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IN BRIEF

M.P. hikes green gram procurement to 60% amid stir

BHOPAL
The Madhya Pradesh government has increased the limit of green gram procurement from 25% to 60% of the total crop of farmers, State Agriculture Minister Aidal Singh Kansana said after a meeting with farmer representatives. » Page 12

'Devise formula for distress sharing of Cauvery water'

CHENNAI
Cauvery Water Regulation Committee chairperson Vineet Gupta on Wednesday asked Tamil Nadu and Karnataka to come up with a distress-sharing formula. » Page 4

SC restricts 'retrospective' environmental clearances

Top court quashes 2021 Office Memorandum on the matter with prospective effect; it upholds power for 'amnesty schemes', but through proper notifications instead of administrative orders

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday quashed, with prospective effect, a 2021 Office Memorandum (OM) granting *ex post facto* environmental clearances to infrastructure projects, holding that the Union government cannot substantially alter protective environmental checks by issuing mere administrative instructions.

"The 2021 OM is an administrative order, and envisages a perpetual regime for grant of environmental clearance to projects undertaken without prior environmental clearance. It substantially alters the nature of enquiry and criteria for grant of environmental clearance under the 2006 notification. It supplants an earlier delegated legislation [2006 notification] through an administrative instruction, which is impermissible in law," the court noted in an 80-page judgment.

> The 2021 Office Memorandum is an administrative order, and envisages a perpetual regime for grant of environmental clearance to projects undertaken without prior environmental clearance. It substantially alters the nature of enquiry and criteria for grant of environmental clearance under the 2006 notification
> SUPREME COURT JUDGMENT

'No parallel route'

An 'amnesty' measure cannot become a permanent, parallel route which circumvents the prior environmental clearance (EC) regime under the 2006 notification of the Environment Ministry. A valid amnesty measure should be used as a rare exception, must be finite in duration and confined to its class, a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant observed.

The court said the prior EC regime of the 2006 notification, spanning across various sectors such as highways, airports, real estate and township developments, and mining and resource extraction, was mandatory in nature.

The 2006 notification's mandate could have only been amended through a subsequent and appropriate amnesty notification for select, deserving projects whose continuation was of "supervening public interest", Justice Joymalya Bagchi, who authored the judgment, held.

The court barred the Centre from passing administrative orders to grant *ex post facto* clearances in the future. Justice Bagchi added that the present judgment would not, however, stand in the way of the top court granting *ex post facto* clearances in exercise of its plenary powers under Article 142 of the Constitution.

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U.S. fast-tracks Act for 100% tariffs on trade partners of Russia

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

The U.S. Senate has voted to fast-track the passage of a legislation that could see a tariff of 100% being imposed on India for its import of Russian oil.

The Senate on Tuesday exhibited a rare display of bipartisan agreement by voting 86-12 to invoke a cloture motion to advance the 'Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026'.

The original version of the Act, introduced in 2025, proposed 500% tariff on those importing Russian oil. However, the Act was revised downwards early this month.

As per Senate documents, the bipartisan Act "is designed to deprive [Russian President] Vladimir Putin of the revenue financing Russia's war against Ukraine" by limiting political leadership, financial institutions, energy sector, and sanctions-evasion networks. The sanctions are to be implemented using "targeted tariffs to pressure the world's largest purchasers of Russian energy to reduce their dependence on Moscow".

> **Trade troubles**
> The proposed U.S. sanctions seek to use targeted tariffs to pressure Russian energy purchasers to reduce their dependence on Moscow
> - Under the latest version of the Act, a tariff of **'up to 100%'** would be levied on the top five purchasers of Russian crude oil and natural gas
> - Currently, China accounts for about **47-50%** of Russian crude oil exports, while India accounts for another **36-38%**

CONTINUED ON
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U.S. and Iran resume fighting in West Asia

Associated Press
Agence France-Presse
CAIRO/WASHINGTON

Jordan intercepted missiles launched from Iran early on Wednesday, hours after the U.S. military said it knocked down another Iranian barrage launched against American forces in the region, ending a brief pause in fighting between Tehran and Washington.

The U.S. also said it worked with Saudi Arabia to fire on Iran-backed militias in Iraq that have targeted the kingdom in recent days. The militias said at least 20 of their fighters had been killed. Six Iranian advisers were also killed in the strikes, Iraqi militia officials said.

The fighting came after days in which mediators said some progress had been made in negotiations to end the war.

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Cubs' crusade

Roaring appeal: Children in tiger costumes taking part in an awareness campaign in Bengaluru on Wednesday as part of International Tiger Day. India is home to the world's largest wild tiger population, accounting for nearly 70% of all wild tigers globally. K. MURALI KUMAR

Eggs to stay on midday meal menu in schools: Bengal CM

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Putting an end to the controversy over the alleged denial of eggs in midday meals for schoolchildren in Kolkata, West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Wednesday said while the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) will provide protein-rich midday meals to children, eggs will be provided separately through self-help groups (SHGs).

Pilot project

"From August 1, as a pilot project, *satvik* and protein-rich midday meals will be provided to children by ISKCON in large parts of Kolkata. Along with that, eggs will be provided to children through SHGs so that we can provide protein-rich meals to our future generations," the Chief Minister said.

Suvendu Adhikari

When Mr. Adhikari had announced that ISKCON would be providing cooked meals to schools in Kolkata, it raised concerns that eggs would be removed from midday meals.

Members of Opposition parties, including Trinamool Congress chairperson and former Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, questioned why schoolchildren were being deprived of eggs, which are a good source of protein.

The move to entrust ISKCON with providing midday meals was also criticised as an attempt by the BJP government to impose vegetarianism in the State.

Allocation hiked

The Chief Minister added on Wednesday that the State government has increased the allocation for midday meals from ₹6.78 to ₹10 per student per day.

Mr. Adhikari also distributed grants to 80,375 government and government-aided schools under the Samagra Shiksha scheme at the State Secretariat. He said all vacant teacher posts in schools would be filled soon and about 50,000 new teachers will be appointed.

BS-III vehicles may need some tweaks for E20 fuel, says Centre

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

Some rubber parts and gaskets in BS-III vehicles may require replacement when using E20 fuel, a blend of 20% ethanol and 80% petrol, the Union government informed Parliament on Tuesday.

"In case of testing done on BS-III vehicles introduced from 1st April, 2005 and manufactured prior to 2016, some rubber parts and gaskets may require replacement, which can be easily managed during routine servicing regime of the vehicle," Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari said in the Rajya Sabha, citing findings of a study.

Not yet made public

He was responding to a question from the Communist Party of India MP A.A. Rahim on the impact of E20 on vehicle performance, fuel efficiency, engine durability, and maintenance costs. The study is yet to be made public.

The study was carried out by Indian Oil Corporation Limited; the Indian Institute of Petroleum, Dehradun; the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers, and the Automotive Research Association of India.

Other than BS-III vehicles, the study showed there was no need to modify car and two-wheeler engines, the Minister said.

There have been widespread anecdotal complaints of vehicles misfiring or breaking down.

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INBRIEF

Kanwar Yatra begins today; illegal meat shops to be shut

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi on Wednesday ordered the closure of unauthorised meat shops and outlets along Kanwar Yatra routes and near camps ahead of the pilgrimage beginning on Thursday, following a meeting with the Delhi government. An office memorandum issued after a review meeting chaired by Minister Kapil Mishra directed the removal of encroachments, round-the-clock sanitation, fumigation and deployment of mobile dispensaries. A total of 308 camps will be set up across the Capital. According to the police, about 1,600 personnel will be deployed along the yatra routes. Checkpoints will be set up at entry points and additional forces will be deployed to manage crowds and ensure pilgrims' smooth movement.

City court stays non-bailable warrants against Aishe Ghosh

A Delhi court on Wednesday stayed the operation of the non-bailable warrants issued against Students' Federation of India (SFI) joint secretary Aishe Ghosh in connection with a 2021 case related to protests and demonstrations at Banga Bhawan. Judicial Magistrate (First Class) Vijayshree Rathore of the Patiala House Courts passed the order directing Ms. Ghosh to appear in person on Thursday, the next date of hearing. According to the case records, the warrants were issued against Ms. Ghosh on December 12, 2024 and again on April 11 this year after she failed to appear before the court during the proceedings. The order comes a day after the SFI accused the Delhi police of a "witch-hunt" against Ms. Ghosh following an alleged attempt to arrest her from the headquarters of the CPI(M) in the Capital.

Students return to Jantar Mantar over 'police crackdown'

First protest at the site after CJP's 36-day agitation calls for a halt to police harassment in various States; Dipke seeks action over firing of pellet guns

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Students from various Left organisations held a protest at Jantar Mantar on Wednesday against the "police crackdown" in States such as West Bengal, Bihar, and Assam on protesters who participated in the 36-day stir led by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) in New Delhi.

The protest, the first at Jantar Mantar since the CJP called off its stir on July 25, started at 3 p.m. and continued for around two hours. The call was issued by 13 outfits, including the Students' Federation of India, All India Students' Association (AISA), Krantikari Yuva Sangathan, and All India Students' Federation.

AISA national president Neha, who was on hunger strike for 23 days in the CJP-led stir, was also present at the protest.

Students held up placards and posters that read 'Rise in rage' and 'Stop implicating students on false charges'. Some also called for the resignation of Union Home Minister Amit Shah over "police brutality" during the July 20 'Chalo Sansad' march.

The protest by 13 outfits began at 3 p.m. and continued for 2 hours; barricades welded together at Jantar Mantar. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The protesters walked past barricades welded together by the police to create an enclosed space and regulate entry.

'Not terrorists'

Meanwhile, CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke on Wednesday demanded action against those responsible for ordering the use of pellet guns on July 20. Asserting that "students are not terrorists", Mr. Dipke warned that a fresh agitation on a "much bigger scale" would be launched if "harassment" by police forces continues. "In many States, police are visiting the homes of students and threatening them with arrests," he told reporters at the Aurangabad airport on his way home.

In a post on X, the CJP accused the Delhi police of issuing takedown notices and registering FIRs to remove social media posts criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

When reached for comment, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operations) Vinit Kumar said, "We send notices for content that spreads misinformation, has AI-generated or deepfake content or is misleading in any form. The process is part of our social media monitoring."

(With inputs from PTI)

Ease of doing business, services delivery Bills to be tabled in House

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Two key Bills – the Delhi Ease of Doing Business Bill, 2026 and the Delhi (Right of Citizen to Time Bound and Ease of Delivery of Service) Bill, 2026 – are expected to be tabled in the Assembly during the Monsoon Session scheduled from August 7 to 11, sources said on Wednesday.

During the day, Lieutenant-Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu and Chief Minister Rekha Gupta reviewed the ongoing drive to streamline regulations and minimise compliance burdens in the Capital, which includes the proposed legislation on ease of doing business, a source said. The Bill is expected to be cleared by the Cabinet within a week to allow it to be tabled in the House.

The second Bill, which is set to replace the Delhi (Right of Citizen to Time Bound Delivery of Services) Act, 2011, was approved by the Cabinet earlier this month. It proposes to impose a fine of ₹250 per day, subject to a maximum of ₹5,000, on erring officials if a service is delayed without valid justification.

'Include Question Hour'

Meanwhile, the Opposition Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Wednesday urged Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta to include Question Hour in the upcoming session.

CM Rekha Gupta on Wednesday reviewed the govt.'s ongoing drive to minimise compliance burdens. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

AAP chief whip Sanjeev Jha said the session serves little purpose without it and asked whether the government is trying to avoid the scrutiny of "corruption and irregularities" across departments by preventing members of the House from asking questions.

'Can extend session'

He requested the Speaker not to allow the House to convene without a Question Hour, adding that the Opposition is willing to support an extension of the session if needed.

"Normally, if a Question Hour is to be held, there is a gap of 15 days so that members can submit questions, the government can prepare replies, and the responses can be placed before the Assembly. If there is going to be no Question Hour, then what is the purpose of this session?" Mr. Jha said.

Man stabbed to death after objecting to molestation

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A 30-year-old man was stabbed to death after he objected to a group of boys allegedly molesting a woman who was with him inside a park in north-west Delhi's Ashok Vihar on Wednesday afternoon.

The police have apprehended a minor in connection with the case and efforts are under way to trace the remaining accused, said an officer.

According to Delhi Police, a PCR call reporting the stabbing was received at 3.33 p.m., following which a team reached Khimman Singh Park.

The victim was identified as Sunil, 30, a native of Mainpuri in Uttar Pradesh.

According to the police, the woman, a resident of Jahangirpuri, said three to four unidentified boys approached her and Sunil inside the park.

An altercation broke out after they allegedly tried to molest her.

The police said the woman told them that one of the assailants attacked them with a knife before fleeing.

Sunil sustained multiple stab injuries and was taken to a hospital, where he succumbed during treatment. The woman also sustained injuries, the officer said, adding that a case has been registered and further investigation is under way.

DU opens mid-entry round for UG admission; results of third allocation on August 8

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Delhi University (DU) on Wednesday announced that it would open a mid-entry round for undergraduate (UG) candidates who could not complete the admission process, made errors in subject mapping or whose documents were found to be invalid.

According to a notice issued by the office of the Dean, Admissions, candidates will have the option to apply for the mid-entry round from August 3 to 5 by paying a fee of ₹1,000.

As of Wednesday, 71,342 candidates confirmed their UG admissions against 71,624 seats this year, a university official said, adding that additional seats are allocated every year as many students withdraw from the process midway.

"Allocations under the Children/Widows of Personnel of the Armed Forces, Extra-Curricular Activities and Sports quotas will be announced on August 9," the official said. Results of the third round of seat allocations will be announced on August 8, as per a DU notice. It added that allocations would be based on data available by August 5 and include mid-entry candidates.

New students at a session in DU on Tuesday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Fresh cut-offs, ranks

"The minimum allocation score and ranks in the third round would have no relation to those of the earlier rounds. Candidates allotted seats in this round will have until August 11 to accept them," it stated.

Meanwhile, student outfits on Wednesday criticised a notice issued by St. Stephen's College prohibiting students from wearing shorts in classrooms, laboratories and common areas. National Students' Union of India president Vinod Jakhar said the Constitution guarantees citizens the freedom to decide what to wear, eat and say.

DJB approves Yamuna rejuvenation projects worth ₹4,500 crore

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Jal Board (DJB) has approved Yamuna rejuvenation projects worth nearly ₹4,500 crore, including 15 new decentralised sewage treatment plants (DSTPs), expansion of sewer networks, upgradation of existing STPs and sludge management facilities, Water Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh said on Wednesday.

"People often ask when the Yamuna will become clean. The answer lies in building the right infrastructure. When the present government assumed office, the sewage treatment capacity stood at only 749 million gallons per day (MGD), leaving a substantial treatment gap. Now, we plan to increase it to 1,041 MGD," he said.

"Following these approvals, Delhi will have 28 DSTPs under implementation, comprising 13 approved earlier and 15 newly awarded projects," the Minister added.

The govt. also cleared a project to revive and restore the Wazirabad pondage area in order to enhance raw water storage capacity

Mr. Singh also said the government has approved a project to revive and restore the Wazirabad pondage area to enhance raw water storage.

"This would increase the holding capacity of the pond area from one day to two to three days. The government will also instal 250 water ATMs at an estimated cost of ₹58 crore," he added.

In July 2025, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had chaired a meeting on the rejuvenation of the Yamuna and directed officials of the Delhi government to nearly double the city's sewage treatment capacity to 1,500 MGD by 2028.

Trainee IPS officer held for 'harassment'

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad City Police's Women's Safety Wing arrested trainee IPS officer Uday Krishna Reddy late on Tuesday in connection with a sexual harassment case filed based on a complaint by a fellow probationary officer at the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy.

Vigilance books former T.N. Minister, raids 41 locations

DVAC alleges large-scale irregularities in the award of bar and transport tenders by favouring select bidders; at least 284 bars shown as closed continued to operate without licence renewal

S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

The Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) has alleged large-scale irregularities in the functioning of the Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAC), including manipulation of bar and transport tenders, cartelisation, revenue loss, and corruption involving former DMK Minister and sitting MLA V. Senthilbalaji, senior officials, private individuals, and liquor companies between 2021 and 2025.

The agency registered a corruption case against seven accused persons, including Mr. Senthilbalaji; former TASMAC Managing Director S. Visakan; a close associate of the former Minister, Rathesh Raj Shanmugavel, and others. Investigators conducted simultaneous searches on the premises of the suspects at 41 locations across the State since early on Wednesday. The ancestral home of the former Minister was searched at Rameswarapatti in Karur.

The Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau officials conducting raids at multiple locations in Karur on Wednesday. ANI

The allegation is that TASMAC officials, at the behest of Mr. Senthilbalaji and his associates, violated tender norms while awarding licences for bars in Coimbatore, Tiruppur, Erode, Namakkal, Karur and the Nilgiris by favouring select bidders.

As many as 284 bars shown as closed continued to operate without licence renewal, causing a revenue loss of over ₹32.81 crore in three districts - Coimbatore North, Coimbatore South and Nilgiris - during 2022-23.

The DVAC alleged irregularities in transport contracts for TASMAC depots, claiming officials misused earnest money depositdemand drafts submitted by one bidder to award contracts to other transporters. It also alleged that organised syndicates controlled bar licences through proxy operators and political influence. The agency claimed certain distillery and bottle supply firms generated funds through inflated invoices to pay kickbacks for securing liquor supply orders.

States told to deploy drones to monitor stubble burning

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and adjoining areas has urged the governments of Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Punjab to adopt drone surveillance for effective monitoring of stubble burning, an official said on Wednesday.

"The commission emphasised that UAVs/ drones offer a reliable and effective solution for monitoring stubble burning incidents by providing rapid deployment, high-resolution, real-time imaging and flexible flight patterns that complement satellite imagery and ground inspections," said the official. Drones can accurately detect active fire locations, identify smoke plumes, map affected agricultural fields and generate time-stamped evidence for prompt enforcement action.

Stubble being burnt in a field in Punjab. FILE PHOTO

The governments of Delhi and four adjoining States have been asked to ensure that the monitoring area covers paddy cultivation areas, with special emphasis on identified hotspot villages and fire-prone locations.

Mohandas booked for remarks on 'shooting' protesters

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Thiruvananthapuram City Cyber police have registered a case against Hindutva ideologue T.G. Mohandas over a recent YouTube video in which he said he "would have shot" the protesters at Jantar Mantar, Delhi, if he were in control.

The case has been filed under Sections 192 and 353 (1)(b) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Section 66 of the Information Technology Act and Section 120(o) of the Kerala Police Act, related to provocation with intent to cause a riot, publication of statements likely to create fear or alarm and disturb public tranquillity and other offences.

Mr. Mohandas, a former head of the BJP's Kerala intellectual cell, spoke at length about how he would have tackled the student protests against the NEET exam irregularities. "I will impose a curfew in about a four square kilometre area around Jantar Mantar. Then I would announce thrice for the crowd to disperse. After that, I will shoot," he said.

In another video, he said secular women who take part in protests "enjoy being gangraped."

Was misquoted, says Satheesan on sexist remark allegation

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister V.D. Satheesan on Wednesday rejected the charge that he had made a sexist remark in connection with his advice to mothers about sharing traditional or unique cooking recipes.

He took the stand that he was misquoted as exclusively referring to daughters-in-law.

He said he had, in fact, asked mothers to share such recipes with "their children and the person who comes as their son's wife".

Mr. Satheesan asked how can "children" be construed as daughters alone.

Decide on menstrual leave for women bus conductors, says HC

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

The Kerala High Court has ordered that the State government should decide on the demand for paid menstrual leave by women conductors of the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation within three months.

The court held that the State may consider introducing an appropriate policy providing menstrual leave to women conductors, subject to safeguards. It opined that a limited provision for menstrual leave would promote employee welfare, enhance productivity, and foster a more inclusive workplace.

INBRIEF

PM to lay foundation stone of sugar mills in Bihar on Nov. 20

Prime Minister Narendra Modi would lay the foundation stone for two sugar mills at Sakri in Madhubani and Raiyam in Darbhanga district on November 20 this year, Bihar's Sugarcane Industries Minister Sanjay Kumar said on Wednesday. "The State government has set a target of establishing 25 sugar mills," he said at press conference in Patna. The Bihar government is committed to fulfil its resolve to open sugar mills in the State that would not only create employment opportunities but also increase farmers' income, the Minister added.

HC dismisses plea on Jauhar university demolition notice

The Allahabad High Court on Wednesday dismissed a petition filed by Maulana Ali Jauhar Trust at Rampur on the notices for demolition of its university buildings, noting that an interim stay has been ordered. When the matter was taken up before the court, it was informed on behalf of the petitioner that in an appeal filed before the Commissioner, Moradabad, the appellate authority has passed an interim order staying the demolition of university buildings. Taking note of the interim order, the Bench dismissed the petition, saying it need not intervene at this stage. The Rampur Development Authority has directed the university to demolish 38 of its 40 buildings, alleging that they had been constructed illegally. PTI

CWRC head moots Cauvery water distress-sharing plan

Committee chief rejects criticism, says the CWRC's calculation of 3,500 cusecs to be released by Karnataka to Tamil Nadu for the next 15 days had been done taking into account all relevant data

T. Ramakrishnan
CHENNAI

Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC) chairperson Vineet Gupta on Wednesday asked Tamil Nadu and Karnataka to come up with a distress-sharing formula.

When asked by *The Hindu* over phone for his reaction to Tamil Nadu's complaint that the CWRC and the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) – which together form the implementation mechanism for the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal's (CWDT) final award in 2007, as modified by the Supreme Court in 2018 – had not been following a "permanent, scientific formula", Mr. Gupta said, "Why don't they work it out on their own and present it to us?"

Rejecting the criticism against the CWRC and the CWMA, Mr. Gupta recalled that during the water year of 2023-24, the two bodies had worked out a distress-sharing mechanism.

With regards the CWRC's calculation of 3,500 cubic feet per second (cusecs) to be released by Karnataka to Tamil Nadu for the next 15 days, he said it had been done taking into account the rainfall pattern, net inflow into four reservoirs of Karnataka in the river basin, comparison of the current situation with the long-term average, and inputs from the Meteorological Department.

For Biligundlu – the gauge and discharge (G&D) site being used by the Central Water Commission (CWC) for the measurement of the river flow on the boundary of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu – to realise the prescribed quantity, Karnataka had to release 6,000-6,500 cusecs from its four reservoirs in the Cauvery basin.

'Very dry'

In view of the intermediate catchment (between the Krishnaraja Sagar and Kabini dams in Karnataka and Biligundlu) being "very dry", the upper riparian State had to release a much higher quantity than the one prescribed to enable Biligundlu to realise 3,500 cusecs. On an average, the yield from the intermediate catchment would be 80 thousand million cubic feet (tmcft) annually. "But this year, in July, it is completely dry," the CWRC chief said.

