persons, including some relatives of the victim, were being questioned to get any lead on the heinous crime. Forensic teams visited the spot for the second time in search of more clues.

## 'Will take up issue'

Meanwhile, agitations by Opposition political parties continued across the State. Biju Janata Dal (BJD) members staged a demonstration outside the Balanga police station in Puri.

At an all party meeting, BJD Rajya Sabha member Sasmrit Patra said his party would take up all issues, especially the deteriorating law and order situation in Odisha in light of the 15-year-old girl being set on fire and the death of a girl after self-immolation on her college campus, in the Monsoon Session of Parliament beginning on Monday. He said women and girls had come under attack in the State.

# Mamata to address the last Martyrs' Day rally before Assembly election today

**Shrabana Chatterjee**

KOLKATA

Ahead of the Assembly election in 2026, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will on Monday address the last Martyrs' Day rally before the polls.

The rally is expected to set the tone for the election and discuss the political road map. Identity politics is likely to take centre stage as the Trinamool Congress has targeted the Bharatiya Janta Party for attacks on Bengali-speaking migrants in BJP-ruled States.

The founding chairperson of the Trinamool Congress will spotlight "Bengali pride" and address party workers from across the State at the annual meeting in the heart of Kolkata at the Esplanade crossing.



**Taking stock:** Mamata Banerjee visiting the rally site in Kolkata on Sunday to inspect the preparations. DEBASISH BHADURI

party leaders took to the streets on July 16, and said protests would rage across the country if Bengalis continued to be harassed.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed a political rally in Durgapur on July 18, and said that Bengali language and identity were paramount to the BJP. "Wherever there is a BJP government, Bengalis are respected, Bengali language is respected... We will not allow this conspiracy against Bengali *ashmita* [identity and pride] to succeed," the Prime Minister said.

Against this backdrop, Ms. Banerjee, her nephew and Trinamool's second-in-command, Abhishek Banerjee, and all prominent

Ms. Banerjee also visited the Martyrs' Day rally site on Sunday and inspected the preparations a day ahead of the main event.

Observed annually, the Martyrs' Day rally commemorates the police firing on July 21, 1993, that left 13 youth activists dead. Over the years, the event has evolved into a show of political strength and sharpening of political battle lines.

The party supporters have already started arriving in Kolkata and are expected to show up in huge numbers on Monday. Tents and camps have been set up at a ground in Bidhan Nagar for the party workers for the day.

**AAP rejects resignation of Punjab MLA Anmol Gagan**

**The Hindu Bureau**

MUMBAI

A day after Aam Aadmi Party leader and former Minister Anmol Gagan Mann announced quitting politics and tendered her resignation as legislator from the Assembly, the party on Sunday rejected her decision.

Ms. Mann was one of the four Ministers dropped from the Cabinet in 2024. The AAP's Punjab president, Aman Arora, said that he had met Ms. Mann and conveyed that the party had rejected her resignation. "We agreed to continue working together for the progress of the party and the constituency," he said on X.

## Plea in SC against MNS chief over his 'anti-Hindi' remarks

**The Hindu Bureau**

CHANDIGARH



Raj Thackeray

A public interest litigation (PIL) petition has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking criminal proceedings against Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray for allegedly inciting violence and spreading linguistic hatred against Hindi-speaking citizens in Maharashtra.

The petition follows Mr. Thackeray's recent speeches against the State government's resolution to make Hindi the third language in schools.

In his petition filed on Friday, advocate Ghanashyam Upadhyay alleged that Mr. Thackeray and his party engaged in acts of aggression based on caste,

creed, and language. The petition claims that these activities pose a serious threat to the sovereignty, integrity, and unity of India, and have continued unchecked and with impunity. It calls for strict legal action under various provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita (BNS).

The petition alleges that

Mr. Thackeray, in a bid to gain political ground ahead of the upcoming local body elections – particularly in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, one of the wealthiest civic bodies in the country – sought to exploit the controversy surrounding the introduction of Hindi as the third language in schools.

The petition alleges that in recent months, at Mr. Thackeray's behest, MNS workers began inspecting offices and business establishments to check if operations were being conducted in Marathi. In one instance, they allegedly stormed a bank and assaulted an employee for not speaking Marathi.

The hearing is expected in the coming week.

## Prioritise national interest over politics, Dhankhar tells all parties

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI



Jagdeep Dhankhar at a programme for the eighth batch of participants of the Rajya Sabha Internship Programme. X/@VPINDIA

Vice-President's Enclave on Sunday.

He said a thriving democracy could not afford an atmosphere of constant acrimony.

"Every Indian political party and every parliamentarian, to my knowledge, is a nationalist at the end of the day. He

believes in the nation. He believes in the progress of the nation..." he said.

**Call for discussion**  
Against the backdrop of Opposition parties demanding a detailed discussion on Operation Sindoora and U.S. President Donald

Trump's repeated claims of brokering peace between India and Pakistan during the recent conflict, the Vice-President said that politics should not be prioritised over national interest.

"Let us not have politics when it is an issue of national security, national concern and that can happen because India has to stand proud amongst the comity of nations. We are well regarded in the world. The very idea that Bharat can be controlled from outside goes against our claim.

We are a nation, a sovereign nation. Why should our political agenda be set by forces that are inimical to Bharat? Why should our agenda be even influenced by our enemies?" he said.

**India will address concerns of private sector in civil nuclear segment: Minister**

**Press Trust of India**

NEW DELHI

India will be able to address the apprehensions of the private sector globally about investments in the civil nuclear sector, which was opened up to achieve the ambitious target of producing 100 GW of atomic power by 2047, Union Minister Jitendra Singh has asserted.

Mr. Singh, who oversees the Department of Atomic Energy, said changes in relevant rules and legislation will have to be made to facilitate the entry of the private sector in the field of nuclear energy, which currently is under tight control of the government.

The announcement has already been made in the Union Budget, but we will have to frame rules, also possible legislation to actually move on, which will take a lot of consideration, a lot of introspec-



Jitendra Singh

and NPCIL-NTPC joint venture company Anushakti Vidyut Nigam Limited (ASHVINI) can build nuclear power plants in the country.

Scientists at the DAE are also developing the Bharat Small Modular Reactors ranging from 50 MW to 300 MW each for installation in thermal plants which have completed their operational life.

"It is just that the suppliers, most of them private and most of them from the other countries, had their own apprehensions from a business point of view. I am sure in the course of time, we will be able to address that also, able to satisfy them and reassure them to venture in," Mr. Singh said.

Mr. Singh said the decision to open up the nuclear sector for private participation was more difficult than unleashing space sector reforms.

## Row over Minister 'playing mobile game' in Maharashtra House

**Purnima Sah**

MUMBAI

A political row erupted in Maharashtra after a video, purportedly of Agriculture Minister Manikrao Kokate playing online rummy on his mobile phone during the ongoing Assembly session, surfaced on Sunday.

The clip, shared by Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) MLA Rohit Pawar, triggered outrage from Opposition leaders, who accused the government of being indifferent to the agrarian crisis in the State.

The video went viral on social media. Posting the video on X, Mr. Pawar added that the Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar-led NCP, to which Mr. Kokate belongs, was functioning "under the shadow of the BJP", a partner in the ruling *Mahayuti* alliance.

"The downloaded game suddenly opened, and I was skipping it. It was a matter of just five to 10 seconds; why was that part not shown?" he said.

## Over 58% Dalit voters in Bihar think unemployment is biggest poll issue: survey

**Abhinav Lakshman**

NEW DELHI

More than 27.4% Dalit voters in Bihar have "no trust" in the Election Commission, the survey also found

ed its special intensive revision of the rolls as the survey was under way, one question was put on the survey mid-way, for which only around 8,500 responses could be gathered.

**Fear of losing vote**  
To the question "Do you fear losing your vote in the new voter list?", over 71% of the respondents said "yes" and 23.4% said "no" with a little over 5% not expressing an opinion. On the question of whether they trusted the EC to be impartial, over 27% said "no", about 51% said "yes", and 21% said they did not know.

The survey asked a total of 11 questions.

It found that while over 47.5% of the respondents said Prime Minister Narendra Modi was their favourite leader at the national level, 40.3% said Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, and about 12% said other politicians.

It further said that to the question "who do they credit for the caste census?", 33.15% respondents said Narendra Modi, 30.81% Rahul Gandhi, 27.57% Bihar Leader of the Opposition Tejashwi Yadav, and about 8% other politicians.

Further, the survey showed that about 48% said the work of the Nitish Kumar-led government was "bad", while about 45% said it was good.

Mr. Bharti told *The Hindu*, "A lot of people do surveys of Scheduled Castes, but hardly do many of them actually speak to us on the ground. This survey is of Dalits, by Dalits."

## IN BRIEF

Chandra Barot, who directed Amitabh's *Don*, passes away

Veteran filmmaker Chandra Barot, best known for directing the 1978 Amitabh Bachchan-starrer *Don*, passed away on Sunday due to cardiac arrest at a hospital in Mumbai, his family said. He was 86. Barot was battling 'idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis' for the past 11 years and had been receiving treatment at the Guru Nanak Hospital, according to his family. "Chandra passed away at the Guru Nanak Hospital this morning at 6.30 due to cardiac arrest caused by a chest infection. He had IPF, which is fibrosis of the lungs, for the past 11 years," his wife Deepa Barot said. After *Don*, Barot directed a Bengali film *Aashrita*. PTI

## INTUC asks Centre for invitation to tripartite talks

The working committee of the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), the trade union arm of the Congress, which met in New Delhi on Sunday, has resolved to question the Centre's decision not to invite it to various tripartite panels. Pointing to last month's deadly Air India crash in Ahmedabad, INTUC said it was proof that the policy of privatisation is a serious threat to the life and safety of the common people. The trade union also favoured the formation of workers' cooperatives against exploitation by online and platform companies. Congress leader Digvijaya Singh said that the BJP-led government does not care for the welfare of workers.

## CoinDCX hit by ₹378-crore security breach; founders say customer funds unaffected



CoinDCX co-founder Sumit Gupta said that the attack targeted an internal wallet.

Press Trust of India  
NEW DELHI

Indian cryptocurrency exchange CoinDCX has suffered a security breach, resulting in theft of \$44.2 million, or nearly ₹378 crore, even as the founders took to X to reassure that customer funds remained unaffected and safe, with the compromise limited to an internal operational account.

The total exposure is being absorbed entirely by CoinDCX, using the company's treasury reserves, the company said in a first incident report released on Sunday.

According to the report, on Saturday, at 4 a.m., CoinDCX security systems detected an incident involving unauthorised access to one of its accounts on the partner exchange, leading to a financial expo-

## Cattle traders in Maharashtra to launch boycott amid 'harassment'

Members of the Muslim Qureshi community condemn the violent attacks on cattle transporters by *gau rakshaks*; community body has announced an indefinite trade boycott from today, has also met the DGP seeking police protection

**Snehal Mutha**  
MUMBAI

**M**ohammed Sufiyan, 25, a licensed cattle trader in Washim district of Maharashtra, says he was shocked when his buffaloes were detained by "*gau rakshaks*" (cow vigilantes) with the help of the local police in May, while being shifted from Badnera in Amravati district to Washim.

"I received a court order and paid ₹65,000 as *khavati* [maintenance payment for animals in custody], but I am yet to get my buffaloes back," says Mr. Sufiyan, adding that cow vigilantes had obtained a stay order, and a hearing is scheduled in August. Mr. Sufiyan and his father are licensed traders who buy and sell cattle for a living. "I may have to pay more depending on how the August 11 hearing goes. I cannot even think of the loss I have to bear. It makes no sense to continue in this business," he said.

Mr. Sufiyan is not in the slaughter business, but says he still faces the



The members of the Qureshi community engaged in cattle trade have allegedly been harassed by cow vigilante groups. FILE PHOTO

squeeze. The situation is worse for several other members of the Muslim Qureshi community dealing in buffalo and other bovine meat, be it traders or butchers, who have allegedly been harassed by cow vigilante groups, including members of the Bajrang Dal. The harassment has lasted for over a decade now, they allege.

According to the Maharashtra Animal Preservation (Amendment) Act, 2015, a fitness certificate from a veterinary doctor is required for slaughtering

buffaloes, certifying that the buffalo is "unfit" for milking and not pregnant. However, community members say *gau rakshaks* groups "harass them" even though they follow the law.

Condemning the violent attacks on cattle and meat traders and transporters, and the heavy losses and trauma caused by such attacks, members of the Qureshi community have staged protests across Maharashtra. They have also announced an indefinite boycott of cattle trade from Monday. "Some of the

traders have already stopped dealing in cattle; however, formally, we are launching a complete boycott in Maharashtra from July 21," says Shabir Qureshi of the All India Jamiatul Qureshi (AIJQ), a traders' union.

A delegation of the traders' body also met Minister of State for Home (Urban) Yogesh Kadam and Director-General of Police Rashmi Shukla, seeking protection from the self-proclaimed *gau rakshaks*. "Both have given us oral assurance that action will be taken as per law," claims Abdul Sadiq Qureshi, Vidharba chief of the AIJQ.

In a letter to the DGP on July 2, the AIJQ highlighted "harassment" and "loss of life and property" suffered by those who transport animals within Maharashtra and requested that "police officers" in the respective jurisdictions be directed to remain "extra-vigilant and control harassment" of the community. The community also says atrocities had increased after the Maharashtra Animal Pre-

servation Act, 1976 was amended in March 2015, prohibiting the slaughter of cows, bulls, oxen, and bullocks.

Citing the amended law, AIJQ president Mohammed Arif Chowdhary said in the letter, "Under Section 5A of the said Act, there is no restriction for transport of animals such as goats, sheep, buffaloes and other bovines within the State, including for purposes of being butchered."

Some of the Qureshi community's demands include protection for legal animal traders; the prohibition of illegal interference and harassment; accountability for inaction of the police and administration; ensuring smooth operation of slaughter houses; and ending violence against the community on religious grounds.

"The boycott will impact all farmers as they depend on the Qureshi community to sell aged animals and buy new ones," says Amravati-based trader Shaikh Afsar, adding buying and selling cattle is part of the farming ecosystem.

## NDRF trains dogs for use in disaster operations

Press Trust of India  
NEW DELHI

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) will soon press into service its first contingent of cadaver dogs who can sniff out the dead or human remains in a disaster zone, an officer at the agency said. About half a dozen such dogs have been under training at the NDRF battalion bases in Arakkonam in Tamil Nadu and Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh for the last few months, they said.

"To train the special canines, largely from the Belgian Malinois and Labrador breeds, the force has procured a special scent from abroad that smells akin to the odour emitted by a dead body," he said. "Utilising the golden hour of finding life during a disaster has been the guiding principle of the rescuers, and hence finding the dead or mortal remains was not a priority," an NDRF officer said. "However, we have seen that the force is also part of operations where NDRF is tasked with retrieving bodies from under the debris," he said. "Finding bodies or human remains is important to give closure to the families and loved ones," he said.

## Annual share of abstentions in India's votes at the United Nations reaches an all-time high

**T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan**  
NEW DELHI

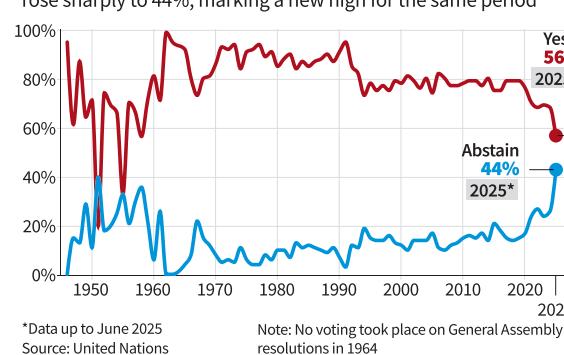
An increasingly polarised world has led to India altering its voting strategy at the United Nations in such a way that the proportion of abstentions every year has increased, while the 'yes' votes have reduced, an analysis has found. According to former diplomats, this rise in the share of abstentions could in fact help India establish its own position on various issues.

An analysis by *The Hindu* of more than 5,500 different resolutions in the UN that India voted on between 1946 and June 2025 shows that the annual percentage of 'yes' votes by India has fallen to 56%, the lowest since 1955. On the other hand, the annual percentage of abstentions has increased to 44%, the highest share in India's history at the UN.

The data show that this change in voting patterns

## UN voting pattern shifts

India's annual share of 'yes' votes on United Nations resolutions dropped to 56% in 2025\* — the lowest since 1955 — while abstentions rose sharply to 44%, marking a new high for the same period



began around 2019.

India's voting pattern remained volatile until the late 1960s, with the percentage of annual 'yes' votes swinging between 20% and 100% during this period. The percentage of abstentions also fluctuated between 0% and 40%.

The subsequent 25 years — between around 1970 and 1994 — saw the magnitude of this volatility

decrease substantially. The percentage of annual 'yes' votes during this period ranged between a low of 74% and a high of 96%. Annual abstentions ranged between 8% and 19%.

Between the mid-1990s and 2019, India's voting patterns in the UN became even more stable, with the share of 'yes' votes ranging between 75% and 83%. The share of abstentions

ranged between 10% and 17%.

According to former representatives to the UN, the increase in abstentions is simultaneously a reflection of an increasingly polarised world, as well as a reflection of the fact that UN resolutions have become much more complicated.

## A useful tool

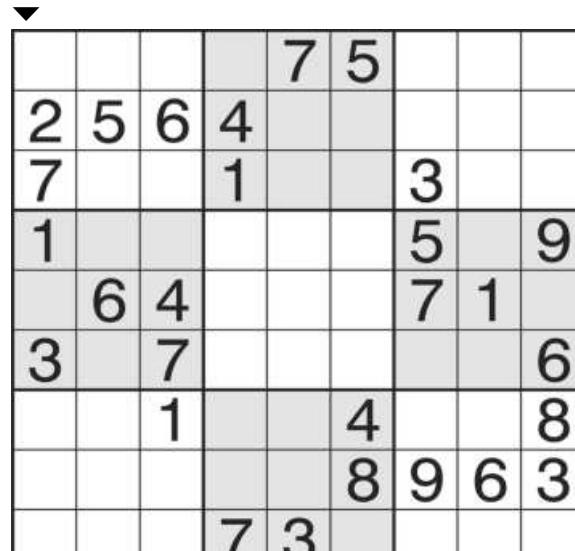
"This may best be looked at through a much wider lens than merely an India-centric one to better understand the pattern," T.S. Tirumurti, former Permanent Representative of India to the UN, explained. "It is probably a reflection of greater polarisation between major powers in the UN. This has resulted in a lesser incentive to make compromises by either side to strive hard for a consensus resolution, which was the case a decade or so earlier."

In such a context, Mr. Ti-

rumurti said abstentions also provide emerging and middle powers like India the opportunity to express themselves more freely, rather than merely going along with the consensus or voting against it.

Voting for or against a resolution has also become more fraught now because they have become very complicated, according to Syed Akbaruddin, former Permanent Representative of India in the UN. "Previously, resolutions used to be clear and focused on one topic," he explained. "What happens now is that contested resolutions are becoming like Christmas trees, where several different aspects and provisions are hung on the same resolution. So, there are situations where we might agree with most of the provisions of a resolution but not with some. In such situations, we cannot vote 'yes' or 'no', and so abstention is a useful tool."

## SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to previous puzzle

W	A	T	C	H	D	O	G	S	H	A	M	A	N	
R	E	E	T	U	F									
S	C	A	N	C	O	T	T	A	I					
M	I	S	E	R	R	O	R							
I	P	E	T	O	R	R								
T	P	H	G	R										
R	E	P	E	T										
E	T	U	P	R	I	O	R	S	H	I	P	S		
P	R	E	N	T	O	R								
P	A	T	S	O	N	G								
S	M	O	Y	I	E	S								
V	I	L	L	A	N	G								
S	I	S	U	T	E	R								
P	S	Y	C	H	O	T								

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

## FAITH

## SCIENCE

# Mental fatigue can trick the brain into taking the easy way out

Even sedentary work can feel exhausting when sustained for hours together. This exhaustion is called cognitive fatigue and builds up with continuous effort to maintain focus on daily tasks. While cognitive fatigue affects our performance and focus, a new study has found that it also influences decision-making by making one prefer easier tasks

**Sheetal Potdar**

**A**fter a long day at work, it's easier to flop on the couch than hit the gym. Scrolling over social media wins over reading a book. Our exhausted brains favour easier tasks, even if – according to a new study in the *Journal of Neuroscience* – those tasks offer fewer benefits.

Even sedentary work can feel exhausting when sustained for hours together. This exhaustion is called cognitive fatigue and builds up with continuous effort to maintain focus on daily tasks. While cognitive fatigue affects our performance and focus, the new study has found that it also influences decision-making by making one prefer easier tasks.

"Everybody has different capacities for work," Vikram Chib of the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and the lead author of the study said. "We all have a subjective sense of effort – what you may find easy, I might find difficult." The study also provides a neurobiological model to explore how fatigue can influence everyday decisions.

#### 'Really cool'

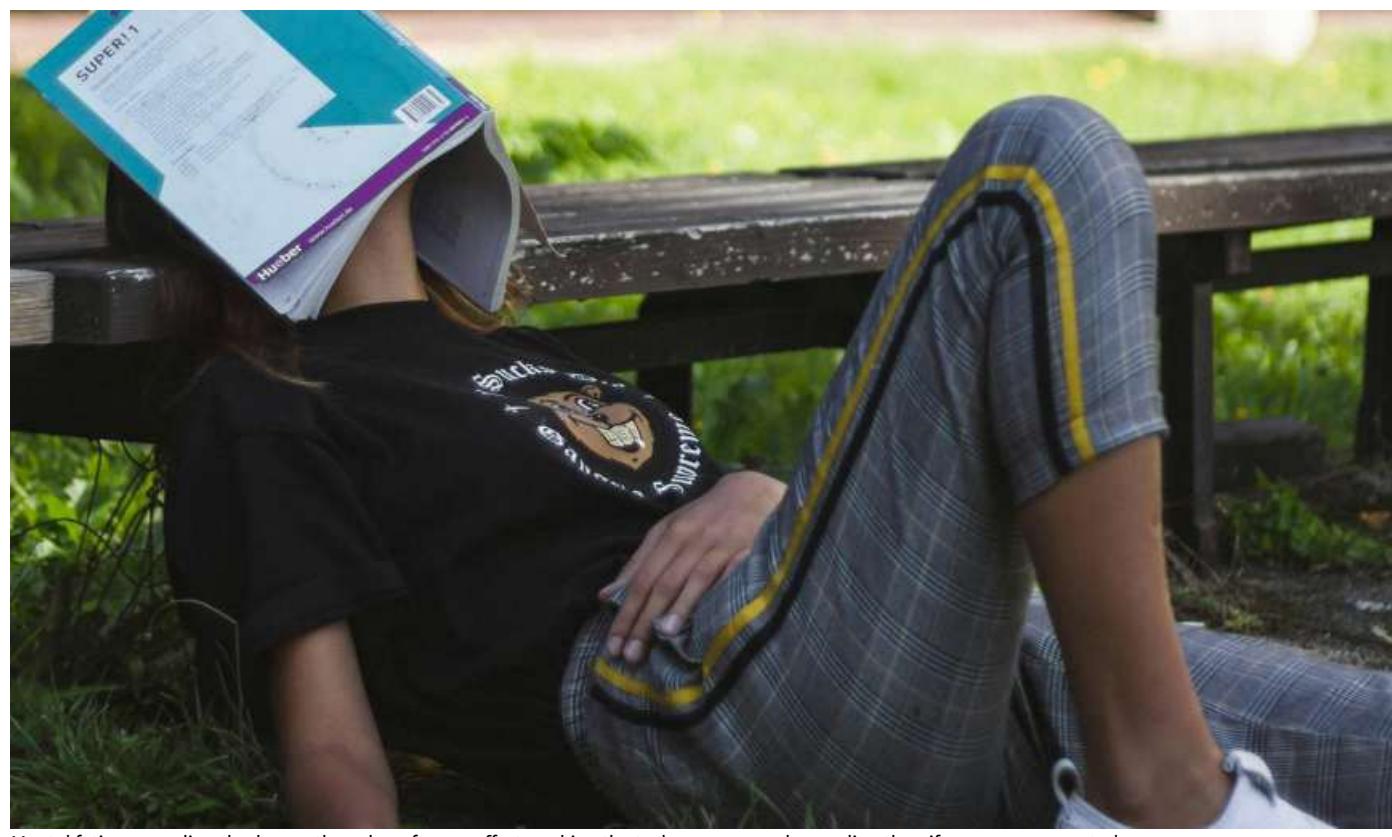
But first, how does sustained effort build up to cognitive fatigue, and how does it affect decisions about exerting further effort?

