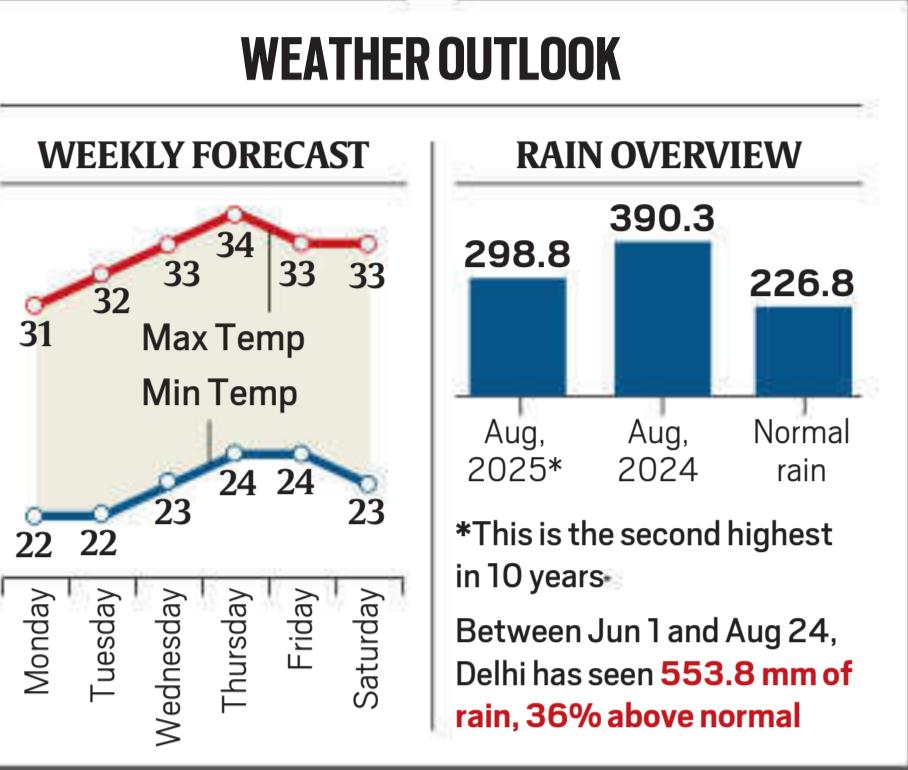


Blueprint for waterlogging woes soon: CM



RAINFALL: Showers likely entire week

EXPRESSNEWSERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 24

AS RECORD-BREAKING bouts of rain in August have led to waterlogging woes across the city, Delhi Chief Minister (CM) Rekha Gupta said Sunday that a blueprint of the Capital's sewer system is being prepared to provide a permanent solution to the problem.

The city has seen 298.8 mm rain in August so far. This is the second highest in 10 years, behind only the 390.3 mm seen in August last year. While problem areas, such as Minto Road and areas around Mathura Road have fared better on the waterlogging front this year, areas like Daulat Kuan have seen persistent issues.

CM Gupta, however, said Sunday that despite Delhi receiving above-normal rainfall in August, residents did not face a severe waterlogging crisis. "While waterlogging did occur in some areas, the situation in most localities returned to normal within half-an-hour to an hour owing to the efficiency of the concerned departments," she said.

She added that "serious wa-

terlogging" was not witnessed this time at "super black spots" such as Minto Road Bridge, ITO Chowk, Zakhira Underpass, and Anand Vihar. "Even after continuous rainfall for two days, Delhi's traffic and civic life remained normal," she said, adding that by the end of the month, more rain was expected and a new record could be set.

The situation has improved because of advance preparations undertaken by civic agencies, including the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, New Delhi Municipal Council, and Delhi Cantonment Board. Acting on forecasts of prolonged rainfall, the government carried out deep-cleaning of drains, installed additional pumps, and deployed special staff in vulnerable areas.

In 2006, the Delhi government's Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) lodged an FIR under sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act against Sachan.

Close to two decades later, on August 18, a Delhi court directed that charges be framed against Sachan and two others — Simpal Garg, who worked in the Food and Safety department at the time, and Dungar's business partner Rajeev Kumar — in this case.

"A grave suspicion arises in-

CCTV cameras captured the horrifying sequence of events. Singh can be seen standing near a divider, scanning the road for the vehicular movement.

Within seconds, a white Etigga speeds towards him at what investigators later said was 120 kmph. He spots the speeding car from a distance and tries to step aside, but the car rams into him. After being hit by the vehicle, the traffic constable is dragged nearly 40 metres by the car that does not stop. The impact flings him into the air before he falls on the road.

Rushed to Manipal Hospital by colleagues, Singh was placed

him. By late Saturday, he had succumbed to his injuries.

Back in Khurja in Uttar Pradesh, Singh's hometown, his family is inconsolable. His father broke down while talking to reporters on Sunday. Recalling seeing the CCTV footage, he said, "That car was speeding at 120 km per hour, and they hit my son... his bones were completely broken. I have two small granddaughters and a grandson... how will I take care of them?"

When asked what punishment the accused should face, he said, "They killed my 35-year-old son... so the accused should also be hanged."

Singh's elder brother, Akshay, said, "He was on duty... the car was speeding at 120 km per hour. They have hit him in such a way that looks like my brother was deliberately murdered. All his bones were broken. He had been fighting for life since yesterday but not even a miracle could have saved him after that brutal hit. Today, I have lost my brother. Such people should be punished, so that others don't have to lose their brothers."

As of Saturday evening, three persons were arrested in the case. Police identified the driver as Vineet. His brother Sumit and another man accompanying them

have also been arrested. They were travelling from Haryana to Ghaziabad when the incident happened.

A case of rash driving, attempt to murder and other charges has been registered in the matter.

In videos of his questioning, Vineet can be seen speaking with little remorse, said officers. Asked how the accident took place, he shrugs: "Gaadi oversped maithi, achanak se dekha nahi toh ek janaab ko lag gayi. (The car was speeding... We did not see and it hit him). When pressed on why he was overspeeding, he added, "Bus galti ho gayi sahab (I made a mistake, sir)."



CCTV grab of the incident.

on life support. Pictures from the hospital show him bandaged, his face swollen, tubes attached to his nose, chest and tongue, his body bruised all over. Through the night, doctors struggled to save

Dead man's signature revives 20-yr-old corruption case against a govt official

NIRBHAY THAKUR
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 24

indicating active involvement of accused Sunil Kumar Sachan with co-accused Simpal Garg and Rajeev Kumar that they have conspired to cheat and forge the signatures of a deceased person, namely Dungar Singh, to illegally obtain the KOD licence to cause financial benefit to accused Rajeev Kumar," noted Special Judge Dr Ruchi Aggarwal Asrani of Rouse Avenue Court in her order.

A signature in Hindi

What landed the government servant and his alleged co-conspirators in trouble was a signature in Hindi and a statement given by Dungar's real brother confirming his date of death. While all of Dungar's signatures on the files concerned before his death had been in English, the ones on the licence renewal form were in Hindi, the probe found.

Dungar's brother and his daughter-in-law also told the ACB that he had passed away on August 5, 2004.

The licence renewal application was dated July 12, 2005.

There was another twist to the tale — two death certificates were issued.

THE LOOPHOLE

Earlier, the ACB had filed a closure report in this case. This was rejected by a judge of Rouse Avenue court, who stated: "Dungar Singh had always put his signature in English. The entire file, from the day he got the licence in 1986 till the last renewal in 2002, bears his signature in English... except this last application for renewal of licence in 2005, the same is signed very neatly in Hindi".

The then Gram Panchayat Adhikari and Registrar, Births and Deaths, of Baghpat had mentioned the date of Dungar's death as August 5, 2004, on one death certificate and October 2005 on another death certificate.

The judge said, "This court is of the view that there is a strong contention that Sh. Dungar

Singh had actually died on 05.08.2004. The ACB had told the court that the two dates had been given by the Registrar to "save the accused".

"The prosecution has established that the accused, Sunil Kumar Sachan, had attested the signatures and photographs of Sh. Dungar Singh when he was allegedly not alive. It is an admitted case of the accused persons that accused Rajeev Kumar was a partner in M/s Shiv KOD and, thus, he had the underlying interest in the grant of the licence...." Judge Asrani said, adding that FSL reports showed that Singh's signatures had been forged.

Earlier, the ACB had filed a closure report in this case. This was rejected by Judge Asrani's predecessor, who stated: "Dungar Singh had always put his signature in English. The entire file, from the day he got the licence in 1986 till the last renewal in 2002, bears his signature in English... except this last application for renewal of licence in 2005, the same is signed very neatly in Hindi".

The court had also noted that not enough efforts were made to question Rajeev Kumar.

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-President



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Sh. Om Birla

Hon'ble Speaker, Lok Sabha

August Presence

Smt. Rekha Gupta

Hon'ble Chief Minister, Delhi

Presided by

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Hon'ble Speaker, Delhi Vidhan Sabha

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Bids are invited under Two-Part bidding system for the following e-Tenders through MSTC Portal:-
1. MANAGEMENT OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES AT PLANT HOSPITAL AND CSR SERVICE AT NEARBY VILLAGES, BRBNMPL, SALBONI: MSTC EVENT NO. BRBNMPL/SALBONI PRESS/MMD/24/25-26/ET/38 [MGMT OF HEALTH CARE SERVICE]; BRBNMPL TENDER NO. 013/SAL/MMD-CIVIL/2025-26; [ESTIMATED COST - ₹336.00 LAKHI]
2. RENOVATION OF C-TYPE QUARTERS (NEW & OLD) AT BRBNMPL, SALBONI: MSTC EVENT NO. BRBNMPL/SALBONI PRESS/MMD/23/25-26/ET/37 [RENOVATION OF C-TYPE QUARTERS]; BRBNMPL TENDER NO. 011/SAL/MMD-CIVIL/2025-26; [ESTIMATED COST - ₹197.74 LAKHI]

Last date of tender submission - 25.09.2025 by 11:00 Hrs. For downloading tender documents and other details, kindly visit website www.mstccommerce.com. Tender details are also available at our website www.brbnmpl.co.in. Further extension or amendment/s, if any, shall be uploaded on the above websites.