Pointing out that the long-term average had been calculated on the basis of 30-year data, Mr. Gupta said there had been a 60% deficit for Karnataka's reservoirs with regard to net inflow.

Farmers outfit protesting in Mysuru against the CWRC direction to release Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu. M.A. SRIRAM

Karnataka to appeal against CWRC order

B.S. Satish Kumar
BENGALURU

Karnataka has decided to file an appeal before the Cauvery Water Management Authority against the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee's (CWRC) order, issued on Tuesday, to release 3,500 cusecs of water daily for 15 days to Tamil Nadu.

The CWMA meeting, scheduled in Delhi on Thursday, is now being keenly watched as Karnataka's appeal is expected to come up before it.

Karnataka Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar said on Wednesday that preparations to file an appeal were going on.

Real Creator IAS Edition https://t.me/+8B98m5PQCF84MmQ9
Real Creator IAS Edition https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Van2VRb6RGJOKH6oBd0F

Two days on, Bihar families wait for protesters' release

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

Hundreds of parents on Wednesday waited outside the Beur Central Jail in Patna to take home their children who were arrested in connection with the NEET paper leak protest last week.

The Bihar government on Monday announced to withdraw all cases filed against protesters across the State and assured that no coercive action would be taken against them in future as well.

But more than 48 hours later, only a few of them have been released. Nikhat Jabeen, 40, was one of the parents waiting outside the Beur jail on Saturday.

"Bihar government has given the order to release everyone, but my son Shadan Malik, 20, is still in jail. I have been waiting outside the jail since morning. The last time I met him was on July 25 night at the Rupaspur police station," Ms. Jabeen told *The Hindu*.

According to her, at least 18 students, including her son, were picked up that night. "After I met him in the police station, I went home and cooked food for all 18 students and came back to feed them. I was awake the entire night. On July 26, around 3 a.m, they sent my child to Beur jail. He told me the police even beat some of the students in the van when they were picked up from the Gandhi Maidan area on the day of the protest," she said.

Prince Kumar, a resident of Begusarai, said the police have not given any information about releasing his younger brother Piyush Kumar. "The buzz is that by late night everyone would be released," he added.

A police source said around 25 people have been released so far, including Patna University Students' Union president Shantanu Shekhar, who said the police behaved nicely. He also demanded that all students should be released at the earliest. The source said the release was delayed due to paperwork and getting the release order from the local court. In Patna alone, the police had booked 144 protesters.

People waiting outside Beur jail in Patna. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Centre 'coercing' automobile manufacturers into silence on E20 fuel issue, says Kejriwal

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday accused the Centre of "coercing" automobile manufacturers into silence over the impact of E20 (petrol blended with 20% ethanol) on vehicles manufactured before 2023.

'Can damage vehicles'

Addressing a press conference on the issue, he claimed that officials from nine automobile firms had, in discussions with him, acknowledged that E20 could damage nearly 30 crore older vehicles and reduce fuel efficiency.

AAP has organised a national town hall on the issue on August 1.

"The Modi government has resorted to outright *goondagardi* (hooliganism) to force E20 petrol on the public. A few days ago, I wrote to 29 companies that manufacture petrol-powered two- and four-wheelers. In my letter, I asked them to clearly state whether E20 petrol can be used in vehicles manufactured before 2023," the AAP chief said, adding that none of the companies responded in writing. However, he had detailed phone conversations with officials from nine of those.

"The technical and engineering reality is that if E20 is used in vehicles manufactured before 2023, it will damage the vehicle, its engine and the fuel train system, and fuel efficiency will also decline," he said.

Aam Aadmi Party national convener Arvind Kejriwal addressing a press conference in New Delhi on Wednesday. ANI

Lawyers teamed up to ensure bail within hours of SC order for 16 arrested over July 24 Kolkata stir

Senjuti Sengupta
KOLKATA

A sea of protesters hit the roads in Kolkata on July 24 in support of the students at Jantar Mantar in Delhi demanding the resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan as Union Education Minister. With the state cracking down on the protesters over alleged role in violence during the stir, a group of lawyers worked quietly behind the scenes to assist 16 people who were arrested by the police.

At least 11 senior criminal lawyers, along with several juniors from each of their teams, have teamed up under the aegis of the All India Lawyers' Union and providing legal assistance to the arrested pro bono. Over the years, many of them have also appeared for victims detained or arrested in connection with various protests across Kolkata, including over R.G. Kar student's rape-murder, the school jobs scam, and other students' and trade unions' demonstrations.

All 16 people were arrested over the violence that erupted on July 24 at the Dorina Crossing in Esplanade during the rally by Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) and Left-affiliated student outfits. The police had resorted to baton charge and tear gas shells to control the situation. The next day, seven FIRs were registered in connection with the violence, including a suo motu FIR by the police for alleged provocative speech and unlawful gathering, and six more on the basis of complaints made by seven journalists who were assaulted by a mob.

The State also invoked recently enforced West Bengal Public Safety and Control of Anti-Social Activities Act, 2026 against all of them. "It is a question of saving our democracy, the Constitution, and the very rights of the people. Participating in a protest is not a crime," said Syed Nafirul Islam, a veteran criminal lawyer, who insists there is no forensic or video evidence linking the accused to stone-pelting or vandalism during the protest.

Soon after he got the news of the arrest, he formed a team to assist them. On Sunday, they appealed for bail but all 16 accused were remanded in police custody until Tuesday by the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) court and then until July 30 in judicial custody. "We had argued that the accused include students, fruit vendors, small businessmen, and social workers. They were in the vicinity when the clash took place, but it does not establish any criminal intent," said Mr. Islam.

FIR withdrawn

With the Supreme Court on Tuesday directing the police across States to release protesters and drop charges against them if they are minors and do not have a criminal background, Mr. Islam's team submitted a copy of the order requesting the CMM to release the accused. In the afternoon, Kolkata Police informed the court that it has withdrawn the suo motu FIR and dropped all charges. By 6 p.m., all 16 accused were granted bail and released by the police.

"Oppression against protesters by any ruling party is not new. But it is our duty to support the common people to exercise their democratic rights. We have done our job. CJP and the students have been protesting for a genuine cause and it is their right," said lawyer Raja Sengupta, secretary of the Bankshall Court Bar Association, who had also rushed to the aid of the 16 accused.

Advocates believe the apex court order reinforced people's faith in the judiciary. "It was a peaceful protest. Minor clashes may happen when there is a large gathering. But the state cannot humiliate the protesters. This is a win for our judiciary and democracy," said Ejaz Akhtar, a Calcutta High Court lawyer.

Advocates Raja Sengupta and (right) Syed Nafirul Islam

'Insult to *Mahanayak*': artists seek removal of Uttam Kumar's new sculpture in Kolkata

Shrabana Chatterjee
KOLKATA

West Bengal's art community has voiced strong disapproval of a new sculpture of Bengali cinema icon Uttam Kumar that was unveiled by Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari at Kolkata's Keoratala crematorium on July 24, the actor's 47th death anniversary.

Art critics said the sculpture "neither bears any resemblance to the yesteryear superstar nor does it qualify as a work of art". Photos of the artwork went viral on social media, with many users criticising it.

Popularly known as the '*Mahanayak* (superstar)' of Bengali cinema, Kumar is held in high esteem in the State's cultural circles.

Criticising the new sculpture, senior sculptor Sanatan Dinda said: "This is very ugly. Both the people who made it and those who commissioned it are incompetent. They have no understanding of art. People who are close to politicians are becoming artists now. This type of work is done through tenders and this is the result. Artists are poorly paid and work on short deadlines. How will they deliver?"

Demanding that the statue be taken down immediately, veteran playwright and artiste Chandan Sen said: "No one has ever insulted Uttam Kumar more than this. Any artiste who has loved the work of Uttam Kumar will say he did not deserve this."

'Unveiled in haste'

The statue also drew criticism from the Opposition. Trinamool Congress MLA Kunal Ghosh urged the State government to scrap the installation and replace it with something better.

In a social media post, he wrote: "Everyone who sees it is saying that whatever else it may be, it cannot be the *Mahanayak*'s statue. Perhaps it was inaugurated in haste."

Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari unveiled the sculpture on July 24, actor Uttam Kumar's 47th death anniversary. X/@KUNALGHOSHAGAIN

T.N. govt. considering proposal to serve weekly chicken biryani in school meals: Education Minister

Press Trust of India
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu government is evaluating a proposal to serve chicken biryani once a week to students under the State's noon-meal scheme, Minister for School Education Rajmohan said on Wednesday.

Speaking to reporters here, he said, "The Justice Party brought food, the Kamaraj rule made it a midday meal, Kalaignar (Karunanidhi) came and brought eggs into this, puratchithalaivar (M.G. Ramachandran) changed it to a nutritious meal, Amma (Jayalalithaa) came and brought eggs every week... many changes occurred. Similarly, I had a desire... I have put forward a request: why not serve chicken biryani once a week?"

A formal request, supported by relevant data, has been submitted to the Chief Minister

According to him, a formal request, supported by relevant data, has been submitted to Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay, who is currently reviewing the proposal.

The Minister also highlighted plans to revamp the existing school breakfast menu.

Noting the current allocation of approximately ₹15 per student, he said the government intends to replace repetitive items such as wheat and rava 'upma' with more nutritious and appetising alternatives.

Centre criticised

Lashing out at the Union government, Mr. Rajmohan accused it of "withholding" educational funds over policy and language disputes.

Describing the expenditure on government schools as an "investment in knowledge" meant to shape future scientists and economists, the Minister stated that blocking funds jeopardises the State's future and is entirely "unacceptable".

GJM team meets Bengal CM over hills status

Press Trust of India
KOLKATA

A Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) delegation on Wednesday met West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari and sought a "permanent solution" to the political issue of the Darjeeling hills through talks with the Centre and the State, and also replacing of the semi-autonomous Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA) with a more enduring institutional arrangement.

GJM president Bimal Gurung and general secretary Roshan Giri called on the CM at the PWD's Maidan camp office here and held a 90-minute meeting.

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Lingering challenges

India's crisis in education should not be treated as a technical failure

The Indian political leadership tends to respond to mass protest with new laws, fast-track courts and inquiry committees, rarely addressing core issues. The Cockroach Janta Party agitation has met a similar fate: the immediate demand conceded, the upsurge mollified with new legislation, the promise of judicial scrutiny, and a task force. This is crisis management, building on a dysfunctional architecture. For the National Testing Agency (NTA), the task force is expected to operationalise the K. Radhakrishnan Committee's October 2024 blueprint, much of it stalled for 18 months: a statutory, UPSC-like NTA under a Director General and two Additional Directors General; 10 functional verticals spanning cybersecurity, psychometrics and forensics; a thousand standardised testing centres; a Digi-Exam biometric framework integrating Aadhaar, facial recognition and continuous surveillance. The NTA has issued hiring notifications, but structural challenges remain: six to 12-month recruitment cycles, pay scales that cannot compete with those of the private sector, and cadre creation requiring legislative sanction. The NEET 2027 deadline is daunting. Fully implemented, the Radhakrishnan panel's recommendations would have included a shift toward continuous, computer-adaptive testing. Standardised tests such as the GRE play a key role in American admissions, but do not carry the stakes of a single sitting. The panel also noted that agencies such as the National Medical Commission and the IITs are treated as passive clients in the exam cycle. But these may well be outside the purview of the taskforce since, as constituted, it leans on capacity in technology, space research, intelligence, public administration, and logistics. Its lone academic is the IIT Madras director. More career educators and assessment researchers might have pressed the broader question – what these examinations are meant to measure, and whether they should exist in their current form – that the government appears to treat as settled. Instead, a crisis in education is being addressed as a technical problem.

JEE's conduct owes much to IIT faculty who see its integrity as intrinsic to a brand they have a stake in. NTA's paper-setters carry no comparable loyalty. Unlike JEE Advanced, where nearly every question is a fresh application of fundamentals, NEET draws on question banks mixed and matched algorithmically – perpetuating the nexus with coaching classes, and potential for mischief. One of the top AIIMS institutions could plausibly be entrusted with NEET paper-setting each year. But the government's approach does not lend itself to greater engagement with academia. The task force's mandate, as the Prime Minister has spelled it out, covers the entire examination system, not NEET alone. Yet, it may well approach the CBSE marking fiasco, too, as a technical problem. Both point to the same failure: an inability to build high-quality academic institutions capable of functioning autonomously. That is not what this task force is built to address.

Hiding the scissors

The censor board has strayed from the law that underpins its existence

The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) wields significant cultural influence by deciding which films can be screened in Indian cinemas. Its decisions on what to excise from Indian films are followed nearly completely even by streaming services, despite not being required to show the censor's version of a filmmaker's artistic vision. The patterns that producers interpret from the CBFC's decisions determine which stories are even made. There is a reason why few political films that espouse the cause of secularism (or the ills of communalism) are seen in cinemas today. There is also a reason why few would dare to make a film such as *Satluj*, considering what it went through at the censors' hands, and the fate it was met with when an online release was briefly achieved. The censor board stands captured, blocking off films that are inconvenient to the ruling dispensation in ways that have never been seen before, and purging politics hostile to the dominant philosophy from films. All this to say, what the CBFC does matters, and the only check on its authority is the Cinematograph Act, 1952 and the rules framed thereunder, but its autonomy is only on paper.

The CBFC is required to watch and rule on films in a matter of weeks. For over a year, the film *Monkey Man*, featuring a dystopian vision of a society with supremacy baked in, has not even been watched. This amounts to a de facto ban, but the CBFC has chosen the route of avoiding that headline by simply not taking a call one way or the other. Even background references to the government's inaction during the COVID-19 pandemic were removed from *Homebound*, India's entry to the Oscars. The CBFC is also guilty of unlawful concealment. In plain defiance of Section 5A(2) of the Cinematograph Act, the board has stopped publishing certificates in the government Gazette. In addition, it has now placed the online details of its certificates with cuts – unindexed and difficult to obtain as they are – behind an "under maintenance" message. Archives have stopped receiving cut portions of films for researchers' study. Pre-censorship as a concept is odious to free societies, and the CBFC's role ought to be curtailed, if not abolished altogether. While it exists, however, the CBFC must be compelled by the film fraternity, and its founding statute, to follow the law. The censor's scissors have plagued and stifled the voice of generations of storytellers, but the dynamic this has played out in has been visible and must be held accountable.

FCRA Bill 2026, a threat to civil society organisations

P.D.T. Achary

Former Secretary General, Lok Sabha

According to the government's legislative programme for the monsoon session of Parliament, the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, has been listed for consideration. Although the Bill was included in the legislative agenda during the previous session, its consideration was postponed following widespread protests, particularly from Christian organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGO). At the time, the government made it clear that it remained committed to passing the Bill. Nevertheless, some interpreted the postponement as a sign that the government intended to defer it indefinitely or even drop it altogether. Those expectations have now been dispelled.

The politics of foreign contributions

In India, foreign contribution has always been a controversial issue. Normally, foreign contributions are allowed to support humanitarian relief and sectors such as health care, education, and environmental protection.

However, the inflow of foreign funds is regulated in all countries that permit such contributions. In India, there was no statutory framework governing foreign contributions before 1976, when the government of Indira Gandhi enacted the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) for the first time. The Act established a regulatory framework to control the acceptance and utilisation of foreign contributions and foreign hospitality. In fact, the government of the day feared, whether real or perceived, the destabilisation of India's democratic system by foreign forces inimical to India's interests. The Emergency regime was quite paranoid about the inflow of foreign money through multiple channels, including NGOs operating in the country.

The most interesting aspect of the brouhaha often raised over foreign contributions in India is that such contributions were never prohibited in general; they were always permitted to come into India. Of course, their acceptance and utilisation came under regulation, which became progressively stricter with every amendment. In 2010, the existing law was replaced by the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010. As in the 1976 Act, the primary focus of regulation under the 2010 Act was the legislature and political parties. The government's concern was the possibility of a large-scale infusion of foreign money into politics. This concern was adequately addressed in the 2010 Act, wherein provisions were made to prohibit the receipt of any form of foreign contribution by candidates for election, media personnel, public servants, judges, government employees, members of the legislature, political parties and their office-bearers, as well as organisations of a political nature.

The Act also provided for the vesting of assets created out of foreign contributions in a prescribed authority under certain circumstances and situations. It was also laid down that any person or organisation engaged in definite cultural, economic, educational, religious, or social programmes must obtain a certificate of registration, without which no foreign contribution could be received. One point that deserves mention in the context of these laws is that, although they were regulatory in nature, they were not unduly harsh on the recipients. Foreign funds were allowed to flow into the country for a variety of humanitarian purposes, under the prescribed regulatory framework.

> The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 expands state control over NGOs and civil society

Sledgehammer effect

But when we look at the present Bill, it gives us a different picture. It in fact has a sledgehammer effect on NGOs and religious and cultural organisations.

The Act of 2010 contains provisions for the registration of applicants and the grant of certificates to receive foreign contributions. There are different conditions under which such a certificate is issued. One of these conditions is that the applicant has not been prosecuted, convicted, or found to have indulged in activities aimed at religious conversion through inducement or force, either directly or indirectly, from one faith to another. Another condition is that the applicant has not been prosecuted or convicted for creating communal tension, disharmony, or similar disturbances. Under the Bill of 2026, if such a certificate is cancelled, the foreign contribution received by the applicant, along with all assets created out of that foreign contribution, shall vest in a designated authority.

Section 16A(2) makes it clear that even if an asset has been created only partly out of foreign contributions, the whole asset shall vest in the designated authority. Initially, such vesting shall be provisional. However, if the applicant fails to obtain a fresh certificate or to have the certificate renewed or restored within the prescribed time frame, the foreign contribution and the assets created from it shall vest permanently in the designated authority. The authority may then transfer such assets to any ministry, department, or agency of the central government, a State government, or a local authority. It may also dispose of the assets through sale, auction, or any other prescribed method, and credit the sale proceeds, together with any unutilised foreign contribution, to the Consolidated Fund of India.

Thus, the cancellation of a certificate becomes a crucial factor in completely ruining an organisation that functions primarily on the strength of foreign contributions. It is, therefore, instructive to examine the circumstances under which a certificate authorising the receipt of foreign contributions can be cancelled by the government.

Clause (1)(c) of Section 14 of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010, provides that a certificate may be cancelled if, in the opinion of the central government, it is necessary, in the public interest, to do so. The consequence of such cancellation is that the organisation loses its authority to receive foreign contributions, its assets created out of such contributions may be taken over, and its activities may effectively come to a halt. This provision confers unfettered powers on the government to cancel a certificate at any time. The term "public interest" is vague. As the government is the custodian of public interest, it can readily justify its actions on that ground. Cancellation of the certificate would result in the vesting of the foreign contribution and the assets created out of it in the designated authority. Depending on the nature of the organisation, such assets could even include places of worship.

Cancellation of a certificate may also result if an individual or organisation is prosecuted in connection with a case alleging religious conversion through force or inducement. Experience suggests that it is very easy for a person determined to have the certificate of a religious organisation cancelled to file a complaint in a police station or in a court alleging forcible religious conversion. Consequently, this provision has immense potential for misuse, particularly against minority religious groups.

A rather unusual provision in this Bill is that if a person surrenders a certificate of registration, the entire foreign contribution remaining with the person, along with all the assets created out of such contribution, will vest in the designated authority. It is difficult to understand the rationale behind this provision. A person or organisation that has availed of foreign contributions and created assets from them may, after some time, decide that it no longer requires any further foreign contributions and may therefore surrender its certificate. However, under Clause 16A(1)(b) of the Bill, all the assets created out of the foreign contribution, together with any unutilised portion of such contribution, shall vest in the authority.

Exemption clause

Finally, Clause 16L exempts any organisation, class of organisations, or person from the operation of this Bill if the government considers such an exemption to be in the public interest. Although the purpose of this clause appears to be obvious, the concern is that it may be vulnerable to challenge under Article 14 of the Constitution, which guarantees equality before the law. The clause neither identifies any intelligible differentia that distinguishes the favoured class of organisations or persons from those to whom the law applies in its entirety, nor establishes a rational nexus between such differential treatment and the object sought to be achieved by the legislation. The exemption of individuals or organisations is left entirely to the government's opinion that such action is expedient in the public interest. It is clear from the overall scheme of these amendments that the state seeks to eliminate organisations active in the educational, cultural, environmental, and charitable sectors on account of certain deep-seated prejudices.

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India's theatre reform needs a readiness framework

Harinder Singh

Former Director, Operational Logistics, at the Army Headquarters

India's theatre-isation is nearing completion. The United States, the United Kingdom, and China have already made this shift: modern conflict favours integrated structures over single-service models. India is now moving in the same direction. The transition, however, may temporarily reduce operational readiness. The key question is what will be lost, how much, and for how long before capability is restored.

Transforming a single-service structure that has stood for seven decades is difficult. The merger of 17 single-service commands into three integrated theatres carries three real risks.

First, the knowledge gap at the top. A theatre commander will command forces from three services, at least two of which he has not spent decades honing. Staff can advise, but it cannot replace the instincts built over a career – knowing how quickly a mechanised brigade mobilises or a fighter squadron scrambles. In a fast-paced conflict such as Operation Sindoor (2025), that gap becomes critical when domain expertise matters most.

Second, each service has unique values and cultures – merging them is difficult, which will show up sharpest around careers and rank. A joint force worried about career progression or rank-equivalence – hurting morale and motivation – can dampen active combat.

Third, slower decision-making. Adding the Vice Chief of Defence Staff (VCDS), alongside the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), adds a layer between the theatre commanders and the Raksha Mantri – one more link between order and action. Theatre commanders are to report directly to the Raksha Mantri once fighting starts. But an untested structure cannot suddenly switch on under fire, and peacetime habits of routing through the VCDS would be hard to break when speed matters most.

None of this argues against theatre commands; the reform must proceed. All three hit short-term readiness first, with no time to recover once fighting starts. The risk compounds; gaps in data links, jointness and logistics rarely surface until a crisis forces the question. India's Air Force chief has argued that coordination may serve better than forcing fusion too fast. The next question is how much this costs, and for how long.

> Modernising military structures while maintaining readiness remains the key challenge

How much and for how long

Here is a rough but useful distinction. First, the nature of change. Reforms touching weapon-platforms show results within months; those touching structures such as the Andaman and Nicobar Command took over a decade. Theatre-isation is the second category – who commands what, and how fast the three services fuse as one fighting system - and that costs readiness.

Second, the scale of the delay. The current plan may take two to three years, while full transition could take a decade or more. China created theatre commands in two years and the U.S. in 10; India has spent 25 years debating the move. The real challenge is not money or hardware, but mindsets – hierarchy, authority, and command structures. Even the U.K. restructured its joint command twice since 2012. For India, the risk is reduced readiness along the borders during transition.