To answer these questions, researchers recruited healthy volunteers to repeatedly perform a working memory task. These individuals focused on a screen flashing different letters one by one. In the easy version of the task, they had to recall if the current letter matched the preceding one. As the task got harder, volunteers had to recall if the current letter matched with those displayed anywhere between two to six letters prior. After performing the harder tasks many times in a row, participants reported feeling fatigued.

Next, the participants were offered two choices: easy version of the task for less money or difficult version of the task for more money. Fatigued participants chose the easy option even if it meant earning less money, whereas they opted for harder tasks for more money when they were rested.

"It was really cool to see something we expected but was never quantified before, that fatigue actually influenced the participants' choices," Dr. Chib said.

While the participants made their choices, the researchers tracked their brain activity using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). This noninvasive technique allows scientists to pinpoint brain regions that are active during a task. As participants performed the working memory task and reported



Mental fatigue can directly change the value of some effort, making the task seem more demanding than if a person was rested. TONY TRAN/UNSPLASH

feeling fatigued, fMRI revealed the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (dlPFC), located just behind the forehead, was activated, in line with its understood role.

fMRI scans also revealed the right anterior insula was active when the participants made their choices. This region judges whether the effort required for a task is worth the reward. In previous studies from Dr. Chib's group, the insula had been found to estimate the effort of performing a physical task while physically fatigued.

#### Pushing harder

In this study, the role of the insula was extended to evaluating cognitive effort. "This is our current working model of where effort is evaluated in the brain. The insula receives input of fatigue resulting from working memory tasks from the dlPFC and of fatigue resulting from physical tasks from the motor cortex, and it guides decisions about future effort based on the level of fatigue," Dr. Chib explained.

"A big strength of this study is that it finds connectivity linking exertion to choice," Antonius Wiehler, a researcher studying motivation and cognitive fatigue at the Paris Brain Institute, said. Indeed, Dr. Chib and his team found that signals from the dlPFC representing fatigue influenced the neural activity of the insula. This meant fatigue directly changed the value of effort, making the task seem more demanding than when



A big strength of this study is that it finds connectivity linking exertion to choice

**ANTONIUS WIEHLER**  
Paris Brain Institute

person was rested.

The researchers also reported a peculiar observation: while participants reported feeling fatigued as they performed the hard tasks repeatedly, their performance didn't dip. The researchers interpreted this to mean that as people performed harder tasks, the fatigue made them pick easier tasks rather than compromise their performance.

Dr. Wiehler, who wasn't part of the study, agreed: "When the stakes are high and the benefits are clear, such as in this study, people can still use cognitive resources despite needing elevated effort. However, when benefits are uncertain or subjective, like in market decisions, the increased cost leads to behavioural changes."

We have all experienced this in our daily lives: when a deadline looms, we push ourselves harder to finish a task at hand despite needing more effort.

The study also opens new questions. Dr. Wiehler, who induces cognitive fatigue on much longer time scales (up to six hours) in his research, wondered, "How are short-term and long-term fatigue

effects related? How are cognitive capacities restored after a night of sleep?"

Can cognitive fatigue influence effort-based choices for any task? "We have a new study coming up where we report that cognitive fatigue, as induced here with the working memory tasks, makes participants choose even a physical task requiring less effort," Dr. Chib said. In other words, there may be a neurobiological reason to avoid the gym when one is mentally exhausted.

#### Time for a break

Cognitive fatigue is a common symptom of many neurological and psychiatric conditions. Patients who have suffered stroke and those suffering from multiple sclerosis, chronic fatigue syndrome, depression, anxiety, and schizophrenia have reported mental fatigue. Yet the way fatigue manifests in these conditions is poorly defined. The new study is a step towards developing ways to manage fatigue by understanding how it affects effort and decision-making in the brain.

How can we avoid fatigue skewing our daily decisions? Dr. Chib advised being "mindful about taking breaks. While we haven't directly tested it, reframing tasks can also help." The next time you catch yourself making a poor but easy choice while mentally tired, you know it's time for a break.

(Sheetal Potdar has a PhD in neuroscience and works as a science writer. sheetalpotdar@gmail.com)

## THE GIST

Volunteers in a study had two choices: an easy version of a task for less money or a difficult version for more. Fatigued participants chose the easy option even if it meant earning less, whereas they opted for harder tasks for more money when they were rested

Researchers reported that while participants reported fatigue as they performed hard tasks, their performance didn't dip. This was interpreted to mean that as people performed harder tasks, the fatigue made them pick easier tasks rather than compromise performance

Cognitive fatigue is a symptom of many neurological conditions. Yet the way fatigue manifests here is poorly defined. The new study is a step towards developing ways to manage fatigue by understanding how it affects effort and decision-making in the brain

## BIG SHOT



Firefighters combat a wildfire on peatland in Riau province, Indonesia, on July 20, 2025. These fires can be challenging to extinguish due to the nature of peat, which burns slowly and deeply, producing smoke and haze, which can spread to neighbouring countries like Malaysia and Singapore, causing air quality issues. AFP

## WHAT IS IT?

### Moon Day: remembering the leap

**The Hindu Bureau**

**Q** International Moon Day is celebrated every year on July 20 to commemorate humankind's first landing on the moon by the Apollo 11 mission in 1969. The UN General Assembly formally recognised this date in 2021, following a proposal recommended by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). The commemoration also aims to highlight the collective progress of all nations in exploring the moon.

On the day, activities like public events, sky-gazing, educational outreach, and science competitions are organised worldwide to inspire curiosity and foster interest in space science, especially among the youth. According to the UN, International Moon Day also serves to promote sustainable practices in space, international cooperation, peaceful exploration, and the responsible use of lunar resources.

There have been minor criticisms related to the chosen date. Some commentators have noted that while the Apollo 11 lunar module landed on July 20, Armstrong's first step technically occurred at 2:56 UTC on July 21. This ambiguity has occasionally prompted debate over whether July 21 is more accurate to commemorate. There is also



An aircraft passes in front of the moon; the red glow is attributable to smoke particles from North American wildfires, a day ahead of the full supermoon on August 18, 2024. REUTERS

occasional commentary questioning whether the date, rooted in an American achievement, fully encompasses the international spirit intended by the UN, more so since other nations have contributed significantly to lunar exploration.

Despite these discussions, July 20 remains globally recognised for now as the date humankind first leapt beyond the earth.

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



## A long list

The designation of TRF as a terror group should put more pressure on Pakistan

**T**he decision of the U.S. to designate The Resistance Front (TRF) group that claimed responsibility for the Pahalgam terror attack in April 2025, as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) and a Specially Designated Global Terrorist is a development that should undergird the global fight against terror. The Ministry of External Affairs has called it "a timely and important step". For one, the U.S. State Department has acknowledged the severity of the Pahalgam attack. It also names the TRF as a "front and proxy" for the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), which Pakistan claims it has rendered "defunct". Even though the U.S. added groups such as the LeT and the Jaish-e-Mohammad to its FTO list in 2001, they have masterminded attacks in India since then. The U.S. has also partially made amends for the TRF's name having been kept out of the UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution condemning the Pahalgam attack, apparently at Pakistan's behest, but with the concurrence of the U.S. and other P-5 members. It is hoped that the designation will now help India's case in designating the TRF at the UNSC, under the 1267 Committee for sanctions, also strengthening the trans-national legal pursuit of those behind the attack.

While this is a positive step, it is necessary to put the Trump's administration's other actions since the Pahalgam attack into perspective. After India launched Operation Sindoora, the U.S. has countered India's narrative on the four-day conflict on several occasions. Mr. Trump, as well as Secretary of State Marco Rubio, have repeatedly made the claim that the U.S. negotiated the India-Pakistan ceasefire, and averted a nuclear conflict by using trade ties as leverage – an equivalence which Pakistan has been happy to endorse. Mr. Trump's unprecedented White House lunch and praise for the Pakistani military chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, came hours after the government had said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had cleared the picture with Mr. Trump, and brings into question just how much pressure the U.S. is willing to put on Pakistan to act against terrorism. The Trump administration had held out the promise of doing more to support India in its fight against terrorism by fast-tracking the extradition, in April, of Tahawwur Hussain Rana, who was wanted by India for the 2008 Mumbai attacks. It is hoped that the TRF's listing means that the U.S. is recommitting to that objective. Given that the real challenge lies more in credibly ending Pakistan's support to these groups, New Delhi must focus on its efforts, diplomatic as well as legal, to ensure justice for the victims and to prevent further terrorist acts.

## Republican rumblings

Donald Trump is facing pressure from within his own support base

**P**resident Donald Trump, under pressure from a segment of his support base, has instructed his Attorney General, Pam Bondi, to request a court to unseal grand jury transcripts related to sex offender and former friend of the President, Jeffrey Epstein. While Mr. Trump had vowed, even during his presidential campaign, to unveil the files, in recent days he has faced mounting pressure to supply all relevant and new information pertaining to the case. The latest turn in the murky saga relating to Mr. Trump's prior association with Epstein, the former financier who died by suicide in a New York prison cell in 2019 while awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges, came after a report claimed that Mr. Trump, in 2003, sent a "bawdy" birthday letter to Epstein with references to a shared "secret". Mr. Trump has filed a libel lawsuit against the newspaper and its publisher Rupert Murdoch. He went on to post, on the Truth Social platform, "Based on the ridiculous amount of publicity given to Jeffrey Epstein, I have asked Attorney General Pam Bondi to produce any and all pertinent Grand Jury testimony, subject to Court approval. This SCAM, perpetrated by the Democrats, should end, right now!"

Mr. Trump's publicity woes regarding Epstein have been compounded, however, not due to any action by Democrats, but the fact that far-right MAGA groups, including conspiracy theorists such as QAnon, who believe that the U.S. government, media, and financial worlds are controlled by elites associated with a global child sex trafficking operation, have been applying pressure on the administration within Republican circles. Even prior to the latest report linking Mr. Trump and Epstein, the President had said that some "stupid Republicans... have fallen into the net" in asking for more information to be released. Now, it is possible that lawmakers in the House of Representatives will have the opportunity to vote on the decision to release the documents relating to the prosecution of Epstein, relying on a legislative mechanism known as a "discharge petition". A bipartisan team, led by Republican Thomas Massie and Democrat Ro Khanna, has proposed this petition under the moniker of the "Epstein Files Transparency Act", which, if it is passed with 218 signatures, could require the Attorney General to "make publicly available... all unclassified records, documents, communications, and investigative materials in the possession of the Department of Justice..." relating to Epstein. Mr. Trump may soon discover that while it helps his policy agenda to have a federal government tri-fecta and a sympathetic Supreme Court, his political prospects ultimately rest upon his support base, and it is one that is capable of abruptly turning the tide against him.

# Reform cannot wait, aviation safety is at stake

**T**he Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau's preliminary report on the Air India Boeing 787 air crash in Ahmedabad, on June 12, 2025, was released last week, on July 12. The report remains inconclusive, with critical uncertainties on whether pilot action was inadvertent or deliberate. I would argue that the lack of faith among pilots and those who track aviation by myself about the robustness of the investigation and its findings, – whether correct or not – emanate from a deep lack of trust in the entire aviation system in India that often penalises its personnel, excessively, rather than holding airlines and regulators to equal scrutiny.

I would like to use this opportunity to, once again, call for a complete reform in the aviation sector. A genuine 'culture of safety' must permeate every layer of the aviation system. This includes fair employment terms and, crucially, access to mental health care without punitive consequences resulting in the automatic grounding of and loss of income for air crew at a time when the current system, ironically, jeopardises their psychological well-being.

The complex web of aviation safety is highly technical, but years of study with aviation professionals have helped me understand its intricate technicalities. The aviation system broadly involves multiple elements: the aircraft itself (design, airworthiness, and maintenance) and the people who operate it (maintenance engineers, technicians, pilots and cabin crew). These are, broadly, the responsibility of the airline operator, while airport infrastructure, air traffic control systems and its personnel are the responsibility of the Airports Authority of India (AAI) and/or the aerodrome operator. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has regulatory control over airlines, the AAI and the airport operators. The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) has supervisory control over the DGCA and the AAI. Aviation accidents never result from a single failure but stem from multiple failures that align together, as in the Swiss cheese model. Each safety layer has flaws (holes); when these holes align across layers, an accident occurs.

**The fight for safety through courts**  
I have filed over 15 Public Interest Litigations (PIL) in the various High Courts and the Supreme Court of India after studying the links between aviation technicalities, regulations and data. I approached the judiciary because aviation authorities in charge of safety, became the violators. No one is held accountable for air crashes or the lives lost, in turn emboldening violations despite knowing that existing/known safety breaches can cause deaths.

Court interventions have saved lives, as seen in the case of the crash in 2018 at Ghatkopar, Mumbai, when a small plane fell into a building site. In 2016, the Bombay High Court had issued a stay that halted construction near Mumbai airport. Had it not been issued, a 13-storey building would have stood in its place at the site..

Mumbai's airspace is among the most hazardous globally – there are over 5,000 vertical obstructions within a four-kilometre radius and in violation of the Inner Horizontal Surface (IHS) criteria. Despite a pending PIL, obstacles in the no-obstacle approach and take-off funnel rose from 125 in 2010 to over 1,000 in 2025, highlighting regulatory opacity and potential



**Yeshwanth Shenoy**

is the President, Kerala High Court Advocates Association, and has been fighting for aviation safety for over a decade

misrepresentation by the DGCA, the AAI, airport operators, and the MoCA before the Bombay High Court. Had the High Court been informed about this accurately, the spread of these obstacles could have been stopped.

### Regulatory loopholes that pose a threat

Until 2008, airspace around airports was strictly regulated. The Aircraft Act and Statutory Order 988 of 1988 enabled the strict control of construction of buildings around airports. In 2008, a non-statutory committee was formed, effectively bypassing the legal safeguards that once ensured obstacle-free zones. It approved 25 buildings in prime locations in Mumbai using an aeronautical study conducted by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), which ought not to have been a part of a move to recommend construction which was illegal and of extra height. By the time ICAO distanced itself from the misuse of aeronautical studies, the AAI had begun conducting its own assessments which were less stringent.

The appellate committee granted permission for extra height recklessly. Around the year 2015, these obstacles, in addition to being physical barriers to safe flight movements, began interfering with radar and communication signals. The appellate committee also came out with guidelines and capped the maximum height at 90 metres in the Inner Horizontal Surface (IHS) and recorded that "any further deterioration in obstacle profile in and around airport is likely to aggravate the situation". Despite this, the appellate committee allowed obstacles to come up with impunity jeopardising safe flight operations. Ironically, the appellate committee that had permitted the safety violations was given statutory recognition through the 2015 Rules – despite these rules not allowing height relaxation.

The panel comprised officials entrusted with aviation safety and included a Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Civil Aviation, a Joint Director General in the DGCA, and a Member (Air Navigation Services) in the AAI. Thus, any complaint about obstacles is essentially judged by the very entities that sanctioned them.

Under pressure after a PIL on obstacles, the MoCA amended the 2015 Rules to limit the no objection certificate (NOC) validity to 12 years – an admission of the issue but an evasion of responsibility. How does the MoCA justify approving 100-floor buildings when it knows that 45 floors would become illegal in 12 years? This raises critical questions. What are the mechanisms that exist to demolish floors that become illegal after the expiry of the NOC?

What began in Mumbai has now spread across India. Even greenfield airport projects such as Navi Mumbai (Maharashtra) and Noida (Uttar Pradesh) have obstacles sprouting around them. Navi Mumbai Airport will start operations with a "displaced threshold" – which means aircraft will be unable to use the full runway because of the obstacles and increasing risks to air safety, thereby turning the airport into a monument of corruption and indifference by aviation authorities.

There is widespread systemic breakdown. First, aircraft design and airworthiness. The DGCA's limited internal technical capability forces it to be over reliant on foreign regulators such as the Federal Aviation Administration (U.S.) and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA),

The air crash in Ahmedabad is a moment for action – a genuine 'culture of safety' must flow to every layer of India's aviation system

as seen during the engine failure issue (Pratt &Whitney) that IndiGo experienced in 2017-18.

Second, aircraft maintenance standards. Aircraft Maintenance Engineers (AMEs) work under severe stress without duty time limits. The DGCA has allowed airlines to delegate AME tasks to less-qualified, lower-paid "technicians" – a cost-cutting move that undermines safety. Duty-time limitations recommended for AMEs by the court of inquiry following the crash in Mangalore (May 2010) remain unimplemented.

Third, the flight crew. Airlines violate Flight Time Duty Limitations for pilots, and the DGCA grants exemptions which allow pilots who are fatigued to operate. The DGCA's unique NOC requirement restricts pilot mobility across airlines, increasing stress and enabling airlines to coerce pilots into breaching regulations. Cabin crew, whose primary role is passenger safety, are often dismissed as mere hospitality workers, which is a dangerously reductionist view.

Fourth, airline operations. Airlines prioritise the goal of profit, adopting policies that consistently undermine safety. Despite the DGCA suspending personnel for safety violations, airline officials often retain high positions, controlling operations. DGCA-appointed officers in airlines, who are expected to enforce compliance, often have no real authority, making accountability toothless.

Fifth, air traffic management. The AAI faces a severe shortage of Air Traffic Controller Officers (ATCO) – an issue that has been flagged even by parliamentary committees. The provision to give licences to ATCOs has not yet been implemented. Duty-time limitations for ATCOs – recommended by the Mangalore Court of Inquiry – remain unimplemented.

Sixth, silencing whistle-blowers. Whistle-blowers are often demoted, transferred, or terminated – a trend that has discouraged the reporting of critical safety issues in the AAI and airlines.

When aerodromes operate in violation of safety standards, any other shortcomings in any of the other components become potentially fatal – as seen in Ghatkopar (2018), Kozhikode (2020), and now Ahmedabad (2025). Non-compliance in aviation stems from a lack of safety culture, not ignorance. Crashes are not mere "accidents" – they are the inevitable result of years of systemic neglect and policy violations. Without immediate systemic improvements, the next disaster will not wait for five years, but is just around the corner.

### The role of the judiciary is important

The judiciary, which has always been the silver lining in India's constitutional set-up, has been inactive on aviation issues, relying on the state's technical expertise on the subject. It must address the deterioration in the aviation sector and hold authorities accountable. Additionally, the judiciary's conservative approach to valuing human life needs to change.

In India, human life is undervalued, for example, as seen in railway accidents and motor vehicle deaths – a few lakhs of rupees. When this is the worth of a human life, safety upgrades that cost crores of rupees become easier for stakeholders to ignore. Immediate and comprehensive reform is needed. The aviation system requires accountability, oversight and a safety-over-profit commitment.

Reform cannot wait. Lives are at stake.

# India can reframe the Artificial Intelligence debate

**L**ess than three years ago, ChatGPT dragged artificial intelligence (AI) out of research laboratories and into living rooms, classrooms and parliaments. Leaders sensed the shock waves instantly. Despite an already crowded summit calendar, three global gatherings on AI followed in quick succession. When New Delhi hosts the AI Impact Summit in February 2026, it can do more than break attendance records. It can show that governments, not just corporations, can steer AI for the public good.

### India can bridge the divide

But the geopolitical climate is far from smooth. War continues in Ukraine. West Asia teeters between flareups. Trade walls are rising faster than regulators can respond. Even the Paris AI Summit (February 2025), meant to unify, ended in division. The United States and the United Kingdom rejected the final text. China welcomed it. The very forum meant to protect humanity's digital future faces the risk of splintering. India has the standing and the credibility to bridge these divides.

India's Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology began preparations in earnest. In June, it launched a nationwide consultation through the MyGov platform. Students, researchers, startups, and civil society groups submitted ideas.

The brief was simple: show how AI can advance inclusive growth, improve development, and protect the planet. These ideas will shape the agenda and the final declaration. This turned the consultation into capital and gave India a



**Syed Akbaruddin**

is a former Indian Permanent Representative to the United Nations and, currently, Dean, Kautilya School of Public Policy, Hyderabad

As the host of the AI Impact Summit next year, India can set the course – steering AI for the public good

democratic edge no previous host has enjoyed. Here are five suggestions rooted in India's digital experience. They are modest in cost but can be rich in credibility.

### Pledges and report cards

First, measure what matters. India's digital tools prove that technology can serve everyone. Aadhaar provides secure identity to more than a billion people. The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) moves money in seconds. The Summit in 2026 can borrow that spirit. Each delegation could announce one clear goal to achieve within 12 months. A company might cut its data centre electricity use. A university could offer a free AI course for rural girls. A government might translate essential health advice into local languages using AI. All pledges could be listed on a public website and tracked through a scoreboard a year later. Report cards are more interesting than press releases.

Second, bring the global South to the front row. Half of humanity was missing from the leaders' photo session at the first summit. That must not happen again. As a leader of the Global South, India must endeavour to have as wide a participation as possible.

India should also push for an AI for Billions Fund, seeded by development banks and Gulf investors, which could pay for cloud credits, fellowships and local language datasets. India could launch a multilingual model challenge for say 50 underserved languages and award prizes before the closing dinner. The message is simple: talent is everywhere, and not just in California or Beijing.

Third, create a common safety check. Since the Bletchley Summit in 2023 (or the AI Safety Summit 2023), experts have urged red teaming and stress tests. Many national AI safety institutes have sprung up. But no shared checklist exists. India could endeavour to broker them into a Global AI Safety Collaborative which can share red team scripts, incident logs and stress tests on any model above an agreed compute line. Our own institute can post an open evaluation kit with code and datasets for bias robustness.

Fourth, offer a usable middle road on rules. The United States fears heavy regulation. Europe rolls out its AI Act. China trusts state control. Most nations want something in between. India can voice that balance. It can draft a voluntary frontier AI code of conduct. Base it on the Seoul pledge but add teeth. Publish external red team results within 90 days. Disclose compute once it crosses a line. Provide an accident hotline. Voluntary yet specific.