Senior General Manager



विज्ञान, प्रावैधिकी एवं तकनीकी शिक्षा विभाग

राजकीय अभियंत्रण महाविद्यालय, परिचय चम्पारण

WALK IN INTERVIEW

Advt.No-02/2025

प्रावैधिकी एवं तकनीकी शिक्षा विभाग, विहार सरकार के नियंत्रणाधीन राजकीय अभियंत्रण महाविद्यालय परिचय चम्पारण के लिए अतिरिक्त सांस्कृकाक प्रायोगिक एवं अतिरिक्त कर्मशाला अनुदेशक की आवश्यकता है। पदानंतर, आवश्यक योग्यता एवं मानदेय निम्न प्रकार है।

पद	विभाग	आवश्यक शैक्षणिक योग्यता	मानदेय
अतिरिक्त सांस्कृकाक प्रावैधिकी अनुदेशक	प्रावैधिकी अनुदेशक इन्डियनिक्स एण्ड कम्प्यूटिंग कम्प्यूटर सार्केस इन्डियारिंग अर्सेनिक अभियंत्रण	AICTE के नियमनुसार	विज्ञान, प्रावैधिकी एवं तकनीकी शिक्षा विभाग, विहार, पटना के नियमनुसार।
अतिरिक्त कर्मशाला अनुदेशक	टीपर नेशनल एजेंसी कॉर्स इंडियनिक्स	National Council for Vocational Training, Delhi (NCVT) State council for Vocational Training, Patna (SCVT) से मान्यता प्राप्त संस्थान से समर्थित होने वाले एक या दो वैयक्ति आवश्यक, अस्थायी एवं मानदेय पर आवश्यक है।	विज्ञान, प्रावैधिकी एवं तकनीकी शिक्षा विभाग, विहार, पटना के नियमनुसार।

इच्छुक उम्मीदवार अपने Resume सहित सभी मूल प्रमाण पत्रों, उनकी छाया प्रतिरूप एवं दो रंगीन पासपोर्ट साइज़ कोटों के साथ दिनांक - 04 / 09 / 2025 को 11:00 बजे पूर्वाह्न में राजकीय अभियंत्रण महाविद्यालय परिचय चम्पारण में सांस्कृकाक द्वारा होने वाले उपचित होंगे। इस कार्य के द्वारा प्रावैधिकी के प्रकार की याचना भन्ना देव नहीं होगा। कार्यानुसारि के आवाह पर यह सेवा पूर्णतः वैकलिक, आव यकता आवश्यक, अस्थायी एवं मानदेय पर आवश्यक है।

नोट:- विज्ञान में वर्तित पद आवश्यकता अनुसार घटाया/बढ़ाया जा सकता है अथवा विज्ञान पूर्व सूक्ताने के प्रावैधिक द्वारा पूर्णतः निरस्त किया जा सकता है जिसके लिए कोई दावा स्वीकार्य नहीं होगा।

उक्त सूक्ताने के प्रावैधिक द्वारा पूर्णतः निरस्त किया जा सकती है। प्रावैधिकी राजकीय अभियंत्रण महाविद्यालय परिचय चम्पारण

PR-012225 (Sci. & Tech.) 2025-26

नशे से बचने का है एक ही उपचार, दृढ़ संकल्प और परिवार से प्यार।

कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय
केंद्रीय भवन प्रमण्डल संख्या- 02, यवन नियंत्रण विभाग, पटना।

ई-नियिदा आभियंत्रण सूचना संख्या-02/25-26 (डबल वीड सिस्टम)

(केवल ई-नियिदा पद्धति वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर)

नियांकित कार्य होने वाले तकनीकी एवं वित्तीय पीडी विस्तृत में ऑन लाइन ई-नियिदा आभियंता की जाती है :-

कार्य का विवरण :-

क्र.प्र.	कार्य का नाम	प्रावैधिक तारीख (लिये गए)	यात्रा की जाती (लिये गए में)	नियिदा कार्यालय का मूल्य (रुपये में)	प्रावैधिक शुल्क (रुपये में)	कार्य समाप्ति की अपेक्षा
1	Renovation of Residence No. - 14 at Circular Road, Patna for the year 2025-26, (including Electric Work)	1,94,80,000-00	3,89,600-00	10,000-00	5,900-00	06 माह

1. विज्ञानदाता का पदनाम एवं पता

2. नियिदा आभियंता की तिथि

3. नियिदा कार्यालय डाउनलोड एवं अपलोड करने की तिथि एवं समय

4. नियिदा तकनीकी बीड खालने की तिथि एवं समय

5. नियिदा वित्तीय बीड खालने की तिथि एवं समय

6. प्री-बीड मॉटिंग की तिथि एवं समय

7. नियिदा की विवाही की अवधि

8. नियिदा ई-स्ट्रैक्ट करनेवाले पदाधिकारी का पदनाम एवं पता

विस्तृत जानकारी state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar से प्राप्त की जा सकती है।

PR-012127 (B&C) 2025-26

कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय

केंद्रीय भवन प्रमण्डल संख्या-02, पटना

नशे से बचने का है एक ही उपचार, दृढ़ संकल्प और परिवार से प्यार।

विवरण

कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय

वाढ़ नियिदा प्रमण्डल, बैगुसाराय

स्थानीय/राजकीय/प्रावैधिक/स्पॉष नियिदा (अतिरिक्त कार्य)

पुनर्नियिदा आभियंत्रण सूचना संख्या -02 / 2025-26

(केवल ई-डेन्कर पद्धति के अनुसार वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर)

पत्रांक - 1415

1. कार्य का विवरण -

सूप संख्या	कार्य का नाम	प्रावैधिक तारीख (लिये गए में)	अग्राम की राशि (रुपये में, और लाइन में आगे लिये गए में)	परियालय वित्तीय का मूल्य (रुपये में)	वेट्रोन का देव बीड प्रोसेसिंग की अपेक्षा	कार्य समाप्ति की अपेक्षा
01	बोर्डीटीप्रॉफरसेस्ट्रेनिंग (अपेक्षीय प्रावैधिक विवरण) विस्तृत विवरण के सुधारणा प्रसारित वेट्रोन का राशि एवं लाइन की अपेक्षा	490.45	9,80,900.00	10,000.00	5,900.00	31.03.2026

2. नियिदा आभियंत्रण सूचना नियिदा की तिथि -

दिनांक 18.08.2025

3. नियिदा कार्यालय डाउनलोड एवं अपलोड करने की तिथि

दिनांक 08.09.2025 से 03.10.2025 के 15:00 बजे तक

केवल वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर

4. नियिदा तकनीकी बीड खालने की तिथि एवं समय

दिनांक 06.10.2025 को 15:00 बजे

केवल वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर

5. नियिदा वित्तीय बीड खालने की तिथि एवं समय

सभी विवरण की राशि एवं लाइन में आगे लिये गए रूपया में

6. प्री-बीड मॉटिंग का अपारहन एवं समय

दिनांक 16.09.2025 को 15:00 बजे अपारहन से

(क) दिनांक - 16.09.2025 को अधीक्षण अभियंता का कार्यालय, विहार, बैगुसाराय, पटना | 15:00 बजे अपारहन से

(छ) दिनांक - 17.09.2025 को मुख्य अभियंता (पटना) का कार्यालय भवन नियिदा विभाग, विहार, पटना | 15:00 बजे अपारहन से

7. नियिदा की विवाही की अवधि

120 दिन।

8. नियिदा ई-स्ट्रैक्ट करनेवाले पदाधिकारी का पदनाम एवं पता

सभी विवरण का अवधि

प्रियों वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



IN JEST

DURING THE hearing on the presidential reference last week, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta recalled how H V Kamath from coastal Karnataka frequently opposed B R Ambedkar in the Constituent Assembly. A day later, when Chief Justice of India B R Gavai sought to humour the court to lighten the mood, Mehta said humour is always good as the subject is also boring at times. Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal, who was on the other side, however, was quick to disagree that the 'subject is boring'. Mehta clarified that his comment was not on the subject matter of the reference but that generally law is not an interesting subject for many. Sibal, however, was in no mood to give in and said: "No, it's the most interesting subject". "My learned friend is today Mr Kamath. He opposes everything I say," quick came Mehta's repartee.

OUT OF SITE

TILL AUGUST 15 this year, several pictures of former Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora's wife, along with the spouses of other police officers, were there in the photogallery of the official website of Police Families Welfare Society (PFWS). The photographs were from the various events organised by the PFWS during Arora's tenure (July 31, 2022 to July 31, 2024). However, all pictures of the last three years have now been pulled down on directions from the Delhi Police headquarters, it is learnt. Incidentally, the pictures from similar events attended by the wife of Arora's predecessor Rakesh Asthana are intact and photographs of this I-Day event have also been uploaded. The PFWS is a non-profit organisation that works under the aegis of the welfare unit of Delhi Police and the Commissioner's wife is its de facto chairperson.

AAP joins TMC, SP in boycotting House panel on Bills to sack arrested ministers

MAULSHREE SETH

LUCKNOW, AUGUST 24

IN A setback for the Opposition unity narrative that was seemingly gaining momentum in the past month over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in Bihar and the September 9 Vice-Presidential election, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has joined the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Trinamool Congress (TMC) in boycotting the Joint Committee of Parliament that will scrutinise three Bills that seek to remove Central and state ministers, including the Prime Minister and Chief Ministers, facing allegations of corruption or serious offences and have been detained for at least 30 days.

The AAP's decision came on a day when SP president Akhilesh Yadav reiterated his party's decision to stay away from the Joint Committee. The Mamata Banerjee-led TMC too said Saturday it would not be part of the panel, terming it "a farce". Claiming that the Bills were

brought by the Centre "to topple governments and to encourage horse-trading", AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said, "(Prime Minister) Narendra Modi's love for the corrupt is as famous throughout the world as Laila-Majnu, Heer-Ranjha, and Romeo-Juliet." The Bills were "not against corruption", he added.

Asked why his party was not joining the Joint Committee, Yadav alleged that Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was aware of the Bill and hence "freed himself of all charges".