Third, the timing. India faces pressure on two fronts – an unresolved boundary with China, a festering rivalry with Pakistan. A long war gives theatre-isation time to mature; a short one runs on whatever readiness is on hand. China raised five theatre commands in 2016; the one facing India was tested at Doklam in 2017, and in 2020. The Goldwater-Nichols Act (1986), a success after its first test in Panama, spent a decade absorbing its readiness costs – diluted expertise, command friction.

Indian defence planning just treats reform as self-executing: approve the structure, allocate roles, and assume readiness follows. Beijing shows otherwise: it took two years to raise five theatre commands .

The gap is partly procedural and partly semantic. India still speaks of "defence preparedness"; modern militaries focus on "military readiness" – staying ready, always. India has yet to develop a military readiness framework. It needs one now, along with four key reforms.

First, the metrics – a public statement of what the joint force must be ready to fight is essential. Naming these readiness risks matters. A "two-front" threat can quietly become "two-and-a-half" if left unaddressed. No one in India has said this openly.

Second, the standards that measure force structures against operational demands. India measures inputs – money, manpower, machines, and material (4Ms) – rather than actual military capability. A readiness standard needs three elements: unit-level readiness, force readiness, and sustainability with surge capacity. The transition window will not wait.

Third, India needs mechanisms that compel policymakers to notice and act. The U.S. created a Readiness Oversight Council in the 1990s. India needs a similar structure: a Defence Readiness Council at the ministry level, a Military Readiness Committee under the CDS, and sub-committees within each service and theatre command.

Fourth, hedge the transition itself. Keep a reserve force outside the new structure so short wars are not fought entirely on untested ground. Diplomacy with China and Pakistan may not resolve long-standing disputes, but it can buy the time theatre-isation requires. Neither guarantees peace, but both create valuable time.

Theatre-isation is not the problem, but assuming it comes at no cost is. Readiness is what is at stake, and war does not wait for the transition to finish.

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India's refusal to uphold a global gig work law

Rejimon Kuttappan

is a workers' rights advocate

On June 12, in Geneva, the International Labour Conference adopted Convention No. 193, 'Decent Work in the Platform Economy', which is the first binding international treaty written for the rider, driver, picker and data-labeller who earns a living through an app. The vote was lopsided: 406 in favour (which included nations such as China, Brazil, Germany, France, South Africa, and Japan), 8 against, and 36 abstentions.

India abstained. Under the International Labour Organization's (ILO) tripartite system, each country votes through three delegates. Only India's government abstained; its employer and worker delegates voted in favour.

Abstention is not neutrality. It is a decision to maintain distance from a treaty that millions of workers waited two years to win.

What India walked away from

Convention No. 193 does what India's own laws refuse to. It extends a floor of rights to platform workers regardless of classification, even if a company calls them "employees" or "independent partners". Core protections, which include pay as per the statutory or negotiated minimum; on-time payment; occupational safety and health; and social security on terms no less favourable than what comparable workers receive, apply to all.

The Convention also enters territory no global standard has touched – algorithmic management, the opaque software that allocates work, sets pay, monitors performance, and silently deactivates accounts. Platforms must now disclose significant automated decisions, explain them in writing, and keep a human in the loop. Further, Article 9 of the Convention strikes at the gig economy's central fiction: governments must classify workers correctly, guided "mainly by the facts relating to the performance of work" and by what the worker does.

> Convention No. 193 extends a floor of rights to platform workers regardless of classification, even if a company calls them 'employees' or 'independent partners'

It is no utopian document. It is a floor for worker's rights that India's gig workers currently do not stand on.

India's gig workforce stood at roughly 7.7 million in 2020-21. By NITI Aayog's own projection, it will reach 2.35 crore by 2029-30, about 6.7% of the non-agricultural workforce. This is no longer the urban side-hustle of marketing decks. Gig work is now becoming the mode through which India's cities are fed, moved and supplied.

Further, NITI Aayog data shows that about 39% of gig workers earn ₹10,000-₹25,000 a month and 34% earn ₹25,000-₹40,000, with wages stretched across 12-hour shifts; fuel paid for by the worker himself; and no overtime, because overtime requires an employer to exist. Only about 15% have any social security. The rest ride into Indian traffic each morning with no accident cover, no sick pay, no pension, and an algorithm that can switch off their income without explanation.

The government's defenders will say that India needs no Geneva treaty because it has its own framework. The Code on Social Security, 2020, part of the four Labour Codes brought into force in November 2025, was among the world's first central laws to define "gig worker" and "platform worker". It directs aggregators to pay 1%-2% of their annual turnover, capped at 5% of worker payouts, into a social security fund.

While on paper, this sounds like leadership, in practice, it is a promise printed and shelved. Neither the central law nor most of the State laws specify the nature, quantum or eligibility of benefits. The contribution mechanism remains largely un-operationalised and the schemes are notional. Meanwhile, the real laws have come from the States: Rajasthan's Platform-Based Gig Workers Act of 2023, and the welfare boards drafted in Karnataka and Telangana. The Centre abstains in Geneva while its own States legislate.

India's abstention at the Conference reads less like a one-off position than a habit. India is a founding member of the ILO and has ratified six of the eight core conventions. It has not ratified Convention No. 87 (Freedom of Association) or No. 98 (Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining) because they would give government servants the right to strike, which domestic rules bar. Nor has it ratified Convention No. 190 on violence and harassment at work.

A founder of the ILO that will not sign the ILO's own guarantees is not a country caught off-guard. It has a settled posture: endorse the principle but withhold the obligation. The logic is consistent. India ratifies Conventions only once national law is in full conformity. There is a federalism argument too, as labour is a concurrent subject. But abstention does not protect federalism; the States are already moving.

What abstention costs

When a country ratifies an ILO convention and writes it into domestic law, a worker can sue a platform for redress. Abstention forecloses that future. It tells every aggregator in India that the classification fiction is safe here and that the algorithm need not explain itself. It widens the gap between a delivery worker in China, who will have rights, and one in Chennai, who will not.

The government had a choice between the worker and the platform, and in one of the most public forums on earth it chose to make no choice at all, which, when one party holds the app and the other the handlebars, is the same as choosing the app.

The World Bank estimates that 154-435 million people already earn through platforms worldwide. Twenty-three and a half million of them will be Indian by 2030. They delivered the meal. The least their government owed them was a show of hands.

The scourge beneath HYDRAA's excesses

The anti-encroachment body's run-ins with the court point to a systemic problem

STATE OF PLAY

Swathi Vadlamudi

The Hyderabad Disaster Response and Asset Protection Agency (HYDRAA), which earned nation-wide adulation for its anti-encroachment operations in Hyderabad, received a major setback on July 27, when the Telangana High Court directed the chief secretary to replace HYDRAA chief A.V. Ranganath with another officer.

This order elicited varied reactions, with the main Opposition parties, the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), hailing it as a slap in the face of the State government which, they alleged, had been creating fear among the general public, and resorting to blackmail through HYDRAA. Chief Minister A.Revanth Reddy, on the other hand, stood firm in support of Mr.Ranganath, defending the State government's authority to appoint officers. Mr. Reddy described HYDRAA as one of the most significant reforms introduced by his government and reminded that the agency had earned appreciation from across the country for its efforts to protect public assets.

The evolution of HYDRAA

HYDRAA was created two years ago through an executive order, with the express mandate of asset protection, disaster management and logistical support for other departments. Protecting the properties of local bodies and the government which include parks, lakes, stormwater drains, land parcels, roads and footpaths from encroachment is its responsibility.

Over the last two years, HYDRAA has created history by

venturing where nobody has ever ventured; it has pulled down structures raised in lakes, drains, and government lands and has secured parks and open spaces. Though initially sceptical about its drives, people soon started trusting the agency, as vouched by the thousands of complaints received by HYDRAA through its grievance platform 'Prajavani'. In fact, the agency had to halt the programme for more than a month, unable to handle the deluge of petitions from the public. In contrast, a similar programme by the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation has seen numbers dwindle due to a loss of faith in the civic body.

Within two years, HYDRAA has reclaimed 3,325 acres of public property under lakes, drains, government lands, parks, open spaces, roads and footpaths, apart from its participation in other tasks related to disaster response and lake development. Most of its operations were undertaken upon public requests or upon requests by other departments.

More often than not, the agency has entered into legal crosshairs, and has been repeatedly upbraided by the Telangana High Court for violating stay orders on certain disputed lands. The final straw was when a High Court order favouring a realtor with regard to a particular land title was flouted more than once.

However, the HYDRAA chief is standing his ground. His defence is that the title which is being disputed in court had no relation to the land he cleared on the ground, which he claims is government land occupied by the builder in question.

His contention that land sharks have excelled, in what he calls, 'court craft' in cahoots with revenue, irrigation and municipal officials has more than its share of truth.

Corruption in real estate

The real estate mafia is one of the most powerful forces of corruption in Telangana, and especially Hyderabad, holding many pubic servants in its grip. Documents are hidden, titles are changed, water courses are altered, maps are redrawn, court cases are weakened, and appeals are never filed – all to benefit builders or developers often times in collusion with the political class. The Telangana Anti Corruption Bureau had filed a record number of cases in the quarter ending June 30, which speaks volumes about the corruption intertwined with the system.

HYDRAA as of now derives its strength from its chief, who in turn enjoys the unflinching support of the Chief Minister holding the Municipal Administration and Urban Development portfolio. While strengthening an individual over institutions is not a democratic way of functioning, compromising institutions by giving up public assets to favour a clique of realtors is not democracy either.

Besides announcing his support for HYDRAA, the CM should pay serious attention to the scourge of corruption institutionalised in the State's public departments.

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Ten years and 7 PMs later, did Brexit make a difference?

Analysis of migration and trade data show that Brexit neither helped in controlling net migration nor in significantly improving the U.K.'s trade

DATA POINT

Areena Arora
Gauri Singavarapu

When Andy Burnham took charge as the U.K.'s Prime Minister on July 20, he became the seventh occupant of 10 Downing Street since the country decided to exit the European Union (EU) by a narrow margin in the Brexit referendum held in June 2016.

The fact that the U.K. has never seen these many Prime Ministers in any 10-year period in at least the last five decades speaks to the political volatility the country is witnessing **(Chart 1)**. Although one cannot attribute the unprecedented revolving door of Prime Ministerss to Brexit alone, the instability provides the backdrop to test whether the U.K.'s exit from the EU – which legally came into force in January 2020 – made any difference in meeting the objectives it purportedly wanted to achieve.

The two key arguments made in favour of the exit were to control migration and enable the U.K. to chart its own path in trade by freeing the country from the "unfair" regulations imposed by the EU.

Taking back control of borders

The Vote Leave campaign used the famous slogan "take back control", meaning in part to increase control over the U.K.'s borders and break free from the EU's free movement programme, which allows citizens of member countries to live and travel across other member countries without a visa.

Seven months after the referendum, the then Prime Minister Theresa May said, "Brexit must mean control of the number of people who come to Britain from Europe." The Conservative Party manifesto for the 2019 election, which Boris Johnson won to become the Prime Minister, promised that there would be fewer lower-skilled immigrants and that overall immigration would come down. Instead, the data show that net migration (immigration minus emigration) moved in the opposite direction, although immigration from EU countries fell.

After free movement between the U.K. and the EU ended in January 2021, net migration reached 8,91,000 in 2022 and 8,48,000 in 2023, more than three times the 2016 level. In fact, the total net migration of 2.7 million in the five-year period from 2021 to 2025 was more than double the 1.27 million recorded in the five years before the Brexit vote (2012-2016).

Brexit campaigners had promised to cut overall numbers by replacing EU free movement with a common system covering migrants from everywhere. While a unified system was put in place, the trends for EU and non-EU migrants diverged sharply **(Chart 2)**.

In the 2012-2016 period, net migration from EU countries to the U.K. marginally exceeded the country's overall net migration figure. For instance, in 2016, net migration from EU and non-EU countries stood at 2,53,000 and 90,000 respectively, while 94,000 U.K. nationals left the country. This left the U.K.'s net migration in 2016 at 2,49,000. The trend has since reversed: from mid-2022, net migration from the EU to the U.K. has been negative. Thus, Brexit did not reduce migration but altered the composition of migrants.

Mixed outcomes in trade

Trade tells another complicated story. Brexit campaigners touted leaving the EU as a chance to reduce dependence on the bloc's regulations and expand commerce with the rest of the world while continuing to have full access to the European market.

The COVID-19 pandemic coincided with the U.K.'s formal exit from the EU and the U.K.-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement. The agreement was a last-ditch free trade deal to continue zero tariffs and avoid reverting to the World Trade Organization's rules, which Ms. May claimed would allow "for the freest possible trade in goods and services between Britain and the EU's member states."

Though the U.K.'s exports to countries in the EU, in current prices, have grown year-on-year since 2021, its trade deficit has also widened due to higher imports from these countries **(Chart 3)**.

Across each year from 2012 to 2025, the U.K. ran a trade deficit with EU countries and a surplus with non-EU countries. Though the pattern held, the U.K.'s trade deficit with the EU as a percentage of its exports to the bloc increased from 13.5% in 2021 to 23.5% in 2025. At the same time, the country has not been able to significantly improve its trade surplus with other countries, indicating that Brexit perhaps did not help the U.K. in any considerable measure on the trade front.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and the resulting spike in energy prices benefited the U.K., which re-exported gas to EU countries. The Office for National Statistics reported that European demand, combined with Britain's regasification infrastructure, which converted imported LNG back into pipeline gas, nearly tripled gas exports to record levels in April 2022 – possibly explaining the peak of £202.9 billion worth of goods exported to EU countries in 2022. However, U.K.'s goods exports haven't recovered to their 2019 pre-pandemic peak. Inflation-adjusted goods exports remained weaker in 2025 than before the pandemic and before the U.K.-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement took effect in 2021.

On services, the U.K.'s exports to EU and non-EU countries follow largely parallel trends. Though services exports fell sharply during the pandemic, they have recovered since, suggesting that Brexit did not derail them – although sectors dependent on moving staff, particularly in EU countries, faced higher regulatory costs.

Brexit's balance sheet

The data for the charts were sourced from the Office for National Statistics and the Government of the United Kingdom.

Chart 1: Changing hands at 10, Downing Street. U.K. has had seven PMs since the Brexit referendum in June 2016

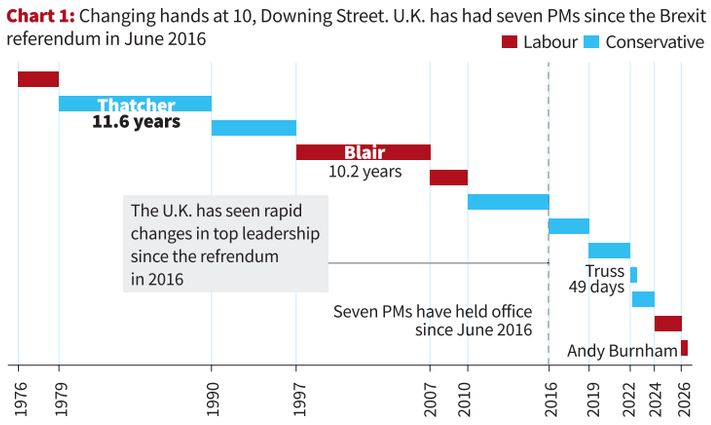


Chart 2: Net migration from EU countries fell after the Brexit refrendum while it increased from non-EU countries since 2021

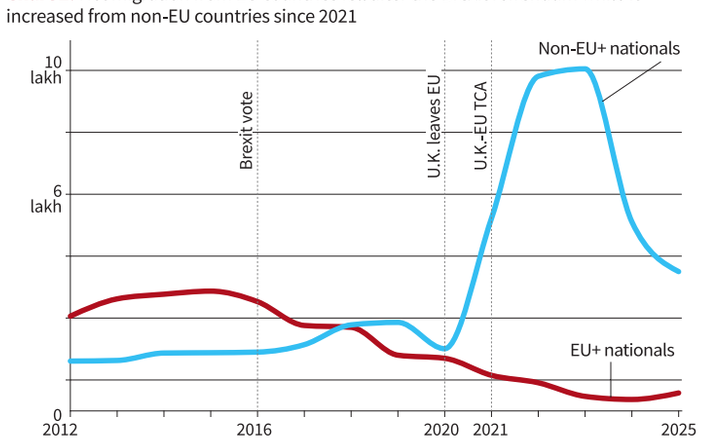
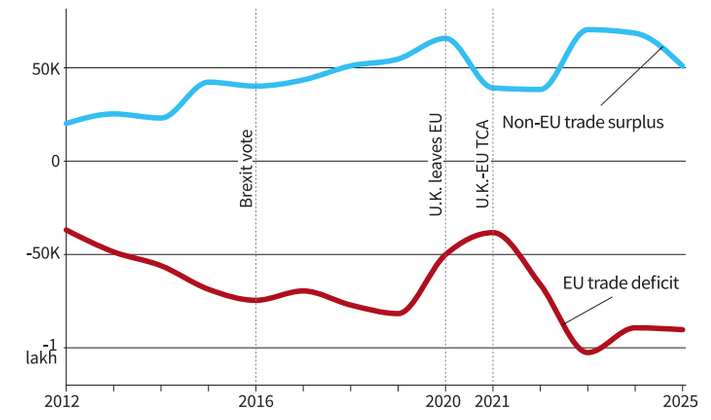


Chart 3: The U.K.'s trade deficit with EU countries has widened while its trade surplus with non-EU countries has not shown considerable increase (Values in million £)



Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Number of jobs to be cut by BMW by end 2027

8,000 BMW is to offer almost half its German staff voluntary redundancy in a bid to cut 8,000 jobs by the end of 2027, a source said. About 40,000 of BMW's roughly 85,000 permanent employees would receive the offers from October. AFP

Population of Japanese residents in Japan as of January 1

119.74 million. The number of Japanese people living in the country has fallen below 120 million for the first time in 42 years, government data showed on Wednesday, as the nation confronts a low birth rate and an aging society. AFP

Death toll in quake rubble in southwestern Japan

18 Soldiers and emergency workers combed through a badly damaged shopping mall and collapsed houses looking for trapped survivors on Wednesday. The earthquake that hit a day earlier in the Kumamoto area on the southern main island of Kyushu also left at least 62 people injured. PTI

Water ATMs to be installed by the Delhi government

250 The Delhi government plans to install 250 water ATMs for ₹58 crore across the national capital, Water Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh said on Wednesday. "We have approved the project; initially we will start with government schools," Mr. Singh said. PTI

Percentage increase in Nepal's tiger numbers in past four years

20 in per cent. Nepal's tiger population has risen by roughly 20% in the past four years to an estimated 429, officials said on Wednesday, a conservation milestone despite challenges from human-wildlife conflict. AFP

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Behind China's AI gift, a constraint

China's embrace of open-weight AI models is driven as much by compute constraints as by a bid to project itself as a responsible global AI power; until it overcomes chip and inference bottlenecks, Beijing is likely to keep sharing its models with the world

WORLD INSIGHT

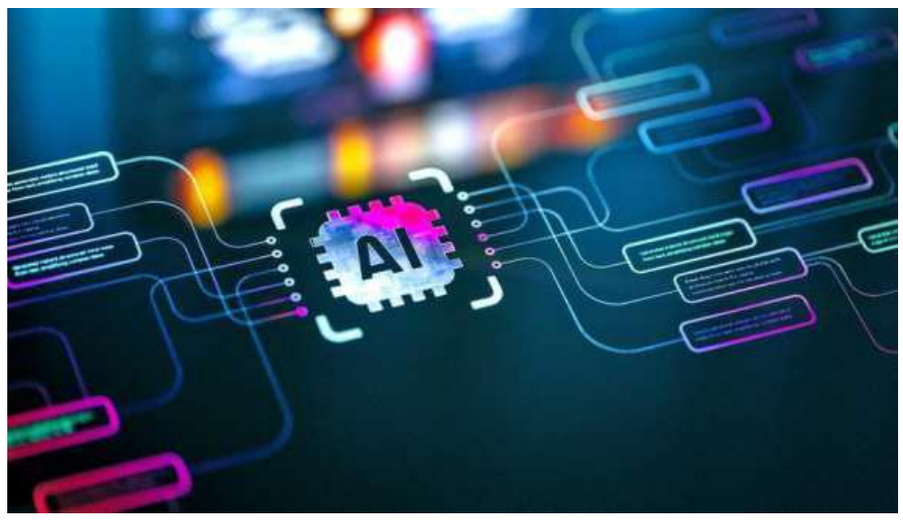
Amit Kumar

At the ninth World AI Conference in Shanghai this month, Chinese President Xi Jinping addressed the gathering for the first time in nine years. It is indicative of the priority that AI occupies for the leadership. At the conference, Mr. Xi pitched Chinese AI models as a global public good. The contrast was clear as day. America is selling closed-source, proprietary models while China is offering open-weight models to the world. This distinction is not merely technical, but equally political.

Unlike Anthropic, OpenAI, and Google, which host their frontier models on their respective servers and offer services via an application programming interface (API), Chinese labs such as DeepSeek, Qwen, and Moonshot also release their weights for anyone to download. Unlike American models, these can be customised, modified, and even further trained. There is no subscription to cancel or terms of service. The maker cannot revoke or restrict access. So long as one can manage the requisite compute to host the model, even Papua New Guinea or Senegal can run it locally on their servers. And most importantly, the data never leaves the border.

AI diplomacy

However, one may wonder what explains China's benevolence. Well, to begin with, the objective is to project China as a responsible AI player in the comity of nations. Unlike the Americans, who he alleged to have overstretched the concept of national security to AI, and thereby adopted an exclusionary approach, China is committed to sharing the benefits and fruits of AI. Mr. Xi's framing was indicative in this regard. He described AI as "humanity's collective wisdom," a "historic opportunity" to "bridge the AI and digital divides," and something that



GETTY IMAGES

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"should not be a solo performance by a single country but a symphony of international cooperation." The underlying message, aimed at Washington, projected Beijing as the open and cooperative alternative to the U.S.'s AI models.

But there is a limiting factor at play too that explains Beijing's benevolence – its compute constraint, both for training and inference.

Since 2022, the U.S. administration, in concert with its allies, has imposed a series of export restrictions on China, limiting its ability to both mass-import and mass-manufacture high-end chips.

The compute constraint

To understand this constraint, one must separate two very different tasks – training a model and serving it. Training is a one-time cost. A lab assembles a cluster of chips, runs it for a few months and comes up with a finished model. The fleet required is numerically small. For instance, GPT-4 was trained on an estimated 25,000 Nvidia chips, and Meta trained its Llama 3.1 on ~16,400 chips. DeepSeek, on the other hand, trained its acclaimed V3 model on ~2,000 export-compliant H800s. A frontier model, in other words, needs chips in the thousands, and it needs them only once.