Fifth, avoid fragmentation. Splintered summits serve no one. The U.S. and China eye each other across the frontier AI race. New Delhi cannot erase that tension but can blunt it. The summit agenda must be broad, inclusive, and focused on global good.

### The path for India

India cannot craft a global AI authority in one week and should not try. It can stitch together what exists and make a serious push to share AI capacity with the global majority. If India can turn participation into progress, it will not just be hosting a summit. It will reframe its identity on a cutting edge issue.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Trump's claim

The U.S. President, Donald Trump, seems to have dropped another claim – that five jets were downed during the India-Pakistan conflict (Front page, "Cong. seeks clarity over Trump's

remarks on jets", July 20). India cannot afford to remain silent whenever Mr. Trump makes a serious remark, especially when it one that has direct implications for the country's image, identity,

### Ensure road safety

Omni bus drivers, especially on the Madurai to Chennai

route, drive in a reckless manner. The vehicles also

have very powerful head

### Corrections & Clarifications

The colour labels in the chart, "Dividend surge", that accompanied the front page report, "PSU dividends to Centre almost double since 2020" (July 20, 2025) were reversed.

lights, causing difficulty to other road users. The police and RTO officers must act.

**S. Prakash,**  
Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu

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

# Temples of social justice

**R**ecently, a political controversy erupted in Tamil Nadu on the issue of diverting temple funds for building colleges. Beyond the political debates, the issue throws light on a unique social justice model around the regulation of secular practices associated with religion. This model, predominantly developed in the erstwhile Madras Presidency, draws strength from a 200-year-old legislative framework which continues till date. It has gained more acceptance in south India. As elections approach in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, clarity on the issue will help diffuse attempts to polarise voters around it.

#### Religious endowments law

Through the Religious Endowment and Escheats Regulation 1817, the East India Company set up the earliest legislative architecture around regulation of religious endowments. When the British Crown assumed direct control over Indian territories in 1858, Queen Victoria issued a proclamation stating that the sovereign would restrict interference in religious affairs. This was necessary as there was concern about losing face from the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny, which was triggered by religious issues.

However, the withdrawal of the British government from religious affairs was not complete. In fact, in the Madras Presidency, various British officials argued for continued oversight of religious endowments. Finally, the British government settled for a balanced approach: the sovereign would not interfere with practices that were essentially religious, such as rituals, but would exercise control over the lands and secular aspects of the religious endowments.

The idea of the government supervising religious institutions came to be crystallised when the Justice Party was elected in 1920. One of the earliest legislative interventions by the Justices was Bill No. 12 of 1922: Hindu Religious



**Manraj Shunmugasundaram**

Advocate practising before the High Court of Madras and DMK spokesperson



**Swetha Sethubaskaran**

Advocate practising before the High Court of Madras

Endowments Act. When it was introduced in the Madras Legislative Council, it faced opposition, mainly due to the provision in the law that allowed surplus temple funds to be diverted for other purposes.

The nub of the issue was whether funds provided to a temple could be used for secular purposes. The matter was debated and settled in 1925, when the law was enacted. Since then, every revised version of the plenary law, including the current law – The Tamil Nadu Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act, 1959 – has retained the provision of surplus funds.

Section 36 of the 1959 Act permits the trustees of religious institutions to appropriate any surplus funds for any purposes listed under the law, with the prior sanction of the Commissioner. ‘Surplus’ means any amount remaining after adequate provisions have been made for the maintenance of the temple and training of its officials. The Act also empowers the Joint Commissioner or the Deputy Commissioner to appropriate funds in cases where the original purpose has become impossible to fulfil.

Endowments to temples have a long and rich history. Temples received lavish donations from the sovereign rulers from as far back as in 970 AD, when the Chola empire was at its peak. Historian Anirudh Kanisetti writes that Sembiany Mahadevi, a Chola queen, made strategic donations of land and kind to temples. The practice continued during the Vijayanagara kingdom. Temples were not just places of worship; they were socio-cultural hubs and were also used for educational purposes. This is confirmed by the inscriptions on temple walls and the spacious *mandapams* (pillared halls) which were used to hold educational or cultural events. So the original intent argument would also support the theory of utilising temple resources for educational purposes.

The 1959 Act has been tested

and upheld by constitutional courts. Among the permissible uses of surplus funds under the 1959 Act is the establishment and maintenance of universities or colleges (Section 66). These educational institutions are also required to make available the study of the Hindu religion or Hindu temple architecture. Seen within this framework, building colleges from temple funds is not only legal, but a logical extension of these provisions.

#### Social justice legacy

The controversy around the use of temple funds cannot be restricted to discussing legal propositions, however; it also carries ideological and sociopolitical significance. In the pre-colonial era, the motivation for the rulers to support large-scale endowments was that the temples acted as channels through which state resources could be allotted for important welfare projects. Through colonial rule, the British East India Company and the Crown viewed sovereign involvement in the management of temple affairs as necessary for reasons of revenue and maintenance of local control.

Over the last century, the Self-Respect Movement, which emerged from the Madras Presidency, viewed the regulation of temples and oversight of their resources as a critical feature of anti-caste reforms. Without this, there would have been no temple entry legislation in 1936 and 1947. Today, Tamil Nadu and Kerala are among the few States where governments have appointed priests from backward classes after a prolonged legal struggle.

Ultimately, any argument against government control of temple affairs would be striking at the root of social justice. The role of the government in ensuring that surplus funds are appropriated in a lawful manner is settled. Any reversal of this would only result in a set back of the long legacy of social justice and religious reforms that south India has pioneered.

Any argument against government control of temple affairs would be striking at the root of social justice

# Caught in the crossfire

Universities in Kerala cannot be made pawns in an ideological war

#### STATE OF PLAY

**Sarath Babu George**  
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**I**ver more than half a decade, the relationship between the Kerala government and the Raj Bhavan has deteriorated. Where there was ceremonial civility and mutual respect earlier, there is now friction, partisanship, and constitutional brinkmanship. And caught in this crossfire are Kerala's public universities.

Successive Governors – Arif Mohammed Khan followed by Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar – have clashed repeatedly with the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) government, especially over matters pertaining to higher education. Increasingly, these disputes are no longer symbolic or rhetorical; they are affecting the functioning of academic institutions.

This dysfunction is most apparent in the ongoing deadlock over the appointment of Vice-Chancellors. Thirteen of the 14 State universities, where the Governor serves as Chancellor, have been without permanent Vice-Chancellors for months or even years. The logjam arises from disagreements between the government and the Governor's office over the constitution of search-cum-selection committees, effectively stalling leadership appointments in institutions.

The current flashpoint of this crisis is the University of Kerala. On June 25, a private event at the university's Senate Hall was abruptly cancelled on the grounds that it featured a controversial depiction of 'Bharat Mata' holding a saffron flag. Citing violations of university norms, Registrar



K.S. Anil Kumar issued orders to cancel the event, reportedly at the advice of the Syndicate, which is dominated by Left-leaning members. The Governor was informed of the cancellation, but chose to go to the Senate Hall nevertheless. The programme proceeded amid student protests and political tensions.

A week later, the Vice-Chancellor in-charge, Mohanan Kunnummal, suspended the Registrar. In retaliation, the Syndicate convened a meeting, and despite the Vice-Chancellor formally adjourning and exiting the meeting, proceeded to revoke the suspension, citing procedural overreach. The scenario has given way to an unprecedented situation where both the suspended Registrar and his temporary replacement claim to hold the same office.

As the stand-off persisted, students bore the brunt. Protests escalated and essential administrative processes, including the issuance of degree certificates, came to a halt. Dr. Kunnummal returned to the university only on July 18 and cleared the backlog, reportedly under the Governor's advice. Even then, Higher Education Minister R. Bindu's attempt to broker a truce has yielded little substantive change. The Vice-Chancellor remains adamant on the legitimacy of the suspension, while the Syndicate insists on its

revocation.

The Governor and the government also continue to spar over the appointments of interim Vice-Chancellors, with each attempting to assert their ideological and administrative primacy in the higher education sector. While the Left claims that campuses are being influenced by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Governor's office claims that there is excessive political interference by the State. Mr. Arlekar's ideological proximity to the RSS and his public admiration for Hindutva ideologue V.D. Savarkar have only heightened tensions. With little sign of a thaw, the confrontation threatens to erode public faith in governance as well as in higher education.

The longer this constitutional tug-of-war continues, the greater the risk of irreparable harm to not just the reputations of these institutions, but also to the lives of thousands of students whose academic and professional futures are in limbo. The University of Kerala, the Cochin University of Science and Technology, and the Mahatma Gandhi University ranked between 9th and 11th places among State public universities in the NIRF India Rankings 2024. Their progress risks being undone by continued administrative paralysis and the increasing politicisation of academic governance.

Kerala's universities deserve better. They cannot be made pawns in an ideological war; they need autonomy, leadership, and stability. If the State's constitutional actors cannot rise above their entrenched positions, the students, and the credibility of Kerala's academic institutions, will ultimately have to pay the price.

# Will the BJP-TDP alliance signal a new political fault line?

Telangana is entering a competitive three-cornered phase, but one with asymmetrical stakes

#### DATA POINT

**Pradeep Kumar Dontha**  
**Vignesh Karthik KR**

**T**he speculation over whether the BJP will support a TDP candidate in the upcoming Jubilee Hills by-polls signals a broader realignment in Telangana's political landscape.

The 2023 Assembly elections marked a rupture in Telangana's political trajectory. The decade-long dominance of the BRS, formerly the Telangana Rashtra Samithi, came to an end as the Congress returned to power under Revanth Reddy. While the spotlight has been on the Congress's resurgence, it is the unfolding reentry of the TDP and the consolidation of the BJP-TDP-JSP alliance that holds deeper implications for the political landscape. To assess what this reshuffling portends, it is essential to revisit the historical trajectories of vote share transfers, social base shifts, and evolving patterns of caste and party alignment.

The TDP's renewed interest in Telangana is a strategic return rooted in its historical strength. From 1985 to 1999, it consistently won over 45% of seats in the region, drawing support from Backward Classes (BCs) such as the Yadavs, Gouds, Mudirajs, Munmuru Kapus, and settler Kammas in southern Telangana. Post-2001, due to its ambiguous stance on Statehood, its vote share dropped from 38.46% in 1999 to 15.32% in 2014, and to 0% in 2023 when it did not contest.

Correlation analysis of historical vote shares reveals a strong negative correlation (-0.89) between the TDP and the BRS, suggesting that the BRS's rise was built substantially on the crumbling edifice of the TDP's support base. This trend was visible across key districts (Table). In Karimnagar, the TDP's vote share plummeted from 46.5% (1999) to 0% (2023), while the BRS's vote share rose from 0%

to 37.9% over the same period. In Medak, the TDP's fall from 47.5% to 0% coincided with the BRS's rise to 45.3%. In each case, the migration of BC votes and settler votes from the TDP to the BRS was crucial for the latter's dominance.

However, the electoral tide began to turn after 2018. The BRS, having reached its peak in that election with a vote share of 47.32%, began to lose ground due to governance fatigue, internal fragmentation, and its failed attempt at national expansion.

As dissatisfaction grew, especially among aspirational BCs and Dalits, a second wave of vote transfer began, this time from the BRS to the BJP. The BJP's statewide vote share increased from 7.10% in 2018 to 13.9% in 2023, marking its best performance in Assembly elections in the State. Its growth was especially sharp in northern Telangana: in Adilabad, the BJP grew from 7.85% to 27.6%; and in Nizamabad, from 6.88% to 26.2%. Some Scheduled Tribe (ST) groups in northern Telangana, such as the Gonds, have also extended support to the BJP.

What makes this moment particularly significant is the overlapping social base of the three parties. Each has historically drawn from the same pool of Backward Classes, settler Kammas, and sections of Dalits, especially the Madigas. The BRS's dominance between 2014 and 2018 rested on its ability to combine Velama leadership with broad BC support.

With the NDA now consolidating this fragmented social base, the TDP is reactivating its settler and BC networks in urban centres and the BRS is consolidating Madiga and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) support in the north. The expectation from the JSP is to mobilise Munuru Kapus. The BRS finds itself in danger of being squeezed out from both ends.

While this churn weakens the BRS, it paradoxically strengthens the Congress in the short term. In 2023, Congress won because it successfully positioned itself as the

alternative amid a fractured opposition. Its vote share rose from 28.65% in 2018 to 39.40% in 2023, and it gained significant traction in southern districts. These gains came predominantly from traditional support among Reddys, Mallas, and segments of OBCs disillusioned with the BRS.

The Congress is moving beyond its traditional Reddy and Mala base by courting OBCs through a 42% BC reservation plan and by making BC leader Mukesh Kumar Goud as the State Congress chief. Its aim is to chip away at the OBC support of the BRS and BJP. This marks a conscious attempt to reposition itself as a platform for backward caste assertion in Telangana. Yet the NDA is posing a challenge with a broad caste alliance that includes Kammas, Kapus, Madigas and many non-dominant OBCs, backed by the BJP's cadre strength, the TDP's grassroots networks, and the JSP's possible appeal among youth and Munuru Kapus.

Geographically, the NDA has managed to minimise internal friction: the BJP consolidates its hold over northern Telangana and urban pockets such as Hyderabad and Warangal, while the TDP is poised to recover ground in southern districts such as Nalgonda, Mahabubnagar, and Khammam. The alliance is thus strategically distributed.

The real concern for the Congress, then, is not its lack of social breadth, but whether it can institutionalise its emerging coalition into a stable political architecture. If the BRS fails to recover by reviving Telangana sentiment and decentralising its leadership, it risks becoming a spoiler in contests increasingly shaped by Congress-NDA rivalry. Telangana, therefore, is entering a competitive three-cornered phase, but one with asymmetrical stakes.

**Pradeep Kumar Dontha** is a political consultant and **Vignesh Karthik KR** is a postdoctoral research fellow of Indian and Indonesian politics at KITLV-Leiden

#### Three-way contest

The data was sourced from the Election Commission of India and IndiaVotes

**Table:** District-wise vote shares of various parties in Assembly elections in the Telangana region. Data for the period before bifurcation also pertains to the seats in the Telangana region, even though it was part of united Andhra Pradesh then

District	Party	Avg.	1999	2004	2009	2014	2018	2023
Adilabad	TDP	19.0%	48.9%	37.6%	18.9%	8.6%	0.0%	0.0%
	BRS	26.3%	0.0%	17.8%	17.7%	43.4%	45.8%	33.4%
	INC	30.4%	38.1%	30.4%	30.2%	23.6%	30.6%	29.4%
	BJP	8.8%	0.0%	3.3%	3.9%	7.9%	10.0%	27.6%
Nizamabad	TDP	21.9%	46.6%	34.9%	37.7%	12.4%	0.0%	0.0%
	BRS	28.9%	0.0%	17.7%	16.7%	54.7%	49.7%	34.9%
	INC	35.5%	46.6%	35.2%	30.0%	31.5%	35.5%	34.2%
	BJP	8.3%	5.1%	2.7%	3.8%	5.3%	6.9%	26.2%
Karimnagar	TDP	16.7%	46.5%	31.8%	17.2%	4.7%	0.0%	0.0%
	BRS	32.0%	0.0%	30.3%	17.7%	52.6%	53.5%	37.9%
	INC	30.2%	41.5%	18.1%	27.7%	24.7%	27.6%	41.4%
	BJP	7.5%	9.0%	3.5%	6.0%	7.6%	6.2%	12.9%
Medak	TDP	19.9%	47.5%	35.4%	22.0%	14.6%	0.0%	0.0%
	BRS	29.8%	0.0%	24.9%	11.5%	42.5%	54.6%	45.3%
	INC	32.8%	41.3%	26.2%	36.1%	28.9%	29.3%	35.2%
	BJP	6.9%	6.1%	4.3%	3.8%	5.9%	8.1%	13.1%
Ranga Reddy	TDP	26.0%	51.1%	44.2%	24.3%	24.5%	11.9%	0.0%
	BRS	23.5%	0.0%	21.7%	6.1%	26.2%	45.4%	41.7%
	INC	27.7%	41.0%	16.3%	32.2%	22.4%	21.8%	32.5%
	BJP	6.9%	0.0%	0.0%	6.6%	7.4%	8.6%	18.5%
Hyderabad	TDP	19.1%	43.2%	38.0%	13.6%</			

# Text & Context

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

**Rabies deaths reported in Karnataka since February**

**19** In the past six months, Karnataka has recorded more than 2.3 lakh dog bite cases, indicating a sharp increase compared to the corresponding period last year, according to official data released on Sunday. In all of 2024, the State reported 3.6 lakh dog bite cases and 42 rabies deaths. PTI

**Number of children in Ongre tribe who have cleared class 10 exam**

**9** "This is the first time Ongre students have reached this educational milestone. Their admissions were formalised and their classes commenced on July 15," said Prakash Tirkey, school teacher at Dugong Creek in Little Andaman. Ongres are semi-nomadic and used to be fully dependent on hunting and gathering for food. PTI

**MPs who have signed notice to bring motion against Justice Varma**

**100** Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Sunday said over 100 MPs have already signed a notice to bring a motion in Parliament for the removal of Justice Yashwant Varma, crossing the threshold of support required for tabling the impeachment exercise in the Lok Sabha. PTI

**Number of schooling years children could lose due to heatwave**

**1.5** in years. A report compiled by UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring team, Monitoring and Evaluating Climate Communication and Education project and University of Saskatchewan has pointed out that over the past 20 years, schools were closed in at least 75% of the extreme weather events, impacting five million people or more. PTI

**Number of new polling stations created in Bihar**

**12,000** A release issued by the election department on Saturday said that the total number of polling stations has risen to 90,712 from 77,895, after the establishment of 12,817 new ones in Bihar. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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## Is Israel committing genocide in Gaza?

Why did South Africa take Israel to the International Court of Justice? What does international law say about genocide? Do international experts believe Israel has genocidal intent? Can the UN take stronger action? What role are powerful countries playing?

### EXPLAINER

Aaratrika Bhaumik

#### The story so far:

In January 2024, South Africa initiated proceedings against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), alleging that Israel's military campaign in Gaza amounted to genocide. The application was filed just over two months after the Hamas-led attacks of October 7, 2023. Although the court has not yet ruled on the merits of the charge, it has issued a series of binding provisional measures, including repeated directives to ensure the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid into Gaza. These interim orders reflect the court's preliminary assessment that a "plausible" risk of genocide exists. In the months since, conditions in Gaza have grown increasingly dire. In March, Israel violated a six-week ceasefire and resumed its assault on the besieged enclave. Entire neighbourhoods have been reduced to rubble, families decimated, and access to food, water, and electricity remains critically limited. As the humanitarian crisis worsens, a global consensus is emerging. Heads of state, senior United Nations officials, and leading international jurists are increasingly characterising Israel's conduct in Gaza as genocidal.

#### What is genocide?

The term genocide was coined in 1944 by Polish-Jewish jurist Raphael Lemkin and formally recognised as a crime under international law by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in 1946. In the aftermath of the horrors of the Holocaust, the UNGA unanimously adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Genocide Convention) in 1948. The Convention defines genocide as acts committed with "the intent to destroy, in whole or in substantial part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group". It is considered the gravest of international crimes, and its prohibition constitutes a non-derogable peremptory norm (*jus cogens*) of international law.

Because of its status as a *jus cogens* norm, the duty to prevent and punish genocide gives rise to an *erga omnes* obligation – one owed to the international community as a whole. This means that all states, regardless of their direct involvement in a conflict, are legally bound to act against genocide wherever it occurs. It is on this basis that South Africa, a party that is technically unrelated to the conflict in Gaza, claims standing to bring the case to the ICJ.

Proving that genocide has occurred requires establishing two essential elements: the act itself and the intent behind it. The first element, known as *actus reus*, refers to one or more of five specific acts committed against a protected group. These include killing members of the group; causing them serious bodily or mental harm; deliberately inflicting conditions intended to bring about the group's physical destruction; imposing measures to prevent births within the group; and forcibly transferring children to another group.

Equally critical is the *mens rea*, or mental element, which requires not just a general intent to carry out these acts, but a specific intent (*dolus specialis*) to destroy the group, in whole or in part. This rare intent is what sets genocide apart from other mass atrocities. While other crimes may involve the indiscriminate or deliberate killing of civilians as



**Tensions rise:** Genocide is characterised by the targeting of individuals as members of a group, with the aim of annihilating the group's capacity to survive or reconstitute itself. AFP

individuals, genocide is characterised by the targeting of individuals as members of a group, with the aim of annihilating the group's capacity to survive or reconstitute itself as a political, social, or cultural entity.

#### What are the main claims against Israel, and how has Israel responded?

Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories, told the Human Rights Council last year that there were reasonable grounds to believe Israel had crossed the threshold for committing genocide. In her report, she pointed to the systematic destruction not only of residential areas but also of critical infrastructure, including hospitals, universities, mosques, water systems, agricultural zones, and cultural heritage sites, as evidence of a policy aimed at making Palestinian life in Gaza unsustainable. Her assessment has been echoed by prominent rights organisations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights.

The scale of destruction appears to lend further credence to these claims. In June, a UN Commission of Inquiry found that Israeli air strikes, shelling, burning and controlled demolitions had destroyed more than 90% of schools and university buildings across the Gaza Strip. According to local health authorities, over 58,000 people have been killed, including more than 17,000 children. Gaza now reportedly has the highest per capita number of amputee children in the world. As the starvation crisis deepens, civilians have reportedly been shot while waiting in queues for food and essential supplies.

In its submission to the ICJ, South Africa accused Israel of "weaponising international humanitarian law" to shield its actions from accountability. Since the

outset of the genocide proceedings, Israel has maintained that its military campaign targets Hamas and not civilians, who it claims are affected only as collateral damage. Ms. Albanese has described this approach as "humanitarian camouflage," arguing that Israel has systematically distorted key humanitarian norms, such as those on human shields, collateral damage, safe zones, evacuations, and medical protection, to blur the distinction between civilians and combatants. This strategy, she argues, not only obscures the real human cost of the conflict but also undermines the core tenets of international humanitarian law.

#### Why is proving genocidal intent difficult?

Establishing genocidal intent is notoriously difficult, as states rarely articulate such intent overtly. Accordingly, the ICJ has held that intent may be inferred from circumstantial evidence, such as the scale and nature of atrocities, patterns of conduct, and dehumanising rhetoric by state officials. In its submission to the ICJ, South Africa cited several statements by senior Israeli leaders as indicative of genocidal intent. For instance, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed that the enemy would "pay a huge price" and pledged to reduce parts of Gaza "to rubble." Other officials have referred to Palestinians as "human animals" and called for their "total annihilation."

However, the ICJ's evidentiary standard for proving genocidal intent remains stringent and has come under increasing criticism.