"We are not in it, we are opposing it. Our CM knew that such a Bill was in the pipeline and thus, he ensured that all cases against him were withdrawn. He also helped withdraw cases against his Deputy CM," the SP chief alleged.

To emphasise his point, Yadav cited the examples of some SP leaders who are behind bars, alleging that the motive of the three Bills was to pressure Opposition parties and "break them".

— WITH ENS DELHI INPUTS

SECURITY BREACH DURING RAHUL YATRA: Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi is hugged by a man during the Voter Adhikar Yatra in Bihar's Purnea. As a surprised Gandhi struggled to balance his bike, security personnel caught hold of the unidentified intruder and shoved him aside. Purnea SP Sweety Sehrawat said: 'The LoP was being escorted by a Close Protection Team, which appears to have handled the situation. If the CPT flags any concerns to police, we will track down the person concerned and take necessary action.' PTI

Rahul: People agree with what we have been saying on 'vote theft'

HIMANSHU HARSH

PATNA, AUGUST 24

CONGRESS'S RAHUL Gandhi and RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, the Leaders of Opposition in Lok Sabha and the Bihar Assembly respectively, on Sunday questioned the functioning of the Election Commission (EC) and accused it of siding with the BJP.

During their joint press conference in Araria, Rahul Gandhi was also asked about endorsing Tejashwi Yadav as their alliance's chief minister face in Bihar, a question he sidestepped.

The press conference took place amid the Voter Adhikar Yatra launched by Rahul Gandhi to mobilise public support in Bihar against what the Opposition calls "vote theft" through the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of elec-

toral rolls. It was also attended by CPI-ML (Liberation) general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya and Vikas Sheel Insaan Party (VIP) chief Mukesh Sahani.

"The yatra has been very successful... This overwhelming response shows that crores of people in Bihar agree with what we've been saying about 'vote chorii'," Rahul Gandhi said.

He accused the BJP and the EC of working in coordination to remove legitimate voters. "SIR is an institutionalised method of vote theft... There is a partnership between the EC and the BJP," he said.

The Congress leader further accused the EC of failing in its constitutional responsibility to maintain accurate voter list in states like Maharashtra, Haryana, and Karnataka. "In Bihar, we will not allow vote theft to happen. You may have done it elsewhere, but

here, we will stop you," he said.

On Karnataka, he said, "I presented black-and-white data on fake voters in Mahadevapura... I said there are fake voters and was asked to file an affidavit within five minutes. When Anurag Thakur said the same thing, no affidavit was sought from him... This shows where the EC stands."

Tejashwi Yadav echoed these concerns, alleging that the EC "has become a 'Godi Commission', functioning like a BJP cell."

Amid the show of Opposition unity, when asked why the Congress isn't endorsing Tejashwi as the alliance's CM face in Bihar, Rahul sidestepped the question, instead emphasising alliance unity. "There is mutual respect among all partners. We are ideologically and politically aligned. There is no tension. The focus now is to stop vote theft," he said.

Later, he took to X to share photos of his visit and wrote,

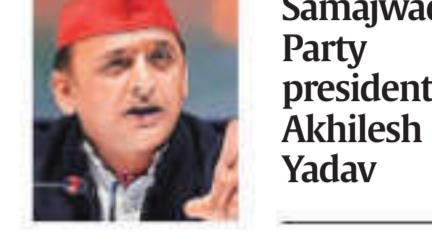
"Bihar grows 90% of the world's makhana, but the farmers and labourers who toil in the sun and rain don't even earn 1% of the profits. In big cities, it sells for Rs 1,000-2,000 per kg, but these hardworking people – the very foundation of the industry – get barely anything. Who are these farmers and labourers? They are mostly Dalits and extremely backward communities. All the hard work is done by these 99% Bahujans, while the benefit goes to only 1% of middlemen..."

Earlier, he took to X to share photos of his visit and wrote, "Bihar grows 90% of the world's makhana, but the farmers and labourers who toil in the sun and rain don't even earn 1% of the profits. In big cities, it sells for Rs 1,000-2,000 per kg, but these hardworking people – the very foundation of the industry – get barely anything. Who are these farmers and labourers? They are mostly Dalits and extremely backward communities. All the hard work is done by these 99% Bahujans, while the benefit goes to only 1% of middlemen..."

Makhana farming is almost entirely done by Mallahs, members of a riverine caste who are also among the most impoverished communities. Most makhana cultivation is concentrated in the riverine belts of Mithilanchal in North Bihar.

Gupta said, unlike BJP leaders, Gandhi sat down with the farmers who explained to him the entire cycle of cultivating makhana and the precarious conditions they endure. The farmers, the Congress leader said, reiterated their long-standing demands, including government intervention in pricing, procurement, and processing. Sahani also promised them that the Mahagathbandhan would ensure better remuneration if voted to power.

Probe Pooja Pal's 'threat to life' claim, SP writes to Shah



Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav

MAULSHREE SETH

LUCKNOW, AUGUST 24

THE SAMAJWADI Party (SP) has asked Home Minister Amit Shah to order a probe into the allegations made by expelled Chait MLA, Pooja Pal, that her life was under threat from Samajwadi Party after she met CM Yogi Adityanath.

SP's UP unit president Shyamal Pal, in a letter to Shah, sought an inquiry and called Pal's statements "inspired by the BJP" and part of a larger conspiracy to tarnish the party.

Pooja Pal, a three-time MLA and widow of murdered BSP MLA Raju Pal, was expelled by the SP on August 14, hours after she praised Yogi for ending, what she described, as the "reign of terror" of slain gangster-politician Atiq Ahmad in Prayagraj. Atiq had allegedly plotted the 2005 murder of her husband Raju Pal.

In his letter to Shah, Shyamal Pal asked for an investigation into what he described as "baseless and indecent" statements.

Shyamal further said that Pooja Pal started worrying about her life and property "after coming in contact with the BJP". "Mrs Pal should clarify who is threatening her life... The Samajwadi Party demands that this allegation should be probed and the truth be brought out."

Maintaining that they do not trust the state government, which is why they are seeking justice from the Centre, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav said that Pooja Pal might be killed by the BJP and SP leaders might be jailed for it."

In a letter to Akhilesh and shared on X, Pooja Pal accused him of strengthening criminal elements within the party by "insulting and deserting her midway", adding that she was receiving life threats. She claimed that if anything happened to her, the Samajwadi Party and Akhilesh Yadav should be held responsible.

Ayodhya Ram Temple trustee Bimalendra Mishra dies at 71



Bimalendra Mohan Pratap Mishra

MAULSHREE SETH

LUCKNOW, AUGUST 24

Bimalendra Mohan Pratap Mishra, a key member of the Sri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra trust and a scion of Ayodhya's erstwhile royal family, died of cardiac arrest at his house in Ayodhya late Saturday night. He was 71.

Members of Mishra's family said he had been unwell and passed away at his residence, Rajasdan, in Ayodhya, around 11 pm. The news of his death was shared early Sunday morning, leading to a large crowd gathering at the residence. His last rites were scheduled to be performed Sunday evening along the banks of the Saryu river.

Popularly known as 'Raja Ayodhya' and 'Pappu Bhaiya' among people of Ayodhya, Mishra, a soft-spoken and man of few words, despite his family's close association with Ram Janma Bhoomi, remained neutral and equally regarded by both sides of the Ram Janma Bhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute. He played a significant role in planning and construction of the Ram Temple.

In 2020, after the SC verdict on the Ram Janma Bhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute, the charge of the site was handed over to him by M P Agarwal, then division commissioner of Faizabad MP, who was acting as ex officio "receiver" of the makshesh temple and the site for almost three decades.

In 2009, BSP chief Mayawati convinced him to contest the Lok Sabha election as BSP candidate from Faizabad after the sitting MP had shifted allegiance and contested as an SP candidate.

Pak woman name in Bihar voter list, came to India 7 decades ago

HIMANSHU HARSH

PATNA, AUGUST 24

A PAKISTANI woman who allegedly entered India nearly seven decades ago has been identified on the draft electoral roll in Bihar's Bhagalpur amid the ongoing Special Intensive Revision, prompting an official inquiry and steps for her removal from the voter list.

The development emerged following a verification drive initiated by the Ministry of Home Affairs to identify foreign nationals residing in India beyond the validity of their visas. Officials said that the name of the woman not only appeared in the state's voter list but had also been verified through the SIR process.

The Booth Level Officer (BLO) concerned, who handled the verification process, said she was notified by the election department based on a formal commun-

ication received by the Home Ministry on August 11.

"I received a letter from the department containing her passport and visa details, which confirmed her Pakistani nationality. Her passport was issued in Rangpur in 1956, and her associated visa date back to 1958," she said.

The BLO added that based on the instructions, she checked the information and found her name in the draft roll. "The woman appeared to be in poor health and was unable to engage in conversation during the verification.

Following orders, I completed the necessary formalities and verification, and submitted Form 7 to initiate the deletion of her name from the voter roll."

District Magistrate of Bhagalpur, Dr Naval Kishor Chaudhary, confirmed the action and said that a formal investigation is in progress. "As per the information available, her name was found in the electoral roll.

JATIN ANAND

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 24

INDIAN UNION Muslim League (IUML) on Sunday organised an event in Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium to mark the opening of its national headquarters — Quaid-e-Millath Centre — in Daryaganj. The event was attended by Congress general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal, former Union minister Kapil Sibal, IUML's elected representatives from Kerala and supporters from across states.

Wayanad Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who was expected to attend the event but couldn't due to health reasons, sent a message for the gathering, hailing the party's biggest ally in Kerala for standing "steadfastly for the values of harmony, unity, freedom and justice enshrined in the Constitution of India".

On the draft roll published on August 1, about 65 lakh names were excluded, which the electoral body had said were dead (22,34,501), shifted or absent (36,28,210), or already enrolled (7,01,364).

In her message, she said pro-

tection of the rights of all Indians had been the basis of the Congress and IUML's shared political journey both in Kerala and at the national level, and accused the BJP of having undertaken "the systematic destruction of our institutions".