Serving that model to the public, however, is an altogether different proposition. Inference scales with the user base and requires continuous expansion as it must answer hundreds of millions of user queries. OpenAI crossed a million GPUs in 2025, and Meta targeted the equivalent of 1.3 million by the end of 2025. Thus, for any model with a mass consumer base, the serving fleet dwarfs the training fleet, often by ten to a hundred times.

In other words, the distinction is that of a stockpile and a flow. To train a model, a lab can accumulate ten or twenty thousand chips through smuggling, stockpiling, and modest domestic production. This is precisely why the export controls could not prevent China from reaching parity at the model level. Inference, however, cannot be solved this way. The export controls mean that the most advanced chips remain out of bounds for Chinese firms. Additionally, the concessions the U.S. has offered exist largely on paper. Around 10 Chinese firms were cleared in principle to buy up to 75,000 H200 chips each, but not a single unit had been delivered by mid-2026, as sales remained stalled and Beijing itself directed firms towards domestic alternatives.

China can attempt to bridge the shortfall through domestic production, but even here, restrictions on export of EUVs continue to prove a handicap. SMIC's 5nm line in China runs at roughly 20% yield without EUV tools, far short of commercial viability. This severely restricts the ability of Chinese labs to offer services via API alone. DeepSeek's decision to freeze new registrations in January 2025 was influenced by a surge in traffic it could not serve, alongside a reported 'large-scale malicious attack'.

Openness by necessity

Furthermore, given that Chinese models are nearly as good as the U.S.'s frontier models, their popularity is increasing. Data show that the Chinese models' share of U.S. firms' AI usage has hit a record 60% on OpenRouter – a marketplace for routing queries to various models based on requests.

American firms are preferring Chinese models as they provide comparable services at a fraction of the cost. But this success comes with a rider – the need for enormous compute. The solution thus is to simply outsource compute via open-weight models. Hence, China's open-weight offering to the world is largely a product of its structural constraint. It can build models that rival the U.S. but cannot serve them at scale.

But Beijing cannot ignore the urge to securitise and restrain access for too long. Sooner or later, it will face that choice. Indeed, Beijing is already reported to be weighing restrictions on overseas access to its most capable models.

One can expect China's frontier models to move towards proprietary models, while trailing models remaining open-weight. But so long as China cannot overcome the larger constraint, it is likely to continue fielding open-weight models. And China's constraint is the world's gain.

(Amit Kumar is a Staff Research Analyst at Takshashila Institution)

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THE GIST

- China's open-weight AI models can be downloaded, customised and deployed on local servers, allowing countries to retain control over their data without relying on proprietary, API-based services.
- Even as Beijing promotes open-weight AI as a global public good, it is already weighing restrictions on overseas access to its most capable frontier models, signalling that this openness may not be permanent.

The IACS and the making of modern Indian science

Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science fulfilled Mahendralal Sircar's vision of scientific self-reliance

Shekhar Mande

The late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries marked a period of profound intellectual and cultural awakening across India, with Bengal emerging as its prominent centre. Although similar currents of intellectual, social, and cultural reform were taking shape in several other parts of the country, the scale, diversity, and enduring influence of this awakening found their fullest expression in Bengal.

What is now widely known as the Bengal Renaissance not only transformed Bengal but also profoundly influenced the intellectual, social, and cultural evolution of modern India. The movement fostered remarkable advances across a broad spectrum of disciplines, ranging from philosophy, spirituality, literature, and the arts to education, social reform, and the natural sciences. It produced an extraordinary generation of philosophers, reformers, educators, scientists, writers, and artists whose collective vision and achievements laid many intellectual and institutional foundations of modern India.

A vision for scientific self-reliance

One of the most influential figures of this remarkable period was Mahendralal Sircar (1833-1904). Deeply concerned that the colonial administration had failed to provide adequate opportunities for Indians to pursue education and research in the natural sciences, Sircar articulated a bold vision for scientific self-reliance.

In 1869, in an article published in the *Calcutta Journal of Medicine*, he proposed the establishment of the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science (IACS), arguing that scientific education was indispensable for India's intellectual and societal progress. As he wrote: "The best method, and under the present circumstances, the only method, that we can conceive of, by which the people of India can be essentially improved, by which the Hindu mind can be developed to its full proportions, is as we have seen above, by the cultivation of the Physical Sciences". Three years later, while addressing a meeting of the Bethune Society at the Medical College Theatre in Calcutta in 1872, Sircar lamented the lack of institutional support for scientific research in India under colonial rule: "I must say, though I say with deep regret, that our Government has hitherto afforded no opportunity, nor offered any encouragement to the pursuit of science by the native of this country".

These statements reveal Sircar's remarkable foresight. At a time when scientific research in India received little official encouragement, he envisioned an institution that would enable Indians to pursue scientific inquiry and contribute to the advancement of knowledge. That vision culminated in the establishment of the IACS on July 29, 1876, as the country's first national institution dedicated to scientific research by Indians. Today, as we celebrate its 150th anniversary, we honour not merely the founding of an institution but the birth of a scientific movement that transformed the landscape of Indian science.

Among the most celebrated scientists associated with the IACS was C.V. Raman, whose pioneering work transformed modern physics. Shortly after joining the Accountant General's Office in Calcutta in 1907, Raman noticed a "strange-looking board" bearing the name 'Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science'. Intrigued, he made enquiries about the institution and was introduced to Amrit Lal Sircar, the son of the Association's founder. Recognising Raman's enthusiasm for scientific research, Amrit extended an open invitation to use the Association's laboratories for his experiments outside office hours.

For nearly a decade, Raman followed a remarkable routine. He spent the early mornings and evenings at the IACS laboratory while serving as a government officer during the day. This extraordinary dedication continued until 1917, when he resigned from the Finance Department to accept the Palit Professorship of Physics at the University of Calcutta. Even thereafter, IACS remained the principal venue for his experimental investigations.

It was in the laboratories of IACS that Raman made his most celebrated discovery, the Raman effect, which he announced to the world on February 28, 1928. This landmark discovery earned him the Nobel Prize in physics in 1930, making him the first Asian scientist to win this prize in the sciences. In many ways, Raman's achievement represented the fulfilment of Sircar's vision: that an institution founded and nurtured by Indians for the cultivation of science could produce discoveries of the highest international significance.

A legacy that endures

The founding of the IACS also marked a defining moment in the renaissance of science in India. More than the establishment of a scientific institution, it embodied the aspiration that Indians should not merely learn science but actively create it. Over the past century and a half, IACS has nurtured generations of exceptional scientists, provided a vibrant institutional framework for the pursuit of scientific inquiry, and made contributions of enduring significance to the advancement of science worldwide.

As we commemorate this historic milestone, we pay our deepest tribute to the vision and foresight of Mahendralal Sircar, whose unwavering belief in the transformative power of science made the institution possible. We also celebrate the extraordinary legacy of the IACS itself, a legacy of intellectual curiosity, scientific excellence, and national service that continues to inspire generations of researchers. May that spirit continue to guide the Institute, advancing the frontiers of knowledge and contributing to the scientific and technological progress of India and the world.

(Shekhar C. Mande is president, Indian National Science Academy, and national president, Vijnana Bharati)

IN THE LIMELIGHT

Bollywood's politics of silence, caution and calculated dissent

While some of Bollywood's biggest stars have chosen caution or silence, others have continued to speak out despite boycotts, trolling and professional setbacks; together, they show an industry balancing conviction with the pressures of political polarisation

Sudhish Kamath

When Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan finally caved in to the protests and resigned, protestors around the country were quick to appropriate Salman Khan's 'It's done bro' as the defining meme of the moment.

Salman Khan's first message praised the students, called the paper leak "a very serious issue", described their agitation as "the right way to go about it" and urged that it not be "hijacked politically". Less than 24 hours later, after Prime Minister Narendra Modi had responded, he expressed confidence that the government would take strict action and asked the students to return home with an appeal to activist Sonam Wangchuk, 25 days into his fast: "Sonam, it's done, bro... If you want, will send you food from home."

Both posts came under fire – from both sides.

Superstar Salman Khan's posts on the recent student protests perfectly capture Bollywood's swinging tightrope walk. Silence is seen as complicity and middle-ground fence-sitting as rage unfolds on the streets and outrage on our feeds.

Yet the story of Bollywood's political engagement over the last decade and a half is far more complicated than the accusation that it has been silent.

Take Amitabh Bachchan. During the Nirbhaya protests in 2012, Bachchan tweeted that he was "pained and horrified" to see peaceful protesters being met with tear gas and water cannons. Last week, as students once again took to the streets, Bachchan's public timeline was occupied instead by cryptic Hindi aphorisms. He later clarified that they were not about him (or his hospitalisation and surgery) but were inspired by Argentina's loss in the World Cup, after they went viral amid speculation that he was expressing support for the movement.

Aamir Khan's remarks on intolerance in 2015 triggered years of boycotts, political attacks and eventually cost him the Incredible India campaign. By 2020, the actor deleted his social media accounts.

Shah Rukh Khan rarely comments directly on politics anymore, though he did ask India to "be democratic" as part of his New Year message before the pandemic. He leaned more towards it in *Jawan*, with an appeal asking citizens to vote thoughtfully. Around the same time, the arrest and eventual exoneration of his son Aryan Khan turned the actor into the centre of one of India's most polarising media trials – which the younger Khan lampooned in his Netflix show *The Ba****ds of Bollywood*.

Salman Khan has chosen another route – speaking rarely, carefully. During the farmers' protest, struggling for adjectives, he said: "The right thing should be done, the noble thing should be done, the correct thing should be done..."

Actor Shabana Azmi kisses the hand of the fasting student activist Neha Bora at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi, on July 19. REUTERS

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Cozying up to Modi

During the 2019 elections, Akshay Kumar's interview with Prime Minister Modi – remembered as much for its conversation about mangoes – became symbolic of Bollywood's changing relationship with the establishment. His meetings with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath over the proposed Noida Film City only reinforced that perception, even as questions over his Canadian citizenship complicated his image as one of Hindi cinema's loudest on-screen nationalists.

In 2019, an entire delegation of Bollywood's biggest names – Karan Johar, Ranbir Kapoor, Ranveer Singh, Alia Bhatt, Rajkummar Rao, Ayushmann Khurrana, Ekta Kapoor, Vicky Kaushal, Rohit Shetty and Imtiaz Ali and several others – posed with Prime Minister Modi in photographs that came to symbolise the industry's growing proximity to political power.

Politics, in turn, borrowed freely from cinema. *Uri*'s "How's the Josh?" became an election slogan. More recently, Modi even invoked *Dhurandhar* in a speech to attack those who didn't like the film.

After watching *Dhurandhar*, Hrithik Roshan posted on Instagram that he "may disagree with the politics of it" but admired its storytelling and craftsmanship. When he shared his appreciation on X, the political disclaimer disappeared. Yet to paint Bollywood as uniformly timid would ignore another, equally consistent tradition.

There are a handful of filmmakers who have consistently been political – Anurag Kashyap, Hansal Mehta, Anubhav Sinha, Vishal Bharadwaj, Sudhir Mishra and, more recently, Honey Trehan, whose film *Satluj*, previously called Punjab 95, was taken off Zee5 three days into release.

Women lead the charge

Deepika Padukone visited JNU in 2020 and simply stood with the protesting students between the promotions of Chhaapaak. The viral photo was followed by calls to boycott the film.

Long-time activist Shabana Azmi kissed the hand of a fasting student and suffered an asthma attack caused by tear gas used during the *Sansad Chalo* march.

Swara Bhaskar has continued speaking despite sustained online abuse, admitting it cost her acting opportunities.

Richa Chadha has repeatedly defended dissent and free speech and continues to tweet asking people to "come together." Both these actresses were trolled by the right-wing ecosystem for marrying Muslim men.

Huma Qureshi, accompanied by her brother Saqib Saleem, turned up at the Delhi protests to support the students.

There are many more who aren't afraid to speak their minds including Taapsee Pannu, Sonakshi Sinha, Gul Panag, Ayesha Khan and Lekha Washington who showed up with actor Imran Khan.

Youth icons join in

Imran Khan at the Mumbai student demonstrations, when asked about "apolitical actors," said, "If you can't stand by your own opinions, if you can't pour your heart into your art, your art has no value."

Avinash Tiwary used Instagram to urge followers to "make this the biggest protest ledger ever in the world" and encouraged people to register their support.

Vijay Verma was among the first to tweet and get trolled with threats of unfollow.

"You can do this quietly too. No need to announce everything," the actor posted in response.

No more Jaane Bhi Do Yaaron

Veteran actor Naseeruddin Shah, speaking emotionally after participating in the recent Delhi student protests, said he was "boiling with anger". Asked why so many of his colleagues remained silent, he replied with a line that immediately went viral: "A dog with a bone in its mouth can't bark." Bollywood then, perhaps, is a mirror of India itself: risk-averse, scared into silence, politically divided and deeply aware that every public statement carries consequences.

Just as people have been emboldened to take to the streets in larger numbers.

Seen together, they reveal an industry caught between public expectations and political consequences.

Or, as Rajkummar Rao wrote while defending himself against criticism over a political campaign song, "One song does not define who I am, what I stand for or what my ideologies in life are."

He ended that post with a line that perhaps explains Bollywood better than any political analysis can.

"You can never know the pressure."

A little later, he quietly deleted it.

But here's to the braver voices. Like Dhurandhar actress Ayesha Khan wrote in her post after being trolled: "I rather have a spine than a career. Go scare someone else."

(The writer is a film critic, filmmaker and screenwriter, most recently known for Culture Vulture, an indie on Bollywood's relationship with politics)

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

"I was watching a movie last night and the hero kept saying 'hang loose'. Any idea what it means?"

"When you tell someone to 'hang loose' or 'stay loose', you want him/her to remain calm."

"If Roshni hangs loose she will definitely do well in the audition. How does that sound?"

"Sounds great."

"When the Principal began to worry about the coming exams, I told him to hang loose."

"I wouldn't tell the Principal to hang loose if I were you. You see, the expression 'hang loose' is considered slang. It should be used only in informal contexts."

"I see. Tell me, what...."

"...it's unbearably hot today. Last night I just couldn't sleep."

"Hang loose. The summer is almost over."

"What makes you say that?"

"It's started raining in Kerala. So it should start raining here pretty soon."

"I don't want it to rain 'in here'. I want it to rain here."

"What's the difference?"

"No, they don't. When you say that you want it to rain 'in here', it means you want it to rain inside this room."

"Rain inside the room! That happens every year during the monsoon season. You see, that's how badly our roof leaks. So, if I say, 'It snowed in here', does it mean that it snowed inside the room?"

"That's right. You don't want that to happen, do you?"

"Given how hot it is right now, I wouldn't mind a bit of snow inside the room."

"You have a point there. But if you would like it to snow all over the city, then you have to say 'here' instead of 'in here'."

"I wish it would snow here."

"I am sure many people would enjoy the experience."

"Well, did you finally get a chance to meet your boss' wife?"

"Yes, she came to the party last night. When she walked into the room, I had to do a double take. You see, ..."

".What does 'double take' mean?"

"When you do a double take, you react with surprise. For example,..."

"...is it like looking at something the second time just to make sure that I saw it correctly the first time?"

"I guess you could say that. Suppose your physics teacher returned your test paper and you found that she's given you a hundred. How would you react?"

"I guess I would close my eyes and take another look just to see if I had seen it correctly the first time. You know, just to make sure that I wasn't dreaming!"

"Well, in that case you would be doing a double take."

"I think I understand now. Tell me about your boss' wife. Why did you do a double take after seeing her?"

"She is really beautiful that's why."

"Is she a medium height woman?"

"You don't say 'a medium height woman'. A better way of saying the same thing is 'of medium height'. Yes, my boss' wife is a woman of medium height."

"I see. The man who robbed the bank was of medium height. How does that sound?"

"Why do you always come up with examples where someone gets killed or robbed?"

"That's me, I guess."

Published in The Hindu on June 12, 2001

Word of the day

Punctilio:
a fine point of etiquette or petty formality

Synonyms: formal, decorous, correct, nice

Usage: *Every punctilio of the ceremony was observed.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/punctilio

International Phonetic Alphabet: /pʌŋktɪliəʊ/

THE DAILY QUIZ

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

On the death anniversary of Ingmar Bergman, test your knowledge of one of cinema's greatest auteurs, whose films transformed the language of world cinema

Prathmesh Kher

QUESTION 1
In which Swedish city was Ingmar Bergman born in 1918?

QUESTION 2
Which Bergman film won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 1961?

QUESTION 3
Identify the two Bergman films for which cinematographer Sven Nykvist won the Academy Award for Best Cinematography.

QUESTION 4
Despite sharing a surname and Swedish heritage, iconic actress Ingrid Bergman appeared in only one film directed by Ingmar Bergman. Name the film.

QUESTION 5
Ingmar Bergman died on July 30, 2007, the same day as which fellow European cinema giant?

Visual Question:
Ian McKellen plays Death in the Arnold Schwarzenegger starrer Last Action Hero. Which Bergman film is this scene paying homage to?
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Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. This U.S. President signed legislation to create NASA after the Soviet Union launched Sputnik 1. Name the President and the year when the legislation was created. **Ans: Dwight D. Eisenhower and 1958**
2. This Swedish Economist, who was born on this day, received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1961. He also served as the Secretary-General of the UN. Identify the economist. **Ans: Dag Hammarskjöld**
3. At an international summit held in 2010, it was decided that July 29 would be marked as International Tiger Day. Did India take part in the summit, and name the host country. **Ans: Yes and Russia**
4. The first part of this three-part fantasy novel series was published on this day in 1954. The series was first revised and republished in 1965. Identify the title of the first book. **Ans: The Fellowship of the Ring**
5. The wedding of this royal couple on this day was watched by over 700 million people on television. It was broadcast in 74 countries. Identify the couple. **Ans: Prince Charles and Princess Diana**
Visual: A part of the wreckage of the Malaysian Airlines flight MH370 was found on the shore of Réunion Island in the Indian Ocean on July 29, 2015. What is the part called? **Ans: flaperon**
Early Birds: Siddhartha Viswanathan | Piyali Tuli | Sitaram Saharay | Lalchand Bhutani | Tito Shiladitya

From Page One

Supreme Court restricts 'retrospective' approvals

The court said that the 2021-OM had indiscriminately allowed every permissible industry to be regularised for a meagre compensation. It had yielded to a principle of 'pollute and then pay', rather than to sustainable development. The top court quashed the 2021 OM prospectively to not upset ongoing projects, including the AIIMS Medical College and Hospital building in Odisha, the Centre of Excellence for Cancer Diseases in Tamil Nadu, Vijayapura Airport in Karnataka, medical colleges, slum rehabilitation and irrigation projects intended for drought-prone areas.

It said retrospective clearances given under 2017 notification, which provided a 'one-time amnesty' for undertakings started without prior clearance, and the 2021 OM would remain valid unless individually assailed in accordance with law.

The case has had a roller coaster ride with a Division Bench declaring such retrospective clearances a gross illegality in a May 2025 judgment.

In November last year, a larger Bench had diluted the judgment, reasoning that doing away with the retrospective clearance regime would have a "devastating effect" on ongoing public projects worth "thousands of crores of rupees".

U.S. fast-tracks Russia sanctions tariff Act

A cloture is basically a Senate procedure that sets a time limit for the debate and related actions on an issue before it is put to a vote. That is, it is a procedure meant to hasten the vote on a particular issue. The original version of the Act, introduced in 2025, proposed a blanket 500% tariff on those importing Russian oil. However, the Act was revised in early July 2026.

Under the latest version of the Act, a tariff of "up to 100%" would be levied on the top five purchasers of Russian crude oil and natural gas. Currently, China accounts for about 47-50% of Russian crude oil exports, while India accounts for another 36-38%.

As per the latest Indian government data, Russian oil made up a little more than 40% of Indian oil imports in May 2026, and the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has told *The Hindu* that this rose to "more than half" in June.

"The stakes for India are substantial," Ajay Srivastava, founder of the think tank Global Trade Research Initiative said. "Access to discounted Russian crude has significantly lowered India's import bill, supported energy security, and helped contain inflation."

"Washington is steadily expanding its use of trade and economic measures to pursue strategic objectives," he added. "Reciprocal tariffs, Section 301 investigations, forced-labour measures, sector-specific duties, and now Russia-related sanctions reflect an increasingly broad toolkit of economic pressure."

'BS-III vehicles may need tweaks for E20 fuel'

Some users attributed the problems to E20 fuel or contaminated E20 fuel.

Fuel efficiency and mileage is influenced by "a host of factors beyond just fuel type", Mr. Gadkari said, including, he added, driving habits, maintenance practices such as oil changes and air filter cleanliness, tyre pressure and alignment, and even air conditioning load.

After a brief pause, U.S. and Iran resume strikes

The war began on February 28 with U.S. and Israeli attacks on Iran. U.S. President Donald Trump said on Wednesday that the American military "will hit Iran hard" after the missile attack. "We will be hitting them hard. They are going to get a beating," Fox News quoted Mr. Trump as saying, adding that he used swear words to emphasise his point.

The renewed hostilities sent oil prices spiking, with Brent crude jumping 3.1% to $84.58 a barrel.

Mr. Trump also told Fox that U.S.-Saudi Arabia bombing of pro-Iranian militias overnight inside Iraq had been coordinated with the authorities in Baghdad – despite the Iraqi government publicly condemning the attacks.

The Jordanian military said five missiles had been "intercepted and destroyed." Iran's state-run IRNA news agency carried a statement from the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard saying the Guard's Aerospace Force fired ballistic missiles at the Muwaffaq Salti Air Base and the headquarters of the U.S. military's Central Command in Jordan.

Hours earlier, the U.S. Central Command said its forces "remain vigilant and at a high state of readiness". In announcing the strikes against militias in Iraq, the U.S. warned that further attacks on American troops or Saudi Arabia's energy infrastructure risked additional action.

Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi called an emergency meeting of the country's National Security Council on Wednesday to discuss the strikes.

Two Iraqi government officials said a visit to Saudi by Mr. al-Zaidi that had been scheduled for Thursday had been postponed, without another date being set.

India getting ready for Xi, Putin visits in September

Both leaders expected to attend BRICS summit in Delhi on Sept. 12, 13; Foreign Secretary holds wide-ranging talks in Beijing as Chinese officials arrive in Delhi to oversee security preparations

Ananth Krishnan
Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

India is getting ready for visits by Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin, with both leaders planning to attend the BRICS summit to be held in Delhi on September 12 and 13, sources here said on Wednesday. Consultations are continuing with regard to these upcoming high-level visits.

On Monday and Tuesday, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri held a series of talks in Beijing, during which both sides discussed "strengthening high-level interactions". In recent weeks, Chinese officials have also visited India to oversee the arrangements and security preparations for a possible high-level visit.