In *Croatia v. Serbia* (2015), the court held that such intent could only be inferred from a pattern of conduct if "this is the only inference that could be reasonably drawn" from the acts in question. This rigid standard effectively

precludes a finding of genocide if any alternative motive appears plausible. In 2023, several states, including Canada, the Netherlands, the U.K., Germany, France, and Denmark, raised concerns over this high bar in a joint declaration filed in the genocide case instituted by Gambia against Myanmar. They cautioned that such a restrictive approach risks making genocide "near-impossible" to prove. Instead, they proposed a "balanced approach," urging courts to weigh all available evidence and discard inferences that are clearly unreasonable. In other words, the presence of other conceivable motives should not automatically negate a finding of genocidal intent.

This view is consistent with international criminal jurisprudence. Both the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) have recognised that genocidal intent can coexist with other motives. In *Prosecutor v. Goran Jelisić* (2001), the ICTY held that "the existence of a personal motive does not preclude the perpetrator from also having the specific intent to commit genocide."

However, even under the ICJ's exacting standard, several experts believe that Israel's conduct fulfils the criteria for genocide.

In November last year, Israeli genocide scholar Shmuel Lederman acknowledged that the operational patterns of the Israeli Defence Forces closely mirrored the incendiary rhetoric of senior officials. Similarly, Omer Bartov, a professor at Brown University and former Israeli soldier, recently wrote in *The New York Times* that both official rhetoric and developments on the ground had led him to the "inescapable conclusion" that Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinians.

#### What is the road ahead?

A final verdict by the ICJ on South Africa's genocide allegations against Israel is likely to take years, as it must follow extensive hearings on jurisdiction and the merits of the case. By the time a judgment is rendered, the devastation in Gaza may already be irreversible, particularly in light of Israel's continued non-compliance with the court's binding provisional measures. As a result, the proceedings are increasingly being seen as a litmus test for the credibility of the so-called "rules-based international order".

Within the UN framework, a strong case has emerged for suspending Israel from the UNGA, citing its persistent violations of the Charter and binding Security Council (UNSC) resolutions. Article 6 of the Charter permits the expulsion of a member state by the Assembly on the UNSC's recommendation if it consistently breaches the Charter's core principles. In 2024, the UNGA adopted a resolution calling for economic sanctions on Israel, including an arms embargo.

Yet, major Western powers, including France, the U.K., Germany, and Canada, have confined their responses to muted diplomatic criticism, particularly following the collapse of the ceasefire in Gaza in March. The U.S., in particular, has continued to shield Israel from accountability by repeatedly vetoing most UNSC resolutions demanding an immediate ceasefire. In the absence of decisive multilateral action, one can only hope that President Donald Trump may once again intervene and nudge Mr. Netanyahu to agree to a renewed ceasefire and bring an end to the ongoing bloodshed.

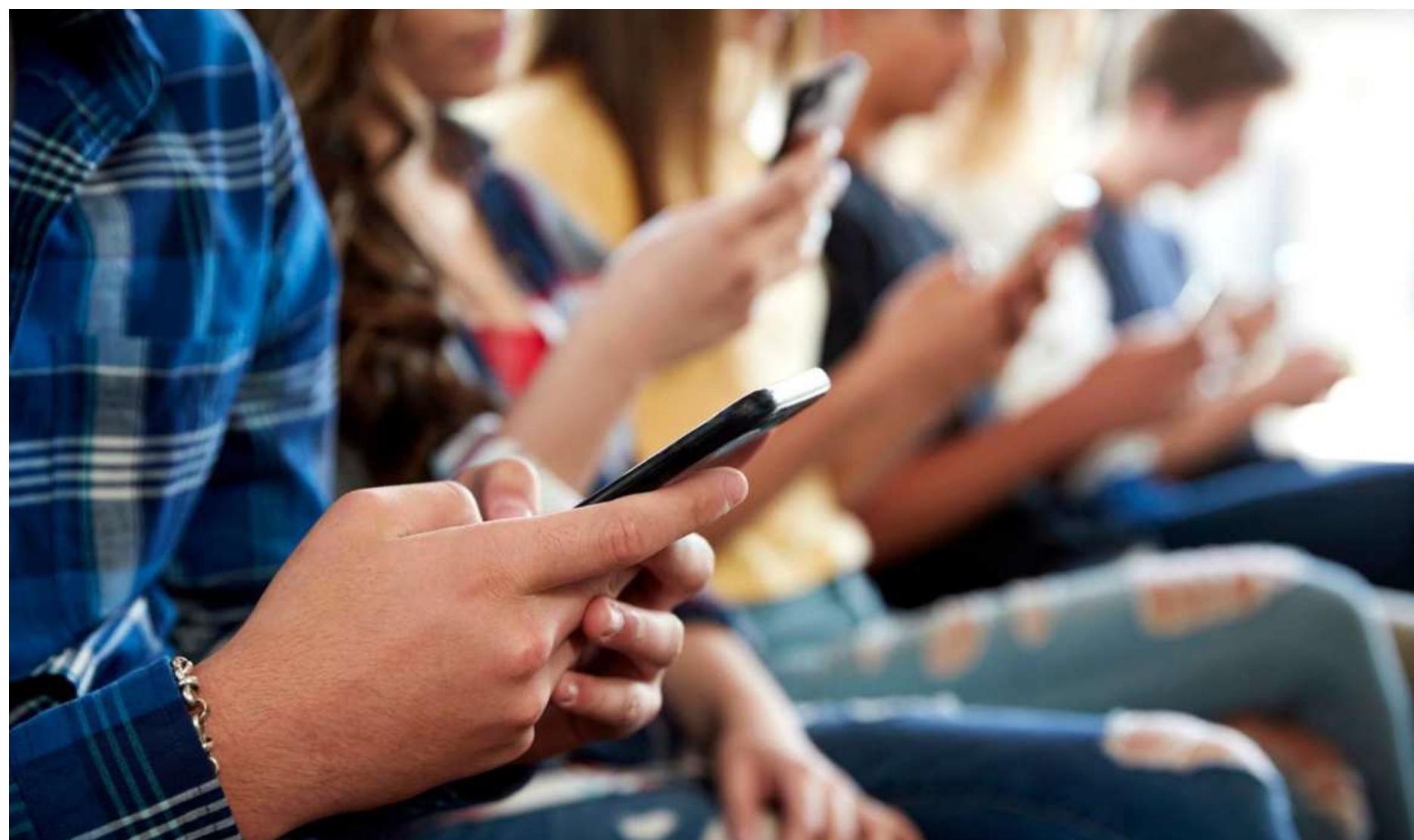
### THE GIST

In January 2024, South Africa initiated proceedings against Israel at the ICJ, alleging that its military campaign in Gaza amounts to genocide, based on a plausible risk and supported by statements from Israeli leaders and patterns of destruction.

Establishing genocidal intent is difficult, as states rarely express it openly. The ICJ's stringent evidentiary standard has been criticised for making genocide "near-impossible" to prove, even when actions and rhetoric strongly suggest such intent.

While the ICJ has issued binding provisional measures, Israel's non-compliance and continued assault raise doubts about the credibility of the rules-based international order. Calls for UN sanctions grow, but powerful states like the U.S. continue to block decisive action.

## CACHE



Denmark, Greece, Spain, France, and Italy are some of the first countries that will work alongside the Commission with the aim of launching their own national age verification apps. GETTY IMAGES

## What is the European Commission's age check plan to keep children safe online?

European Commission is developing an age verification app under the Digital Services Act to prevent minors from accessing harmful online content while claiming to protect adult users' privacy; many critics argue that the move risks compromising privacy and fails to effectively safeguard children

**Sahana Venugopal**

**The story so far:**

The European Commission is working on an age verification app that is meant to stop children from accessing unsafe content online while protecting the privacy of adult internet users. Critics, however, claim this comes at the cost of user privacy.

**What is the European Commission age verification debate?**

The European Union has, in the recent past, enacted multiple pieces of legislation to regulate the operations of large online platforms such as e-commerce giants, social media companies, and even pornography-hosting websites. In particular, the European Commission has highlighted some risks that children face when they are online, including platform designs that encourage digital addiction, cyberbullying, exposure to harmful content, and unwanted contact from strangers.

Digital advocates have previously recommended that the user interface of a large digital platform could be adjusted on the basis of the user's age, with children receiving private accounts and having their safety or well-being features turned on by default. When it comes to platforms such as porn sites, children ideally should not be able to access or even accidentally see explicit content. One way this could be done is through an app that verifies the user's age online, in order to be certain that children are not using adults' accounts.

The European Commission on July 14

presented guidelines concerning the protection of minors on online platforms, along with a prototype of an age-verification app under the Digital Services Act (DSA). Development of the age verification blueprint began early this year and is built on the same technical specifications as the European Digital Identity Wallets (eID), which are slated to be rolled out before the end of 2026, according to the European Commission, with two services meant to be compatible.

Denmark, Greece, Spain, France, and Italy are some of the first countries that will work alongside the Commission with the aim of launching their own national age verification apps in the future, in their own languages.

"During the pilot phase, the age verification solution will be further enhanced with new features. Apart from eID, further updates will include additional options for users to prove they are over 18. The age verification will also be enhanced with the latest technical solutions (zero-knowledge proof) to ensure the highest level of privacy protection," said the European Commission in its post.

**How will age verification affect the privacy of adults?**

While those in favour of creating a safer internet for children are in support of making age verification mandatory to access porn websites, critics of the move believe that it violates privacy rights and can put their security online at risk or make their browsing activities easier to track and monetise.

However, the European Commission has defended the privacy standards of its

prototype app and said that it will enable age verification while preventing privacy violations. The regulator added that the technical specifications and the open-source age verification blueprint were freely available to view and use as well.

"It will, for example, allow users to easily prove they are over 18 when accessing restricted adult content online, while remaining in full control of any other personal information, such as a user's exact age or identity. No one would be able to track, see, or reconstruct what content individual users are consulting," stated the Commission.

Meanwhile, at the topmost levels of the French government, President Emmanuel Macron also supports age verification and even wants to ban social media for users who are under 15 years of age.

France is one of the countries that will first try out the age verification app prototype.

There are also ongoing discussions as to whether certain social media platforms that contain adult content, such as X, can be classified as porn platforms. This also has implications for the user experience of adult social media users across the European Union.

**Why are some porn companies against age verification?**

While most companies agree that children using the internet should be protected from explicit content, cybersecurity threats, and social media addiction, they often disagree on the ideal way to go about this process.

For example, Pornhub-owner Aylo's main contention is whether age verification takes place at the website

level or not. In a company post on June 26, Aylo stressed the need for "device-based age verification." According to the company, age verification should have been carried out by Apple, Google, and/or Microsoft long before an underage user even arrives at an adult website such as Pornhub.

For close to two weeks in June, internet users in France who tried to access pornography platforms such as Pornhub, YouPorn, and RedTube encountered a largely black screen with a notice, or a historic painting with a call to action against the French government's move to implement mandatory age verification for adult platforms.

Aylo also warned that users unable to access Pornhub would go to smaller, less regulated sites potentially hosting illegal content. It unblocked its websites in late June after a Paris administrative tribunal's decision over the rule's unconfirmed compatibility with EU laws. But Aylo's next actions remain to be seen as the top administrative court affirmed this month that age verification was a must.

"Data breaches happen daily. Forcing you to enter sensitive personal information repeatedly creates an unacceptable security risk we refuse to impose on our users. We refuse to compromise your privacy with measures that, ironically, fail to effectively protect children," said Aylo in a statement on its website on July 15.

"To make the internet safer for everyone, every phone, tablet or computer should start as a kid-safe device. Only verified adults should be allowed to unlock access to age-inappropriate content," said the company.

### THE DAILY QUIZ

#### A quiz to mark the 56th anniversary of humans landing on the moon

Please send in your answers to [dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in](mailto:dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in)

**V. V. Ramanan**

**QUESTION 1**  
Easy one to begin with. What was the mission called and what were the codenames for the Command Module and the Lunar Module?

**QUESTION 2**  
From which place did the rocket blast off and what was the place on the moon where the lunar module landed?

**QUESTION 3**  
What were the first words spoken from the surface of the moon after the landing?

**QUESTION 4**  
Neil Armstrong carried something that had made

history in 1903 during the voyage. What?

**QUESTION 5**  
What connects James Lovell, William Anders and Fred Haise to the Apollo XI mission?

**QUESTION 6**  
What specifically did Michael Collins omit from the insignia design for the mission, as the trio felt the design had to be representative of everyone who had worked toward a lunar landing?

**QUESTION 7**  
What were the trio's version of 'life insurance' for their families in case they did not make it back to Earth?



**Visual Question:**  
This is a moon rock brought back by the Apollo XI crew. What was it christened as? WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

**Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:** 1. Mandela belonged to which ethnic group in South Africa? **Ans: Xhosa**

2. What is the name of the political party that he served as the president of? **Ans: African National Congress**

3. What is the term used to define the separation of people into racial or other ethnic groups in daily life? **Ans: Racial segregation**

4. uMkhonto weSizwe was associated with Mandela. What was it? **Ans: It was the paramilitary wing of the African National Congress**

5. What was the name of the trial that took place in apartheid-era South Africa between 9 October 1963 and 12 June 1964, after a group of anti-apartheid activists were arrested on Liliesleaf Farm? **Ans: Rivonia Trial**

6. What is the term used to describe a situation where specific false memories can sometimes be shared by a large group of people? Hundreds of people recorded having vivid and detailed memories of news coverage of South African anti-apartheid leader Nelson Mandela dying in prison in the 1980s, despite Mandela actually dying in 2013. **Ans: Mandela Effect**

**Visual:** In this image, Mandela has raised his clenched fist. What is it called? **Ans: Amandla Salute**

**Early Birds:** Sunil Madhavan | Parimal Das | Pranab Biswas



**KNOW YOUR ENGLISH**

*I am keeping my lips zipped about the bet*

It was fairly obvious by then that Swiatek was going to blow away Anisimova

**S. Upendran**

"Did you find the time to watch the Wimbledon finals on TV?"

"I watched the men's match completely. But when it came to the ladies final, I watched only the first three games before switching off the TV."

"Only three games?"

"It was fairly obvious by then that Swiatek was going to blow away Anisimova."

"Blow away?"

"The expression 'blow away' has many different meanings. But in the context of sports, it is mostly used to mean to defeat someone comprehensively."

"In other words, you outperform everyone else."

"I guess you could say that. Here's an example. After the second round, Iga Swiatek just blew away her opponents."

"How about this example? During the first half of the game, the two teams were evenly matched. In the second half, however, our opponent blew us away by scoring seven goals."

"Ouch! Here's another one. We thought Sindhu would blow away the competition. We were shocked when she lost in the first round."

"That's what makes every tournament exciting. So, did Sujatha buy you breakfast? After all, you did take a bet with her that Swiatek would win."

"That's true. But Sujatha is going through a tough time. So, I'm keeping my lips zipped about the bet."

"Does it mean the same thing as 'keeping your lips buttoned'?"

"Very good. When you keep your lips zipped, what you are doing is keeping quiet. The Manager was angry and wasn't willing to listen to reason. So, I decided to keep my lips zipped."

"Keeping one's lips buttoned is the best thing to do when someone is angry."

"Exactly! So, how are things at your office? Heard you're getting a new boss."

"That's true. He'll be joining us in a week or two."

"That's a long time! What are you guys going to be doing?"

"What we've been doing the past few days, I suppose! Sleepwalk through the workday."

"Sleepwalk through the day? What are you talking about?"

"Do you know what sleepwalk means?"

"Doesn't it mean to walk in one's sleep?"

"I'm told I used to sleepwalk when I was a kid."

"I believe my uncle sleepwalks even now."

"Sleepwalk has other meanings as well. It's frequently used in informal contexts to mean to say something without really thinking."

"And you're not thinking because you're asleep! Since your mind is not functioning or has been switched off, you're not really worried about the consequences of what you do or say."

"Very good!"

"How about this example? Last night, I saw a movie where most of the actors sleepwalked through their roles."

"So, what you're suggesting is that the actors were wooden. There was little or no life in their acting."

"Yes."

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**Word of the day**

**Forswear:**

agree to give up or do without

**Synonyms:** avoid, withdraw, deny

**Usage:** He decided to forswear junk food to stay healthy

**Pronunciation:** newsth.live/forswearpro

**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /fɔrswεr/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to [letters@thehindu.co.in](mailto:letters@thehindu.co.in) with the subject 'Text & Context'

# MONEYWISE

## Personal loan: avoid 5 mistakes

**Santosh Agarwal**

Personal loan is often the preferred credit option for those seeking quick credit access with minimal documentation and no collateral. However, this ease of access leads many borrowers to overlook crucial aspects, leading to higher interest costs, unexpected charges or even a debt trap. Here are five common mistakes loan applicants should avoid:

### Not getting credit report early

Your credit score is one of the first filters lenders would use to evaluate creditworthiness. Those with higher credit scores usually have better chances of loan approval. Many lenders also use credit scores to set interest rates of the loan applicants, with those having higher scores being offered lower rates for the loans. Thus, always fetch your credit report before making the loan application as any error or outdated information in credit report can reduce credit score and thereby, reduce loan approval chances. If you notice any error(s), report them to the concerned credit bureaus(s) and the lender for rectification. A rectified credit report can lead to higher credit score and thereby, increase your loan approval chances at lower interest rates.

### Not comparing loan offers

The interest rates offered to the same applicant can vary widely across lenders depending on cost of funds and credit risk assessment of the loan applicant. Some lenders also offer loans at preferential interest rates to existing customers. Thus, those planning to avail the loans should compare loan offers from as many lenders as possible.

They should begin the search by approaching banks and NBFCs with which they already have existing deposit and/or loan/credit card relationships. This should be followed by visiting online financial marketplaces to view the loan options of other lenders.

Then, an applicant should opt for the lender that charges the lowest interest rate for the desired loan amount with the optimal tenure.

### Ignoring 'optimal' repayment

Lenders usually prefer loan applicants whose monthly EMI obligations, including that of the proposed loan, do not exceed 50-60% of the monthly income. However, even if it does not, the optimal loan EMI would be the one on which you incur the lowest interest cost without adversely impacting unavoidable expenses and monthly contributions for crucial financial goals. You should use online EMI calculators to fix the optimal loan EMI after factoring in income/other financial commitments.

### Ignoring loan options

Just like personal loans, secured loan options like top-up home loans, loan against property (LAP), gold loans and loan against securities do not have any end-usage restrictions.

Being secured in nature, these loans usually have lower interest rates than personal loans. Top-up home loans and LAP also offer longer tenures than personal loans, which further increases EMI affordability and overall loan amount eligibility for the borrowers.

On the flip side, the turnaround time (TAT) for LAP disbursal can be much higher than that of personal loans, while gold loan and loan against securities have similar TATs.

Thus, existing home loan borrowers or those having adequate gold, property or investments to pledge should explore suitable secured loan alternatives and disbursal TAT before making a personal loan application.

### Ignoring emergency fund

Financial emergencies or loss of income due to job loss, disability, illness, etc. lead many borrowers to default on EMIs. Such repayment failures would not only incur hefty penalties, it also reduces one's credit score and thereby, his or her future loan/credit card eligibility. The best way to avoid such scenarios is to increase the size of your emergency fund by at least six months' worth of your personal loan EMI.

(The writer is CEO of Paisabazaar)

**Send queries** on personal finance and investing to the [moneywise@thehindu.co.in](mailto:moneywise@thehindu.co.in). ID. Our experts in personal finance will respond to select queries, but will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund, share or fixed deposit.



**Little effort:** The beauty of the compound effect is that you need not work hard for it. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

## Money making money even while one is asleep

As Albert Einstein said, "compound interest is the eighth wonder of the world;" if one is patient enough, he can witness how his money makes money for him, even while he is sleeping

### DOUBLING MONEY

**Vaishali R. Venkat**

If a child pesters his father for money, his usual retort would be, "Do you think I'm out there shaking a money tree."

Yes, in a way, he is right, you can't just pluck money off a tree. But even a small penny is like a seemingly small seed, which when nurtured and nourished carefully, can be the beginning of a forest.

**Power of compounding**  
In the world of finance, there is one such seed, which not only grows into a tree but could become an entire forest – the power of compounding. The magic of compounding is that it starts small but grows exponentially over time.

More than two centuries ago, Benjamin Franklin, the first Postmaster-General of the United States and author of the book *Poor Richard's Almanack*, echoed this concept saying, "Money makes money. And the money that money makes, makes money."

Further, highlighting its potential of exponential wealth creation in the long run, famous physicist Albert Einstein said, "compound interest is the eighth wonder of the world."

Though the phrase "the compound effect" existed for aeons, especially in mathematics, it became quite popular in the realm of finance, productivity



In the world of finance, there is one seed which could become an entire forest – the power of compounding; the magic of compounding is that it starts small but grows exponentially over time

and personal development after a bestselling book by U.S. author Darren Hardy.

### Compound effect

The compound effect is like a snowballing effect wherein a small, consistent action or an investment accumulates over a period, leading to an exponential growth. In personal finance, it refers to the process wherein your initial invested money earns interest, and the interest earned earns interest, which subsequently generates interest, and the chain goes on and on.

This way, you make a gigantic leap from your original invested amount. Not just this, the beauty of the compound effect is that you need not work hard for it, as even if you are sleeping, your invested money will silently work and keep on generating money for you.

You need to give time for it and just be patient. Consistency is the key.

Let's imagine this scenario. God wishes to give a boon and places two choices before you. First - He will clear all your debts instantly, say ₹35,00,000. Second - He will give



Though the phrase 'compound effect' existed for aeons, it became popular in the realm of finance, and personal development after bestselling book by author Darren Hardy

you ₹1 on the first day with a promise that it will double every day for one month. So, which one do you choose?

Almost all 10 people would only choose the first option for two reasons. The first being instant gratification and the second is the lack of awareness of compounding effects.

In contrast, mathematicians or financial experts will only choose the second option of taking the ₹1 that doubles every day for 30 days. They do not mind waiting for 30 days, let's find out why.

### Money doubles

On day one, God gives you ₹1, it doubles to ₹2 on the second day, to ₹4 on the third day. Likewise, it doubles to ₹512 on the 10th day. Your patience is being tested here.

In a similar doubling strategy, your money becomes ₹16,384 on the 15th day. Time is the secret; time begets money.

On day 20, it would be ₹5,24,288, which is way less from the first choice. But wait, we have 10 more days. On day 24, it would have doubled to ₹83,88,608 and on the last

day, it would be ₹53,68,70,912.

In just 30 days, ₹1 transforms into a whopping sum of more than ₹53 crore. You call it mind blowing but that's the power of compounding.

### SIP investment

Now, let's take a real-life example. Priya invests ₹1,000 every month in a Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) that gives her 12% Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR).

After five years, her investment would have grown to almost ₹82,000. After 10 years, it becomes ₹2,32,000 (approximately) and after 20 years ₹9,99,000.

But wait, the magic has not happened yet. In 30 years, it becomes ₹35,29,000 and in 40 years, a whopping sum of more than a ₹1 crore.

So, just a ₹1,000 in monthly SIP transforms into more than a ₹1 crore in 40 years.

That's the reason all financial experts advise us to start saving right from the first salary, so that, by the time you retire, you would have saved enough, and your money would have worked for you even when you were sleeping.

If you need more money, just step up your SIP amount of ₹1,000 per month by just 10% every year, witness the magic and enjoy your retirement life comfortably and worry-free. Start saving early.