IUML Public Affairs Committee chief Sadik Ali Shihab Thangal said the new office had been envisioned as a "hub of sec-

ular engagements". He sought to draw international intervention in alleviating the crisis in Palestine.

IUML president Kader Mohideen and other leaders felicitate organisation's Public Affairs Committee chairman Sadik Ali Shihab Thangal in Delhi on Sunday. X@iumlkeralastate

seat Kerala Assembly and five MPs — three in the Lok Sabha and two in the Rajya Sabha.

In his keynote address, Sibal accused the BJP-led NDA government of trying to disenfranchise the poor of the country, accusing it of weaponising the country's institutions. "The battle is still on... it has started from Bihar and will reach each state of this country and... opposition parties must stand up for the Constitution of India, that is the only way this country will survive... the only way we can rid it (the country) of this toxic rule," he said.

Praising the IUML for fighting for socialism and minority rights, Venugopal accused the Modi government of having "stolen the 2024 Lok Sabha elections". "They have power... they are trying to divide the people, target the people... see the legislations passed by Parliament — all are targeting communities," he said, the Waqf Amendment Act.

IUML has 15 MLAs in the 140-



ALL INDIA SPEAKERS' CONFERENCE

Ponder over tradition of stalling House for political gains: Shah

DEVANSH MITTAL
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 24

DAYS AFTER the conclusion of the Parliament's Monsoon Session, which saw frequent disruptions amid Opposition protests, Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said that the country will have to rethink the tradition of using protests as an excuse to stall legislative functioning. In his inaugural address at the All India Speakers' Conference in the Delhi Legislative Assembly on Sunday, he said when there is limited debate or discussion in Parliament, the contribution of the House in nation-building gets affected.

The conference is being organised to mark the centenary of Vitthalbhai Patel becoming the first elected Indian Speaker of the Central Legislative Council.

Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Kiren Rijiju, Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena, CM Rekha Gupta, Speaker Vijender Gupta, along with Speakers, Deputy Speakers and Chairpersons of State Legislative Assemblies and Legislative



Union Home Minister Amit Shah with Delhi Lt Governor VK Saxena and Chief Minister Rekha Gupta at the Delhi Legislative Assembly, in New Delhi, Sunday. Amit Mehra

Councils were present.

A special postal stamp dedicated to the life and parliamentary contributions of Vitthalbhai Patel was also released.

Shah said nobody should be allowed to hold Parliament and Legislative Assemblies hostage for political gains. "That's not debate... symbolic protests have their place but using protests as an excuse to stop the House from functioning for days... or entire session... the

country has to ponder over it, the people have to ponder over it, and elected representatives have to ponder over it," he said.

"Whenever Assemblies have lost their dignity, we have had to bear very bad consequences. When the Assembly of Hastinapur lost its dignity because it did not stand up to a woman's honour, the Mahabharata happened. The dignity of Assemblies should be a

way for the people's voice to become the voice of the state, for the benefit of the country," he said.

Shah said the contribution of Vitthalbhai, who was the brother of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, got overshadowed over the years. "If the freedom struggle of the country was important, then running the country and establishing legislative procedures are equally important. Vitthalbhai Patel played an important role in establishing and strengthening democracy even during difficult days," he said.

Recounting an incident from Patel's life, Shah pointed out how he never let the honour of the Speaker's position fall. "The Viceroy had come to the Assembly... when it was suggested that when the viceroy addresses the House, there would be only one chair for him and all other members would have to sit on the floor. Vitthalbhai put his foot down, saying that it would be better if he didn't come as the Speaker's Chair has some dignity, and it should be put beside that of the Viceroy's. The result was that the English government had to agree to this," Shah said.

DYFI's food parcel dig at Mamkoottathil after he quit as Youth Cong chief amid allegations

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG 24



Palakkad MLA was accused of misconduct

THE DEMOCRATIC Youth Federation of India (DYFI) has used its hospital food parcel initiative, which was once criticised by Congress MLA Rahul Mamkoottathil, to take a dig at the legislator in the wake of allegations of misconduct raised by women against him.

Mamkoottathil last week resigned as the state president of the Youth Congress, a day after actor Rini Ann George accused a "young politician" of sending her obscene messages and inviting her to a hotel room. She had not named him, but subsequently other women came out and made similar allegations against the MLA. Mamkoottathil remains a Congress legislator.

The day after his resignation, the DYFI, the CPI(M)'s youth wing, packed their daily "pothichoru"—food parcels that the group distributes to patients and bystanders at 61 government hospitals across Kerala — with newspaper pages on which his resignation news was printed.

In 2023, Mamkoottathil had alleged that the DYFI was engaged in illegal activities under the cover of distributing the food parcels. He had also taken strong exception to leaders of his own party praising the DYFI initiative, which completed eight years in 2024.

DYFI state president V Vaseef said the decision to cover the food packets with these newspaper pages was a spontaneous one. Currently, the DYFI distributes 40,000 to 50,000 food parcels in 61 government hospitals, including government medical colleges, where people queue up for the parcels day after day.

MLA apologises to party workers for having to defend him

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PATHANAMTHITTA, AUG 24

Palakkad Congress MLA Rahul Mamkoottathil on Sunday apologised to the public and party workers amid rumours that he may resign from his legislator post following allegations of misconduct by multiple women.

Addressing reporters at his residence in Adoor, Pathanamthitta, he played an audio clip sent to him by a transgender person, who had recently accused him of sending "lewd" WhatsApp messages.

"I never wished that any party worker would bow their head to justify me. I have to face this situation as I have always justified the party's merits on news platforms... and during protests. But it is unacceptable to me that my party workers have to bow their heads due to me," he said.

Mamkoottathil claimed that the transgender person had contacted him and spoken about a conversation she had with a reporter. In the recording, a voice purportedly belonging to the transgender is heard denying any misbehavior from Mamkoottathil and describing him as a good friend.

Admission and Fee Regulatory Committee, Haryana
SCO-38-39, Sector-17 A, Chandigarh
Phone No. 0172-2703839, E-mail ID
haryanasfc@gmail.com

NOTICE

The fee proposal for B.Pharmacy course for the academic session 2025-26 submitted by Gandhi College of Pharmacy, Karnal is being considered by the committee:-

As per section 17(2) of Haryana Private Technical Educational Institution (Regulation of Admission and Fee) Act, 2012, notice is required to be given to the Technical Educational Institutions, Parents or guardians and representatives of the students already studying therein to express their view point in writing with respect to the determination of fee within 3 weeks of publication of this notice. For reference to analysis report submitted by the Chartered Accountant (Member) of the Committee please visit the website of this committee www.afchry.techeduhry.gov.in or on the website of the concerned institutes. For any other information contact numbers given in the website of the committee may be called. For personal hearing in the matter, interested person or party may appear in the office of the committee on 16.09.2025 at 11.30 A.M. If any institute, parents or guardian or representative of students wish to appear for personal hearing before 16.09.2025 at 11.30 A.M., they may seek appointment from Mrs. Kanchan Saini, Deputy Director, AF&RC on her mobile number 9416109284 or from any other officials whose phone/mobile numbers are available on website www.afchry.techeduhry.gov.in

Director General,
Technical Education Haryana,
Member Secretary (ex officio)

NO. 37959/HRY

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25.08.2025 से 08.09.2025

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GOVT & POLITICS 7

PM: In current volatility, best way forward is self-reliance

'Selling indigenous goods also patriotism, not just Op Sindoor'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
AHMEDABAD, AUGUST 24

IN THE current global volatility, the best way forward for India is to become self-reliant, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday as he called upon people to buy only indigenous goods and ensure that the rupee does not 'go out'.

While virtually addressing a gathering of Sardardham, a voluntary organisation of Patidar community in Ahmedabad, to inaugurate a girls' hostel, Modi said that in his recent speech on the Independence Day, he laid emphasis on Swadeshi (indigenous).

"In the current global volatility, the best way forward for India is to be Atmanirbhar (self-reliant). The meaning of Atmanirbhar Bharat is to insist on Swadeshi things. Our enthusiasm for Make in India should

be increased. The Swadeshi Andolan is not a 100-year-old andolan (movement). It is an andolan that will strengthen our future. And we have to provide leadership to it, our young boys and girls have to provide it. It should be decided that we will not bring a single foreign thing in our home," Modi said.

"Our success and strength lies in Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India. The future of our coming generations has to be secured in it... And once we start buying Indian things, its quality will certainly change gradually. Because everyone wants to last in the market and for that everyone will manufacture good (material), will do good packaging and sell it at cheaper rates. And therefore now, we can't afford that our rupee goes out (abroad)," he added.

Modi told the gathering that he was sure that all of them will do the task given by him and strengthen the country.

Addressing the traders' community, he said, "It is my request to traders as well. Now, our society has not remained one of farmers, it is also of traders. Let us put a board that says 'Only Swadeshi goods are being sold in my shop. Those who want to buy Swadeshi, come to my shop.' We should sell only indigenous goods. This too is patriotism. Operation Sindoor alone is not patriotism. This too is patriotism."

In his speech, PM Modi also recollects the initiatives of Gujarat government under him for welfare and education of girls in the state.

The PM had made an un-scheduled address at the event, which was also attended virtually by Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah after inaugurating the hostel building.

CISF to have all-woman commando team

New Delhi: The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has decided to create an all-women commando team for conducting specialised counter-terrorist operations, officials said on Sunday.

A group of 100 female personnel deployed across the country as part of the aviation security group (ASG) guarding civilian airports are the first to be trained for the task. The about 1.70 lakh-strength CISF is primarily tasked to guard 69 civil airports, the Delhi Metro and a number of other vital installations in the government and private domain.

"The training for the first batch of the women personnel in commando skills has been started at a training centre located in Barwaha, Madhya Pradesh... This eight-week advanced commando course will prepare women personnel for quick reaction team (QRT) and special task force (STF) duties at high-security establishments and plants," a CISF official said.

PTI



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Pune hospital gets Health Dept notice over liver transplant deaths

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PUNE, AUGUST 24

THE DEPUTY Director of Health, Pune circle, Sunday issued a notice to Sahyadri Hospitals in connection with the liver transplant surgery where both a donor woman and her recipient husband died.