During Mr. Misri's talks in Beijing with a senior Communist Party of China official Sun Haiyan, who is Vice Minister in the party's International Department, both sides "expressed commitment to working together to follow through on the common understandings reached by the leaders, strengthen high-level interactions, properly manage differences, and make sustained efforts to foster the improvement and development of bilateral relations," according to a readout from the Chinese side.

High-level meet: Narendra Modi, Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping at the BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, in October 2024. REUTERS

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The Ministry of External Affairs said both sides had "discussed ways to deepen implementation of the guidance of the leaders for bilateral relations, including addressing issues of priority to both sides and by promoting political, people-to-people, academic and think-tank exchanges."

Other preparations for a possible visit by Mr. Xi are also under way.

Mr. Xi did not attend the BRICS summit in Brazil last year, again deputing Mr. Li to represent China in his stead. He did, however, attend the summits in 2023 in South Africa and in 2024 in Russia, where his talks with Mr. Modi paved the way for the subsequent gradual normalisation in relations.

India intensifies contact

Mr. Putin's attendance at the summit was earlier indicated by the Russian side when Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited New Delhi for the BRICS Foreign Ministers meeting in May and discussed "highest level" contacts with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.

India has intensified contact with BRICS member countries both bilaterally and under the multilateral BRICS umbrella.

Official sources here indicated that they expect top leaders of the member countries to attend the summit meeting, though the final details of the visits will be known closer to the date of the summit.

Russia has extended support to India's chairmanship of BRICS and China reiterated its support earlier this week during Mr. Misri's visit.

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SC closes coal block scam case against Manmohan Singh

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Manmohan Singh

The Supreme Court on Wednesday provided former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh posthumous relief by agreeing with two back-to-back closure reports filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in 2014 giving him a clean chit, while highlighting there was no "sufficient material or good reason" to register a corruption case against him in connection with the coal block allocation scam.

A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said the apex court would have ordinarily dismissed the case as infructuous solely on the ground of the demise of the appellant, however, the Bench said it had gone through the closure reports filed in the trial court, only to discover the trial judge had no "compelling reason" to reject the closure reports and make adverse observations against the former PM.

Singh passed away in December 2024, but the case and the aftertaste of the adverse observations of the trial court continued to linger on.

Arguing the appeal on behalf of Singh, senior advocates Kapil Sibal and A.M. Singhvi submitted the CBI had filed the closure reports as regards Singh in the trial court on August 27, 2014 and, subsequently, on October 21, 2014. However, the Special Judge had turned down the closure reports and took cognisance against Singh.

"We find no compelling reason for the Special Judge to have turned down the closure reports... We allow the setting aside of the judgment and close the case on merits," the court observed in a short order.

Centre's assurance cannot override statutory processes on withdrawal of FIRs, experts say

Aaratrika Bhaumik
NEW DELHI

Even as the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) contended that the Supreme Court's interim order permitting the States to proceed with the investigation into the FIRs registered against student protesters was in "direct contradiction" to the Centre's assurance that no punitive action would be taken against them, legal experts said the assurance could not override the statutory provisions governing the criminal process.

Once an FIR has been registered, they pointed out, the investigating agency may file a closure report if it finds no material to proceed, or the public prosecutor may seek withdrawal from prosecution in accordance with law.

Notably, during the hearing on Tuesday, Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre and the Delhi Police, made no reference to any assurance by the Centre that protesters would be granted amnesty. Instead, he submitted that the violence during the protests may have been caused by "anti-social elements" and miscreants who had infiltrated the demonstrations.

Students protest over the alleged police brutality during the youth's protests over irregularities in NEET, in New Delhi on Wednesday. ANI

"It is doubtful whether the Union government can give an assurance to the court on behalf of the State governments regarding the closure of criminal cases registered by the State police. Except for the Delhi Police, the police are under the control of the State governments, not the Centre," said Abhay S. Oka, a former judge of the Supreme Court. "Moreover, once an FIR has been registered, it cannot simply be cancelled or deregistered," he added.

Mr. Oka explained that if the investigating agency finds no evidence against the accused, it may file a closure report. Alternatively, if the prosecution seeks to withdraw the case before the judgment is pronounced, the public prosecutor may move an application, he said.

Judicial scrutiny

He, however, stressed that both these routes remain subject to judicial scrutiny.

"Even if the investigating officer files a closure report, the court is not bound to accept it. After hearing the complainant, it may either accept or reject the report. Likewise, if the public prosecutor seeks to withdraw a case before judgment is pronounced, the court can grant consent only after giving the victim an opportunity of being heard," he said.

In its interim order, the Bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant permitted the investigation into the FIRs to continue, while restraining the police from taking any coercive action against "protesting students" unless they had criminal antecedents.

Senior advocate Sanjay Hegde said the interim order reflected the court's attempt to balance the interests of the investigation with the need to protect those who had participated in peaceful protests.

Advocate Nipun Saxena said the exclusion of persons with criminal antecedents was consistent with the well-established principles governing the grant of interim relief.

Fresh cases of detentions, takedown of online posts reported

Vijaita Singh
Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

The fallout from the protests demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan continued, with many reports of people, including minors, being detained or arrested by the police, and social media users being asked to take down posts related to the agitation.

A 21-year-old man, who was detained by the police in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj after being identified from a photo taken while participating in a protest on July 26, was released on Wednesday. The victim said he was beaten up in police custody. The police wrongly accused him of vandalising a private vehicle belonging to a BJP member, he said.

'Parents summoned'

"They first called my father to the police station and then my mother. It was then that I went and surrendered... I was merely there to protest, I was not involved in vandalism, yet I was kept in detention for more than a day," he said.

When contacted, a police official who answered the phone of the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Prayagraj City, said, "Nobody has been detained. People had been called for questioning based on CCTV footage, but they were released." Ten others were arrested in the case.

Rishav Ranjan of the Congress's legal cell said a 17-year-old boy from Bhagalpur in Bihar, who participated in a protest, was picked up by the police from his home around 3.45 a.m. on July 26. He was among 40 others who were detained or arrested by the Bhagalpur Police. Atulesh Jha, City Superintendent of Police, said, "As per the assurance given by the government, the case... is being withdrawn... and he has been released."

Several Instagram users claimed that the videos related to the July 20 protests were being taken down.

Sailors' safety 'highest priority', says Indian Embassy in Ukraine

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

Hours after the Forward Seamen's Union of India (FSUI) issued an urgent appeal in view of a "life threatening" situation for 13 Indian seafarers on board a commercial vessel in the Black Sea, the Indian Embassy in Ukraine has taken note of the issue and said that it is attaching "highest priority" to the matter.

"A situation regarding *MV AMIR1* with Indian seafarers onboard has been brought to our attention. We attach the highest priority to this and are in constant touch with all concerned to ensure safety and security of all Indians on board," the Indian Embassy said in a post on social media.

15 seafarers trapped

Earlier on Tuesday, the FSUI issued an 'Urgent Appeal' regarding *MV AMIR1* saying that 13 Indian sailors are among the ship's 15 crew members who are "trapped in a terrible and life-threatening situation".

"Repeated drone and missile attacks are being attempted in the immediate vicinity of the vessel. The crew is living under constant fear of a direct hit at any moment. We urgently appeal to all concerned authorities, ship owners, flag state, and the Government of India to immediately secure their safety and arrange prompt repatriation. Indian seafarers must not be left as sitting targets in conflict zones," the FSUI said in a statement late Tuesday evening.

India had issued an advisory for its seafarers on July 26 against the backdrop of frequent attacks on civilian merchant vessels in the Black Sea and nearby regions that have emerged as the maritime front of Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Govt. simplifies NEET-UG counselling procedure

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda on Tuesday reviewed the preparedness for the forthcoming NEET-UG counselling 2026.

The government has introduced several technology-enabled and student-centric reforms aimed at enhancing transparency in counselling, improving accessibility and simplifying the admission process.

One of the key reforms is the introduction of a one-time physical reporting framework aimed at reducing the need for repeated visits. Following seat allotment, candidates will be able to exercise their willingness online by selecting either the 'Freeze or Float' option.

Those opting for the freeze option will physically report to their allotted institute within the prescribed schedule to complete admission formalities, including verification of documents and payment of the admission fee.

J.P. Nadda

Those opting for the float option for participating in subsequent rounds for upgradation will be able to complete admission formalities through the online mode within the stipulated timeline.

During this period, they will not be required to physically report to the allotted institute, submit original documents or pay the admission fee. Their provisional admission will remain valid while participating in subsequent counselling rounds.

The upgradation facility will remain available up to the third round of counselling. After completion of the third round, candidates holding allotted seats will report physically to their institutions for verification of original documents, payment of admission fees and completion of institutional formalities.

Online resignation

Candidates wishing to forego their allotted seat will now be able to submit their resignation through the MCC Counselling Portal without the need to visit the allotted institute.

Special emphasis has been placed on improving accessibility for Persons with Benchmark Disabilities (PwBD). The Ministry has fully digitised the admission process under the NRI category. The review also highlighted several steps to strengthen operational efficiency, including online document verification, validation of the seat matrix by the National Medical Commission and verification by participating institutes.

LS passes paper leak Bill amid Opposition protests

No shots were fired at students during the July 20 protest and 'utmost restraint was exercised' by the police, says Minister; 'I brought before you a boy who suffered pellet gun injury', says Rahul

Sandeep Phukan
NEW DELHI

Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Wednesday insisted that "no shots were fired" at students during the July 20 protest in Delhi, rejecting Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi's allegation that Home Minister Amit Shah had ordered security forces to open fire on the protesters. He was replying to the debate on the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026.

The Bill, which proposes tightening penalties and introducing time-bound investigations and trials for paper leak cases, was passed amid Opposition protests over the alleged police excesses against students during the NEET-UG agitation. Soon after its passage, Mr. Shah hailed the legislation in a post on X, congratulating students across the country and describing the amendment as a measure that would "shield the dreams and aspirations" of the youth.

Centre's stand: Union Minister Jitendra Singh speaks in the Lok Sabha on the paper leak Bill on Wednesday. ANI

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"The Modi govt. will spare no one who attempts to imperil the future of our students and will leave no stone unturned to ensure that they face the full wrath of the law," the Minister said. However, he did not respond to the charges that Mr. Gandhi sought to raise inside the Lok Sabha in his speech.

Dr. Singh, who is the Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office and handles the Department of Personnel and Training, responded to the charge while replying to the debate on the paper leak Bill.

'Utmost restraint'

He said "utmost restraint was exercised" during the police action and "it was made sure that casualties do not happen". Mr. Singh accused the Congress of attempting to politicise a legislation aimed at safeguarding the integrity of public examinations.

The Minister said the amendments reflected an willingness to "learn from experience" after the implementation of the 2024 anti-paper leak law. So far, 52 FIRs had been registered since the original law came into force and suicides linked to paper leaks had declined, he informed the Lok Sabha.

Responding to the government's assertion that no shots had been fired, Mr. Gandhi stood by his charge.

"I brought before you a boy who suffered pellet gun injury. He could lose an eye and the pellet gun is a lethal weapon. And the government is saying I am lying. What do you want me to do? Bring the gun?" he said.

The amendments significantly strengthen the 2024 law. They mandate that investigations be completed within two months and empower States and Union Territories to designate sessions courts as fast-track special courts to conduct day-to-day trials.

Rahul Gandhi hits out at Centre, RSS in Lok Sabha over protests crackdown

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday launched a scathing attack on the government in the Lok Sabha over the students' protest in the capital last week, drawing sharp rebuttals from the ruling NDA.

Mr. Gandhi could not complete his speech amid protests and objections from the Treasury benches, even as a substantial part of the address was expunged from the records.

Participating in the debate on the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, he took an indirect dig at the BJP and its core supporters by referring to three categories of people – students, those who think they know everything and pretend to be god, and "*andhbhakts*" (blind believers) who believe the second category is god.

The Treasury benches erupted in protest over the remarks, and as the uproar continued, Mr. Gandhi claimed that he was not being allowed to speak.

Vociferous attack: Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi speaks in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. ANI

He said that Dharmendra Pradhan, who had to resign as the Union Education Minister, was just a symbol and the Education Ministry was actually being run by the RSS.

At this, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh stood up and said that the Leader of the Opposition had the responsibility of not using unparliamentary words.

Mr. Gandhi targeted the RSS, alleging that it was influencing the education system. "The soul of the system has been captured by the RSS. Mr. Pradhan never ran the Education Ministry. The man and organisation that run the Ministry is called the RSS," he said.

Mr. Gandhi then trained his guns at Union Home Minister Amit Shah, claiming that he was not present in the Lok Sabha because he was "scared".

The BJP demanded that Mr. Gandhi apologise for "misusing" the House by making "baseless" allegations.

Rahul seeks Shah's ouster, vows justice for students

Sandeep Phukan
NEW DELHI

Escalating the confrontation with the Narendra Modi government over the use of force and lethal weapons such as pellet guns against protesting students during their March towards Parliament on July 20, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday demanded the dismissal of Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

"There are only two possibilities: either [Amit] Shah ordered the use of lethal weapons or he was not aware of it. He is either culpable or incapable and in both cases, he has to go," Mr. Gandhi said.

Addressing a press conference at Indira Bhavan, Mr. Gandhi also said that the "balloon" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "fake image" had already burst.

Seeking to reassure students injured in the protests, Mr. Gandhi said the Opposition would pursue accountability. "We will ensure that every single student gets justice."

RS passes Bill to criminalise disrespect to *Vande Mataram*

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha passed the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026 on Wednesday, in the absence of members from Opposition parties.

After raising slogans demanding an apology from Union Home Minister Amit Shah for last week's police action against protesting students, the Opposition walked out as Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale started speaking about the Bill.

The Bill proposes to amend the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971, and extend the punishment for acts of disrespect towards national symbols such as the National Flag, the Constitution, and the National Anthem, to acts causing obstruction in the singing of the National Song, *Vande Mataram*.

The Bill will now go to the Lok Sabha for its consideration and passage.

Nityanand Rai

Replying to the brief discussion on the Bill, which largely saw the participation of NDA members, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said the Congress was engaging in appeasement politics by insulting *Vande Mataram* for many years.

"The *Vande Mataram* Bill is not merely an ordinary Bill, but represents India's soul, national awareness, and cultural heritage, and reminds us of the freedom struggle," Mr. Rai said, asking why the Congress opposed the Bill.

Vande Mataram was penned by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in 1875, but only two stanzas were adopted as the National Song, with Congress leader Jawaharlal Nehru making that decision in 1937, years before he became the country's first Prime Minister.

Penal provisions

"Don't know why a few people are opposed to *Vande Mataram*, or why Congress is particularly opposed to *Vande Mataram*," Mr. Rai said. "There has been a discussion about making penal provisions for disrespecting the national song through this Bill. Opposing *Vande Mataram* means the Congress has been always working to disrespect the pride of this country by adopting a policy of appeasement."

The Aam Aadmi Party's Sanjay Singh said that his party believed that *Vande Mataram* and the National Anthem should not be insulted. The Bill was passed by voice vote. The House was adjourned after Mr. Harivansh allowed some members to place special mentions in the House.

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Rahul is spreading misinformation, he must apologise: BJP

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Wednesday demanded an apology from the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, for what it described as spreading misinformation in an attempt to create confusion, provoke unrest, and derive political benefit.

Sambit Patra

At a press conference, BJP MP and spokesperson Sambit Patra said Mr. Gandhi falsely claimed in the Lok Sabha that bullets were fired at the students' march on July 20. Since no such incident occurred, his charge that Amit Shah ordered the firing was also false, Mr. Patra said. The allegation was also inaccurate because decisions about the use of force are taken by the area magistrate, and not the Home Minister, he said.

"During the movements in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, you shot and killed hundreds of students. In Jammu & Kashmir, you fired bullets. In Assam, you fired on the Assam students' union and brutally killed over 800 students," Mr. Patra said.

He countered Mr. Gandhi's charge that he was not allowed to speak in the Lok Sabha. "Rahul Gandhi alleged that Ministers Kiren Rijiju and Rajnath Singh interrupted his speech... the objections raised a couple of times by Mr. Rijiju was about the use of unparliamentary word 'idiot' by Mr. Gandhi," he said.

He rejected Mr. Gandhi's claim that Mr. Shah was "trembling" inside a car, saying that the Home Minister was a strong leader who had taken decisive action against Naxalism and terrorism.

Backlog of cases, timely completion of paper leak probe among challenges

NEWS ANALYSIS

Maitri Porecha
NEW DELHI

Following widespread protests over the NEET-UG, 2026 paper leak issue, the Union government introduced the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026 in the Lok Sabha.

While the Bill was introduced with the objective of curbing examination malpractices through time-bound investigations and speedy trials, it faces certain limitations with regard to timely completion of investigations. It may also lead to a growing backlog of cases, as has been observed under other similarly enacted laws.

The Bill has enhanced the period of debarment of service providers engaging in unfair means from four years to eight and empowers the Union government to constitute a special task force to investigate offences. The Bill states that the investigation of an offence must be completed within two months. However, it does not contain any provision for instances where the investigation deadline is not met.

"This is different from other laws. For instance, The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 requires reasons to be recorded in writing for extending time period for preliminary inquiry and investigation," an analysis by PRS Legislative Research states. "Similarly, under the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, the officer must explain the delay in completing investigation and filing chargesheet within 60 days, in writing."

Bill lacks clarity on provisions if probe timeline is surpassed

The amendment Bill requires that trial must be completed within three months from the date of filing of the chargesheet.

"This may contradict a Supreme Court ruling. The court in 2002 held that it is neither advisable, nor feasible, nor judicially permissible to draw or prescribe an outer limit for conclusion of criminal proceedings. It further held that criminal courts are not obliged to terminate trials or criminal proceedings merely on account of lapse of time," the PRS analysis states. For organised crimes, the amendment Bill proposes a minimum sentence of seven years and a fine of up to ₹10 crore, up from the ₹1 crore in the anti-cheating law passed in 2024.

The new Bill empowers States and Union Territories to designate a sessions court as a special fast-track court for speedy adjudication. Similarly, fast-track courts have been set up under other laws too. For example, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 also provides for designation of a sessions court as a special court, for each district.

The major challenge in the operation of fast-track special courts is the pendency of cases, apart from the fact that the average time taken in disposing of the cases widely varies between States.

As of April 2026, 775 fast-track special courts were functional, including 398 exclusive POCSO courts. "These courts have had more than two lakh pending cases since 2023," the analysis says.

It is pertinent to note that the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act passed in 2024 following the uproar over the earlier NEET-UG paper leak case has not secured any conviction over the past two years.

Opposition to raise Ram Temple issue in Parliament

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

An emerging consensus is taking shape within the INDIA bloc that the Opposition should continue pursuing the Ram Temple embezzlement case in Parliament. The Samajwadi Party (SP), which has been raising the matter during meetings of Opposition parties, staged a protest in the Parliament House complex on Wednesday.

According to senior Opposition leaders, it was decided that the issue will be taken up in the Lok Sabha on Thursday and in the Rajya Sabha after the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026 is cleared. The Opposition wants to seek a discussion on the alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ayodhya Ram temple.

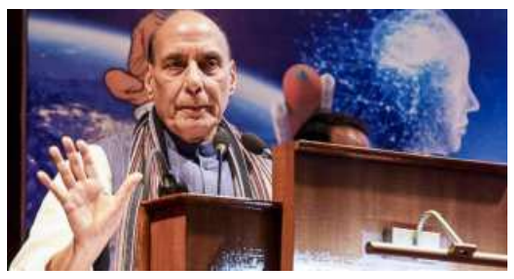
BJP govt. in U.P. took action only against peripheral players in the embezzlement case, says SP

Speaking to reporters, SP president Akhilesh Yadav said the alleged diversion of donations reflected the BJP government's failure to safeguard public faith. "The issue is the same. Those who could not protect donation boxes and the offerings made by devotees cannot be expected to prevent paper leaks or stop examinations from being cancelled. Those who can play with people's faith can also play with the future of our youth," he said.

At the Makar Dwar, SP MPs held donation boxes with currency notes placed on top and raised slogans against the BJP government, chanting "*chanda chor, gaddi chhod*" (donation thieves, vacate your seats) and waving placards. The SP has argued that the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh has arrested only peripheral players in the alleged scam while shielding those responsible for planning it.

Several Opposition leaders had initially expressed reservations about whether the INDIA bloc should take up the issue, fearing it could communalise a narrative that has largely remained focused on policy matters.

INBRIEF



Rajnath unveils first Dept. of Military Medicine in Lucknow

Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday virtually inaugurated the Department of Military Medicine at the Command Hospital (Central Command) in Lucknow. This is India's first dedicated academic and operational department focused exclusively on military medicine. The new department seeks to strengthen operational medical preparedness of the Armed Forces Medical Services.

In relief to Salman, HC orders removal of *Kala Hiran* teaser

The Delhi High Court has directed the makers of the proposed film *Kala Hiran – The Battle For Legacy* to immediately take down its teaser and related promotional content, holding that the material *prima facie* violated Bollywood actor Salman Khan's personality rights and was causing irreparable harm to his reputation. Justice Jyoti Singh passed the interim order on July 27 while hearing an application by Mr. Khan in his pending personality rights suit.

No abnormality in fuel switch of grounded AI plane: Centre

Minister says inspections of the Boeing 787 plane conducted at a U.S. facility found no defect in the fuel control switch, which has come under scrutiny following the AI 171 crash in Ahmedabad

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

The Union government has informed Parliament that inspections had found "no abnormality" in the fuel control switch of an Air India Boeing 787 aircraft that was grounded earlier this year after a pilot reported a suspected malfunction before operating a London-Bengaluru flight.

"Detailed examination of the fuel control switch, including structural integrity of the fuel control switch detents was carried out, and no abnormality was observed," Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol told the Rajya Sabha earlier this week, referring to inspections conducted at the original equipment manufacturer's (OEM) facility in Seattle, U.S.

Further examination of the complete "thrust control module", which houses the fuel control switches, was still under way at the OEM's facility, Mr. Mohol said.

The response in Parliament pertains to Air India flight AI 132 from London to Bengaluru on February 1. REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE

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The government's response has assumed significance because fuel control switches are at the centre of the preliminary investigation into the AI 171 crash in Ahmedabad on June 12, 2025, in which 260 people were killed.

The preliminary report by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) said the ill-fated Air India flight AI 171's two fuel control switches transitioned from 'RUN' to 'CUTOFF', interrupting fuel supply to both engines and causing them to lose power. The report did not establish whether the movement of the switches was inadvertent or deliberate. The AAIB's final report is expected between mid-September and the end of October.

The reply in Parliament pertains to Air India flight AI 132 from London to Bengaluru on February 1 this year. Before departure, the pilot had reported that the left engine's fuel control switch on the aircraft did not remain positively latched in the 'RUN' position when pressure was applied. The switch latched correctly on a subsequent attempt, according to the government, following which the flight departed for Bengaluru. Air India subsequently grounded the aircraft for detailed inspections.