(The writer is an NISM & CRISIL-certified Wealth Manager)

## A note on multi-asset funds

### THINKINVESTOR

A multi-asset class fund could take exposure to three asset classes – equity, bonds and commodities (typically gold and silver); however, be mindful of commodities in the core portfolio

**Venkatesh Bangaruswamy**

The number of asset management companies (AMC) have increased over the years. This makes it difficult for product differentiation in the equity space, as funds typically invest within the universe of 500 stocks comprising large-caps, mid-caps and small-caps. It is, therefore, not surprising to see AMCs creating different products to woo investors. A differentiating product in recent times has been multi-asset funds. Here, we discuss the characteristics of such funds and if they fit into your core portfolio.

### Asset allocation

Asset allocation is the most important step in the investment process. It refers to the portion of savings you invest in asset classes to achieve life goals. Asset allocation can vary for each goal, even if all the goals have the same time horizon. Why? Asset allocation is a function of risk attitude – more important a goal is, less risk you want to take; that means more bonds and less equity allocation. For instance, the asset allocation for your child's education portfolio may be more conservative compared with that of your retirement portfolio.

A multi-asset class fund could take exposure to three asset classes – equity, bonds and commodities (typically gold and silver). You must be mindful of having commodities in the core portfolio, as prices are volatile driven by global demand and supply and geopolitical issues.

That apart, such a fund decides the optimal allocation to each asset class based on investment mandate. In other words, the fund's asset allocation cannot be tailored to your goals or risk attitude.

### Conclusion

You must make tax-efficient investments. Are multi-asset funds tax efficient? A multi-asset fund that invests more than 65% in equity is considered an equity fund.

The point is that if you sell your fund units after holding them for more than 12 months, you must pay 12.5% long-term capital gains tax above ₹1.25 lakh in any year you realise the gains. But funds holding less than 65% in equity are considered as non-equity-oriented funds.

Capital gains arising from such funds will be added to your total income and taxed at your marginal tax regardless of the holding period. This has major implications on the post-tax returns on your investments, as the equity portion of the fund will also be taxed at your marginal tax rate (typically 30%). You must be mindful of these factors when you choose multi-asset funds.

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

### Personal Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	Loan amount 1 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	Interest Rate (%)	EMI (Rs)	EMI (Rs)	Processing fee
HDFC Bank	10.90-24.00	10,846-14,384	2,169-2,877	Up to Rs 6,500
Tata Capital	11.50 onwards	10,996 onwards	2,199 onwards	Up to 3.5%
State Bank of India	10.30-15.30	10,697-11,974	2,139-2,395	Up to 1.5% (Min. Rs 1,000; Max. Rs 15,000)
ICICI Bank	10.80 onwards	10,821 onwards	2,164 onwards	Up to 2%
Bank of Baroda*	10.40-18.20	10,722-12,751	2,144-2,550	Up to 2% (Max. Rs 10,000)
Axis Bank	9.99-22.00	10,621-13,809	2,124-2,762	Up to 2%
Kotak Mahindra Bank	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 5%
Bank of India	11.10-16.15	10,896-12,199	2,179-2,440	Up to 1% (Min. Rs 250; Max. Rs 15,000)
Canara Bank	9.95-15.40	10,611-12,000	2,122-2,400	Up to 0.25% (Max. Rs 2,500)
Punjab National Bank	10.50-17.05	10,747-12,440	2,149-2,488	Up to 1%
HSBC Bank	10.15-16.00	10,660-12,159	2,132-2,432	Up to 2%
Federal Bank	11.99 onwards	11,120 onwards	2,224 onwards	Up to 3%
Union Bank of India	10.35-14.45	10,710-11,751	2,142-2,350	Up to 1% (Max. Rs 7,500)
Bajaj Finserv	10.00-31.00	10,624-16,485	2,125-3,297	Up to 3.93%
Punjab & Sind Bank	9.85-12.90	10,587-11,351	2,117-2,270	0.50%-1%
Indian Overseas Bank	10.50 onwards	10,747 onwards	2,149 onwards	Up to 0.75%
UCO Bank	10.20-13.20	10,673-11,428	2,135-2,286	Up to 1% (Min. Rs 750)
IDFC FIRST Bank	9.99 onwards	10,621 onwards	2,124 onwards	2%
Bank of Maharashtra	9.00-13.80	10,379-11,582	2,076-2,316	Up to 1% (Max. Rs 10,000)
Central Bank of India	10.10-11.90	10,648-11,097	2,130-2,219	Up to 1%
IndusInd Bank	10.49 onwards	10,744 onwards	2,149 onwards	Up to 3.5%

### Car Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	Interest Rate (%)	EMI (Rs)	Processing fee
Union Bank of India	7.80-9.70	10,090 - 10,550	Up to Rs 1,000
Punjab National Bank	7.85-9.70	10,102 - 10,550	Up to 0.25% (Rs. 1,00

# 'Tesla official with no sales experience is running sales'



**New game:** Jegannathan has spent 13 years at Tesla in technology roles. AP

Reuters

A relatively little-known information technology executive is running Tesla's sales team as the electric carmaker grapples with a drop in sales, according to people familiar with the matter.

Raj Jegannathan, a senior executive with a wide purview, including several IT and data functions, recently took over the sales role, said the people familiar with the matter. Some inside Tesla have interpreted this to mean that Mr. Jegannathan has assumed the role of Troy Jones, Tesla's top sales executive in North America until he departed earlier this month after 15 years with the company, said the people.

Mr. Jegannathan, who has recently grown closer to CEO Elon Musk, has no traditional sales experience, according to two people familiar with the matter and his LinkedIn profile. *Reuters* could not determine if it is an interim role.

Demand for Tesla's cars in Europe and North America has dropped sharply. Last quarter, its quarterly sales plunged 13% to the weakest in nearly three years, due to a backlash to Mr. Musk's politics, Tesla's aging vehicle lineup and increased competition from rivals offering more affordable alternatives.

Tesla did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Tesla's share price, which has fallen 18% so far this year, rose 3% on Friday.

## High-level departures

Mr. Jones, the latest in a string of high-level departures, managed the fallout as Musk's political affiliation with U.S. President Trump prompted left-leaning consumers to shun Tesla. As Tesla's sales were dropping earlier this year, Mr. Jones implored managers to work on selling and pushed back against concerns over political headwinds related to Mr. Musk, according to a person who heard the comment. Other key figures who recently left include Mr. Musk's confidant Omead Afshar, who was in charge of sales and manufacturing operations in North America and Europe. Mr. Jegannathan's expanded role has been interpreted as taking over Mr. Afshar's responsibilities as well, some of the people said.

Milan Kovac, the head of Tesla's Optimus humanoid robot team, announced he was leaving in June. Other recent departures include top battery executive Vineet Mehta and software chief David Lau. Last year, Tesla faced a wave of high-level departures, including chief battery engineer Drew Baglino and global public policy head Rohan Patel.

Mr. Jegannathan has spent 13 years at Tesla in technology roles. He joined in 2012 as a senior staff engineer, with responsibilities for Internet traffic and cloud security, according to his LinkedIn page. More recently, he has helped develop Tesla's data centre effort in Texas, two people familiar with the matter said.

His duties have expanded rapidly. Earlier this year, he became a vice president for IT/AI infrastructure, apps and information security, according to his LinkedIn page.

# Key trends likely to reshape global reinsurance sector in 2025

## OPINION

### Ramaswamy Narayanan

Even as the reinsurance sector was reeling from the impact of the higher tariffs announced by the U.S. on imports from 57 countries in early April, the flare-up of the Israel-Iran conflict and the devastating Air India plane crash have put additional pressures on the global reinsurance business. While the world's leading economy has since paused 'reciprocal tariffs' and continues to engage in talks with trading partners, economists have been warning of rising recession risks which could derail global demand forecast amid rising costs.

On account of the

heightened geopolitical uncertainties, global businesses are already witnessing order cancellations, piling inventory and heightened credit default risks; especially affected are those that rely on imported goods originating from conflict-ridden regions. As a result, insurers could see higher claim costs lines, compelling reinsurers to recalibrate underwriting and pricing strategies. Key near term reinsurance trends:

#### Higher coverage

While the U.S. asserts its tariffs are intended to strengthen its domestic economy, many industries, including insurance, are expected to face significant inflationary pressures. The 25% duty on imported au-



**Code red:** While the world's leading economy has since paused 'reciprocal tariffs,' economists are warning of rising recession risks.

tomobiles and auto parts will not only drive up the prices of new cars and replacement parts, but also negatively impact automobile insurance rates, as insurers factor in the associated cost escalations.

Similarly, the 25% tariff on steel and aluminium imports will lead to higher construction costs, and ultimately lead to larger insurance payouts across home and commercial segments. What's more, with repair

costs rising on inflated material cost, insurers will also have to raise the coverage limits on existing policies. Also, insurers have to account for the increasing complexities and regulatory risks in public sector projects, forcing them to adjust underwriting policies across most insurance segments.

#### Pricing strategies

As the cost of capital goods and services spirals upwards due to the tariff war, global reinsurers will have to adjust premium pricing models for the auto, property and casualty reinsurance segments, among others. Additionally, the fatal Air India plane crash compelled reinsurers to re-evaluate risks associated with wide-body aircraft

models like the Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner; this would harden aviation reinsurance market leading to stricter terms.

From an operational perspective, tariffs on reinsurance-related services will increase the running costs for global reinsurers, especially for services and contracts involving cross-border deals. Consequently, reinsurers will have to model different loss scenarios, identify potential market dislocations, and revise their premium pricing models on priority.

Even in the unlikely event that the U.S. settles for a flat 10% tariff policy for all its trading partners, reinsurers will have work cut out in the near term, as they factor in the impact of the disruptions on the glo-

bal reinsurance market.

#### Stagflation concerns

Within reinsurance, property reinsurance remains the largest and fastest growing segment, followed by casualty reinsurance covering liability insurance for individuals or corporations.

In terms of regional market share, North America accounts for 34% of the global reinsurance business, while the Asia-Pacific region remains the fastest growing, with a 17% market share currently. While the global reinsurance market was poised to experience a compound annual growth rate of 11% between 2025 and 2032, the tariff war could derail some of this momentum. According to a *Reuters* poll, 92% of the surveyed economists from

50 different economies agree the tariffs will have a negative impact on business sentiment, with 75% alluding to a lower global growth forecast for 2025.

As a result, reinsurers may have to contend with shrinking economic activity in the most extreme scenario, thereby underscoring likelihood of reduced insurance demand and higher credit risks. This is especially true for price-sensitive reinsurance and markets like Latin America and the Asia-Pacific region.

Consequently, reinsurers will have to devise new cost-efficient solutions to tap the emerging markets and help them sustain the positive growth momentum from 2024.

(The writer is CMD, GIC Re)

# Fail fast but never give up trying, says Britannia Industries' Varun Berry

**Britannia Industries MD and CEO talks about the company's transformation from a biscuit giant to a food powerhouse; efforts to create a ₹1,000 cr blockbuster brand; focus on bolstering distribution network, research and development initiatives and ofcourse, the crucial marketing function**

## IN CHAT

### Vinay Kamath

I'm waiting for Varun Berry, MD and CEO of Britannia Industries, at his office in Whitefield, Bengaluru. There's a lip-smacking array of Britannia products on the table in front of me. I sample a bit of cheese and cookies. I ran over in my mind Britannia's steps to emerge as a foods company rather than a biscuits major.

In 1984, freshly graduated from Punjab Engineering College, Chandigarh-bred Berry was kicked up about gaining admission to a U.S. university with scholarship. But his dreams for a master's in the U.S. came crashing down when his visa application was rejected. He wondered whether it was due to his Punjabi origins at a time when terrorism in the State was at its peak and Operation Bluestar had just happened. He set foot, instead, in his home country's consumer goods sector after he was selected for an executive role at Unilever, where he spent the first eight years of his career.

The lanky Mr. Berry, all 6'4" of him, walks in.

My first question was, "Is rural and urban growth coming back for consumer goods?" Mr. Berry says Britannia is definitely seeing rural growth reviving. "In



**Full of flavour:** It's been great, fulfilling as a business, says Varun Berry on his stint with the company.

urban areas, there's a pull into e-commerce and a bit from modern trade as well. While e-commerce is only about 3% for us, it's growing exponentially; modern trade is also growing, general trade (mom-and-pop stores) is growing to a lesser extent. Urban growth is coming back, but less than rural and slow," he explains.

But worries remain. "Rentals have gone through the roof and with price increases all round, it's putting pressure on consumers. Salaries haven't gone up in the same proportion." This year, with good rains expected, a growth revival could well be round the corner. He looks forward to that, after the stress of the past 18-24 months. "We need a

Cakes, launched 25-30 years ago, have still not got to ₹1,000 cr. We are giving a big impetus to cakes; along with rusks it should be a ₹1,000 crore business for us

break," he adds.

I ask Mr. Berry about Britannia's premiumisation journey. "Going quite well," he replies, before shifting focus to the company's bottom-of-the-pyramid products such as Tiger glucose, cookies, Tiger creams. The firm intentionally has mere 7% share in the category, mainly for brand representation. "Brands such as Tiger don't give us good margins.

Just selling empty kilos is not going to help in the long run, right? It's not that Tiger is a small brand today; even today with our share, its volumes are still big, but are not accretive to our margins," he explains.

The 'belly of the market' brands such as Good Day and Marie offer good margins. The premium – and new – products such as Nutri Choice and categories such as croissants and wafers are seeing high double-digit growth rates. New launches in cheeses, and Winking Cow shakes, large cakes for celebrations, et al, are doing well in the market, he adds.

I ask about Britannia's journey of becoming a complete foods company with a bigger contribution of non-biscuits (it's 70:30

now) to its portfolio. "That journey suffered during COVID because biscuits and in-home consumption just took off; everyone was stressed, so they were looking at probably the cheapest form of food.

The third reason was most of our adjacency products are out-of-home products. But it's slowly coming back as we've launched quite a few products in non-biscuits categories," explains Mr. Berry.

#### Milkshakes sales

Britannia's Winking Cow milkshakes are doing well and contribute ₹250 crore, while croissants and wafers fetch ₹130-140 crore. A blockbuster brand for Britannia would need to be at least ₹1,000 crore in size.

"We've launched a lot of categories which are growing fast. But biscuits are so big for us that to move the needle big-time will take a lot longer," says Mr. Berry.

Some categories should get to that target in the next 2-3 years, he muses.

"Cakes, which we launched, maybe 25-30 years ago, have still not got to ₹1,000 crore. We are giving a big impetus to cakes; along with rusks it should be a ₹1,000 crore business for us," he elaborates.

While Britannia dominates southern markets, there have been surprises upcountry, he says. Bihar, West Bengal and Odisha are its strong markets.

Britannia has bolstered its distribution across three million direct outlets and 6.5 million indirect outlets. Though it still has more ground to cover to catch up with Parle, he concedes.

How would he describe the 12 years since he took over as MD of Britannia? "It's been great, fulfilling as a business, and, more than that, from a people perspective. I guess everyone has enjoyed the ride. We've had some tough years, but people have stuck around and given their best. We also brought a complete change to the way the organisation looks and feels. We used to cater to a much older audience and we're seeing how to make our products younger in appeal to a different audience, and it's not easy because biscuits are a pretty mature category," he explains.

"If you must stay with those consumers, you will have to create excitement, whatever category you are in," he adds.

Mr. Berry says there's been a lot of R&D and marketing effort to launch in adjacent categories.

"We've taken big risks. Some we've not been successful with. Our philosophy is to fail fast and keep trying... though we do get beaten occasionally, broadly the ship's been on course," he says.

(The writer is with *The Hindu businessline*)

# More volatility ahead, a mid-year prediction update

## OPINION

### Shiv Shivakumar

I had predicted significant changes for the year ahead, in my January 25 opening note penned for *businessline's* Corporate File section. How did I do on my predictions?

\* I had said it would be an unpredictable year. The VIX index is at about 17-plus right now, signalling high volatility.

\* Trade wars via tariffs will replace physical wars. Tariffs are one of the most searched words this year. Tariffs are going up before going down, almost every country and every category is on the tariff list. If you are not on the list, you are irrelevant. Nothing is off the table. In the tariff wars,



**New world order:** In the tariff wars, a friend of an enemy is an enemy; rules and order have changed, convenience is in. REUTERS

a friend of an enemy is an enemy. Rules and order have changed, convenience is in.

\* Donald Trump, I said, would change things upside down, and he did. I predicted the U.S. GDP growth to be around 2%; now I think it will be closer to 1.4% – still significant,

adding \$420 billion on a \$30 trillion base. China will add about \$900 billion to its \$19 trillion GDP in 2025.

President Trump single-handedly changed the rules on everything, from meeting leaders live in the White House Oval Office, to calling out countries to fall in line. No other leader

in world history has wielded such power so swiftly. He has single-handedly made irrelevant institutions such as the WHO, WTO, and the UN.

Global competitiveness is now a combination of economic power, military strength, soft power, innovation strength, and digital readiness. Military spends, typically at \$3 trillion per annum, will grow by nearly 8% for the next few years. This will lead to a cut in welfare programmes and tax rise in many countries.

\* I predicted interest rates would go down; they have in the U.S., U.K., India and China.

\* I predicted the dollar will get stronger. I got this wrong. The dollar weakened by 11% against the six major currencies so far in 2025.

\* I predicted immigration to be a hot issue, and that's turning out to be so in the U.S., Bangladesh, India, and Europe. Immigration uncertainty will hit student enrollment at the top global universities.

\* Quick commerce was predicted to get stronger, and it has done. Expect Q-comm to get stronger in the second half.

\* I predicted the Sensex to be at 85,000 by the year-end. It crossed 83,000 recently, before moving to 82,000-plus. If the U.S. trade deal happens and the EU issue over Russian oil purchase is resolved, then I still hold to 85,000. However, the one dampener here is job security. An unsure job environment will challenge people's participation in the stock market.

\* AI is hurting jobs and will continue to do so. Going by the current trend, no one is too big or too senior to be untouched by the pink slip. A lot of technology companies and consultants are asking you to go up the value ladder at work. I don't understand this. Where will you go?

\* Job security will be at a premium, I predicted. Job losses in the tech industry alone are about one lakh so far, with more on the way. Individuals need to build their own skill base and not depend on companies to gift it to them. So, I got eight right on the list! Expect volatility in the next five months; fasten your seat belts.

(Shiv Shivakumar is operating partner, Advent International and former chief of Pepsico India and Nokia India)

50 different economies agree the tariffs will have a negative impact on business sentiment, with 75% alluding to a lower global growth forecast for 2025. As a result, reinsurers may have to contend with shrinking economic activity in the most extreme scenario, thereby underscoring likelihood of reduced insurance demand and higher credit risks. This is especially true for price-sensitive reinsurance and markets like Latin America and the Asia-Pacific region. Consequently, reinsurers will have to devise new cost-efficient solutions to tap the emerging markets and help them sustain the positive growth momentum from 2024.

(The writer is CMD, GIC Re)

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**TEHRAN**

**Fire at Iran's largest oil refinery kills one in the country's southwest**



A fire at Iran's largest oil refinery in the southwest killed one person, state media reported on Sunday. A leaky pump in an under-repair unit at Abadan refinery caused the fire on Saturday, killing a worker. Firefighters put out the blaze in two hours and operations remained unaffected, the report stated. AP

**ISLAMABAD**

**Ten more killed in Pakistan due to monsoon rain, toll crosses 200**



The death toll in Pakistan due to monsoon rain crossed 200 on Sunday as another 10 persons have been killed, according to the country's chief disaster control body. The seasonal downpour began on June 26 when the first spell of monsoon rain was recorded, triggering flash floods in the northwest of the country. PTI

**WASHINGTON**

**Trump, Xi likely to meet during October APEC summit in S. Korea**



U.S. President Donald Trump might visit China before going to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit between October 30 and November 1, or he could meet Chinese leader Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the APEC event in South Korea, a media report stated on Sunday citing multiple sources. REUTERS

**MANADO**

**At least five killed as Indonesian passenger ferry catches fire at sea**



**Israel orders evacuations in central Gaza as talks stall**

**Associated Press**  
DEIR AL-BALAH

The Israeli military published new evacuation warnings for areas of central Gaza on Sunday, in one of the few areas where the military has rarely operated with ground troops. The evacuation cuts access between the city of Deir al-Balah and the southern cities of Rafah and Khan Younis in the narrow enclave.

The move comes as Israel and Hamas have been holding truce talks in Qatar, but mediators say there have been no breakthroughs. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has stressed that expanding military operations in Gaza will pressure Hamas for talks, but negotiations have been stalled.

## Israeli strikes kill 85 trying to reach aid sites across Gaza

**Largest toll recorded in northern Gaza where 79 were killed and 150 injured trying to access aid; UN official says Israeli forces opened fire toward crowds who tried to take food from a convoy**

**Associated Press**  
DEIR AL-BALAH

At least 85 Palestinians were killed while trying to reach food at locations across Gaza on Sunday, the territory's Health Ministry said, on the deadliest day yet for aid-seekers in over 21 months of war.

The largest death toll was in devastated northern Gaza, where living conditions are especially dire. At least 79 Palestinians were killed while trying to reach aid entering through the Zikim crossing with Israel, Zaher al-Waheidi, head of the Health Ministry's records department, said. The UN World Food Pro-



**Little result:** A nun, children, and young altar servers attend a morning mass at a church in Gaza City on Sunday. AFP

gram said 25 trucks with aid had entered for "starving communities" when it encountered massive crowds. A UN official said Israeli

fire was heard.

More than 150 people were wounded, some in critical condition, hospitals said.

Mr. Al-Waheidi said another six Palestinians were killed in the Shakhoush area, hundreds of metres north of a hub of the recently created Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, a U.S.- and Israel-backed group, in the southern city of Rafah.

Separately, seven Palestinians were killed while sheltering in tents in Khan Younis in the south, including a five-year-old boy, according to the Kuwait Specialized Field Hospital, which received the casualties.

## Truce holds in south Syria as week-long clashes kill 1,000

**Agence France-Presse**  
SWEIDA

Calm returned to southern Syria's Sweida province on Sunday, after a week of sectarian violence between Druze fighters and rival groups that killed more than 1,000 people.

A ceasefire announced on Saturday appeared to be holding after earlier agreements failed to end fighting between longtime rivals the Druze and the Bedouin that spiralled to draw in the Islamist-led government, the Israeli military and armed tribes from other parts of Syria.

**No clashes**

Witnesses on the outskirts of Sweida city reported hearing no clashes on Sunday morning, with government forces deployed in some locations in the province in order to prevent



Security forces stand guard at a checkpoint to prevent Bedouin fighters from advancing towards Sweida on Sunday. REUTERS

vinces to enforce the truce and at least one humanitarian convoy headed for the Druze-majority city.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that since around midnight, "Sweida has been experiencing a cautious calm", adding government security forces had blocked roads leading to the province in order to prevent tribal fighters from going there.

The Britain-based Observatory gave an updated toll on Sunday of more than 1,000 killed since the violence erupted a week ago, including 336 Druze fighters and 298 civilians from the minority group, as well as 342 government security personnel and 21 Sunnis.

## Putin meets adviser to Iran's Khamenei for nuclear talks

**Agence France-Presse**  
MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin held a surprise meeting with Ali Larijani, top adviser to Iran's supreme leader on nuclear issues, to discuss Tehran's nuclear programme in the Kremlin on Sunday.