Dr Nagnath Yempalle, District Civil Surgeon, who holds additional charge of Deputy Director of Health, Pune circle, told *The Indian Express* that they had taken cognisance of the tragic incident and issued a notice to the hospital. "We have asked the hospital to provide details of the entire incident by Monday," Yempalle said.

Kamini Kaomkar, 42, a resident of Hadapsar had donated a part of her liver to her husband Bapu Balkrishna Koamkar, 49, on August 15.

Bapu Koamkar, however, died on August 17 after the liver transplant operation. Kamini who had initially recovered well after donating part of her liver, according to Sahyadri hospital authorities, had however developed hypotensive shock and multi organ dysfunction which could not be controlled even with advanced treatment.

DC overturns 2023 order to lift stay on sale of Panchkula land

SUKHBIR SIWACH
CHANDIGARH, AUGUST 24

AMBALA DIVISIONAL Commissioner Sanjeev Verma has overturned a controversial order issued in 2023 by the then Divisional Commissioner Renu Phulia. The order had lifted a more than two-decade-old stay on the sale and purchase of a 14-acre land parcel near Panchkula, originally belonging to an erstwhile king.

Phulia had then decided on a petition — filed by Prithvi Raj Chhabra, brother of former additional chief secretary Shashi Gulati — in just 15 days. Within a few months of her order, her husband and state information commissioner SS Phulia, and son Nilanchal had decided to buy five acres of the said land. Both Phulia and her husband have since retired.

In his quasi-judicial order dated August 19, Verma said: "...from the material placed on record on behalf of state it is clear that the then I&D Presiding Officer (Renu Phulia) had personal interest in the matter and had already entered into an agreement to purchase the aforesaid land from the petitioners on June 20, 2023 whereas the present petition has been filed on August 28, 2023..."

Jharkhand ex-CM Champai on house arrest ahead of tribal groups' protest

SHUBHAM TIGGA
RANCHI, AUGUST 24

FORMER JHARKHAND chief minister Champai Soren was placed under house arrest on Sunday morning, hours before he was scheduled to join Adivasi groups in their 'Hal Chalo Ropa Ropo' protest against land acquisition for the proposed RIMS-2 hospital in Ranchi.

The information regarding the arrest was shared by Champai Soren through social media. "To prevent the voice of the tribal/in-

ISRO SUCCESSFULLY TESTS PARACHUTE SYSTEMS

Major leap for Gaganyaan mission as crew module passes key re-entry test

ANONNA DUTT
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 24

IN A major milestone for the Gaganyaan human spaceflight mission, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Sunday successfully completed an Integrated Air Drop Test, simulating the re-entry of the crew module, deployment of all parachutes, and recovery of the crew module.

For the test, a Chinook helicopter carried the dummy crew module to a height of around 3 km — 40 km off the seacoast — from Sriharikota, the country's only spaceport.

Three main parachutes were deployed to slow down the crew module before it hit the sea. "It was a very successful test. All the parachutes worked as expected and the velocity was reduced to limits safe for human beings. The module was recovered by the Navy and handed over to us in Chennai," said ISRO Chairperson V Narayanan. The same crew module will be reused for other tests as well.

The space agency plans to launch the first uncrewed mission of the Gaganyaan programme by the end of this year, with the first crewed flight scheduled for late 2027. The government has so far approved eight flights under the Gaganyaan mission, two crewed and six uncrewed. One of the six uncrewed missions will also carry the first module of the Bharatiya Antariksha Station.

The crew module for the actual flights under Gaganyaan mission will consist of a 10-parachute system. First to open will be two Apex Cover Separation Parachutes that are meant to protect and clear the parachute compartment before the deployment of the others. This will be followed by the opening of two drogue parachutes that are meant to stabilise and bring down the velocity of the crew module. After that, three pilot chutes would be used to extract the three main parachutes that would be needed for the final splashdown.

Two of the three main parachutes are sufficient to ensure a safe landing of the astronauts.

The test carried out on Sunday was not only to check the deployment of the drogue, pilot, and main parachutes but for the coordination between four key organisations — ISRO that will undertake the Gaganyaan mission, DRDO that designed the parachute system, the Indian Air Force that provided the Chinook helicopter for the drop test, and the Indian Navy that recovered the module. The Navy will undertake the recovery operations for the final Gaganyaan flights as well.



(Clockwise from top left) The dummy crew module at Sriharikota; a Chinook helicopter carries the module 40 km off the coast; parachutes deploy as it is dropped from a height of 3 km. PTI

Gaganyaan mission new chapter for Atmanirbhar Bharat: Rajnath

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 24

DEFENCE MINISTER Rajnath Singh on Sunday said the Gaganyaan mission symbolises a "new chapter" in the journey of Atmanirbhar Bharat and called astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla and the other three Gaganyaatris the pioneers of national aspirations.

At an event hosted by the IAF in New Delhi, Singh felicitated the four Gaganyaatris. The ceremony comes after the Axion 4 mission, in which Shukla was a member and represented India.

"We do not see space only as a field of research, but as the future of tomorrow's economy, security, energy, and humanity," Singh said. He said India is steadily advancing into "new frontiers of space".

"We've already marked our



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan and Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal AP Singh with Gaganyaatris Prasanth Nair, Ajith Krishnan, Angad Pratap and Shubhanshu Shukla in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

presence from Moon to Mars, and today, the nation stands fully prepared for missions like Gaganyaan," Singh said.

He termed the achievement as

not merely a technological milestone, but "a new chapter in Atmanirbhar Bharat when we are proudly standing tall among the world's leading space powers".

'Hanuman ji first to go to space': Thakur to schoolkids

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, AUGUST 24

SENIOR BJP leader and former Union minister Anurag Thakur on Saturday told students at an event in Una in Himachal Pradesh that Lord Hanuman could be considered the "first to travel in space".

The Hamirpur MP was speaking at Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya in Una on National Space Day on Saturday. Thakur later shared a video on X with the caption: "Pavansut Hanuman ji...the first astronaut." Thakur is heard asking students who was the first man to go to the space. Students were replied with several names, including Neil Armstrong, Soviet Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin was the first person to go to space.

The chargesheet stated that Mishra recorded videos of the woman on June 25, the day of the alleged rape incident, and blackmailed her by forwarding the videos to a friend. He also

and two students, Zaib Ahmed (19) and Pramit Mukherjee (20) — in the 658-page chargesheet.

All four accused are in judicial custody. According to the chargesheet, obscene videos of the student, who is in her early 20s, were recovered from the mobile phones of Mishra, Ahmed and Mukherjee.

The chargesheet stated that the woman's statements were supported by CCTV footage and telephone tower location data, which confirmed her presence and that of the accused.

The other two accused,

Reet Punjapuri par abhyayan ke bina nadhi tal khann ki anumati nahi: suptim kort

जम्मू-कश्मीर राजमार्ग परियोजना पर फैसला आया, जो पहले ही पूरी हो चुकी है

इ. पुनर्पूर्ति की दर

सत्र रेत खनन प्रबंधन विभाग, 2020 और रेत खनन के लिए प्रवर्तन पर नियमीय अधिकारी नहीं ही जा सकती, जो तक कि यह अकालन करने के लिए उचित वैधिक अधिकार न किया जाए कि रेत किसी जलदी प्राकृतिक रूप से प्रतिसाधित होती है।

नाशालय ने इस "पुनर्पूर्ति अध्ययन" को अनिवार्य आवश्यकता बताया तथा राष्ट्रीय हाईकोर्ट अधिकारी (एनजीआई) के उस आदेश को बरकरार रखा, जिसमें जम्मू-कश्मीर, भारतीय राष्ट्रीय राजमार्ग प्राचिकरण (एनएचएआई) और परियोजना प्रसाराकारकों द्वारा दायर अप्रैली की काटाई की अवश्यकता है।

न्यायपूर्ति परिवर्द्धन अध्ययन की अनिवार्य आवश्यकता अन्तर्गत अन्यसभा और नाशालय ने इस प्रतिसाधित रूप से प्रतिसाधित करने के लिए उचित वैधिक दोषी रह गई थी।

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Man kills sister's 'harasser' with knife she used to cut birthday cake

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
Bhopal, August 24

A 21-year-old and his friends took the knife that his sister used to cut her birthday cake and allegedly killed a man, accusing him of harassing her police in Madhya Pradesh's Guna district said.

POLICE said on Saturday that eight accused have been identified on the basis of CCTV footage and other technical intelligence. They have all been arrested.

According to a police officer, the main accused, identified as Abhishek Tinga, killed Anil, who "was in frequent contact with his sister and had made inappropriate advances".

Anil had purportedly told Abhishek's sister that he would give her gold and silver jewellery if she married him, police said. When the sister told her brother about the matter, he allegedly decided to kill Anil, said SP Ankit Soni. Abhishek allegedly considered Anil's actions obscene and disrespectful, and hatched a plan with his friends. "They ordered five knives online as a part of their plan and began tracking the victim's movements," the officer said.

Speaking to reporters outside the police station, Abhishek said, "I had to take action. My sister is young and was being harassed. He used obscene language to speak to her. I could not sit silently."

On Friday, when Anil was drinking at a nearby locality, Abhishek was tipped off, following which he turned up with his friends, surrounded him and killed him with a knife.

Fresh conversion FIR filed against Chhangur Baba

Lucknow: Around a month after the Anti Terrorism Squad (ATS) of UP Police arrested 65-year-old Jamaluddin alias Chhangur Baba for running an anti-conversion racket, Kushinagar police have lodged a fresh case against him and 13 others. While Chhangur Baba and his associate Neetu alias Nasreen, have been booked under the anti-conversion law, the others have been accused of rape and wrongful confinement.

Chhangur Baba, a resident of Balarampur, is currently in jail.

POLICE said the fresh case was lodged after a woman, who belongs to the Hindu community, alleged that she was sexually assaulted over a span of seven years – 2017 to 2024. She alleged that one of those who raped her took her to Chhangur Baba, who forcefully converted her to Islam before marrying off to a Muslim man.