The U.K.'s aviation safety regulator later sought information from Air India on the maintenance carried out on the fuel control switch before the aircraft was cleared for the flight from London.

Bombay HC quashes externment of two SDPI functionaries

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday quashed the externment order issued by the Mumbai Police against two Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) functionaries.

"Babri Masjid mosque should not have been demolished" is not an anti-national remark, and citizens have the right to hold such views, the court said.

A police externment order bans or expels an individual from a locality or district.

"The petitioners are targeted as several such FIRs are against all political parties. Did you take any action against the political parties? Then selectively [action] should not be taken. The action was taken just because they belong to one religion?" Justice Madhav Jamdar, who was hearing the petition, said.

The two petitioners, Firoz Abdul Wahab Khan and Mohammad Rafiq Gulam Rasul Ansari, had challenged the police orders banning them from Mumbai for one year from December 3, 2025. The order was issued on the basis of three FIRs that were registered in connection with the protests against the Waqf Bill in 2024 and 2025; air pollution caused by the Chembur-Govandi cement factory here; and the demolition of Babri Masjid.

"The externment order is applicable when there is material to show the likelihood of offences," Ibraheem Harbat, the lawyer, said.

The FIRs pertain to just sloganeering, with no harm to the public or property, Justice Jamdar said.

Chief public prosecutor Shishir Hiray alleged of a link between the accused and the banned Popular Front of India (PFI), saying "The petitioners were involved in disturbing social disharmony and breach of peace."

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Don't succumb to bullying, Muslim side tells M.P. govt. in SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Muslim side in the Bhojshala-Kamal Maula mosque complex dispute urged the Madhya Pradesh government in the Supreme Court to "not succumb to bullying" when the State voiced apprehension over "law and order" to a suggestion that land belonging to a dargah nearby could be allotted as an alternative site for offering Friday *namaz* (prayers).

In a brief oral exchange before a Bench headed by the Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Wednesday, senior advocate Huzeifa Ahmadi, representing the Muslim petitioners, said the district administration had currently allotted land 1.3 km away from the disputed complex.

On July 14, the Supreme Court directed the State authorities to identify an open space near the disputed complex where the Muslim community could offer Friday *namaz*.

"Your order was very clear. It said 'near and adjacent' [to the disputed complex]. I had identified four sites both near and adjacent. But the site offered is 1.3 km away," Mr. Ahmadi submitted.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, for the government, said there had been another "discussion", and an alternative site was identified. But Mr. Ahmadi persisted, saying that he had received instructions in court that the "alternative site is also far away and is part of some brewery".

"There is the Bhojshala site. Next to it is a dargah. The dargah has land right there. We will pray there," Mr. Ahmadi said. But Mr. Mehta said there was a "law and order issue".

"You cannot really succumb to bullying by one particular side. There are four parcels of open land right there. They could allocate..." Mr. Ahmadi reacted.

As farmers march to CM's house, M.P. hikes green gram procurement to 60%

Mehul Malpani
BHOPAL

The Madhya Pradesh government has increased the limit of green gram procurement from the current 25% to 60% of the total crop of farmers, State Agriculture Minister Aidal Singh Kansana said after a meeting with farmer representatives.

"In districts like Narmadapuram, Sehore, and Harda, this will amount to around 3 quintals per acre. The decision will be implemented immediately, and efforts will be made to benefit the maximum number of farmers," Mr. Kansana said, adding that the government had also increased the procurement slot booking deadline from July 30 to August 10.

He said the government was going to form a high-level committee under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister's Agricultural Production Commission to review the issues related to the e-token system for fertilizer distribution. "The committee will review the system and suggest improvements. Until necessary reforms are made, the MSP e-token system for fertilizer distribution has been suspended with immediate effect," he said.

Farmers stage a protest in Bhopal on Tuesday, demanding full procurement of the green gram crop. A.M. FARUQUI

The announcement came as tensions escalated in Bhopal on Wednesday, with nearly 2,000 farmers from neighbouring districts marching to the Chief Minister's residence demanding the full procurement of the green gram crop and an improved fertilizer distribution system.

The farmers breached police barricades on the Narmadapuram road on the outskirts of Bhopal, and blockades at multiple points before entering the city. Following brief clashes with police, the group reached Polytechnic Square, less than a kilometre from Chief Minister Mohan Yadav's residence.

While several protesters and organisations appear satisfied with the government's decision and have begun to disperse, a section of farmers continue to camp near the CM's residence and demand 100% procurement.

Meanwhile, the Centre's limit of purchasing 4.54 lakh tonne of green gram from Madhya Pradesh remains unchanged.

Investigate crime, not marriages: Allahabad High Court to police

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

Police have 'no business to be nosy parkers' in marriages of adults, says HC and slaps penalty on police, girl's father

Reaffirming that consenting adults are free to choose their life partners, the Allahabad High Court recently rebuked the Uttar Pradesh Police for continuing to investigate the marriage of two adults, observing that the police have "no business to be nosy parkers" in such matters.

A Division Bench of Justices J.J. Munir and Tarun Saxena on July 27 quashed an FIR registered under Section 87 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita against a couple who married in February this year, after attaining majority.

They had approached the court after the police filed the FIR on a complaint from the girl's father against the girl's husband. The petitioners contended that they had married of their own free will.

'Violation of rights'

"This investigation into an adult's free choice of her partner and the marriage between two major citizens is not only an abuse of process of criminal law, but also gross violation of their fundamental right to liberty guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution. The liberty that a person, who is a major, enjoys, includes the liberty to marry a person of his/her choice. The police have no business to be nosy parkers. We have repeatedly reminded the police that it is no business of theirs to investigate marriages. They ought to investigate crime. This is no crime where any investigation is required," the court said.

Finding merit in the couple's allegation that the police were siding with the woman's father, the court imposed costs on the police and the complainant. It directed the Superintendent of Police and the Station House Officer to jointly pay ₹1,000 to the woman, while her father was ordered to pay ₹5,000.

Audio feed muted in CJI's court during oral mentions

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The audio feed during the Supreme Court's live-streaming of oral mentionings before Chief Justice of India Surya Kant was muted on Friday.

The control room managing the live feed for the Chief Justice's court room posted a message on the chat box informing viewers that "as per direction, audio stopped in Court 1".

While the video feed continued, the lack of audio prevented the public, the media, and lawyers from hearing the oral exchanges between the Bench and lawyers mentioning their cases.

The CJI had recently said that mentioning was an "administrative" exercise rather than a judicial proceeding, and ought not to be reported.

Oral mentionings is a routine usually witnessed as soon as the court assembles for the day. The lawyers are heard seeking urgent hearings, at times for safeguarding life, liberty, and other fundamental rights.

FAITH

Worship family deity

Visiting temples is efficacious for all. Having a dedicated prayer area at home, chanting slokas and offering home-made prasad every day are all the right ways of enriching oneself in this material world. However, that alone is not enough. The positive vibes from the temple precincts, the energy and the spiritual aura ever present there helps one connect with God even more intensely. Therefore, one should make an attempt to visit temples as frequently as possible.

It is important to visit one's family deity at least once a year, said Damal S. Ramakrishnan. In today's world, with ease of travel, devotees visit many of temples that they have heard of, especially ones known to be popular or have the reputation of fulfilling a devotee's specific prayer. Nothing compares to one's family deity, be it one in a famous temple or a *grama devata* (village deity) or *amman* in a remote corner of the world. One should visit their dedicated family temple, offer prayers, perform *archana* as a bare minimum and pray for the well-being of one's progeny and seek continued protection from the family deity.

Often, many devotees who hold certain *archa murtis* as their favourite, assume it is enough if they pray to their *ishta devata*. Srinivasa Perumal of Tirupati is almost everyone's favourite. One should not forget that this same deity followed the norms required of a devotee, vis-à-vis family deity. Ahead of His marriage to Padmavathy, He worshipped His *kula deivam*, Lord Nrisimha of Ahobilam. If Perumal Himself pays obeisance to His family deity, can ordinary devotees be found wanting?

INBRIEF

LIC pays ₹12,207.25 crore dividend to government

Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) on Wednesday paid ₹12,207.25 crore dividend to the Centre. CEO and MD R. Doraiswamy presented the dividend cheque, for ₹12,207.25 crore, to Union Minister of Finance Nirmala Sitharaman as the government of India's share of dividend, LIC said. The shareholders had given their approval at the annual general meeting on July 27. LIC said it is completing 70 years and as on March 31, 2026 the asset base stood at ₹59.03 lakh crore.

SBI raises ₹4,691 crore via Additional Tier 1 bonds

State Bank of India has raised ₹4,691 crore through its first Basel III compliant Additional Tier 1 (AT1) bonds to part fund the growth strategy, signifying its ability to diversify and raise long term non-equity regulatory capital. This is the first Tier I bonds issuance in the ongoing financial year. "This issue attracted a robust response from investors with bids of more than two times against the base issue size of ₹3,000 crore," SBI said in a statement.

Parliamentary panel calls for upgrading coal washery infra

The quality of domestically produced coal with high-ash content remains a "major challenge, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Coal, Mines and Steel stated in its latest report, calling for increased priority to coal beneficiation and modernisation of washery infrastructure for increasing availability of higher quality coal. Specifically, on logistical constraints, the committee called for the ministry to institute washeries "at or near pitheads".

Private R&D spends cross govt.'s in FY24

A level last seen in 2009-10, official data reveal a structural shift: private industry accounted for 45.5% of national R&D spending in 2021-22, rising further to 51.8% in 2023-24, the first time businesses have contributed more to India's research effort than all levels of government combined

Jacob P Koshy
NEW DELHI

India's spending on research and development (R&D) surged to 0.83% of GDP in 2021-22, the first time that the country crossed the 0.8% threshold – a level last seen in 2009-10, according to newly disclosed government data.

The figures also reveal a structural shift in India's innovation landscape: private industry accounted for 45.5% of national R&D spending in 2021-22, rising further to 51.8% in 2023-24, the first time businesses have contributed more to India's research effort than all levels of government combined.

The figures were disclosed by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) in response to a Lok Sabha questionon Wednesday. They form part of the latest Research & Development Statistics 2025-26, although the full statistical report itself has not yet been publicly released.

The numbers are significant because India, despite possessing one of the world's largest scientific workforces and ranking among the top countries in scientific publications, has long spent a much smaller share of its economy on research than major scientific powers. The share of R&D in GDP - long considered a bellwether of progress - has, in the case of India, steadily fallen every year till it reached its nadir of 0.64% in 2020-21.

That year China spent 2.4% of GDP, Japan 3.3%, South Korea 4.8%, United States 3.5% and around 5% in Israel. Successive governments have also repeatedly argued that India's innovation ecosystem is constrained because industry contributes a much smaller share of national R&D spending than in advanced economies, where business routinely accounts for over 70% of research expenditure.

DST compiles India's official R&D statistics through its National Science and Technology Management Information System (NSTMIS), which has conducted national science surveys since 1973 using UNESCO and OECD definitions. The surveys gather expenditure data from central and state government agencies, universities, public sector enterprises and private industry. The 2022-23 edition explicitly stated that its coverage had been expanded to include multinational companies and enterprises outside the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research's recognition scheme. There were 2,397 DSIR-recognised in-house R&D centres as of December 2022. Until Wednesday's parliamentary reply, the latest publicly available DST publication was the 2022-23 edition, released in 2023, which contained data only up to 2020-21. The parliamentary reply is therefore the first official disclosure of India's R&D expenditure for 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24, even though the corresponding statistical reports have yet to be published.

The fresh data point to an abrupt discontinuity. Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) fell from ₹1.33 lakh crore in 2019-20 to ₹1.27 lakh crore in 2020-21 (a COVID-year slump), before jumping 53% to ₹1.95 lakh crore in 2021-22. It subsequently rose to ₹2.13 lakh crore in 2022-23 and ₹2.45 lakh crore in 2023-24.

However, budget documents from the period do not suggest a commensurate surge in government science spending. Union allocations to the Department of Science and Technology, Department of Biotechnology, Department of Atomic Energy, ISRO and other major science agencies rose only incrementally across these years, making it unlikely that the increase was driven solely by public expenditure.

The sharp rise in GERD coincided with a dramatic increase in the private sector industry's contribution to India's research spending. Private industry accounted for 38.5% of GERD in 2017-18, 37.7% in 2018-19, 33.8% in 2019-20 and 36.4% in 2020-21, before jumping to 45.5% in 2021-22, 48.0% in 2022-23 and 51.8% in 2023-24 – the first time private industry has contributed more than half of India's total R&D expenditure. In absolute terms, Industry R&D spending increased from about ₹43,800 crore in 2017-18 and ₹46,700 crore in 2018-19 to ₹44,800 crore in 2019-20 and ₹46,400 crore in 2020-21, before almost doubling to ₹88,600 crore in 2021-22 and rising further to ₹126,800 crore in 2023-24.

Science wins

The numbers are significant because India has long spent a much smaller share of its economy on research than major scientific powers

- India's share of R&D in GDP has steadily fallen every year till it reached its nadir of 0.64% in 2020-21
- That year, China spent 2.4% of GDP, Japan 3.3%, South Korea 4.8%, U.S. 3.5%, Israel 5%

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Garment exporters hope for tariff-rate quota from the U.S.

M. Soundariya Preetha
COIMBATORE

Indian garment exporters are hoping for tariff-rate quota, which countries such as Bangladesh have got, from Washington as India is also a major buyer of U.S. cotton.

Officials in textile and apparel export promotion councils told *The Hindu* the Centre was trying to negotiate with the U.S. for tariff concession for such garments exported to that country.

"Bangladesh, Indonesia and Malaysia will not be charged the additional 10% tariff by America for garments with U.S. cotton. However, this is a quota-based concession and does not apply to all garments exported by Bangladesh to the U.S. Australia offers India similar concessions," said an official.

Further, India is talking to the U.S. for a bilateral trade pact too.

IRDAI okays reforms, policyholder fund norms, new general insurer

Special Correspondent
HYDERABAD

Insurance regulator IRDAI approved various reforms, including the Policyholders' Education and Protection Fund (PEPF) regulations, besides permitting a new general insurer, at its meeting on Tuesday.

On PEPF, IRDAI said the Fund will be a dedicated institutional mechanism to promote insurance awareness and literacy initiatives, strengthen grievance redressal mechanisms and facilitate tracing and recovery of unclaimed insurance amounts.

Other reforms included introduction of perpetual registration supported by an annual fee regime instead of periodic renewals; and regulations governing penalties. Approving grant of certificate of registration to ProTec General Insurance, IRDAI said since January this is the fourth registration.

Govt. must continue E10 supply, says Team Bharat amid E20 row

Saptaparno Ghosh
NEW DELHI

Amid growing concerns over the impact of E20 fuel on vehicles, citizens' advocacy group Team Bharat met officials from the Union Petroleum Ministry, urging the government to continue supplying E10 petrol (petrol with 10% ethanol) for vehicles designed to use it even as it demanded pure petrol with no ethanol blending be made available at all fuel stations at affordable prices.

The citizens'-advocacy group, founded by political commentator and observer Tehseen Poonawalla, put forth the demands at a meeting with Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Puri.

Team Bharat with Union Minister Hardeep Puri.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Poonawalla said Team Bharat also called for E20 being made available at 20% discount to the pure petrol variant being sought. The group also sought relevant documents and reports on E20 fuel to be in the public domain for transparency.

Also, they called for a mechanism and rules to assess how vehicles may have been damaged because of the blended fuel, along with procedures to address the grievances.

Making it clear Team Bharat has not called for a complete rollback of the E20 fuel, Mr. Poonawalla said "The government has come forward to discuss concerns, we are thus striving for a middle-ground acceptable to all."

The group also raised concerns about a potential conflict of interest allegedly involving Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari in relation to the overall blending programme.

The outreach assumes significance in the wake of furore over E20. *The Hindu* also reached out to officials at the Union Petroleum Ministry for a comment.

Separately, sources told *The Hindu* the government and Team Bharat at the next meeting would be working on a mechanism to inspect vehicles reportedly damaged due to E20.

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'Maruti is top EV exporter in Q1 FY27'

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

Maruti Suzuki India Ltd, which entered the electric vehicle (EV) segment last year, exported 15,210 EVs in Q1FY27, commanding a 97% share in total EV shipments from the country.

The EV market, dominated by Tata Motors and Mahindra, registered total exports of 15,641 units in the review period, as per available industry data.

Maruti, the market leader in the passenger vehicles segment, had in August 2025 unveiled eVitara and since then, exported more than 41,000 units to 47 countries with the U.K. being the top destination.

Q2 net income slips to $636 mn at Cognizant

Balasubramanyam C. P.
CHENNAI

Cognizant net income for the second quarter ended June 30 slid to $636 million from $645 million a year earlier. Q2 revenue rose 4.5% to $5.48 billion. Operating margin expanded 30 basis points to 15.9%.

Financial Services, Cognizant's largest business segment, posted 12% year-on-year revenue growth to $1.73 billion.

Stating that "40% of software development in the firm is AI assisted", CEO Ravi Kumar S., on an earnings call, said AI represented significantly larger long-term opportunity for technology services firms, estimating the $1 trillion systems integration market could expand into a $5-6 trillion enterprise operations market with $4.5 trillion of operational labour exposed to AI.

Cognizant revised downward 2026 constant currency revenue growth guidance to 4%-5.5%

For the third quarter, Cognizant expects revenue of $5.60-$5.68 billion, representing a growth of 3.4%-4.9%, or 3.8%-5.3% in constant currency.

Cognizant revised downward its 2026 constant currency revenue growth guidance to 4%-5.5% from 4-6.5% earlier.

The IT services provider ended the quarter with 3,56,700 employees while voluntary attrition at the company over the last 12 months stood at 13%.

$275mn U.S. deal hits Adani Enterprises Q1

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Adani Enterprises Ltd (AEL), the holding firm of the Adani Group, suffered a consolidated net loss of ₹1,160 crore in the June ended quarter of FY27 on a one-time settlement of $275 million (₹2,644 crore) relating to U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control.

This is AEL's consolidated net loss for the second straight quarter even as the flagship Adani Group firm saw record quarterly operating profit on the back of growth in airports and copper businesses.

The one-time charge had a significant impact on the firm's reported net earnings in the quarter as AEL had reported net profit of ₹855 crore in the corresponding period of the previous year.

This is AEL's consolidated net loss for second straight quarter.

Excluding this exceptional settlement, core business remained profitable as earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) grew 49% year-on-year. Profit before tax stood at ₹1,295 crore (excluding OFAC settlement of ₹2,644 crore). Revenue from operations rose by almost 50% YoY to ₹32,924 crore.

JERUSALEM

Israel army accuses Hezbollah of truce violation in south Lebanon

AP

The Israeli military accused Hezbollah of a "blatant violation of the ceasefire" in Lebanon on Wednesday, saying the militant group had fired a drone at an Israeli vehicle there. The army said the incident took place in a strip of territory where Israeli forces are operating that runs around 10 km deep inside southern Lebanon. AFP

WASHINGTON

U.S. Senate confirms Jay Clayton as Trump's top intelligence official

AFP

The U.S. Senate confirmed Jay Clayton as Donald Trump's top intelligence official on Tuesday, putting a permanent chief in charge of the country's spy agencies as the President revives unsupported election fraud claims ahead of the midterms. Senators voted 51-47 to confirm Mr. Clayton's appointment. AFP

MOSCOW

Russia puts Telegram's Durov on wanted list over terrorism charges

AFP

Russia charged Pavel Durov, the founder, owner and CEO of the messaging app Telegram, with aiding terrorism and put him on an international wanted list, the country's main domestic security agency said on Wednesday. The charges against Mr. Durov came as Russian authorities restrict Telegram in the country. AP

KUMAMOTO

Toll rises to 18 as rescuers comb through quake rubble in Japan

AP

Soldiers and emergency workers combed through a badly damaged shopping mall and collapsed houses looking for trapped survivors on Wednesday after a powerful earthquake that killed at least 18 people, including a foreigner, in southwestern Japan. The magnitude 7.1 earthquake also left at least 62 people injured. AP

Ukraine hits 2 Russian refineries hours after Zelenskyy's U.S. visit

The overnight attacks started fires at a Lukoil refinery in Russia's Perm region, more than 1,500 km from Ukraine, and a refinery in Ryazan, about 400 km from the border; the war will only come at a higher cost for Moscow, says Zelenskyy

Associated Press
KYIV

Ukrainian forces hit two of Russia's biggest oil refineries overnight in its latest long-range strikes, officials said on Wednesday, as Kyiv deepened its economic, military and diplomatic pressure on Moscow.

Ukraine's almost daily long-range drone and missile strikes using domestically developed weapons have battered Russian oil facilities for months.

The operation has brought a fuel crisis that is embarrassing the Kremlin more than four years after Russia's all-out invasion of its neighbour.

Smoke rises from an oil refinery following a Ukrainian attack in the town of Noginsk outside Moscow on July 18. AFP

The overnight attacks started fires at a Lukoil refinery in Russia's Perm region, more than 1,500 km from Ukraine, and a refinery in Ryazan, about 400 km from the border, Ukraine's Security Service and General Staff said in separate statements.

The refineries have a combined annual production capacity of around 220 million barrels of oil, according to Ukraine, and make a vital contribution to Russia's military effort and its government revenue.

It was not immediately possible to independently verify the claims. Ryazan Gov. Pavel Malkov said only that six people were taken to hospital after a drone attack. He said drone debris caused fires at unidentified "industrial sites".

Russian online retailer Wildberries, a major supplier likened to Amazon that Ukraine has targeted in recent days, said it evacuated employees from a facility in Ryazan but provided no further details.

American help

The attacks came hours after President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited Washington on Tuesday for talks with U.S. President Donald Trump to push for more vital American help for Ukraine's fight against its much bigger enemy.

"Russia must feel that every day of this war will only come at a higher cost for it. We need to weaken the aggressor and keep up the pressure to bring an end to this war closer," Mr. Zelenskyy said on social media.

West Bank violence 'only getting worse', says UN

Agence France-Presse
GENEVA

Two years after the International Court of Justice said Israel's occupation of the West Bank was unlawful, settler violence and territorial annexation is "only getting worse", the UN said on Wednesday.

The United Nations' human rights office said that with attacks by Israeli settlers and the creation of outposts "hitting an all-time high", countries had to act to end the occupation.

"We are alarmed by the Israeli government's announcement to further increase the number of settlements and outposts, and open calls by Israeli leaders for revenge and collective punishment against Palestinian communities, accompanied by threats to turn the West Bank into another Gaza," rights office spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani said in a statement.