Moscow has a cordial relationship with Iran's clerical leadership and provides crucial backing for Tehran but did not swing forcefully behind its partner even after the U.S. joined Israel's massive bombing campaign on Iran in June.

Mr. Larijani "conveyed assessments of the escalating situation in the Middle East [West Asia] and around the Iranian nuclear programme", Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov

**Britain, France, Germany to hold new discussions with Iran on its nuclear programme**

said. Mr. Putin had expressed Russia's "well-known positions on how to stabilise the situation in the region and on the political settlement of the Iranian nuclear programme", he added.

Separately, a German diplomatic source said on Sunday that Britain, France and Germany are planning to hold talks with Iran on its nuclear programme in the coming days. Iran's Tasnim news agency also reported that Tehran had agreed to hold talks with the three European countries.

## Going fishing



Indonesians use nets to catch two tonnes of fish released by officials at the Gemblegan Reservoir in Klaten in Central Java on Sunday as part of the traditional fish-catching festival of Memed Ikan. It is celebrated to give thanks to the God for the abundance of fish harvests. AFP

## Exit polls predict drubbing for Japan PM in Upper House

**Agence France-Presse**  
TOKYO

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's coalition lost its Upper House majority in elections on Sunday, local media projected, in a debacle that could end his short premiership.

Mr. Ishiba's governing coalition was already humiliatingly forced into a minority government after Lower House elections in October, shortly after he became Prime Minister and called the snap vote.

Mr. Ishiba's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its partner Komeito won around 41 of the 125 Upper House seats contested on Sunday, short of the 50 needed to retain a majority, Nippon TV and TBS projected. National broadcaster NHK projected that the LDP could win anything between 27 and 41 seats and Komeito between five and 12, making retaining a majority "difficult".

The right-wing populist party Sanseido was meanwhile projected to have made strong gains, winning between 10 and 22 seats, adding to the two it already holds in the 248-seat chamber.

Mr. Ishiba, 68, a self-avowed policy "geek" seen as a safe pair of hands when he won the LDP leadership in September, was tight-lipped late on Sunday about his future.

"It's a difficult situation, and we have to take it very humbly and seriously," Mr. Ishiba told broadcaster NHK. Asked about his future, he said only that he "cannot speak lightly of it".

"We can't do anything until we see the final results," Mr. Ishiba added.

"Ishiba may be replaced



by someone else, but it's not clear who will be the successor," Hidehiro Yamamoto, politics and sociology professor at the University of Tsukuba said.

Mr. Ishiba's centre-right LDP has governed Japan almost continuously since 1955, albeit with frequent changes of leader.

Mr. Ishiba took over in September on his fifth attempt and immediately called elections.

But this backfired and the vote left the LDP and its small coalition partner Komeito needing support from opposition parties, stymying its legislative agenda.

**Plagued by challenges**  
Many voters are angry about rising prices and falling living standards.

At one Tokyo polling station on Sunday, 54-year-old voter Atsushi Matsuura said: "Commodity prices are going up, but I am more worried that salaries aren't increasing."

Not helping is lingering resentment about an LDP funding scandal, and U.S. tariffs of 25% due to bite from August 1. Japanese imports are already subject to a 10% tariff, while the auto industry, which accounts for 8% of jobs, is reeling from a 25% levy.

## 'Russia open to peace but achieving goals remains priority'

**Associated Press**  
MOSCOW

Russia is open to peace with Ukraine but achieving its goals remains a priority, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Sunday, days after U.S. President Donald Trump gave Moscow a 50-day deadline to agree to a ceasefire or face tougher sanctions.

Mr. Peskov and other Russian officials have repeatedly rejected accusations from Kyiv and its Western partners of stalling peace talks. Meanwhile, Moscow continues to intensify its long-range attacks on Ukrainian cities, launching more drones in a single night than it did

during some entire months in 2024, and analysts say the barrages are likely to escalate.

"President (Vladimir) Putin has repeatedly spoken of his desire to bring the Ukrainian settlement to a peaceful conclusion as soon as possible. This is a long process, it requires effort, and it is not easy," Mr. Peskov told state TV reporter Pavel Zarubin. "The main thing for us is to achieve our goals. Our goals are clear," he added.

The Kremlin has insisted that any peace deal should see Ukraine withdraw from the four regions that Russia illegally annexed in September 2022, but never fully captured.



**Consecutive attacks:** A rescuer walks at the site of a Russian drone strike in Dnipro in Ukraine earlier last week. Reuters

It also wants Ukraine to renounce its bid to join NATO and accept strict limits on its armed forces – demands Kyiv and its Western allies have rejected.

In his nightly address on Saturday, Ukrainian Presi-

dent Volodymyr Zelensky said his officials have proposed a new round of peace talks this week. Russian state media on Sunday reported that no date has yet been set for the negotiations, but said Istanbul

would likely remain the host city.

**Trump's threat**  
Mr. Trump threatened Russia on July 14 with steep tariffs and announced a rejuvenated pipeline for American weapons to reach Ukraine, hardening his stance toward Moscow after months of frustration following unsuccessful negotiations aimed at ending the war. The direct Russia-Ukraine negotiations in Istanbul resulted in several rounds of prisoner exchanges but little else.

Mr. Trump said he would implement "severe tariffs" unless a peace deal is reached within 50 days. He provided few details on

how they would be implemented, but suggested they would target Russia's trading partners in an effort to isolate Moscow in the global economy.

In addition, Mr. Trump said European allies would "billions and billions" of dollars of U.S. military equipment to be transferred to Ukraine, replenishing the besieged country's supplies of weapons.

**Latest gains**  
Meanwhile, Russian forces have taken control of the village of Bila Hora in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, state-run RIA news agency reported on Sunday citing the Russian Defense Ministry.

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CM YK A IN-X



U.K. water companies have been under attack over the discharge of sewage into rivers and lakes. ISTOCKPHOTO

## U.K. govt. pledges to halve sewage pollution by 2030

**Agence France-Presse**

LONDON

The U.K. government on Sunday promised to halve sewage pollution caused by water companies by 2030, after the number of serious contamination incidents in England was revealed to have risen by 60% in a year.

Privatised in 1989, U.K. water companies have been under attack over the discharge of significant quantities of sewage into rivers, lakes and the sea.

Environment Secretary Steve Reed said water industry regulator Ofwat, which is reportedly facing abolition, was "clearly failing". "It's failed everybody. It's failed customers, we saw those huge bill rises. It's failed the environment," he told the BBC. "I have been up and down this country and spoken to wild swimmers, parents, everybody furious about the state of our water," Mr. Reed said, adding that regulation of the industry "must change".

Suffering from underinvestment in a sewerage system that dates largely back to the Victorian era, U.K. water companies have faced a barrage of criticism for several years over pollution. Britain's public spending watchdog warned in April that the water sector as a whole will need to invest \$388 billion over the next 25 years to meet environmental and supply challenges.

On Monday, a landmark review of the water industry will outline recommendations to the government on tackling the sector's environmental and financial performance.

# 'No life without water': settler attacks threaten communities in West Bank

By damaging, diverting or seizing control of Palestinian water sources, settlers use water as a tool to forcibly displace people to other locations; according to an NGO, the legal system has also led to sharp disparities in water access within the West Bank between Palestinians and Israelis

**Agence France-Presse**

KAFR MALIK

From his monitoring station on a remote hill in the occupied West Bank, water operator Subhil Olayan keeps watch over a lifeline for Palestinians, the Ein Samiyah spring.

So when Israeli settlers recently attacked the system of wells, pumps and pipelines he oversees, he knew the stakes.

"There is no life without water, of course", he said, following the attack which temporarily cut off the water supply to nearby villages.

The spring, which feeds the pumping station, is the main or backup water source for some 1,10,000 people, according to the Palestinian company that manages it – making it one of the most vital in the West Bank, where water is in chronic short supply.

The attack is one of several recent incidents in which settlers have been accused of damaging, diverting or seizing control of Palestinian water sources.

"The settlers came and the first thing they did was break the pipeline. And when the pipeline is broken, we automatically have to stop pumping" water to nearby villages, some of



Israeli settlers swim in the Ein Samiyah spring near Kafir Malik, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. The spring is one of the most vital in the West Bank, where water is in chronic short supply. FILE PHOTO

which exclusively rely on the Ein Samiyah spring.

"The water just goes into the dirt, into the ground," Mr. Olayan said, adding that workers immediately fixed the damage to resume water supply.

Just two days after the latest attack, Israeli settlers – some of them armed – splashed in pools just below the spring, while Mr. Olayan monitored water pressure and cameras from a distance.

His software showed normal pressure in the pipes pulling water from the wells and the large pipe carrying water up the hill to his village of Kafir Malik.

But he said maintenance teams dared not venture down to the pumping station out of fear for their safety.

Since the start of the war in Gaza, deadly settler attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank have become commonplace.

Last week, settlers beat a 20-year-old dual U.S. citizen to death in the nearby village of Sinjal, prompting U.S. Ambassador Mike Huckabee to urge Israel to "aggressively investigate" the killing.

**Tool for annexation'**

Issa Qassis, chairman on the board of the Jerusalem

Most prominent among them is Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, himself a settler, who said in November that 2025 would be the year Israel applies its sovereignty over the Palestinian territory.

Mr. Qassis accused Israel's government of supporting settler attacks such as the one on Ein Samiyah.

The Israeli Army said that soldiers were not aware of the incident in which pipes were damaged, "and therefore were unable to prevent it".

The damage to Ein Samiyah's water facilities was not an isolated incident.

In recent months, settlers in the nearby Jordan Valley took control of the Al-Auja spring by diverting its water from upstream, said Farhan Ghawanmeh, a representative of the Ras Ein Al Auja community.

He said two other springs in the area had also recently been taken over by settlers.

**Water rights**

In Dura al-Qaraa, another West Bank village that uses the Ein Samiyah spring as a back-up water source, residents are also concerned about increasingly long droughts and the way Israel regulates their water rights.

"For years now, no one has been planting because

the water levels have decreased," said Rafeaa Qasim, a member of the village council, citing lower rainfall causing the land to be "basically abandoned".

Mr. Qasim said that though water shortages in the village have existed for 30 years, residents' hands are tied in the face of this challenge.

"We have no options; digging a well is not allowed", despite the presence of local water springs, he said, pointing to a well project that the UN and World Bank rejected due to Israeli law prohibiting drilling in the area.

The lands chosen for drilling sit in the West Bank's Area C, which covers more than 60% of the territory and is under full Israeli control.

Israeli NGO B'Tselem reported in 2023 that the legal system led to sharp disparities in water access within the West Bank between Palestinians and Israelis.

Whereas nearly all residents of Israel and Israeli settlements have running water every day, only 36% of West Bank Palestinians do, the report said.

In Dura al-Qaraa, Qasim fears for the future.

"Each year, the water decreases and the crisis grows – it's not getting better, it's getting worse."

## Hong Kong tempest



Waves surge near the Victoria Harbor as Typhoon Wipha battered Hong Kong with strong winds and heavy rain on Sunday. Fallen trees and collapsed scaffolding were reported across the city. The highest tropical cyclone warning, T10, was issued for seven hours. AP

# Eritrean President warns Ethiopia against waging war amid tensions

**Agence France-Presse**

NAIROBI

Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki has warned neighbour Ethiopia against launching a new war between the bitter foes, with tensions high in the Horn of Africa region.

Eritrea and Ethiopia have had fraught relations since the former declared independence in 1993, with tens of thousands of people killed in a war between the two from 1998 to 2000.

At the heart of the current tension, according to the Eritrean government, is landlocked Ethiopia's long-held desire for a seaport.

Mr. Afwerki, who has ruled Eritrea with an iron fist since independence, warned Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed that



Frayed bond: Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki with Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in Ethiopia. FILE PHOTO

he would not be able to simply overwhelm his country by weight of numbers – Ethiopia's population is 130 million, compared to just 3.5 million people living in Eritrea.

"If he thinks he can overwhelm [Eritrean forces] with human wave attack, [he is mistaken]," Mr. Afwerki told state televi-

sion channel Eri-TV.

"Before dragging the people of Ethiopia into unwanted wars or using them for another political agenda, the country's internal problems must be first addressed and solved," he said.

He called Mr. Abiy's actions a "reckless" attempt to "divert attention" from

domestic problems.

Mr. Abiy signed a peace deal with Mr. Afwerki shortly after coming to power in 2018, but a violent conflict erupted in Ethiopia's Tigray province from 2020 to 2022 as Eritrea's forces backed rebels there fighting Ethiopian troops. At least 6 lakh people were killed in the conflict, according to an African Union estimate.

Although a peace deal ended the fighting, Eritrea has maintained a military presence in Tigray and relations between the neighbours have deteriorated.

Mr. Abiy has repeatedly said Ethiopia must have access to the sea, but by peaceful means.

Last month, a report by a U.S. monitoring group accused Eritrea of rebuilding its Army and destabilising its neighbours.

# By 'cleaning up U.S.', Trump pivots Native Americans from the political left

**Agence France-Presse**

TUBA CITY

sive U.S. President.

Like her, some neighbours have begun to blame immigration from Latin America for the unemployment and drug trade plaguing the impoverished reservation.

"Trump is cleaning up America, it's a good thing," said Ms. Mexican, a former power plant employee who praised Mr. Trump's hardline deportation policy.

"America has to come first," she said. "Us Natives, we are Americans and we should have the jobs first."

Rising inflation is an enduring concern in this isolated region, where cars are essential for getting around.

Ms. Mexican and her husband Joe spend \$40 a day on gasoline to tend to their sheep, which are kept

in a pen some 40 km away.

The couple also provide financial support for some of their unemployed grandchildren.

"Sometimes we don't have enough to get groceries for the both of us," Ms. Mexican said, adding that she would like Mr. Trump to "slow down" on his tariffs targeting multiple imported products.

### Surprising inroads

Spanning the southwestern United States of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah, the Navajo Nation is the largest Native American reservation in the United States.

Mr. Trump made surprising inroads in last year's presidential election in the region that has been a Democratic stronghold since the 1980s.

The Republican leader



Navajo Nation resident Gilberta Cortes at her house in Arizona. Ms. Cortes says she is not impressed by the U.S. President. AFP

notably won by 17.1 points in Navajo County, double his margin of victory from four years earlier, and lost by just 19 points in Apache County, down from 33.6 in 2020.

A similar trend was observed nationwide, from North Carolina to Montana, with Native American

does not get electricity, Gilberta Cortes said she "butts heads... all the time" with her 21-year-old son, who voted for Mr. Trump. "He talks about inflation, he says that cartels are ruining everything for Native Americans," Ms. Cortes said.

### Election tactic

The 42-year-old mother is not as impressed by the U.S. President.

She resents his mockery of the Native American origins of Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren, whom he regularly refers to as "Pocahontas."

Laws enacted by Mr. Trump during his first term to investigate the disappearance of thousands of Native American women did not persuade her either.

"It was just favouritism so that he would get our votes," said the left-wing voter. And the President's anti-immigration rhetoric and policies have unsettled her further.

Several Navajos have been stopped in recent months by immigration agents because of their skin colour, according to some reservation officials.

"You see a lot of racism... When I go out, I feel like I'm just walking on eggshells," Ms. Cortes said.

Mr. Trump's climate change scepticism is also a concern, with many Native Americans claiming a spiritual connection to the environment.

Ms. Cortes has had to forbid her children from playing outside in the summer because of heat waves, which are growing

more intense in the Arizona desert.

"If he drills oil like crazy and he makes cuts to environmental agencies, it's gonna make things worse in the long run," Ms. Cortes said.

Elbert Yazzie thinks some of his friends will soon regret their decision.

Mr. Trump's recently passed signature spending Bill is expected to shrink the federal food assistance program, among other cuts that could hit out at low-income Americans.

"They voted for him because they thought there would be more jobs for us American citizens. But instead, he's cutting off food stamps," Mr. Yazzie said from his caravan.

"That's going to affect a lot of people around here," Mr. Yazzie added.

**HIGH REGARD**

Anderson feels out of place sharing trophy name with Tendulkar



FILE PHOTO

England pace legend James Anderson confessed that seeing his name alongside the iconic Sachin Tendulkar on a trophy feels "completely out of place". "I feel completely out of place when I see myself alongside him with the trophy. I hold him in such high regard," Anderson said.

**FIGHTING HARD**

Rew, Ekansh prop up England u-19 on first day of second Youth Test



FILE PHOTO

Fifties by captain Thomas Rew, in pic, and Ekansh Singh lifted England under-19 to 229 for seven on a rain-hit opening day of the second Youth Test against the Indian colts at Chelmsford on Sunday. **The scores:** England u-19 229/7 in 62 overs (Thomas Rew 59, Ekansh Singh 66 batting) vs India u-19. **Toss:** India u-19.

**LOW-SCORING AFFAIR**

Bangladesh gets the better of Pakistan in the first T20I



FILE PHOTO

Host Bangladesh defeated Pakistan by seven wickets in the first T20I at the Shere Bangla National Stadium in Dhaka on Sunday. **The scores:** Pakistan 110 in 19.3 overs (Fakhar 44, Taskin 3/22, Mustafizur 2/6) lost to Bangladesh 112/3 in 15.3 overs (Emon 56 n.o., Hridoy 36, Mirza 2/23); **Toss:** Bangladesh; **PoM:** Emon.

**UP THE HILL**

Tim Wellens wins stage 15 while Pogacar retains the lead



AP

Tim Wellens, in pic, won a baking and hilly stage 15 of the Tour de France at the walled citadel of Carcassonne on Sunday as his UAE teammate Tadej Pogacar retained the overall lead. Wellens also won stages on the Giro d'Italia and the Vuelta a Espana, while this was a fifth stage win for Team UAE, Pogacar having already won four.

Pacer Kamboj added as cover to India squad

**INDIA IN ENGLAND**

**Shayan Acharya**

MANCHESTER

Fast bowler Anshul Kamboj has been added to India's squad ahead of the fourth Test against England as a cover for Arshdeep Singh, who suffered a cut in his bowling hand during a training session in Beckenham earlier this week.

With Arshdeep unlikely to recover in time for the Manchester Test, which begins on Wednesday, the national selection committee has decided to add the young fast bowler from Haryana as a back-up option for the remainder of the series.

After a successful domestic season, where he claimed 79 wickets in 24 games for Haryana, Kamboj had a fruitful stint with India-A during its two three-day match series against England Lions. As he claimed five wickets in two games, the selectors were impressed with his performance.

With Arshdeep likely to take another 10 days to recover and Akash Deep picking up a groin niggle, it would be interesting to see if Kamboj, who linked up with the squad on Sunday, is eventually drafted into India's playing XI.

**Nitish suffers injury**  
Meanwhile, Nitish Kumar Reddy is in danger of being ruled out of the remainder of the Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy after picking up a knee injury while training at the gym.

*The Hindu* understands



It remains to be seen whether Kamboj will be drafted into India's playing XI.

FILE PHOTO: B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

that the all-rounder underwent scans, which revealed ligament damage, and the BCCI medical team is currently monitoring the situation before making a decision about his future.

Nitish skipped the team's visit to Manchester United FC, and also could not be spotted in the closed-door optional practice session.

India now finds itself in a spot of bother ahead of the crucial Test, and the availability of Jasprit Bumrah becomes even more critical. Among the pacers, Mohammed Siraj is the only one to have played all three Tests in this series and has bowled the most overs for the tourists. With still a couple of matches to go, the team management needs to manage Siraj's workload carefully.

While Pant featured in all three Tests in the series so far, Jurel worked closely with fielding coach T. Dilip and batting coach Sitanshu Kotak over the last several weeks to make sure he remains fit and in the groove.

When India had a long session at Beckenham earlier this week, Jurel was

## Long wait could be over for Jurel at Old Trafford

First-choice wicketkeeper Pant, who is nursing a finger injury, may feature as a specialist batter in the fourth Test; he will be monitored over the next couple of days before taking a call

**Shayan Acharya**  
MANCHESTER

**D**hruv Jurel isn't quite expressive. He is calm, though not often quiet. He comes with a positive mindset, and is always ready to put in the hard yards.

The son of an army man, he focuses on 'process' and 'discipline'. Those two words, he believes, have helped him grow as a cricketer. In a competitive environment, where opportunity doesn't come easy, long waits may often make or break careers, and for Jurel, it has been a long eight-month wait since his last Test outing in Perth last November. But the 24-year-old has taken it in his stride.

Ever since landing in England a couple of months ago, Jurel featured in just two games for India-A, where he scored 227 runs in four innings and claimed seven catches. But in the senior team, Jurel has been under the shadow of Rishabh Pant, the team's vice-captain and the first-choice wicketkeeper-batter.

While Pant featured in all three Tests in the series so far, Jurel worked closely with fielding coach T. Dilip and batting coach Sitanshu Kotak over the last several weeks to make sure he remains fit and in the groove.

When India had a long session at Beckenham earlier this week, Jurel was



**Tough going:** Jurel conceded 25 byes in the second innings of the Lord's Test. AFP

among the first few batters to have a long session in the nets. As bowling coach Morne Morkel aimed at Jurel's stumps to test his outside edge, the youngster remained unperturbed and looked confident throughout.

And as India gears up for the must-win fourth Test at Old Trafford, India's assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate indicated that if Pant, who hurt his left index finger during the Lord's Test, isn't ready to keep the wickets, India could look at Jurel.

In that case, Pant could be used as a specialist batter. Jurel, being a steady middle-order batter, could

also add depth to the batting department.

However, if both Jurel and Pant end up playing together, it would be a selection headache for the team management. But sources indicated that Pant will be monitored over the next couple of days before taking a call.

"We don't want to go through that again where we have to replace the keeper halfway through in the innings. We are just trying to give (Pant's finger) as long as possible (to heal), and hopefully he's good to go in Manchester in the first training session," Doeschate said, adding: "Jurel is in the equation."

In the previous Test, Jurel came in as Pant's substitute after the latter hurt his finger, and ended up conceding 25 byes in the second innings, as India went down by 22 runs to concede a 1-2 lead in the five-match series.

But it's not just Jurel, several wicket-keepers have struggled in England where the ball wobbles a lot once it goes past the batter.

Despite earning praise from the cricketing fraternity, it has still been a long wait for Jurel. But now, with the series on the line and the team management not willing to risk Pant, he could just get lucky.

**Dominant Scheffler puts his name on the Claret Jug**

**BRITISH OPEN**

**Agence France-Presse**  
PORTRUSH

Scottie Scheffler romped to a magnificent four-shot victory to seal his first British Open title at Royal Portrush on Sunday, notching his fourth Major success.

The World No. 1 eased to a three-under par final round of 68, finishing on 17-under for the tournament after shooting in the 60s on all four days.

It was the 10th successive time he has converted a 54-hole lead into a win.

The American's dominance over the past two years has been such that once he birdied the first hole, it seemed as though the chasing pack had already lost any belief of challenging.

Scheffler extended his run of successive top-10 finishes to 11 events.

That streak now includes the PGA Champion-



**Unstoppable:** Scheffler completed the third leg of a possible career Grand Slam. AP

third leg of a possible career Grand Slam.