"The medical examination of the victim and her statement before a magistrate are yet to be conducted, and no arrests have been made so far in the case," the local station officer said, adding that the alleged offences occurred over eight years, from 2017 to 2025.

ENS

ASI's work North-focused, need to find more proof of habitats in South: Keeladi archaeologist

FROM PAGE ONE

all revealed evidence of burial sites. But we needed to ask an important question: who created these burials? Burial sites are evidence only of the final rituals carried out by people – they don't tell the story of how they lived. It's this that we tried to find in Keeladi," Ramakrishna told *The Indian Express* at his NMMA office.

After a year spent exploring 293 sites on both banks of the Vaigai river, the team led by Ramakrishna, then the ASI Superintending Archaeologist, zeroed in on Keeladi, a village near Madurai, where they carried out two seasons of excavations between 2014 and 2016. Here, on a mound "protected by a coconut grove" for 40 years, the team found evidence of "pure habitation" – a large number of burnt brick structures. "It was for the first time in Tamil Nadu, after Arikamedu, that we had found such structures. All of this pointed to the existence of a sophisticated urban society in Keeladi," he says.

In his report, which he submitted in 2023, Ramakrishna proposed that the earliest evidence of life in Keeladi could be dated to between the 8th and 5th Century BCE. If true, Keeladi would have been a contemporary of some of the urban sites in the Gangetic

FOUR MONTHS SINCE SEVIS ACTION, STUDENTS FACE STALLED CAREERS, MOUNTING DEBT AND NO CLEAR PATH BACK

'Never felt more stuck': Indian students in US visa limbo

VIDHEESA KUNTAMALLA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 24

THEY HAD picked a wedding date. His H-1B lottery selection had come through. A 27-year-old MBA graduate from Monroe College, New York, was weeks away from becoming both a husband and a full-time U.S. employee on a work visa.

Then, in April, a notice landed in his inbox: his SEVIS – the Student Exchange Visitor Information System, a U.S. federal database that governs the legal status of international students – had been "terminated". His F-1 visa was revoked, and he was considered out of status and at risk of deportation. "I panicked. Everyone online was saying ICE was detaining people. So I left," he said.

Many of those whose F-1 visas were revoked are still stuck in India, four months after they left the U.S. in a hurry. Now, they grapple with the uncertainty of whether they will be allowed back at all.



US ICE agents demonstrate a raid. AP/file

50% of the 327 international students whose F-1 visas were revoked in recent months are Indians

3.31 LAKH Indians enrolled in the US in 2023-24. They form the largest cohort of international students (29% of the total)

6,000 student visas revoked by US State Department this year.

4,000 of the revocations were for law violations like assault, DUI, burglary and support for terrorism; 200-300 visas were revoked over terrorism.

plication, despite fears of rejection. But many are simply waiting.

A 25-year-old from Telangana who was pursuing a Master's degree in Texas came back to India on April 19, after his SEVIS was terminated following a misunderstanding with a roommate that led to a police complaint. The case was never filed, but fear pushed him to leave.

"Then my SEVIS came back. I saw it on the portal," he said. "But my visa is still revoked. I was doing my internship in a consultancy firm and was hopeful of getting a job there but my contract had to be terminated."

A 26-year-old graduate of Cleveland State University who was working on OPT left the US in April after her visa was revoked due to a shoplifting case from 2022 that had already been dismissed. Her SEVIS was reinstated by late April. "My family took a loan for my education in the US and the only way in which I could pay that off was by getting a job there. For now, nothing is clear, I don't even know what steps to take next," she said.

The reinstatements began in late April. Houston-based immigration lawyer Rahul Reddy, who is in touch with over 200 affected students, earlier told *The Indian Express* that they're the result of growing legal pressure, "not a change in US government attitude". Some students are writing emails to DSOs, others are trying to get embassy appointment dates. A few are preparing to reapply for a fresh

visa. Many are quietly working on backup plans in India, hoping to transfer the value of their US degrees into a new context.

But for others, Plan B doesn't exist yet. "My whole plan was to stay in the US, build a career, get married, settle down," said the Monroe College graduate. "Now I'm 27, jobless, and explaining visa law to my relatives at family functions. What do I even say? I've never felt more stuck in my life."



A flooded road in Jaipur on Sunday. Rohit Jain Paras

After videos of 'copying', leak claims, J&K exam cancelled over 'weather'

JKSSB says exam cancelled as it could not be held at 1 centre due to weather

BASHAARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, AUGUST 24

THE JAMMU and Kashmir Service Selection Board (JKSSB) has cancelled the recruitment examination for junior engineers, saying the test could not be held at one of the 35 centres due to bad weather.

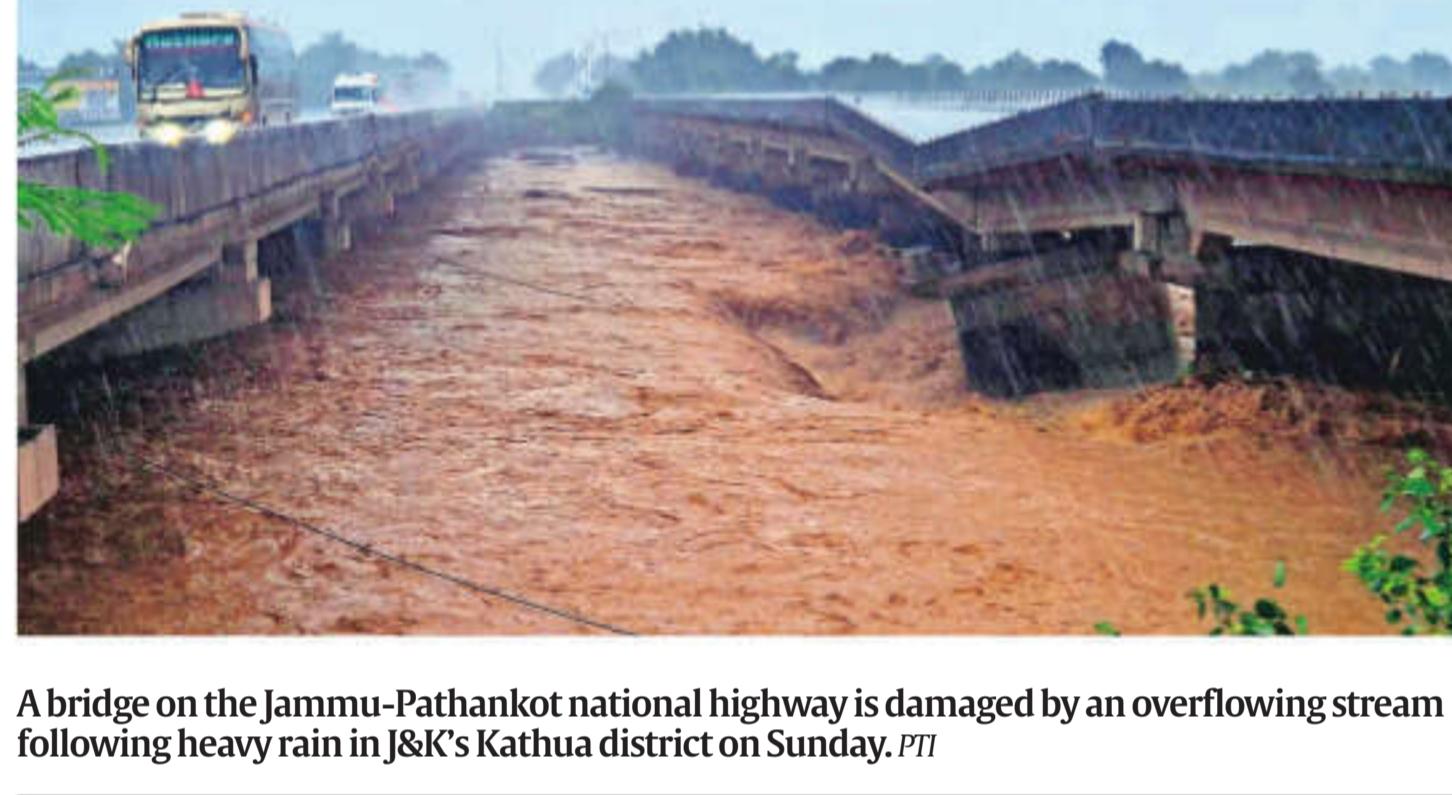
The decision came after allegations emerged that question papers were available on social media even before the exams started, and videos purportedly showing mass copying went viral.

The Selection Board said the exam for Junior Engineers (Electrical) was scheduled for 11 am Sunday at 35 centres in Srinagar and Jammu districts, but had been postponed to noon due to the weather, before being cancelled.

People's Democratic Party leader and legislator Waheed Para said the "sale of exam papers" is a blow to the youth of Jammu and Kashmir. "Students are seen openly trying to solve problems, yet after banning books and locking schools, the government's sale of exam papers is another blow to J&K's youth," he said.

People's Conference president Sajad Lone said on X: "We have finally made it. We are top of the charts. This is nothing short of brazen daylight robbery in recruitment."

The JKSSB has been under fire for the last three years after a series of scams, paper leaks and irregularities in recruitment exams surfaced.



A bridge on the Jammu-Patankot national highway is damaged by an overflowing stream following heavy rain in J&K's Kathua district on Sunday. PTI

Heavy rain in J&K; class 10, 11 exams cancelled, schools closed, traffic hit

ARUN SHARMA
JAMMU, AUGUST 24

HEAVY RAIN threw normal life out of gear across Jammu & Kashmir on Sunday, causing floods and disrupting traffic at various places, including the Jammu-Patankot national highway, and forcing authorities to cancel class 10 and 11 exams that were to be held on Monday.

The weather also forced Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to cancel his visit to Chishot village in Kishtwar district's Paddar area, where 65 people were killed following a cloudburst on August 14.

Though the Jammu-Srinagar national highway was open for vehicular traffic despite rain and

Meanwhile, traffic on National Highway-44 between Kathua and Samba was disrupted following extensive damage to a bridge due to a flash flood in Sehar Khad.

Officials said that all heavy vehicles, including trucks and passenger buses, were plying only up to Kathua town from the Punjab side and up to Samba from the Jammu side. A few light vehicles were, however, plying between Kathua and Jammu via a small alternate bridge in a border area in the district.