A volunteer scans the valley with a flashlight as Palestinians sit on a night watch to help prevent Israeli settler attacks in West Bank. AP

In a sweeping, non-binding "advisory opinion" issued in July 2024, the UN's top court said that Israel's decades-long occupation of Palestinian territory was "illegal".

Israel is "under the obligation to bring to an end its unlawful presence as rapidly as possible", presiding judge Nawaf Salam said.

Violence in the West Bank has surged since the Gaza war began with Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack on Israel.

Houthis, under IRGC guidance, planning to impose fees for Red Sea transit: Yemen

Agence France-Presse
RIYADH

A Minister in Yemen's internationally recognised government on Wednesday accused Houthi rebels of working under Iranian guidance to establish a system to impose fees for ships transiting the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandab Strait.

The narrow maritime artery has been a critical waterway for delivering vast quantities of Saudi crude to the international market, after energy exports were largely choked off by fighting in the Strait of Hormuz.

Information Minister Moammar al-Eryani described "the move as a dangerous escalation aimed at transforming one of the world's most strategic maritime corridors into a permanent source of funding for the militia's military and terrorist activities".

Mr. Eryani said the assessment was provided by recently obtained "confirmed intelligence" indicating that Iran's Revolutionary Guards were helping manage the effort.

The narrow artery has been critical for delivering crude to international market, after Hormuz closure

"The intelligence indicates that IRGC experts and advisers are directly involved in designing the technical and administrative framework of the project," the Minister added in comments exclusive to *AFP*. He added that this would include "the establishment of a dedicated entity responsible for collecting payments from shipping companies and commercial vessels".

Anxieties are growing across the Gulf that the Houthis are hoping to copy Iran's playbook in the Strait of Hormuz.

Bangladesh ex-premier Hasina vows to return by year-end despite fearing for life

Agence France-Presse
NEW DELHI

Bangladesh's fugitive ex-premier Sheikh Hasina said she was determined to return to her country by December despite fearing for her life.

"I may be killed. I may be arrested. I may be sent to prison," Ms. Hasina, 78, said in an emailed response to questions by *AFP*.

"I am fully aware of my fate. Still, I want to go back because my people are calling me," she added.

Sheikh Hasina

Toppled in August 2024 by a student-led uprising that ended her 15-year, iron-fisted rule, Ms. Hasina left by helicopter to India as crowds stormed her palace.

The United Nations says up to 1,400 people were killed in crackdowns as she tried to cling to power.

In November, Ms. Hasina was found guilty by a Dhaka court of crimes against humanity and sentenced to be hanged – a verdict she described as "political vengeance dressed up as law".

The former Prime Minister, who has been living in a secret location in India, insisted there was no pressure for her to return.

Relations between India and Bangladesh, strained under the interim administration that took power after Ms. Hasina's fall, have stabilised since Bangladeshi Prime Minister Tarique Rahman took office in February. Dhaka has formally requested Ms. Hasina's extradition – a request New Delhi has said is "under examination".

PoK protesters 'enemies' like India, says Pak. Defence Minister as toll rises to 37

Press Trust of India
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has termed the protesters in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir as "enemies" like India and ruled out dialogue with them, even as the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) on Wednesday claimed that security forces have killed 37 people in the last two days.

"There will be no dialogue with the protesters. I bracket them with India. I put them in the same category as India and consider them as enemies of Pakistan," Mr. Asif told presspersons on Tuesday.

However, the Prime Minister's Adviser Rana Sanaullah told presspersons that the JAAC held a meeting with him and presented its 38 demands. Alleging that the protesters want to seize Muzaffarabad and Mirpur through force, Mr. Sanaullah on Tuesday claimed that they were currently engaged in an "India-like attack".

Mr. Sanaullah claimed that no one was killed in clashes between the law enforcement personnel and protesters.

Violence erupted when JAAC launched a long march, coinciding with the first phase of polls in PoK

However, the JAAC, a collective of activist groups, on Wednesday said that 37 unarmed peaceful protesters and people, including women and children, who were not even protesting, have been killed by Pakistani forces in the last two days. The party's claim could not be independently verified.

'Many injured'

It said the violence erupted on Monday when the JAAC launched a long march, coinciding with the first phase of polls for the legislative assembly in PoK.

In a statement, the JAAC said that a large number of people are critically injured with bullet wounds. "Hospitals are under forces' control, doctors have been removed, medical stores have no medicines left. Volunteers who try to pick up the dead or injured are also being fired upon," it said.

BLITZING AWAY

Cameroon's Eseme emerges the fastest man in record time

REUTERS

Emmanuel Eseme stormed through torrential rain in Glasgow to claim the men's 100m gold for Cameroon in a new Games record time of 9.83 seconds. Lachlan Kennedy of Australia claimed silver (9.85s) ahead of Nigeria's Kanyinsola Ajayi (9.90). Eseme's time was .05 seconds better than Ato Boldon's effort at Kuala Lumpur in 1998.

GLORIOUS

New Zealand's Hobbs surges to women's 100m gold

AFP

New Zealand's Zoe Hobbs produced a remarkable run from lane seven to win the women's 100m final at the Commonwealth Games. Hobbs, a 60m specialist, won in 10.93 seconds in sodden conditions in Glasgow. England's Amy Hunt took silver (10.98) ahead of Australia's Torrie Lewis (10.99).

AUSSIE POWER

Patterson bests compatriot Olyslagers for high jump crown

AFP

Australia's Eleanor Patterson (1.96m) overcame the challenge of compatriot and World champion Nicola Olyslagers (1.93) to win her second high jump crown — 12 years after her first Commonwealth Games title in 2014. Nigeria's Temitope Adeshina won bronze with a jump of 1.90m, even as India's Pooja finished eighth (1.77).

AUSTRALIAN DOMINATION

Pallister and Forrester swim to their third gold medals

AFP

Australia's ace swimmer Lani Pallister added the 800m gold to her 400m and 1,500m titles on Wednesday even as Jenna Forrester won her third gold in the 200m individual medley and Flynn Southam took the men's 100m freestyle. Australia, which set a Games record in the 4x100m men's medley relay, has won 28 golds in the pool.

Gulveer braves weather and competition to bag silver

He becomes the first man from the India to win a medal in the 10,000m event in the Games' history, finishing with a timing of 27:49.78s; Australia's Robinson clinches gold (27:48.93s)

C'WEALTH GAMES

K. Keerthivasan
GLASGOW

Final push: Gulveer broke away from the pack with around 900m left, even as Australia's Robinson claimed gold. GETTY IMAGES

Real Creator IAS Edition https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Van2VRb6RGJOKH6oBd0F

While much of the spotlight was on India assuring itself of medals in the boxing ring at the Commonwealth Games here, a few kilometres away at the Scotstoun Stadium, a middle-distance runner from the country was quietly scripting history.

In challenging track conditions with heavy rain and sun making frequent appearances, Gulveer Singh won silver (27:49.78s) in the men's 10,000m on Tuesday to become the first Indian man to win a medal in the event in the Games' history.

Ky Robinson of Australia won gold in a time of 27:48.93 while David Mullarkey of the Isle of Man bagged bronze in 27:50.28.

Gulveer was one of the favourites to bag a medal. Before the race, he was in the top three in season's best and his personal best of 27:00.22 (a National record) was at the top in the field.

Gulveer ran a tactical race, being among the leaders till the last before accelerating. He stayed in sixth position at the 8,000m mark with five more laps to go. With around 900m left, he broke out of the pack.

Gulveer, who has improved since joining hands with coach Scott Simmons in the USA three years ago, brought out his best in a strong field that also included Daniel Ebenyo, the 2023 World championships silver medallist.

Ebenyo ended up sixth while the other Kenyans, Edwin Kurgat and Ishmael Kipkurgi finished fourth and 10th respectively.

Wrapping himself in the Indian tricolour, Gulveer was gasping for breath when he came to the mixed zone. "It was not easy to run in the conditions. I take this opportunity to thank my family, coaches and the Athletics Federation of India for their support," he said.

Six Indian pugilists march into semifinals

K. Keerthivasan
GLASGOW

Sakshi Chaudhary, one of India's brightest boxing prospects, led the charge as six pugilists from the country advanced to the semifinals at the Scottish Event Campus here on Wednesday, assuring themselves of at least a Commonwealth Games bronze.

With the exception of Narender Berwal's hard-fought contest, the Indian boxers won their bouts with a fair degree of comfort.

Sakshi outclassed Caitlin Fryers of Northern Ireland to register a 5-0 victory in the women's 51kg category. Arundhati Choudhary defeated New Zealand's Morgan Henderson 3-1 in the women's 70kg last-eight encounter before Jaismine Lamboria won through a 4-1 split decision against England's Elise Glynn in women's 57kg.

Sachin Siwach overcame Moremi Treasure from Botswana with a unanimous 5-0 verdict in the men's 60kg clash while Ankush Panghal was confidence personified in his 5-0 triumph over Jade Micock of Seychelles in men's 80kg.

In the men's 90+kg quarterfinal battle, Narender had to dig deep before edging past Samoa's Michael Seko 3-2 in a split decision. India is now assured of 10 boxing medals.

Punching a medal: Narender (red) had to stretch every sinew while Sachin (blue) was hardly tested by his opponent. Sakshi (blue) and Ankush (red) sailed smoothly into the next round. PTI & AP

Arundhati and Jaismine joined the party. PTI & SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Sachin was never really stretched. It was a cagey affair with both boxers adopting a cautious approach and reluctant to commit in attack.

For much of the bout, they waited for each other to make the first move so that they could create an opening for a counter.

Sachin did just enough in every round, eventually securing a comfortable unanimous decision.

Ankush's duel with Micock, too, was a tactical one, with neither willing to overcommit.

There were few close-range exchanges or sustained body attacks as both preferred to be patient before launching attacks.

Ankush, however, looked the sharper of the two, displaying lightning-quick reflexes to slip and evade the 19-year-old's jabs before responding with crisp right-left combinations.

The Narender-Seko quarterfinal was easily the closest and most physical contest of the day.

The bout came alive after a caution-filled opening round as both of them traded punches with greater intent. Narender forced Seko into two standing counts – one each in the second and third rounds – which may have proved decisive in earning him a place in the semifinal.

Harjinder — from the farms of Punjab to the Glasgow podium

K. Keerthivasan
GLASGOW

Gritty effort: Harjinder's consistency earned her a silver medal. GETTY IMAGES

Real Creator IAS Edition https://t.me/+8B98m5PQCF84MmQ9

Harjinder Kaur's smile is truly infectious. After successfully completing her clean and jerk attempt, she genuflected to the crowd, waved her hands in acknowledgement and happily slow-jogged back to the coaches' area.

It was a special moment for the 29-year-old, who had improved on her bronze medal from the previous Commonwealth Games by clinching silver this time in the 69kg weightlifting competition of the Glasgow Games at the Scottish Event Campus here on Tuesday.

Stiff competition

Amidst stiff competition, Harjinder held her own and didn't wilt under pressure claiming the silver medal with a total lift of 227kg behind Charlotte Simoneau of Canada who lifted a total of 240kg to win the gold.

Charlotte, a two-time junior World champion in 2024 and 2025, was the show-stealer as the 21-year-old created a Games record in snatch (108kg), a Commonwealth and Games record in clean and jerk (132kg), and Games record in snatch (240kg).

> For me to do well in weightlifting, my parents focused on my diet, shoes and kits, sacrificing a lot of things in the process

But Harjinder was focused on the task at hand, not on reputations. She executed all six of her lifts – three in snatch and three in clean and jerk – with remarkable composure, not failing a single attempt.

On a stage where consistency was as valuable as strength, Harjinder did exactly what she had set out to do.

When Harjinder finally walked into the mixed zone with 'Finnie', the Commonwealth Games mascot, in the hands and cameras flashing, her smile seemed brighter than ever.

There was a distinct glow about her, one that reflected not just the joy of winning silver but also the many sacrifices her parents had made to help her reach this stage.

On her day at the big arena, Harjinder didn't forget her family.

"My family played an important role. For me to do well in weightlifting, my parents focussed on my diet, shoes and kits, sacrificing a lot of things in the process. It was a bit of struggle and I used to help my father in farming at Mehas (Patiala district of Punjab)," she said.

Shot putters Toor and Samardeep enter final

Press Trust of India
GLASGOW

Indian shot putters Tajinderpal Singh Toor and Samardeep Singh Gill did not have to exert much as they qualified for the final round of the Commonwealth Games here on Wednesday.

National record holder Toor took two attempts to breach the automatic qualification mark of 20m in Group A. His first effort measured 19.93m before coming up with 20.14m in his second throw. It was the second best distance overall. He did not take the third attempt.

In qualification round Group B, Samardeep's best of the day was 19.95m which came in his opening attempt. His second throw measured 19.75m and the third was a foul.

Samardeep finished fifth overall out of 15 who competed across the two groups. Those who breach the 20m mark or the 12 best performers qualify for the finals to be held on Thursday.

Meanwhile, National record holder Animesh Kujur clocked his season best time to qualify for the 200m semifinals.

The 23-year-old ran in 20.46s to win Heat 4 in round one races and finish seventh overall. The 16 fastest from across 10 heats advance to the semifinals to be held on Thursday.

In the para swimming competition, Chaitanya Vishwas Kulkarni and Suyash Narayan Jadhav entered the S7 50m freestyle finals. Chaitanya was fourth in the Heats at 32.77s while Suyash was sixth with a timing of 35.35s.

Other Indian results:
Weightlifting: Women's 77kg: Sajana (DNF).
Swimming: Men's 200m freestyle: Sajan Prakash (1:51.99s, fifth in his heat and 20th overall); Aneesh Gowda (1:51.64s, seventh in his heat and 18th overall).

Sealing it: Toor threw 20.14m in his second attempt. REUTERS

Indian teams cruise to the threshold of glory

C'WEALTH TT

Amol Karhadkar
NEW DELHI

Diminutive Sreeja Akula and bespectacled Manav Thakkar produced contrasting yet equally influential performances as India's women and men marched into the team finals of the 22nd Commonwealth table tennis championships at the Thyagaraj Sports Complex on Wednesday.

Both teams outclassed England in their respective semifinals to set up title clashes against giant-killer Malaysia on Thursday. The afternoon session began with the Indian women taking centre stage before a vocal group of schoolchildren cheering the home side. Sreeja, blending her long-pimpled backhand with explosive forehand topspin winners, barely broke sweat in dispatching Cheuk Wong.

England responded through the experienced Tin-Tin Ho. Armed with her distinctive pen-hold grip and an uncanny ability to effectively use her backhand, Ho never allowed Yashaswini Ghorpade to settle into a rhythm and levelled the tie.

Teenager Syndrela Das restored India's advantage with another composed display before Sreeja returned for the decisive fourth rubber. Her duel with Ho turned out to be the contest of the tie, featuring engrossing rallies and relentless changes in momentum. Sreeja held her nerve, edging a gripping five-game battle to seal the place in the final.

Rising to the occasion: Sreeja came up with an inspired display once again to boost India. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

Moments after the women exchanged handshakes, the men's teams walked onto the show court. While Manush Shah's opening rubber against Connor Green provided the early entertainment, it was Manav who earned widespread admiration.

Less than 24 hours after sustaining a deep cut to his forehead, against Australia, that required 13 stitches, Manav showed little sign of discomfort. He produced another commanding display as India completed a 3-0 sweep without conceding a game. The victory sets up a mouth-watering rematch against Malaysia, with the Indian men eager to avenge the surprise defeat they suffered in the league stage.

The results (semifinals):
Women: India bt England 3-1 (Sreeja Akula bt Cheuk Lam Jasmin Wong 11-6, 11-3, 11-9; Yashaswini Ghorpade lost to Tin-Tin Ho 9-11, 6-11, 7-11; Syndrela Das bt Anna Green 11-7, 11-4, 11-9; Sreeja bt Ho 11-8, 5-11, 11-6, 8-11; 11-9). **Malaysia bt Australia 3-2.**
Men: India bt England 3-0 (Manush Shah bt Connor Green11-9, 11-9, 11-6; Manav Thakkar bt Joseph Hunter 11-8, 11-4, 11-5; Harmeet Desai bt Benjamin Piggott 11-5, 11-5, 11-5). **Malaysia bt Singapore 3-1**.

INBRIEF

Seales scalps five, West Indies blows Pakistan away

Pakistan crumbled for the second consecutive day to the West Indies pace attack, losing the first Test of a two-match series by 90 runs on the fourth day at Tarouba in Trinidad on Tuesday.

The scores: West Indies 311 & 181 in 54.5 overs (Shamar 38, Tagenarine 35, Abbas 5/22) bt Pakistan 282 & 120 in 40.2 overs (Babar 58; Seales 5/20). **PoM:** Greaves.

Kishan to lead East Zone in the Duleep Trophy

Ishan Kishan will lead East Zone in the Duleep Trophy, to be held in Bengaluru from August 23. The team was named following a zonal selection committee meeting in Kolkata on Wednesday.

The squad: Abhimanyu Easwaran, Sudip Gharami, Shahbaz Ahmed, Suraj Sindhu Jaiswal, Mohammed Shami, Mukesh Kumar (all Bengal), Ishan Kishan (Capt., wk), Kumar Kushagra (wk), Shikhar Mohan, Anukul Roy, Virat Singh (all Jharkhand), Subhranshu Senapati (Odisha), Vaibhav Sooryavanshi (Vice-capt.) (Bihar), Denish Das, Abhijit Sarkar (both Assam).

Stand-byes: Ayush Loharuka (Bihar), Sridam Paul (Tripura), Sambit Baral, Swastik Samal (both Odisha), Sharandeep Singh (Jharkhand).

Ten Doeschate rejoins KKR as cricket strategy chief

Former India assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate has returned to IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders as its head of cricket strategy. The 46-year-old ten Doeschate, a former Netherlands all-rounder, ended his two-year stint with the India men's team after the white-ball tour of England. "In his new role, Ryan will lead the strategic direction for scouting, player recruitment, squad planning and performance evaluation across the Knight Riders network," the franchise said in a statement.

Wimbledon 2026 sees record-high attendance

Wimbledon saw a record-high attendance of 5,50,151 over the two weeks of the Grand Slam, the All England Club said on Tuesday. Attendance at the 139th edition of the grass-court Major was aided by first rain-free Championships since 2019. The total numbers were 1,381 more than in 2025. But Wimbledon still trails in total attendance when compared to the other Grand Slams. The main draw of 2026 Australian Open attracted more than 1.1 million fans. Last year's U.S. Open drew more than 900,000 and main draw for the 2026 French Open was 589,500.

LIVE TELECAST

CWG 2026: Day 7, Sony Sports Ten 2 & LIV, 1 p.m.
Durand Cup: Sony Sports Ten 5 & LIV, 4 & 7 p.m.

All to play for: Preparation is expected to have a huge role as Gukesh aims to defend his crown against the rapidly rising Sindarov.
B. VELANKANNI RAJ & SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Gukesh has his task cut out against in-form Sindarov

The champion's struggles after the spectacular triumph in 2024 have defied belief; recent form and current world rankings may suggest the Uzbek has an edge, but the match should be closer

CHESS

P.K. Ajith Kumar

Chess is getting faster. Long gone are the days when the players would return to resume their game after sleeping over the position. Everybody loves a blitz game, millions of which are played every day on online platforms.

But there is one event that the fans of the mind sport across the world eagerly look forward to that would go on for weeks, played over games that would last several hours.

The long battle between two of the world's sharpest minds across a board of 64 black-and-white squares has fascinated mankind since the 19th century.

The romance about the World chess championship is undeniable.

So the world will turn its attention to Geneva come November 25.

Long time coming

The stage has finally been set for the match between D. Gukesh and Javokhir Sindarov.

It indeed took FIDE a while to declare the venue. The world chess governing body even had to postpone the deadline for submissions from those interested.

Singapore was the host for the last Word title match, in which Gukesh defeated Ding Liren of China. It was a well-organised and well-attended match in the island of Sentosa.

It was the first time that Singapore was conducting a World title match. Switzerland has done it before.

Brissago had hosted the 2004 World championship match between Vladimir Kramnik and Peter Leko, while in 1998 Lausanne was the venue for the match between Anatoly Karpov and Viswanathan Anand, who incidentally had made the announcement about the Geneva match, in his capacity as FIDE's interim president.

Tough loss

Anand had lost that match, though in rather unfair circumstances.

He had come through a gruelling knockout qualifier featuring 97 players in the Dutch city of Groningen, while a fresh Karpov was waiting for him in Lausanne for their match, which would kick off just two days later.

There has been plenty of time for both Gukesh and Sindarov to prepare. And preparation plays an important role in a World championship match.

Interesting battle

The recent form and the current world rankings may suggest the Uzbek has an edge, but the match should be closer.

Granted, Gukesh's fall after the triumph in Singapore has defied belief, but don't forget he is only 20. Sindarov has been playing fabulous chess over the last year or so, but that doesn't mean he cannot be stopped.

It would not be easy, surely. Gukesh will need to reproduce the kind of chess that made him the World No. 3, just last year.

Indian Air Force gets the better of Defenders FC

DURAND CUP

Sports Bureau

Indian Air Force FT defeated Sri Lankan Army side Defenders FC 2-1 in a Group C match of the 135th Durand Cup at the Birsa Munda Stadium in Ranchi on Wednesday.

Somananda Singh handed the Indian Air Force outfit the lead in the 25th minute.

The Airmen doubled the advantage in the 68th minute when Defenders FC's K.D.S. Sankalpa inadvertently turned Mohammad Aquib's cross into his own net while attempting a clearance.

The Sri Lankan team responded quickly as N.M. Aflal pulled one back in the 70th minute, but Indian Air Force held firm for the remainder of the match to secure three points.

After the win, Indian Air Force moved level on points with Jamshedpur FC in the group standings. Jamshedpur, however, retains the lead on the table due to its superior goal difference (+5 against +1).

The result:
Group C: Indian Air Force 2 (Somananda Singh 25, K.D.S Sankalpa 68-og) bt Defenders FC 1 (N.M. Aflal 70).

Prannoy and Unnati progress in Taipei Open

BADMINTON

Press Trust of India
TAIPEI CITY

H.S. Prannoy and Unnati Hooda, the spearheads of India's campaign, advanced to the second round of the Taipei Open Super 300 on Wednesday.

Seeded seventh, Prannoy defeated Minoru Koga of Japan 21-11, 21-14 in his opener in just 35 minutes.

In the women's section, third seed Unnati started her campaign by registering a 21-12, 21-18 win over Taiwan's Pei Yu Wang.

The results (first round):
Men: H.S. Prannoy bt Minoru Koga (Jpn) 21-11, 21-14; Jason Gunawan (HK) bt Mithun Manjunath 21-18, 21-4; Kiran George bt Wang Po-Wei (Tpe) 21-10, 21-18; Tharun Mannepalli bt Jeon Hyeok Jin (Kor) 21-12, 21-15; Richie Duta Richardo (INa) bt Rounak Chauhan 21-14, 21-16; Eogene Ewe (Mas) bt Saneeth Dayanand 21-4, 9-21, 21-12.