Harris English finished second, ending on a 13-under courtesy of a closing round of 66.

## CHESS ROUND-UP

**Humpy scripts history**

BATUMI: Koneru Humpy created history by becoming the first-ever Indian to reach the FIDE Women's World Cup semifinals on Sunday. India No. 1 Humpy, with her black pieces, drew the second classical game against China's Yuxin Song to take the contest with a 1.5-0.5 scoreline. Humpy will next face top-seeded Chinese Lei Tingjie in the semifinal. R. Vaishali lost her second classical game to China's Tan Zhongyi, resulting in her exit from the tournament as Tan won the contest 1.5-0.5. The all-Indian last-eight clash between Harika and Divya Deshmukh will be decided in the tiebreaker on Monday after the duo's second classical game also ended in a draw. The winner of that contest will take on Tan in the semifinals.

**Carlsen to fight for third place**

LAS VEGAS: World No. 1 Magnus Carlsen defeated Arjun Erigaisi 2-0 and R.



**Next move:** Humpy drew the second classical game against Song and will face top-seeded Tingjie in the semifinal.

Praggnanandhaa 3-1 in the Freestyle chess Grand Slam. With Hans Moke Niemann taking on his American counterpart Levon Aronian in the final, Carlsen set up a clash with World No. 2 American Hikaru Nakamura for the third place in the \$7,500 prize money event.

Praggnanandhaa started off with another victory against the world's best in the first game of their mini-match. The Norwegian struck back in the return game and won the next set of games to find himself back in the event. In his next match, Arjun

enjoyed some opening advantage in the first game but could not hold it together while in the second Carlsen proved superior again.

In the other matches slated on the final day, Arjun will meet Fabiano Caruana of United States for the fifth-place play-off while Praggnanandhaa will have to fight for seventh place against another American Wesley So.

**The results:**

**Match 1:** Magnus Carlsen bt R. Praggnanandhaa 3-1; Hikaru Nakamura bt Wesley So 1.5-0.5.

**Match 2:** Arjun Erigaisi lost to Carlsen 0-2; Nakamura bt Fabiano Caruana 3-1.

## SNAPSHOTS

**England remains destination for WTC finals**

SINGAPORE: The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Sunday awarded the hosting rights for the next three editions of World Test Championship finals to England.

The global body made the decision at its annual conference which concluded here Sunday. The three WTC finals scheduled in 2027, 2029 and 2031 after completion of two year cycles will in all likelihood be held in June, which is the time for the cricket season in England.

"We are absolutely delighted that England and Wales has been chosen to host the next three ICC World Test Championship Finals," Richard Gould, ECB CEO, said.

The ICC also welcomed two new members in Timor Leste Cricket Federation and Zambia Cricket Union which were included as Associate Members, taking the ICC's total membership to 110.

Among other decisions, USA Cricket has been given three additional months to undertake comprehensive governance reforms, including but not limited

to completing free and fair elections within the period.

**Indo-Pak World Championship of Legends match called off**

BIRMINGHAM: A veterans' cricket match involving India and Pakistan in the World Championship of Legends here on Sunday was cancelled after the Indian players, including Shikhar Dhawan, refused to be a part of it citing the Pahalgam terror attack in April.

The second edition of the tournament started on June 18 at Edgbaston and is scheduled for an August 2 final.

World Cup winner Yuvraj Singh is the captain of the India legends, while the squad also features the likes of Harbhajan Singh, Irfan Pathan, Suresh Raina, Robin Uthappa and Varun Aaron among others.

The WCL organisers shared a statement on their X account, detailing the decision of cancellation and said their intention while conducting the match was to recreate some "happy memories." The organisers also apologised for "unintentionally causing discomfort" to the Indian legends.

## IN BRIEF

**Marc Marquez cruises to Czech MotoGP win**

Marc Marquez won the Czech MotoGP on Sunday for his eighth victory in 12 races this season and fifth in a row, extending his commanding lead in the world championship. The factory Ducati rider beat Marco Bezzecchi on an Aprilia by almost two seconds, while Pedro Acosta on a KTM finished third.

**Hermann's 63 places SA in final of the T20I tri-series**

A maiden international half-century by Rubin Hermann took South Africa to a seven-wicket win over Zimbabwe in their T20I tri-series match at Harare Sports Club on Sunday. The left-handed Hermann hit 63 off 36 balls. South Africa and unbeaten New Zealand will meet in the final.

**The scores:** Zimbabwe 144/6 in 20 overs (Brian Bennett 61, Ryan Burl 36 n.o.; Corbin Bosch 2/16) vs South Africa 145/3 in 17.2 overs (Rubin Hermann 63, Rassie van der Dussen 52 n.o.; Tintoboda Maposa 2/38).

**Dhakshineswar wins doubles title in Louisville**

Dhakshineswar Suresh and Nicolas Kotzen beat Sekou Bangoura and Benjamin Kittay 6-3, 6-2 in the doubles final of the \$30,000 ITF men's tennis tournament in Louisville, USA. It was the second doubles title of the season for the 25-year-old Dhakshineswar following the one in Indore in partnership with Parikshit Soman. The Indo-American pair dropped only 17 games in all four rounds, and not more than five games to any opponent.

**Other results: Semifinals:** Nicolas & Dhakshineswar bt Jack Anthrop & Preston Stearns (USA) 6-3, 6-2.

**Indian juniors beat Hong Kong, top group**

India continued its winning run, defeating Hong Kong 110-100 to top Group D at the Badminton Asia junior mixed team championships at Solo, Indonesia, on Sunday. India will take on Japan in the quarterfinals on Monday. Both teams had already secured their spots in the knock-out stage before the face-off.

**Bublik downs Cerundolo, wins first clay title in Gstaad**

Kazakhstan's Alexander Bublik battled past Argentine Juan Manuel Cerundolo 6-4, 4-6, 6-3 in the Gstaad final on Sunday to clinch his first career clay-court title. World No. 34 Bublik won on grass at Halle last month and scooped his second title of the season in Switzerland after bouncing back from a first-round loss at Wimbledon. "This is my sixth title and I have played the greats of the game, but this final I will remember as one of the toughest I ever played," said Bublik. "It was complete torture," he added. Cerundolo was playing in his first tour-level final since 2021.

**Barrios retains WBC welterweight crown**

Mario Barrios held off a battling Manny Pacquiao to retain his WBC world welterweight crown with a fight ruled a majority draw in Las Vegas on Saturday. Barrios, 30, held onto his belt despite being dominated for several rounds by 46-year-old Filipino icon Pacquiao, returning to the ring for the first time after a four-year retirement. Barrios was awarded the fight 115-113 by one judge, with the other two cards scoring it 114-114.

# Railways too good for Indian Navy, completes a hat-trick of titles in style

The champion team comes up with a lesson in spotting the weakness of the opponent, working out a plan and executing it to a T in the final

**MURUGAPPA GOLD CUP**

**K. Keerthivasan**  
CHENNAI

**D**efending champion Indian Railways subdued a youthful Indian Navy 3-1 in the final of the 96th MCC-Murugappa Gold Cup hockey tournament at the SDAT-Mayor Radhakrishnan Stadium here on Sunday and completed a hat-trick of titles.

After a sedate start in the pool matches, Railways peaked when it mattered most: in the knockouts.

It was a lesson in spotting the weakness of the opponent and working out a plan and executing it to a T.



**Reigning supreme:** Indian Railways raised its game in the knockout phase to come up trumps.

B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Realising that the Navy players are excellent in deflections through long and short passes from the 25-yard, dotted lines and the striking circle, Railways

seldom allowed the rival strikers any leeway to unleash their shots. Such was the effectiveness of the Railways defence.

In all the four quarters,

who scooped one to the roof of the net after receiving the pass from Gursahibjit Singh from the left. It could have been 2-0 for Railways towards the end of first quarter if not for Zameer, being the last man standing behind 'keeper Sanjay Bhaskar, blocking a shot by Sayyad Niyaz Ram.

Within minutes, Navy equalised through Aakib Rahim Arif who slotted it home from the top of the circle.

Thereafter, it was Railways' show all the way. Pankaj Rawat converted a copy-book penalty corner shot in the third quarter and Niyaz Rahim's fierce hit from the circle in the 57th minute made it beyond the reach of Navy.

Sunil Kumar Singh, who was the head coach of Railways for three straight time, was ecstatic. "It's a huge achievement for us to have a hat-trick in such a big tournament. We improved after each match. We knew the opponent will be depending on the slap shot. We only had to make sure we block it once they enter the 25-yard," said Sunil.

Railways received Rs. 7 lakh while Navy had to be content with Rs. 5 lakh.

M. M. Murugappan, chairman, CUMI and Chola MS, gave away the prizes.

**The result (final):** Indian Railways 3 (Shivam Anand 8, Pankaj Rawat 37, Sayyad Niyaz Rahim 57) bt Navy 1 (Aakib Rahim Arif 15).

## Sreeshankar wins long jump title in Portugal

**ATHLETICS**

**Press Trust of India**  
NEW DELHI

Long jumper M. Sreeshankar clinched the title with a leap of 7.75m at the Meeting Maia Cidade do Desporto in Maia, Portugal, a World Athletics Continental Tour Bronze-level meet.

The Asian Games silver medallist registered his best effort in the second round on Saturday night.

Sreeshankar opened with a 7.63m jump, followed it up with his winning leap of 7.75m in the second round, and then recorded a solid 7.69m. His third attempt was a foul, while his final two jumps were measured at 6.12m and 7.58m.



**All smiles:** Sreeshankar celebrates after his winning effort.

@MEDIA\_SAI

Poland's Piotr Tarkowski matched Sreeshankar's 7.75m effort but his second best jump – 7.58m – was less than the Indian's 7.69m.

According to the World Athletics rules if two competitors tie, their second longest legal jump is used as a tie-breaker.

The meet marks the 26-year-old's second outing

since returning from a long injury layoff following knee surgery. He had announced his comeback with a solid 8.05m win at the Indian Open Athletics Meet earlier this month.

Sreeshankar will be aiming to qualify for the World Championships in Tokyo in September for which the direct qualifying distance is 8.27m.

## Ishaan and Arjun steal the limelight in MRF F2000

**MOTORSPORTS**

**Sports Bureau**  
COIMBATORE

Ishaan Madesh and Arjun Chheda, two 16-year-olds stole the spotlight in the MRF Formula 2000 category, each clinching a race win as the first round of the MRF MMSC FMSCI Indian National Car Racing Championship 2025 concluded at the Kari Motor Speedway here on Sunday. Chheda completed a double, having won Race 1 on Saturday and returning to the podium again.

In the MRF Formula 1600 class, Arjun Nair and Nigel Abraham Thomas emerged victorious in one race apiece in the class.

In the Indian Touring Cars (ITC) category, defending champion Biren Pithawalla (Team NI Racing) pulled off a dramatic win in Race-3, denying former national champion Arjun Balu (Race Concepts) a triple crown. Balu, who was leading the race, suffered a misfire in his car, allowing Pithawalla, despite a turbo issue in his VW Polo, to seize the opportunity and charge towards victory.

**The results (Provisional – all 14 laps unless mentioned otherwise): MRF F2000:**

**Race-1:** 1. Ishaan Madesh 16:37.755s; 2. Biren 17:54.495s; 3. Dhruv Chavan (Buzzing Hornet) 18:00.579s.

**Race-2:** 1. Suprej Venkat 18:44.318s; 2. D. Vidyaprakash 18:45.078s.

**Race-3 (12 laps):** 1. Biren 15:03.891s; 2. Arjun Balu 15:15.873s; 3. Dhruv 15:32.586s.

**ITC1625:** 1. D. Vidyaprakash 16:03.234s; Suprej 16:06.154s.

**ITC1625: 1. Suprej Venkat 18:44.318s; 2. D. Vidyaprakash 18:45.078s.**

**Race-1 (12 laps):** 1. Arjun 13:24.051s; 2. Ishaan 13:26.776s; 3. Akhil Agarwal 13:39.242s.

## MRF MMSC fmisci Indian National Racing Championship 2025



**Podium finish:** MRF F2000 Race-2 winner Ishaan, centre, flanked by second-placed Arjun, left, and Akhil. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

**MRF F1600: Race-2:** 1. Nigel 16:52.562s; 2. Sai Shiva Makesh Sankaran 16:55.351s; 3. Zahan Commissariat 17:07.254s.

**Race-3 (11 laps):** 1. Arjun Nair 14:21.433s; 2. Sankaran 14:21.938s; 3. Nigel 14:22.159s.

**Indian Touring Cars: Race-2:** 1. Arjun Balu 17:36.755s; 2. Biren 17:54.495s; 3. Dhruv Chavan (Buzzing Hornet) 18:00.579s.

**ITC1625:** 1. Suprej Venkat 18:44.318s; 2. D. Vidyaprakash 18:45.078s.

**Race-3 (12 laps):** 1. Biren 15:03.891s; 2. Arjun Balu 15:15.873s; 3. Dhruv 15:32.586s.

**Formula LGB 1300 Open:**

**Race-2:** 1. Bhuvan Bonu (MSPORT) 18:38.743s; 2. Manan Patel (Gameover Motorsports) 18:39.184s.

**Race-3 (11 laps):** 1. Kesar (Redline Racing India) 15:41.190s; 2. Krishanu 15:44.604s; 3. Anirudha Arvind (Strada Motorsports) 15:46.728s.

**Formula LGB 1300 Open:**

**Race-2:** 1. Bhuvan Bonu (MSPORT) 18:38.743s; 2. Bala Prasath (DTS Racing) 21:08.968s; 3. Neythan McPherson (Momentum Motorsports) 21:10.171s.

**Juniors:** 1. Bhuvan 21:02.762s; 2. Neythan 21:10.171s; 3. Aditya Patnaik (Momentum Motorsports) 21:12.492s.

**Volkswagen Polo Cup: Race-2:**

1. Aditya Patnaik (Buzzing Hornet) 18:15.689s; 2. Pratik Patnaik (Sonawane Buzzing Hornet) 18:18.037s; 3. Ojas Surve (Buzzing Hornet) 18:18.904s.

**Race-3 (12 laps):** 1. Aman Nagdev (Buzzing Hornet) 15:31.208s; 2. Aditya Patnaik (Momentum Motorsports) 15:39.615s; 3. Pratik 15:43.667s.

## Five Indians in knockouts of World 6-Red snooker

**Press Trust of India**  
MANAMA

Indian cueists had a good day in office as five of them were assured of knockout berths in the IBSF World 6-Red snooker championships here on Sunday.

Reigning champion Kamal Chawla, Manan Chandra, Brijesh Damani, Paras Gupta and Pankaj Advani registered twin wins apiece in their respective

groups.

In the u-21 category, India's Mayur Garg and Shreyan Razmi booked their places in the knockouts with twin wins.

**The results: Group A:** Kamal Chawla bt Ali Hussein 4-3 (37-26, 5-52, 71-0, 40-1, 6-48, 21-32, 33-23).  
**Group J:** Brijesh Damani bt Abdulrahman Saif 4-1 (8-48, 50-1, 67-0, 55-1, 41-6); Damani bt Asif Imran 4-1 (40-48, 39-10, 31-3, 36-17, 36-0).

**Group M:** Pankaj Advani bt Ahmad Abul 4-1 (27-13, 36-13, 28-32, 45-34, 49-0); Advani bt Ayman Alamri 4-1 (65-0, 43-31, 60-6, 16-33, 46-4).

## Venus returns to tennis, wishes sister Serena will join

**Associated Press**  
WASHINGTON

Venus Williams is back on the tennis scene, ready to compete for the first time in more than a year, and while she smiled or laughed frequently on Sunday while discussing her return at the DC Open, there was something that would make her even happier: if her younger sister Serena were along for the ride.

"I keep saying to my team: The only thing that would make this better is if she [Serena] were here. Like, we always did everything together, so of course I miss her," Venus said when asked about a recent video on social media that showed Serena swinging a racket. "But if she comes back, I'm sure she'll let you all know."

That, of course, was said with a wide grin. Serena, 43, hasn't played since the 2022 U.S. Open. "I don't know what she's going to do. I don't ask those questions," Venus said. When asked why she's getting back on court, Venus offered a simple response: "Why not?"

The Indian mixed team comprised Sathish Kumar Karunakaran, Devika Sihag, Sameeth Dayanand, Tasnim Mir, Varshini Viswanath Sri and Vaishnavi Khadkekar. Swimmer Srihari clocked 49.46 to break Veerhdawal Khade's 17-year-old best Indian time for 100m freestyle and qualify for

**India wins badminton mixed bronze**

BERLIN: India opened its medal account in the Commonwealth Youth Games (WUG) through the shuttlers, who were assured of a mixed team bronze after losing to Chinese Taipei 3-1 in the semifinals, while swimmer Srihari Nataraj continued his record-breaking spree in the pool on Sunday.

The Indian mixed team comprised Sathish Kumar Karunakaran, Devika Sihag, Sameeth Dayanand, Tasnim Mir, Varshini Viswanath Sri and Vaishnavi Khadkekar. Swimmer Srihari clocked 49.46 to break Veerhdawal Khade's 17-year-old best Indian time for 100m freestyle and qualify for

# Tryst with history as India seeks to break Old Trafford jinx

Shubman Gill's men, who broke their duck at Edgbaston in the second Test against England, have an onerous task ahead of them; the ground where the Men in Blue suffered a heartbreakin loss in the 2019 World Cup semifinal was also the venue where Tendulkar scored his maiden Test hundred in a match-saving effort 35 years ago

**R. Kaushik**  
MANCHESTER

**U**ntil a fortnight ago, India hadn't won a Test match at Edgbaston. Shubman Gill's men created history in Birmingham with their commanding 336-run win in the second Test, correcting one anomaly. This week, they will get a chance to set another record straight at Old Trafford, a ground where nine previous Tests have failed to yield a victory.

For various reasons, India have played a mere two Tests in Manchester in the preceding 35 years, the last of them 11 years ago. They were scheduled to play the fifth and final Test here in 2021 until the outbreak of Covid-19 in the ranks and the fear of what it might lead to forced Virat Kohli's men to fly out to Dubai holding a 2-1 lead. When India returned 12 months later, the Test was moved to Birmingham. By then, Rohit Sharma had replaced Kohli as the all-format captain but couldn't play the 'decider' due to Covid. In his first Test as stand-in skipper, Jasprit Bumrah oversaw a crushing seven-wicket loss with England hunting down a target of 378 with consummate ease, thanks to centuries from Joe Root and Jonny Bairstow as the hosts provided an early example of the 'Bazball' style of play that has since become their USP.

The worst of India's four losses dates to July 1952 when Vijay Hazare's side was battered by an innings and 207 runs by an English outfit under Len Hutton. The skipper's century headlined an England tally of 347 for nine declared, after which India had two disastrous outings with the bat. In the first innings, with the fiery Fred Trueman (8/31) scything through their line-up, the visitors were shot out for 58 - a dubious record that went out the window in 1974 when Ajit Wadekar and his men were skittled for 42 at Lord's by Chris Old and Geoff Arnold. In the second innings, Alec Bedser and Tony Lock complemented Trueman by sharing nine wickets, India collapsing in a heap for 82 with Hemu Adhikari's 27 the highest score by an Indian across the two innings. In all, the double-figure mark was breached just five times and there were six ducks.

India's last Test here was in August 2014, marked by further forgettable batting displays that netted them 152 and 161, which ensured that England's 367 was enough to drive them to an innings-and-54-run win. That was the series during which Kohli struggled to buy a run, aggregating just 134 in ten innings with a combination of James Anderson and the corridor of uncertainty his perennial bugbear. Kohli perished to the English swing king for 0 and 7, his travails mirroring that of his team's as they crashed and burned to a 1-3 hammering.

## Big disappointment

The captain during that unedifying campaign was Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who was also at the helm when India wiped the floor 0-4 on the preceding tour in 2011 despite Rahul Dravid amassing 461 runs, studded by three centuries. That was just a few months before Dhoni abruptly announced his retirement from Test cricket during the tour of Australia over the winter, though the innings loss to Alastair Cook's men in 2014 wouldn't be the Jharhkhandi's Old Trafford swansong.

Dhoni returned to Manchester for the 2019 50-over World Cup, making 1 and an unbeaten 56 in comfortable league wins over Pakistan and West Indies respectively. Then came the big one, the semifinal against New Zealand which spilled over to the reserve day.

When rain halted proceedings on the original match day (July 9), the Kiwis had laboured to 211 for five with Ross Taylor and Tom Latham holding fort. India's batting had been in roaring form throughout the tournament, propelled by an unprecedented five centuries in a single World Cup by Rohit Sharma. There was belief within the camp that even if New Zealand posted 250, they had the resources to overhaul that total - the depth in the batting was illustrated by Ravindra Jadeja's presence at No. 8.

At breakfast on the reserve day, Rishabh Pant - interestingly, one of four stumpers in that XI alongside Dhoni, K.L. Rahul and Dinesh Karthik - sought to know Dhoni's plans for the trip to London, ostensibly for the final. Some of the players intended to make the most of the early finish on the reserve day to drive individually to the English capital. Dhoni is supposed to have told his successor-in-waiting that he'd rather travel by the team bus 'one last time', the earliest indication that he was done with international cricket. As it transpired, it wouldn't be another 13 months until he'd formally announce his retirement through



social media.

New Zealand scrambled to 239 for eight on the reserve day when they ran out of time, setting their opponents a challenging target magnified by the overhead conditions that were exactly what Trem Boult, Matt Henry and Lockie Ferguson were praying for. In no time, the cream of the Indian batting, including Rohit and Kohli, were back in the hutch. At 24 for four in 10 overs with Henry breathing fire (he took three of those four wickets), India needed their famed depth to bail them out even if the odds were seriously stacked against them.

Pant and Hardik Pandya ground out 32 apiece but when the left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner accounted for the latter, India were all but out for the count, 92 for six after 30.3 overs. Jadeja's arrival at the crease brought the last recognised pair together, India needing 148 at more than seven over. Then began an extraordinary counter-attack with Jadeja in the forefront. Where Dhoni was content to play second fiddle and bide his time, the left-hander from Saurashtra cut loose uninhibitedly. There were four fours and as many sixes in his 59-ball 77 which easily dominated the seventh-wicket stand of 116.

The duo had brought the equation down to 32 off 20 when, against the run of play, Jadeja was foxed by a Boult slower delivery and holed out to Kane Williamson, the calmest man on the park. But Dhoni was still around and when Dhoni's around, there is still hope, isn't there? It was during this year's IPL, when Dhoni was 43; how could it not have been there when he was 37, no longer at his peak but still a fearsome force of nature?

Thirty-one were required off the last two overs when Ferguson fronted up for the 49th. Boult, Henry and Santner had

all bowled out, Jimmy Neesham would bowl the last over. Dhoni was the master of taking it to the last over and everyone at the ground, all Kiwis included, believed Dhoni would mentally and psychologically stare Neesham down even if 20 were needed off the final six deliveries. It was a question of not getting out to Ferguson; instead, Dhoni went airborne as he scythed the first ball over point for six, after which he patted a yorker back to the bowler.