In 24 hours, Jammu City recorded 190.4 mm of rain, the second-highest in a century.

Udhampur recorded 144.2 mm of rainfall, followed by 115 mm in Reasi district's Katra town, the base camp for Vaishno Devi pilgrims.

The heavy rain led to the overflowing of streams and nullahs across the province.

HAMZA KHAN
JAIPUR, AUGUST 24

HEAVY RAIN continued to wreak havoc in parts of Rajasthan with at least 11 people being reported dead in rain-related incidents over the weekend with authorities rescuing hundreds in the rain-affected areas.

An Orange Alert was issued for several districts Sunday, including for Ajmer, Bhilwara, Sikar, Sirohi, Jalore, Nagaur, and Pali, while 18 districts were on Yellow or 'Be Aware' (Be Updated) mode. However, as per the Jaipur Meteorological Centre, the situation is set to improve in the coming days with all districts expected to go back to Green or 'No Warning' by Thursday. Including Jaipur, schools have been shut in about 20 districts for one to three days.

In Nagaur, a dilapidated house collapsed due to heavy rainfall, killing two persons. In Jhalawar, a car drowned in Kali Sindh River, killing two persons while two others who were in the car are still missing. In Udaipur, four children aged 14 to 10 drowned in a flooded mine on Sunday.

In Bhilwara, rescuers retrieved the body of a 17-year-old

on Sunday. The boy was reported missing in Mandalgarh's Govta Dam on Friday after he had slipped while taking a selfie.

In Bundi, two women died in separate incidents - while a 50-year-old was swept away in floods, a 65-year-old died after a wall of her home collapsed due to rains.

Kota, Bundi and Sawai Madhopur are among the worst hit following incessant rains over the past 2-3 days. In Sawai Madhopur, several villages have been cut off from the district headquarters following heavy rainfall which has flooded or damaged several access roads. A truck carrying SDRF personnel also toppled in Sawai Madhopur, leading to one person being stuck underneath, although he was immediately rescued.

In Sawai Madhopur, MLA Kirodi Lal Meena, who is also the Cabinet minister for Disaster Management and Relief and Civil Defense, took stock of the flood-affected areas on Saturday.

In Kota, Lok Sabha Speaker and local MP Om Birla visited the flood-affected areas on Friday and Saturday. In Bundi, the army has joined the rescue efforts. Here, the state highway has sustained severe damage from the rain.

Hyderabad man kills pregnant wife, chops body, throws into river

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
HYDERABAD, AUGUST 24

A FIVE-MONTH pregnant woman was allegedly murdered by her husband, who chopped up her body at their house in Medipally near Hyderabad and threw the parts into the Musi river, police said on Sunday.

The 27-year-old accused, a driver with a ride hailing company, allegedly strangled the 21-year-old woman on Saturday.

Police said they frequently quarreled over family disputes.

To conceal the evidence, he chopped up the body using a hexa blade, disposed of some parts by throwing them into the Musi river at Prathapsingaram, and kept other parts in his room, DCP (Malkajgiri Zone) P V Padmaja told reporters.

The accused packed the body parts separately in small plastic covers and went to the river three times to throw the pieces, the DCP said.

Later, the accused called his

sister informing that his wife went missing, who then raised suspicion and informed a relative, who took him to a police station. He again tried to portray the murder as a missing incident, but during questioning he confessed of killing his wife, Padmaja said.

Based on his confession, a case under relevant BNS sections on charges of murder and causing disappearance of evidence of offence was registered and the accused was taken into custody, she said. Some body parts were found in the house and sent for post-mortem, she said, adding "We have to ascertain the deceased (is wife of the accused) and a DNA test will be conducted".

The police official said personnel of NDRF besides swimmers of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), carried out searches, but so far they did not find the body parts.

The accused and the victim, both natives of Vikarabad district, who were neighbours, were married in January 2024 at Arya Samaj here, police said.



The upcoming Navi Mumbai airport. Narendra Vaskar

runway visual range (RVR) of 550 metres for landings. Although CSMIA allows Low Visibility Take Offs (LVTO) at 400 metres RVR, poor conditions often force diversions to other cities. NMIA's setup will ensure an aircraft can continue operations without rerouting, reducing inconvienence for passengers and airlines alike.

The airport will use a Category II Instrument Landing System (ILS), which allows pilots to make safe landings when conditions are poor due to fog, heavy rain, or other weather conditions. The system operates by offering aircraft on the final approach precise lateral and vertical guidance, enabling landings at visibility levels as low as 300 metres, said Prabhat Mahapatra, Chief Operating Officer, NMIA.

This is an important improvement for Mumbai, where the existing CSMIA requires a minimum

which is essential for safe and predictable landings during poor visibility conditions.

The decision to align the runway with a three-degree glide path was taken keeping international practices in mind, ensuring compatibility with pilot training standards across the world.

Along with the ILS is a Category II approved Precision Approach Lighting System. This lighting aids pilots in aligning the aircraft properly to the runway at the final approach to landing. The lighting pattern is easily seen even in adverse weather.

The DCP (Malkajgiri Zone) P V Padmaja told reporters.

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ASI's work North-focused, need to find more proof of habitats in South: Keeladi archaeologist

FROM PAGE ONE

plains – a proposition strong enough to shake up history, and politics.

"It was for the first time that such a big excavation had happened in the South. It showed that the second urbanisation – or the emergence of urban centres around 6th Century BCE, after the decline of the Indus Valley Civilisation – happened in the South too. Early and late Sangam literature (the earliest body of Tamil texts, roughly dated to 3rd century BCE) talks about human activities. These didn't exist in a state of vacuum," he says.

Ramakrishna said the team led by ASI archaeologist P Sriraman, who ruled out anything of significance at Keeladi. This led to a political uproar that the Centre was working to downplay Keeladi's – and thereby Tamil Nadu's – antiquity. With the High Court taking over the matter, Ramakrishna was directed to complete his report and the Tamil Nadu archeology department was permitted to carry out further excavations.

At the end of two seasons of excavations, 2017-18 and 2018-19, the state team reported the findings of antiquities such as pieces

of gold ornaments, iron implements and terracotta ring wells, and published a report pegging Keeladi as an urban settlement going as far back as 6th century BCE or even earlier.

In 2023, two years after Ramakrishna finally submitted his report, after a prodding from the court, the ASI asked him to revise it.

"I refused. I stand by my report and my findings. Keeladi offers evidence that all cultures developed independently. But so far, we have only excavated 2 per cent of the mound. There's much more that lies buried in Keeladi," he says, while saying more explorations and excavations needed to be carried out in the South.

The ASI has six Excavation Branches – Delhi, Nagpur, Baroda, Patna, Bhubaneswar and Mysuru – which are mandated to carry out archaeological exploration and excavation works.

The ASI's work has been

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THE INDIAN EXPRESS, MONDAY, AUGUST 25, 2025

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

उर्वरक क्षेत्र को नियंत्रणमुक्त करने का समय आ गया है

Reduced fertiliser availability in a bountiful monsoon year is hurting farmers. Excessive controls are stifling fertiliser industry

भारतीय विसानों को लगातार दूसरे साल अच्छे मानसून का आशीर्वाद मिला है। इसमें कोई आपूर्ति की बात नहीं है जिसे उन्होंने चानू खुरीपा फलाने के मौसम का चाला और मरका की बुवाई के रखने में उल्लेखीय वृद्धि करने का जबाब दिया है। हालांकि, उर्वरक उर्वरक तथा में उत्पत्ति उनका उत्साह हुआ है। फसलों को पैधाएं की अच्छी वृद्धि और अनाज की पैदावार के लिए पानी और पोषक तत्वों की आवश्यकता होती है। इस बारे, समय पर और अच्छी तरह से वितरित वार्षिक से बढ़ी हुई मांग को पूरा करने के लिए न केवल आपूर्ति अपर्याप्त रही है, बल्कि 1 अंगत की यूरिया का स्टॉक भी एक साल पहले की तुलना में लगभग 57 प्रतिशत कम था। पिछले कुछ वर्षों में डाइ-अमोनियम फॉर्मफेट (डीएपी) की कमी देखी गई थी। इस वर्ष, यूरिया और मिश्रित उर्वरकों की भी कमी है, ऐसी खबरें हैं कि विसान खुदरा दुकानों के सामने घंटों काटार में खड़े रहे और फिर भी अपनी न्यूनतम आवश्यकता के अनुसार बैग भी नहीं जुटा पाए।

इस स्थिति के लिए मुख्य रूप से चीन की दोषी ठहराया गया है, जिसने 2023-24 में भारत के कुल 80.1 लीटर यूरिया और 56 लीटर डीएपी आवश्यकता में से क्रमशः 21.5 लाख टन और 22.9 लीटर की आपूर्ति की। यूंकि 2024-25 में चीन से आयात घटकर यूरिया का सिर्फ 1 लीटर और डीएपी का 8.4 लीटर रह गया और इस वितरण में अब तक शादी ही की शिपमेंट हुआ है, इससे रस्टॉक में काफी कमी आई है। लेकिन बहाने सरकार भी समान रूप से देती है। इसने शेयर उच्च मांग का अनुमान नहीं लगाया, खासकर यूरिया के लिए। इस सीनियर में आचारक का रक्कान क्रमशः 9.8 प्रतिशत और 11.8 प्रतिशत बढ़ा है। दोनों ही उच्च नाइट्रोजन की मांग वाली फसलें हैं, दोनों या सोयाबीन के विस्तृत जिन्हें बहुत कम बाहरी यूरिया की आवश्यकता होती है और जिनके रखने में वार्षिक में विस्तृत आई है मांग के खराब आकाल के अलावा, अन्य आपूर्तिकर्ताओं से अधिक सामग्री प्राप्त करने के लिए ज्यादा प्रयास नहीं किए गए—चाहे वह यूरिया के लिए पश्चिम एशिया, रूस और नाइजीरिया हो या कॉफेकॉट के लिए मोरक्को, जॉर्डन, मिस्र और ट्रॉनीशिया। यह आत्मसंतुष्टि भरपूर मानसून वाले वर्ष में विसानों को नुकसान पहुंचा रही है। उम्मीद है कि आगामी रबी की साधियों की बुवाई के मौसम में सामग्री कम होंगी। द्विक्षीय संबंधों में हाल ही में आई नरमी के बाद चीन द्वारा नियंत्रणीय की बुवाई के हटाने से मदद मिलनी चाहिए।