Women: Unnati Hooda bt Pei Yu Wang (Tpe) 21-12, 21-18; Tanya Hemanth bt Wen Chi Hsu (Tpe) 21-16, 14-21, 21-16; Devika Sihag bt Ga Eun Park (Kor) 14-21, 21-7, 21-15, Tanvi Sharma bt Tasnim Mir 21-16, 22-20 and Anmol Kharb bt Ishika Jaiswal (USA) 21-15, 11-21 21-19; Ni Kadek Dhinda Amartya Pratiwi (Ina) bt Rakshitha Sree Santhosh Ramraj 21-10, 20-22, 21-14; Hsiang Ti Lin (Tpe) bt Ashmita Chaliha 16-21, 21-14, 21-15; Supanida Katethong (Tha) bt Shriyanshi Valishetty 21-11, 21-12; Pin-Chian Chiu (Tpe) bt Isharani Baruah 21-8, 19-21, 21-17

Raj Kumar in Indian squad for Asian Games

HOCKEY

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Midfielder Raj Kumar Pal on Wednesday replaced young Aditya Arjun Lalage as India made just one change in its 20-member squad for the Asian Games to be held in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, from September 19 to October 4.

Raj Kumar, who was not included in next month's World Cup-bound squad, got his place back at the expense of Lalage, who is in the 20-member squad for the World Cup to be co-hosted by the Netherlands and Belgium from August 15 to 30.

Star defender and drag-flicker Harmanpreet Singh, who led India to the Olympic bronze medal at the 2024 Paris Games, will continue to lead the side.

India has been drawn in Pool A alongside hosts Japan, Korea, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

Twelve teams, split into two pools of six each, will contest for the gold medal in Kakamigahara.

India will begin its Asian Games campaign against Indonesia on September 20, before taking on Sri Lanka on September 22, Korea on September 24, Japan on September 26 and rounding off the pool stage against Bangladesh on September 28.

Raj Kumar.
FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

The squad: Goalkeepers: Mohith H.S, Suraj Karkera; **Defenders:** Jarmanpreet Singh, Harmanpreet Singh (Capt.), Amit Rohidas, Jugraj Singh, Sanjay, Sumit, Yashdeep Siwach.

Midfielders: Rajinder Singh, Raj Kumar Pal, Hardik Singh, Manpreet Singh, Nilakanta Sharma, Vivek Sagar Prasad; **Forwards:** Dilpreet Singh, Shilanand Lakra, Sukhjeet Singh, Mandeep Singh, and Abhishek.

Mohith ready for baptism by fire at WC

Uthra Ganesan
NEW DELHI

Since the beginning of the year, Mohith HS has been quietly firming his place in the Indian hockey team, leapfrogging the experienced Krishan Pathak to be the preferred choice along with Suraj Karkera.

It was not surprising when the 24-year-old was named in the Indian squad for the upcoming World Cup and, on Wednesday, the Asian Games as well. For the youngster, this would be a baptism by fire – his only other senior outing besides the FIH Pro League over the past two years was the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup last year.

"I was excited when I heard my name and I would like to believe I have earned my place. As a player, I don't think too much about expecting or not expecting selection but I always knew I have to represent India in the World Cup. I was working hard and I made my way," Mohith told *The Hindu* ahead of his World Cup debut.

The confidence stems from the kind of players he has been fortunate to play with. Over the last few years, Mohith has been part of the Indian squad, training with the likes of P.R. Sreejesh, Pathak and Karkera. In addition, the Hockey India League gave him a chance to pick the brains of his teammate and one of the legends of goalkeeping – Vincent Vanasch.

Mohith... diligent work pays off.
FILE PHOTO: B. VELANKANNI RAJ

"Every goalkeeper has a strong and a weak spot. I observe them and try to take the strong points from each, both on and off the field. From Sreejesh, I have learned the basics and the importance of communication. I also learned mental toughness.

"From Vanasch, calmness on the field, defending penalty corners etc. When training with Pathak and Suraj, we always discuss what we should have done. They always help me," he explained when asked about the various influences.

The 'best is yet to come' for Badoni

CRICKET

Vivek Krishnan
NEW DELHI

Ayush Badoni has had five seasons with Lucknow Super Giants in the Indian Premier League. Over the past 12 months, he has also featured regularly for India-A across formats.

The opportunities are a reflection of his potential as a hard-hitting middle-order batter and a part-time off-spinner, but it hasn't yet translated into match-defining performances.

The 26-year-old from Delhi admits he was subpar in the most recent IPL. Despite getting to bat higher up the order, his returns were a meagre 215 runs in 10 matches at an average of 21.5.

Frank: Badoni admits he was subpar in the most recent IPL.
FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

It was followed by three outings for India-A in a 50-over tri-series involving Sri Lanka-A and Afghanistan-A in June, where his scores read 24, 0 and 15. "Definitely, I feel I can perform better. The best is yet to come," Badoni, who will lead South Delhi Superstarz in the third edition of the Delhi Premier League from Friday, told reporters at the Arun Jaitley Stadium on Wednesday.

Badoni's floundering form during IPL 2026 was compounded by LSG's wooden-spoon finish.

"It is challenging to be consistent as a player when the team is losing matches. The motivation goes down. Next year, we will hope to make amends," he said.

Turn it around

Badoni remains determined to turn things around, for he knows that the national selectors are taking note of his contributions.

"Playing for India-A gives you exposure and boosts your confidence. The selectors have told me to focus on my consistency as much as possible and to keep working on my bowling," informed Badoni.

Starzella primed to repeat success in feature

RACING

BENGALURU: Starzella, who is in fine nick, may score an encore in the Bangalore Summer Million (1,600m), the feature event of the races to be held here on Thursday (July 30). False rails (width about 6.5m from 1,600m to the winning post) will be in position.

1 OWN OPINION PLATE (DIV. II), 1,400m, maiden 3-y-o only, (Terms), 1-00 p.m.: 1. Military Code (2) N.S. Parmar 56, 2. Royal Vanguard (6) Vishal Bunde 56, 3. Blazing Pearl (8) G. Vivek 54.5, 4. Evermore (3) Trevor 54.5, 5. Executive One (7) Sai Kiran 54.5, 6. Lysia (1) Akshay K 54.5, 7. Monstera (4) Arvind K 54.5 and 8. Wanganui (5) Antony 54.5.
1. LYSIA, 2. MONSTERA, 3. BLAZING PEARL

2 SHA TIN PLATE (DIV. III), 1,200m, rated 00 to 25, 1-30: 1. Treasure Queen (9) Rafique S.K 60, 2. Forever Royal (4) Kiran Rai 58.5, 3. Flamingo Dream (7) Asirvatham 56.5, 4. Mega Success (6) Jagadeesh 56.5, 5. Sea God (3) Arul 56.5, 6. N R I Millennium (10) Akshay K 55, 7. Princess Jasmine (2) Laxman S 55, 8. Meghann (5) Rushal G 54.5, 9. Dr. Colchester (1) Vinod Shinde 52.5 and 10. Wakizashi (8) Indrajeet K 51.
1. FOREVER ROYAL, 2. DR. COLCHESTER, 3. N R I MILLENNIUM

3 OWN OPINION PLATE (DIV. I), 1,400m, maiden 3-y-o only, (Terms), 2-00: 1. Battle Crown (5) Akshay K 56, 2. Heimirich (1) G. Vivek 56, 3. Routing Run (8) Yash 56, 4. Shining Dawn (4) Antony 56, 5. Zenzele (3) Neeraj 56, 6. Astrid (7) Trevor 54.5, 7. Exotic Black (6) L.A. Rozario 54.5, 8. Sai Princess (9) Jagadeesh 54.5 and 9. Sprezzatura (2) A. Asbar 54.5.
1. HEMIRICH, 2. BATTLE CROWN, 3. ROUTING RUN

4 SHA TIN PLATE (DIV. II), 1,200m, rated 00 to 25, 2-30: 1. Hold Your Breath (3) Kiran Rai 60.5, 2. White Secret (8) Rafique S.K 60.5, 3. Anzac Parade (6) Trevor 60, 4. Chisox (2) L.A. Rozario 60, 5. Visons Dream (4) Asirvatham 60, 6. Glaze (7) M. Rajesh K 59.5, 7. Infinite Spirit (5) Pavan 57.5, 8. N R I Jetpower (9) Akshay K 56.5 and 9. Embosom (1) Vinod Shinde 55.5.
1. HOLD YOUR BREATH, 2. EMBOSOM, 3. ANZAC PARADE

5 LEADING OWNER TROPHY (1,400m), rated 40 to 65, 5-y-o & over, 3-00: 1. Bellavita (1) Ritesh G 61.5, 2. Jersey King (3) Tousif 61, 3. Monterio (2) L.A. Rozario 60, 4. Black Rainstorm (9) Faizan Khan 59, 5. The Leader (11) Akshay K 58.5, 6. Disciple (4) Antony 57.5, 7. Bestidentification (5) A. Asbar 55.5, 8. Stravinsky (7) M. Rajesh K 55.5, 9. N R I Victory (6) Vinod Shinde 55, 10. Final Call (8) Trevor 54, 11. Gordon (10) Darshan 54 and 12. Storm Shadow (12) G. Vivek 52.5.
1. BESTIDENDIFICATION, 2. DISCIPLE, 3. STORM SHADOW

6 B.T.C. WORKFORCE CUP (1,600m), rated 40 to 65, 3-30: 1. Aquamatic (6) R. Pradeep 62, 2. Prince Of Wales (10) Pavan 62, 3. Refreshment (9) G. Vivek 58.5, 4. Sicyon (2) Trevor 58.5, 5. Vibrant Queen (4) L.A. Rozario 58.5, 6. Winfield (3) Antony 58.5, 7. Badshaah (7) N.S. Parmar 56.5, 8. Absolute Force (11) Salman Khan 54, 9. Mister Brown (1) A. Hangal 53.5, 10. Pledge (5) Akshay K 52.5, 11. Alamgir (8) Neeraj 51.5 and 12. Turf Paradise (12) A. Asbar 51.5.
1. PLEDGE, 2. REFRESHMENT, 3. WINFIELD

7 BANGALORE SUMMER MILLION (1,600m), 3-y-o only, (Terms), 4-00: 1. Dardanus (4) Trevor 57, 2. Starzella (2) Antony 55.5, 3. Black Irish (6) Pavan 54, 4. Ashwa New York (5) Neeraj 52.5, 5. Sensuous (3) G. Vivek 52.5 and 6. Shrishti (1) Yash 52.5.
1. STARZELLA, 2. BLACK IRISH

8 SHA TIN PLATE (DIV. I), 1,200m, rated 00 to 25, 4-30: 1. Dasadyu (4) Akshay K 62.5, 2. First Choice (8) N.S. Parmar 62.5, 3. Higgs Boson (5) M. Rajesh K 62, 4. Windcleaver (2) A. Hangal 62, 5. Cascais (3) Asirvatham 61.5, 6. Sweet Winner (6) A. Asbar 61.5, 7. The Golden Dream (7) Kiran Rai 61.5, 8. SD Good Sam (1) R. Pradeep 61 and 9. Chinky Pinky (9) Sai Kiran 60.5.
1. SWEET WINNER, 2. DASADYU, 3. SD GOOD SAM

9 HOLDING COURT PLATE (1,600m), rated 20 to 45, 5-00: 1. Seize The Grey (4) N.S. Parmar 61, 2. Unforgettable Star (9) Darshan 60.5, 3. Interceptor (7) Siddaraju P 59.5, 4. Stentorian (6) Saurav Rawat 58.5, 5. Lots Of Luck (2) A. Asbar 57.5, 6. Stalingrad (3) Pavan 57.5, 7. Femme Fatale (8) M. Rajesh K 56.5, 8. Shahenshaah (1) Sai Kiran 56, 9. Mandate (5) Aleemuddin 55.5, 10. Chotipari (11) Vishal 54.5, 11. Mystic Dew (10) Akshay K 53.5 and 12. Star Honour (12) S. Hussain 53.5.
1. LOTS OF LUCK, 2. MANDATE, 3. STALINGRAD

Day's best: **STARZELLA**
Double: **PLEDGE – LOTS OF LUCK**
Jkt: 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9; Mini Jkt: 6, 7, 8 and 9; Tr (i): 1, 2 and 3; (ii): 4, 5 and 6; (iii): 7, 8 and 9.

‘Virtual magnet’ claims reveal why EVs need their rare-earths

A large amount of effort has gone towards replacing permanent magnets in the rotor with either electromagnets or just a piece of iron; however, efficiency, starting torque capability, and the maximum speed achievable are some important constraints that have kept such motors out of EVs

G. Bhuvaneswari

There have been a number of news reports recently about a startup in Bengaluru called Vimag Labs that has replaced rare-earth magnets in motors with so-called “virtual” magnets.

One such report quoted Manish Seth, the start-up’s CEO, as saying: “We remove permanent magnets, replace them with copper coils, and then through software, we generate magnetic fields inside the motor.”

To understand this claim, it helps to first see how electric motors produce magnetic fields and why they use permanent magnets in the first place.

Rotor and stator

A motor needs a magnetic field to operate. One way to create it is using a permanent magnet. Another is to pass current through copper coils that have been wound around a ferromagnet, temporarily turning it into a magnet. This is called an electromagnet – and it is this approach that the startup has used, instead of permanent magnets.

When an electrical machine converts electricity into mechanical motion, it is called a motor. On the other hand, a machine that converts mechanical movement into electricity is called a generator. In both cases, the conversion happens via a magnetic field.

In a motor, for example, mechanical energy is harvested when the electric energy is used to rotate a component called the rotor. In a generator, electricity is harvested through conductors embedded in a stationary component called the stator.

You can imagine both the stator and the rotor to be two concentric cylinders. Most of the time, the rotor is the inner cylinder. And the magnetic field is established in the gap between the stator and the rotor for the energy conversion process to happen.

An old technology

This is how the large generators in hydroelectric, thermal, and nuclear power plants work. And for a long time now, they have used electromagnets instead of permanent magnets.

In these generators, a turbine spins the rotor. In a thermal or nuclear power station, the turbine is driven by steam. In a hydroelectric power station, it is driven by falling water. The rotor rotates at a fixed speed to generate an alternating current (AC) of frequency 50 Hz. The rotor has copper coils wound around its ferromagnetic core. When these coils are supplied with a direct current (DC), they create a magnetic field, and the core acquires a magnetic north and a magnetic south pole. And as the rotor spins, this magnetic field sweeps past the stator windings, inducing an alternating voltage in them. This helps convert mechanical power into electricity. This technology has been around for 135 years.

The next question is how electricity can be fed continuously into coils that are themselves rotating. Enter: the brushless excitation system. The rotor coils need DC – but supplying it through sliding electrical contacts is difficult because the rotor is constantly spinning. The solution is to mount a rectifier, a device that converts AC into DC, on the rotor itself. To this rotating rectifier, an AC is supplied from another generator. And this other generator is coupled to the same shaft of the turbine imparting mechanical power to the main generator.

In any EV, the battery pack is the costliest and heaviest component, which is why the focus is on optimising the battery’s rating. In turn, permanent magnet synchronous motors dominate the EV market because their efficiency is the highest at present. J. ALLEN EGENUSE

Real Creator IAS Edition https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Van2VRb6RGJOKH6oBd0F

Software and magnetism

This is essentially the principle behind the start-up’s “virtual” magnet: software regulates the current flowing through the electromagnets, thus controlling the strength and direction of the magnetic field. The rectified current can be fed in a controlled manner to the copper coils in the rotor that would make the magnetic strength and direction controllable.

In other words, the software is not creating magnetism by itself. It is just controlling how much current flows through the electromagnets, and thus how strong the magnetic field becomes. There is no novelty in this design.

A permanent magnet establishes the magnetic field in the air gap of an electrical machine in a one-step process. And because the magnet already exists, no electrical energy is needed simply to create the magnetic field. On the other hand, with electromagnets, the magnetic field first has to be established, and the electric current modulated as per the requirement using software.

And every additional step here consumes some energy. There are magnetic losses in the ferromagnetic core, called core losses. The copper conductor has resistance losses. The electronic switches have switching and conduction losses. As a result, it is unlikely for a motor with an electromagnet to be more efficient than a motor with a permanent magnet.

Electromagnets in EVs

BMW and Renault have been trying to build such an electrically excited motor. The three-phase induction motor that Nikola Tesla invented in 1888 – a light yet rugged machine – was used by the first version of the Model S from Tesla in 2012. However, its efficiency was not good enough.

Every 0.1% increase in efficiency of the propulsion motor drive matters in an electric vehicle (EV). This is because any increase in the drive’s efficiency will improve the range drastically for a given battery rating. Put another way, for a given mileage, the battery size can be reduced when the efficiency of the motor drive improves. Thus, increasing the motor drive’s efficiency will bring down the weight and cost of the car perceptibly.

In any EV, the battery pack is the costliest and heaviest component, which is why the focus is on optimising the battery’s rating. In turn, permanent magnet synchronous motors dominate the EV market because their efficiency is the highest at present.

Electromagnets are not the only alternative to permanent magnets. Another approach is the switched reluctance motor (SRM), whose rotor contains neither permanent magnets nor copper coils. Instead, SRMs have lower rotor inertia than even induction motors. In exchange, their torque comes in spurts, which makes the motor noisy and less efficient.

Recently, Honda joined hands with a start-up from Canada called Enedym to improve the performance of an SRM to be used in an EV. Hitachi Astemo is similarly trying to use a synchronous reluctance motor in a battery-driven EV to get rid of the dependency on rare-earth magnets.

On the whole, a large amount of effort has gone towards replacing permanent magnets in the rotor with either electromagnets or just a piece of iron. However, efficiency, starting torque capability, and the maximum speed achievable are some important constraints that have kept these motors out of EVs.

At this time, we will have to wait and see how the Bengaluru start-up fares in the four-wheeler EV market.

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Real Creator IAS Edition https://t.me/+8B98m5PQCF84MmQ9

A Bengal tiger caught in a camera trap in the Bardia National Park, Nepal, in 2017, amid efforts to double the count of the big cats. AFP

Nepal’s tiger numbers climb 20% to estimated 429, says survey

Agence France-Presse

Nepal’s tiger population has risen by roughly 20% in the past four years to an estimated 429, officials said on Wednesday, a conservation milestone despite challenges from human-wildlife conflict.

The latest nationwide survey found tiger numbers had increased from 355 in 2022, reinforcing the Himalayan nation’s reputation as a success story in big-cat conservation.

“The data analysis shows that the tiger population has increased by five percent each year, and we are happy to see this increasing trend,” Bed Kumar Dhakal, spokesperson for Nepal’s Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, said.

The survey was conducted between December and July, and was announced to coincide with International Tiger Day. It covered more than 7,300 square kilometres of Nepal’s southern plains that are home to the predators.

Nepal pledged in 2010 to double its tiger numbers by 2022 and also became the first nation to meet that goal, boosting its tiger population to 355 in 2022 from about 121 in 2009

Wildlife officials deployed more than 3,600 motion-sensitive cameras across five protected areas, with experts analysing thousands of images to identify individual tigers by their distinctive stripe patterns.

“The reason behind the increasing number of tigers is because we could keep their habitat secure,” said conservation department ecologist Hari Bhadra Acharya.

Deforestation, habitat loss, and poaching have been major challenges for tiger populations across Asia, and Nepal has won international praise for reversing the decline.

In 2010, Nepal joined 12 other countries in pledging to double tiger numbers by 2022.

It became the first nation to meet that goal, boosting its tiger population to 355 in 2022 from about 121 in 2009.

Unintended risks

However, the conservation success has also brought unintended risks for communities living near tiger habitats.

Government data shows at least 38 people were killed in tiger attacks between 2019 and 2023.

“The local communities played a crucial role in increasing the tiger numbers, but the government and organisations are not taking action when the tigers are attacking the same communities,” said Nischal Neupane, an advocate for tiger victims in Bardiya district.

The district is home to 112 tigers, up from only 18 in 2009.

World Wide Fund for Nature Nepal representative Ghana Shyam Gurung said conservation gains must be matched by efforts to ensure “people and wildlife can thrive together”.

“By investing in effective co-existence programmes, Nepal can continue to offer a powerful model for other tiger range countries.”

More than 1,00,000 tigers roamed the wild at the start of the 20th century, but global numbers plunged to an estimated 3,200 in 2010 before recovering in parts of Asia through intensified conservation efforts.

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

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

Vibranium’s equally unusual cousins

Vasudevan Mukunth

QUESTION 1

The radioactive debris from the destruction of planet X is called Y. Y saps the strength of the people of X and can even be lethal with prolonged exposure. Y is usually green in colour but it also comes in red, gold, and blue varieties, each with unusual effects. Name X and Y.

QUESTION 2

Name the synthetic alloy developed by the U.S. government and which is virtually indestructible once it has cooled into a specific shape. A covert weapons programme used this alloy to coat an individual human’s skeleton and ‘claws’. It also comes in a secondary form that’s slightly weaker.

QUESTION 3

Mined in a once-great city in the Misty Mountains, _____ resembles silver in appearance, can’t be tarnished, remarkably light, and tougher than steel. The city’s smiths worked the material like cloth, producing mail shirts nearly weightless to wear but capable of stopping swinging blades. Fill in the blank.

QUESTION 4

Z is a room-temperature superconductor that levitates in the presence of magnetic fields — so metal-containing mountains on its world could float. Its immense commercial value on the earth drove the R.D.A. Corporation to colonise the world and mine it, seeding a great conflict between humans and the world’s native dwellers. Name Z.

QUESTION #5

An alien crystalline substance, _____ spreads across landscapes and converts soil and structures as it does, in exchange releasing valuable minerals. Thus, it was an economic resource fuelling a global conflict as well as an ecological catastrophe, since it could also mutate exposed organisms. It was brought to the earth by a meteorite.

Visual: Name the substance shown here. In its universe, it is a critical component of warp drives. Planets containing this mineral were also at risk of tearing themselves apart due to the mineral's properties.
AATREK/MEMORY-ALPHA

Answers to July 28 quiz:

1. 2006 Fields Medal winner for work along with Ben Green – **Ans: Terence Tao**
2. Showed there are infinite prime pairs within fixed distance of each other – **Ans: James Maynard**
3. 2006 laureate for proving the Poincaré conjecture – **Ans: Grigori Perlman**
4. Theory in which Alessio Figalli’s work won a Fields Medal – **Ans: Optimal transport**
5. Adjective named for ancient Green inventor of algebra – **Ans: Diophantine**

Visual: **Maryna Viazovska**

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