The third ball was short, banged into the pitch from wide of the crease, the line impeccable. Dhoni could only bunt it behind square, but he saw an opportunity to come back for the second. He did come back for the second, but fell fractionally short as an extraordinary direct hit, off-balance, from Martin Guptill charging in from the boundary shattered the stumps at the striker's end. It also shattered Indian hopes and aspirations. Dhoni was run out for an even 50 but no one cared, not least the protagonist himself. There was no applause for a half-century, just the deafening sound of silence while the Kiwis celebrated with gusto. If there was one moment that encapsulated India's Old Trafford travails, it was that.

Happy memories of the cricket ground that lies just half a mile across from the largest Premiership football stadium of the same name are few and far between, so why not reflect on potentially the most far-reaching of the lot, the first of an incredible 51 Test centuries by the little big man of Indian cricket? Sachin Tendulkar had been dismissed for 88 in Napier in February 1990, caught by future India coach John Wright off Danny Morrison. Had he reached three-figures, he would have become the youngest Test centurion at the time.

Tendulkar wasn't to be denied his maiden tryst with a hundred six months later. India were in a scrap for survival on the last day of the second Test, stumbling to 183 for six after being set 408 for victory. All the big guns - Ravi Shastri, Navjot Singh, Sanjay Manjrekar, Dilip Vengsarkar, skipper Mohammad Azharuddin and Kapil Dev - had come and gone, and only Kiran More and leggies Anil Kumble and Narendra Hirwani were to come when Tendulkar, batting at No. 6, was joined by No. 8 Manoj Prabhakar. England had nearly two and a half hours to wrinkle out the last four wickets and they believed if they split this alliance, the end would only be a few deliveries away.

The 17-year-old Tendulkar was in the early 20s at Prabhakar's arrival. He had shown glimpses of his genius in the first innings with a polished 68 that convinced the English that he was the real deal. But the second innings was a different kettle of fish.

The target was beyond India's reach, their only hope was to grind out a draw but against Devon Malcolm, Angus Fraser, Chris Lewis and veteran off-spinner Eddie Hemmings, that was easier said than done. Despite his tender age and his lack of experience - it was just his ninth Test - Tendulkar instinctively knew that going into a shell was fraught with danger. And so he played his shots, not recklessly or on a song and a prayer, but with assurance and control with a stoic Prabhakar for company. A pushed three to long-off catapulted him past hundred, the thunderous ovation just the first thousands that would accompany him till his last day as an international cricketer. Not quite 'Sa-chin, Saaa-chin', though there's no prizes for guessing where the genesis of that chant lies.

## THE GIST

▼ India have played a mere two Tests in Manchester in the preceding 35 years, the last of them 11 years ago

▼ The worst of India's four losses dates to July 1952 when Vijay Hazare's side was battered by an innings and 207 runs by an English outfit under Len Hutton

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# MAHARASHTRA



A shrine erected to Waghoba (a tiger deity) in memory of Sarika Shende and the two other women who died in a tiger attack, in Chandrapur, Maharashtra. These serve as memorials and villagers believe are a way to seek protection from future attacks. EMMANUEL YOGINI

# Tigress, tigress burning bright

From January to June this year, at least 22 people have lost their lives in Maharashtra's Chandrapur forest circle to human-wildlife conflict. With 347 tigers in the area and each not having sufficient space due to urbanisation, forest officials say they can only increase surveillance and warning systems. **Snehal Mutha** reports on the relationship between the people who live there, the tigers, and the government

**J**ust past the vibrant fields, at the edge of the jungle in Chargaon village, a silence hangs in the air – not of peace, but of memory. On May 10, Vandana Gazbhiye, 50, a daily wage earner, had been resting after collecting *tendu patta* (Indian ebony leaves) near Maharashtra's Sindewahi forest area, around 3 km from her village in Chandrapur district. It was 9.30 a.m. and the rain had thickened the undergrowth.

Suddenly, a tiger sprang out at her. "I still can't get over it; I could have died," says Gazbhiye, who wears a scarf to hide her baldness. The injury from the tiger attack had led to her shaving the rest of her hair off. "I am afraid to step out now," she adds. Chargaon is in the Brahmapuri division in the Chandrapur forest circle. It is closed to tourism, but frequented by tigers.

The Chandrapur forest circle, spanning over 4,081 sq. km., is home to 347 tigers, up from 191 in 2020, as per Chandrapur circle Forest Department data. Across Chandrapur, 166 villages are marked vulnerable by the Department, across three forest divisions: Bramhapuri, Central Chanda, and Chandrapur. Another 106 are in the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR), part of the Chandrapur forest circle, with one village in the core area and the rest in the buffer. In these areas, people have lived in fear of being attacked over the past three to four years.

A month after the attack, Gazbhiye is still in pain and gets headaches. "I wish I never had to go into the jungle, but poverty forces you," she says, adding that she survived because one of the tiger's claws ripped into the *tendu* leaves she was carrying on her back.

Biologist Rakesh Arora, who works at the TATR, says a male tiger requires a minimum home range of 40 sq. km; today, at least four tigers share that space.

The forest area has remained the same but it has been fragmented by urbanisation: highways and expanding villages have cut off tigers from prey. Farmers, *tendu* leaf and mahua collectors, *gurakhi* (shepherd community), and those working for the Forest Department within the jungle are the most impacted by human-wildlife conflict.

In the first six months of 2025, up to 22 people have lost their lives, and 183 people have been injured in human-wildlife conflict, as per the Forest Department. In 2024, they say 27 people died and 165 people were injured, while in the past four and a half years, 929 people have been injured and 184 died.

## Death and tiger rituals

On the same day that Gazbhiye was attacked, three women from Mendha (Mal) village, 4 km from Chargaon, were killed in an attack by the same tiger, later identified as T-81, as per the For-

Despite its proximity to the forest, tigers used to be a rare sight in the village until a couple of years ago. For the first time, someone was attacked in this village

**SHRADDA GURNULE**  
Sarpanch,  
Mendha (Mal)  
village

est Department. One of the deceased was Sarika Shende. Her son, Dheeraj Shende, 25, says, "We are living with tigers like people live with dogs. They are everywhere. I saw a tiger this morning." At Sarika's house in Mendha (Mal), where her photo is hung on the pink wall, her younger son, Atish Shinde, 22, says he could see multiple pug marks in the area his mother was killed.

The officials documented the incident post-attack and set up a committee for approval to trap T-81 tiger and her cubs, who were then caught and sent to the Gorewada zoo in Nagpur, Maharashtra's third-largest city, about 140 km away. "Tigers involved in conflict end up in the zoo, as no reserve or national park accepts them," says veterinary officer (Wildlife) and head of Rapid Rescue Team, Dr. Ravikant S. Khobragade. "A tigress kills for the protection of herself and her cubs rather than attacking humans. However, she is aggressive, and her cubs are naive and curious," he adds.

In the last 12 years, the Forest Department has captured 94 tigers, with 41 found in conflict situations. Among them, 17 are females, 11 are sub-adults, and the rest are male tigers. "Only 36 among the 94 were shifted to the wild, while 58 ended up in the zoo," as per the study conducted by Khobragade.

Mendha (Mal)'s sarpanch, Shraddha Gurnule, 26, has been raising concerns around these incidents with the Forest Department. She has asked for guards to go along with the *tendu* plucker group. In her sonorous voice, Gurnule recalls, "Despite its proximity to the forest, tigers used to be a rare sight in the village until a couple of years ago. For the first time, someone was attacked in this village."

Somewhere between Chargaon and Mendha

(Mal) in Sindewahi block, on the side of the main road, idols of tigers are installed under thatched canopies. They depict the local ritual practised after people's relatives die in a tiger attack. There are three idols for Sarika, who was 50 when she died, and her friends. This ritual is sometimes observed so that the deceased rest in peace. "This is for the peace of the village as well," says Sarika's son Dheeraj. Many believe death by a tiger has to do with a person's previous life.

Troubled tigers and people

Chandrapur Chief Conservator of Forests, Manikanda Ramanujam says, "The Forest Department is working on a war footing to prevent human-wildlife conflict. We are interacting with gram sabhas to create awareness, taking initiatives to reduce the dependence of villagers on the forest, and using technology to monitor the movements of tigers in sensitive villages."

A forest officer in Chandrapur says that in five years the conflict is only going to increase if appropriate steps are not taken. "Earlier, attacks used to happen mostly in the summer, but now they have extended to the entire year," he says. Currently, the Brahmapuri division hosts the highest number of cubs at 67; sub-adults at 16; and females at 39.

Forest department officials believe most of the attacks are by female tigers and their sub-adults (between 1.5 and 2.5 years), who are pushed to live on the borders of the forest due to territorial fights, mostly among males, but sometimes among females too.

The problem lies in the buffer zone (of TATR) and territorial area (Chandrapur's three zones not a part of TATR), where food is low and competition among tigers is high, because of urbanisation and land fragmentation," says Suresh Chopane, president at the non-profit Green Planet Society that promotes environmental awareness. He is also a former member of the Regional Empowered Committee of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, and served on the Tadoba Tiger Conservation Plan.

The Forest Department says it has installed 982 camera traps across the circle for surveillance, and real-time monitoring is carried out using stealth cameras to alert villagers. They also say they have 181 Primary Response Teams with 917 members, while joint patrols are conducted to prevent tigers and wildlife from getting electrocuted. "We are also notifying villagers of the locations where there are frequent movements of tigers," says Kushagra Pathak, a forest officer in charge of TATR (Buffer).

## Livelihood and conflict

In the monsoon, Chandrapur's forest is thicker than usual on both sides of the road that leads from Sindewahi block to Mul block, 30 km away. In Chitegaon – a village of 1,200 people, most

farmers – a tiger called TF3 killed Sheshraj Nagose, 32, the son of a paddy farmer Pandurang Nagose, 65.

Outside his house, where his hens wander around, Pandurang shows a photo of his son on his mobile phone, taken after the attack. "We are confined to our homes. We can't walk, travel alone at night, or go to our farms for routine work. Allowing children to travel alone to school is scary," he says.

After Sheshraj's death, his wife got a daily wage job at Rajoli forest depot, earning a monthly wage of ₹14,000, while the family was given a compensation of ₹25 lakh. Chitegaon villagers want high fences across all the farms as tigers usually attack when people are either bending over or sitting.

However, villagers complain that they are also fearful of their cattle being attacked. "Cattle are expensive to buy and we face huge losses if tigers take them, even though there is compensation," says Mirabai Uikye, 70, who says she has lost several animals, including a hen recently. According to the data, 3,416 cattle were killed from January 2024 to June 2025.

In another village, 2 km from Chitegaon, is Maragaon, where farmer Maruti Karanshya, 25, was injured on June 26. He went to the local government hospital and was discharged on June 30, but says tiger injuries are getting worse and the hospital is ill-equipped. "They live in a high-risk area, yet the primary healthcare centre does not have the basics, like immunoglobulin injections to prevent infections," his relative adds.

Khobragade admits, "We do fall short in some areas, but government policies are working to strengthen healthcare services."

Pathak says, "One of the biggest challenges is that people do not listen despite giving them safety instructions. However, in the coming year, we won't open the tender for areas that have more casualties and movement of tigers."

## Tourism tames the tigers

In TATR, around 3.5 to 4 lakh people visit Tadoba every month, says the Forest Department. Although tiger tourism generates local jobs, it also has a negative impact on locals as excessive tourism can disrupt the natural behaviour of tigers.

Former member of the State Board of Wildlife, Yadav Tarte Patil, says, "Tigers have become used to people. If a tigress with four cubs sees hundreds of humans, the fear vanishes. Fear is one of the key elements for co-existence."

However, TATR officials say tourism will decrease the dependency of people on the forest. Currently, many villagers are dependent on forest produce, like *tendu* and *mahua*.

Forest officer Pathak says, "TATR has 17 gates, which require guards; then there are drivers, cleaning staff, and many indirect employment possibilities. We employ thousands of people and at least 600 to prevent poaching."

Chopane recommends that tourists not be allowed at mating spots, attack spots, and the sub-adults' resting spots. In the long run, he says, the forest department should work on the conservation of fragmented forests to create underpasses for animals.

The villagers have asked for the shifting of tigers, which the veterinarian has ruled out, as tigers can be stressed due to a new geographical area. Besides, Maharashtra has shortcomings in the mapping of tigers, which could probably help with relocation, he says. "Sterilisation will disturb the ecosystem, so we need to experiment with reverse population, causing a 1.5-year delay in reproduction," says Khobragade.

He says the setting up of rewilding centres in Chandrapur to rehabilitate the cubs captured in human-wildlife conflict, is a good idea. "The cubs in zoos deserve a chance to be in the wild and survive," he adds.

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Maruti Karanshya, a tiger attack survivor in Maregaon village; Shraddha Gurnule, the sarpanch of Mendha (Mal) village. EMMANUEL YOGINI

# KARNATAKA



**City and the river:** The Arkavati entering Thippagondanahalli reservoir on the outskirts of Bengaluru. Once the primary source of drinking water for the city — from 1936 to 2000, according to the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board — the river is today a shadow of its former glorious self. PHOTOS: K. MURALI KUMAR



**Revival bid:** In June 2025, the Karnataka government announced a high-level committee of experts to spearhead the rejuvenation of the Arkavati through a public-private partnership model.



**Polluted:** According to a BWSSB document, once the river crosses Doddaballapur town, Arkavati is in 'a highly stressed state due to pollution from rapid urbanisation and industrialisation'.

# Bringing a 'ghost river' back to life

The Karnataka government has announced its ambitious plan to bring the Arkavati back to life, but people living close to the river have little hope, while experts point out to many challenges, writes **K.C. Deepika**

**A**s the clouds play hide-and-seek and the sun beats down in mid-July, in what has been a dry southwest monsoon for Bengaluru thus far, waters of the Arkavati river, unsettlingly black, flows its course on the outskirts of the city.

Jayaram, 60, a resident of Jogerahalli, close to the Thippagondanahalli (T.G. Halli) reservoir, is walking around in the quaint village as devotional songs play out of a speaker from a nearby temple. Two class 5 students of a government school hang around him as he tells *The Hindu*, "Until a few years ago, we used to wash clothes in the river. They started letting polluted water in from everywhere. What flows now is acid water. We cannot even step into it. There is an odour and froth. Some are brave enough to use it for agriculture."

He recalled that, when he was around 30 years old, he would drink water from the river and wash clothes in it. "When it rains, we see some clean water briefly, and then the black water comes again. The water is of no use to anyone, not even to animals," he says.

Ballyamma, 60, at the nearby Varthur Narasimhapura, was watching over her grazing goats close to a pumping station. "I came here after getting married 40 years ago, and I remember we used to drink this water and cook with it. It has been at least 15 years since we stopped using it. It smells," she says, adding that they use borewell water for their daily needs.



The BWSSB is building a 20 MLD-capacity sewage treatment plant and water treatment plant at the T.G. Halli reservoir.

Once the primary source of drinking water for Bengaluru — from 1936 to 2000, according to the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) — the Arkavati is today what one research called "a ghost river", a shadow of its former glorious self.

#### Immense potential

Over two-and-a-half decades later, in June 2025, the Karnataka government announced a high-level committee of experts to spearhead the rejuvenation of the Arkavati through a public-private partnership (PPP) model. The BWSSB, while announcing the plan, said, "Stretching 53 km from Nandi Hills to T.G. Halli, and covering a basin area of 1,400 sq. km, the Arkavati holds immense potential to be reborn as a sustainable lifeline."

BWSSB Chairman Ram Prasath Manohar, while announcing the plan, said water from the Yettinahole project (which envisages the diversion of west-flowing river water to meet the drinking water needs of seven parched districts in the south Karnataka region) was intended to mix with the Arkavati waters at T.G. Halli, but rapid industrial growth, wastewater discharge, and environmental degradation rendered the reservoir's water unfit for consumption. While admitting that only 15% of the Arkavati's river basin falls under the BWSSB's jurisdiction, he also said that several government agencies, NGOs, and civic bodies were coming together to shape a comprehensive action plan. The BWSSB also an-

If we truly wish to rejuvenate the Arkavati, we must also protect its catchment area. It feels deeply counter-intuitive when, on the one hand, committees are set up to revive the river, yet on the other, the government proposes to dilute its buffer zones and weaken the T.G. Halli preservation notification.

#### Stakeholder meeting

According to a BWSSB document on the 'Rejuvenation of Arkavathy River up to T.G. Halli', from the origin of the river at Nandi Hills, till Doddaballapur town, the stream is less polluted, barring drain water entry and dumping of solid waste.

"Municipal sewage from Doddaballapur town enters into the Nagara Kere (lake) and polluted industrial wastewater enters from Basethyhalli Industrial Area at Veerapur into the river," says the document, adding that once the river crosses Doddaballapur town and enters Bengaluru Rural, the river is in "a highly stressed state due to pollution from rapid urbanisation and industrialisation".

The document also acknowledges that as the river traverses, it accumulates various pollutants, including untreated sewage and industrial waste, leading to poor water quality in T.G. Halli, and that the water is not useful for drinking or any other domestic purposes.

The BWSSB has planned to take up the rejuvenation of the Arkavati from Nandi hills to T.G. Halli (54 km) "to make the river pollution-free".

The document lists views and recommendations from multiple stakeholders of the river, one of which is the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA), as the Dr. Shivaram Karanth Layout is in the Arkavati catchment area. "It is necessary to know the disposal scheme of the wastewater generated from the layouts developed by the BDA in the Bengaluru region," it says.

#### Questionable policy decisions

But is it going to be possible? Experts who have conducted studies on the river say it is not going to be easy. Sharachchandra Lele, Distinguished Fellow in Environmental Policy and Governance, Centre for Environment and Development, Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment, says "rejuvenation" is a tricky concept.

"If it means the natural flow should come back, that will require major changes in groundwater use in the upstream, which looks very difficult. If it means making the river flow 'anyhow', then the idea of putting Yettinahole water into T.G. Halli will make it look like the Arkavati has been 'rejuvenated', but will it really solve any problem? We must also ask, 'rejuvenation for whom?' Do we want the Arkavati to be a 'boating place' or a 'scenic riverside' for urban folks, or a source of water and cultural value for agricultural households?" he asks.

In a study published in January 2013, titled 'Water management in Arkavathy basin: A situation analysis', of which Lele was one of the authors, it was stated that the decline of the Arkavati's flow into T.G. Halli reservoir was directly caused by the expansion of eucalyptus cultivation and increased groundwater pumping in the

T.G. Halli catchment area. "It has been aggravated by the construction of an excessive number of check dams and other structures on the various streams that feed the Arkavati, which resulted in further reductions in surface flows, but did not augment baseflows as the groundwater withdrawal remained unregulated," explains Lele. The changes in cropping, such as the growth of eucalyptus and shift to groundwater-irrigated horticulture and vegetable farming, are the result of government incentives, as well as market pressures (rising demand from Bengaluru), and also the result of changing labour availability as labour migrated to Bengaluru, he says.

#### Arkavati river

- Originates at Nandi Hills in Chickballapur district
- Joins the Cauvery at Sangama in Bengaluru South (formerly Ramanagara) district
- Length of the river: 170 km
- It traverses through four districts
- Chickballapur, Bengaluru Rural, Bengaluru Urban, and Bengaluru South
- It has three tributaries
- Kumudavati, Suvarnamukhi, Vrishabhavati

Source: BWSSB

"While many of the changes are expected in an area close to a city, lack of a governance mechanism around groundwater and, in fact, around integrated management of water resources as a whole is the key missing policy piece. The benefits of groundwater over-exploitation have gone disproportionately to the rich farmers, as poorer farmers could not afford to dig borewells, or abandoned them after they failed, as groundwater levels dropped," he says, adding that the State agency in charge of T.G. Halli reservoir (the BWSSB) lost interest in the inflow decline problem, because it shifted to the Cauvery as the only source that they think will serve all of Bengaluru's water needs.

#### Results of pollution testing

A more recent report, 'Uncovering the hidden pollution in the Arkavathi - Emerging contaminants impacting Bengaluru & beyond,' summarises the results of pollution testing along the river conducted by Paani.Earth, in collaboration with the International Centre for Clean Water, IIT Madras, in February and March 2024. Paani tested samples for 65 unique water and 20 unique sediment pollution parameters and compared the testing results to national and international standards and guidelines for freshwater and sediment pollution.

The report states that every single test site exhibited pollution values above national and international standards and guidelines. "Even remote areas with no visible pollution had high levels of persistent pollutants, highlighting the river's vulnerability to long-range contamination. Across test sites, Paani observed notable spikes in pollution levels, frequently downstream of industrial areas or other zones with known pollution discharges. Additionally, the results demonstrated that high levels of pollutants from Urban Bengaluru enter the Arkavati via the Vrishabhavati and degrade water quality. Many

of the river sites had high phosphorus levels, causing eutrophication," states the report.

"Currently, our rivers are graded A to E based on just a handful of parameters like pH, dissolved oxygen, coliform bacteria, and a few others to decide if the water is 'fit' for drinking, bathing, irrigation, or industrial use. But these grades don't take into account many persistent and harmful chemicals that remain in the water and soil. As a result, water can still be carrying dangerous contaminants like hexavalent chromium and yet be reported as 'safe for irrigation' just because it meets those limited criteria," says Madhuri Mandava, who, along with Khushbu K. Birawat, both from Paani, accompanied *The Hindu* on the site visit to the Arkavati.

She adds that the instruments used are not sensitive enough to pick up dangerous chemicals in lower concentrations, which means harmful contamination can go completely unnoticed and unreported, while the same water continues to irrigate the food we eat.

#### First things first

Lele says it is unlikely that the river will ever flow again "as it did in the past", and that this "past flowing river" itself is a myth.

"We must remember that even 200 years ago, there were probably 400 irrigation tanks blocking streams in the T.G. Halli catchment and that water was used to cultivate sugarcane or paddy. It is best to aim for sustainable and equitable water use in the T.G. Halli catchment and avert water pollution in the reservoir, because the Kumudavati is still contributing inflow. Bengalureans really do not stand to benefit from its rejuvenation, unless the idea is for T.G. Halli dam to start supplying water again, which seems very unlikely," he says.

Birawat is more optimistic. "The first step to healing our rivers is to see what is really hurting them and identify the sources. The Central Pollution Control Board's 2017 guidelines for water quality monitoring laid out a robust framework to help understand pollution sources, trends, and the effectiveness of control measures. But on the ground, implementation by the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board falls short of this intent. Monitoring has been reduced to a simplistic grading exercise, with little evidence of meaningful classification of stations or comprehensive testing. As a result, the programme fails to guide corrective action or improve water quality, and risks, leaving the most critical pollution sources unaddressed," she says.

She also says no matter how much we clean the Arkavati, it will not make a real difference if the Vrishabhavati keeps pouring pollution into it.

A river, she points out, is just not water; it is a living ecosystem. "A river is so much more than just a line of water between two banks. It reflects everything around it – the forests, the lakes, the built-up areas, the storm-water drains, the flood-plains, the fields, the hills, and the aquifers underground. It does feel too little and too late, when you see the pathetic state of the river, but better late than never. If we truly wish to rejuvenate the Arkavati, we must also protect its catchment. It feels deeply counter-intuitive when, on one hand, committees are set up to revive the river, yet on the other, the government proposes to dilute its buffer zones and weaken the T.G. Halli preservation notification," she adds.