भारत के उर्वरक उद्योग पर अधिक नियंत्रण के कारण वर्तमान स्थिति भी कम नहीं है। कंपनियां यूरिया और डीएपी को क्रमशः 266.5 रुपये और 1,350 रुपये प्रति बैग से अधिक कीमत पर नहीं बेच सकतीं। यूरिया का मूल खुदरा मूल्य नवंबर 2012 से अपरिवर्तित है, और आयात की अनुमति भी केवल सरकारी व्यापारिक उद्योगों के माध्यम से होती है। इससे इन उर्वरकों की थोड़ी सी भी कमी होने पर स्थानीय रूप से अधिक अन्यत्र उर्वरक और कालाबाजारी की सम्भावना बढ़ती है। अब समय आ गया है कि इस क्षेत्र के विनियंत्रण के अनुमान के अनुसार, 45 करोड़ लोग ऐसे खेलों से भ्रावित हैं, जिन्हें 20,000 करोड़ रुपये से अधिक एक अन्यत्र उर्वरक और यूरिया आयात की तरफ से नियंत्रित किया जाए। कीमतों को स्थिर रखने और आयात तत्वतंत्र रूप से हो, जिससे कंपनियों को मांग के अनुप्रूप सामग्री की आपूर्ति बढ़ाने के लिए प्रत्याहार मिलेगा। सरकार बाजार में हस्तक्षेप करने और मूल्य वृद्धि को रोकने के लिए प्रमुख उर्वरकों का न्यूनतम स्टॉक बनाए रख सकती है।

गलत उत्तर

ऑनलाइन मनी गेमिंग पर पूर्ण प्रतिबंध लगाना गलत जवाब है, एक अधिक विचारशील दृष्टिकोण की आवश्यकता थी।

संसद द्वारा ऑनलाइन गेमिंग संवर्धन एवं विनियमन विधेयक, 2025 परित होने से ऑनलाइन गेमिंग उद्योग को गहरा झटका लगा है। कोशल और भाग्य के खेल सहित ऑनलाइन मनी गेम्स पर पूर्ण प्रतिबंध लगाने और ऐसे खेलों के विज्ञापन एवं प्रचार पर रोक लगाने के पीछे सरकार का तक, गेमिंग की लीला, मानसिक व्यावरण संबंधीयों और विनियमन के दूर करने की उसकी धोषित इच्छा पर आधारित है। केंद्रीय मंत्री अश्विनी वैष्णव ने संसद में कहा कि एक अनुमान के अनुसार, 45 करोड़ लोग ऐसे खेलों से भ्रावित हैं, जिन्हें 20,000 करोड़ रुपये से अधिक एक अन्यत्र उर्वरक और यूरिया आयात की तरफ से नियंत्रित किया जाए। कीमतों को स्थिर रखने और आयात तत्वतंत्र रूप से हो, जिससे कंपनियों को मांग के अनुप्रूप सामग्री की आपूर्ति बढ़ाने के लिए प्रत्याहार मिलेगा। सरकार बाजार में हस्तक्षेप करने और मूल्य वृद्धि को रोकने के लिए प्रमुख उर्वरकों का न्यूनतम स्टॉक बनाए रख सकती है।

एक प्रस्पर जुड़ी हुई दुनिया में, प्रतिबंध ऐसी गतिविधियों को अनियमित और/या विदेशी बाजारों की ओर धकेल देगा, जो भारतीय अधिकारियों के अधिकार क्षेत्र से बाहर हो सकते हैं। इससे कुछ चिंताओं का समाधान करना मुश्किल हो जाएगा। भारत का इतिहास ऐसे उदाहरणों से भरा पड़ा है कि कैसे प्रतिबंध, निषेध और मूल्य नियंत्रण लगभग कभी भी धोषित उद्देश्यों को प्राप्त नहीं कर पाए हैं। इस कदम के महत्वपूर्ण अधिक निहितार्थ भी होंगे। पीडब्ल्यूसी की "सूर्योदय से धूप तक" शीर्षक वाली एक रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, वास्तविक धन वाले गेमिंग सेप्यामेंट ने 2023 के दौरान 16,500 करोड़ रुपये का राजस्व लाया, जो 2028 तक 26,500 करोड़ रुपये तक पहुंचने की उमीद थी, जो भारत में ऑनलाइन गेमिंग बाजार का एक महत्वपूर्ण हिस्सा है। पूर्ण प्रतिबंध इस सेमेंट में शामिल सभी कंपनियों की जाता हुई गई है।

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एक अधिक सुविधारित दृष्टिकोण की आवश्यकता थी। 2020 में नीति आयोग के एक मसौदा पर में उल्लेख किया गया था कि हिताराक फैटेसी स्पोर्ट्स उद्योग के लिए एक हल्के-फुल्के नियामक ढाँचे के पक्ष में थे। एक विवेकार्य दृष्टिकोण अधिक नियामक स्पष्टता प्रदान करने, सरकार की चिंताओं को दूर करने के लिए तंत्रज्ञ व्यापार के लिए प्रयत्न करने की ओर धकेल देना चाहिए।

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THE IDEAS PAGE

An overwhelmed humanity

Transformative technologies, left unregulated and unchecked, may gradually dumb us down as a species

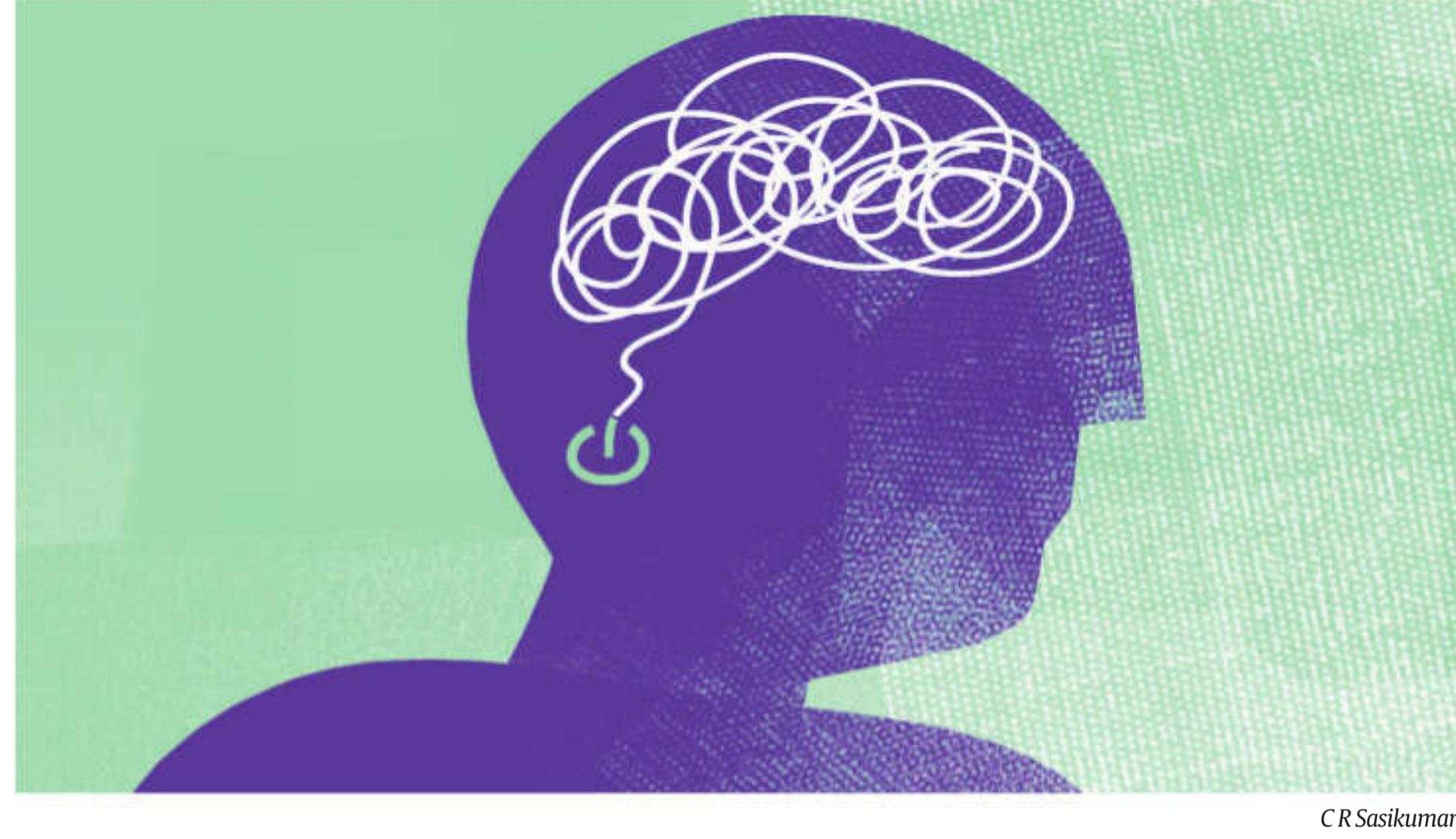


VIKRAM PATEL

HOW OUR SOCIAL world shapes our brains is the most important discovery in the science of human development. This is best illustrated by two classic bodies of research. The first was a series of experiments conducted in newborn animals, usually mice, in which one eye was sewn shut, depriving the brain of visual stimuli from the external world from that one eye during a critical period of brain development. When the eyelid was later reopened, nerve recordings in response to visual stimuli showed that far fewer neurons activated in the deprived eye, while parts of the brain's visual cortex representing the open eye grew substantially. These experiments vividly demonstrated that visual experience relies not just on the anatomy of the eye (which was normal in both eyes) but stimulation of the brain circuits responsible for interpreting visual stimuli. Without these stimuli, the neural pathways, while physically intact, were functionally dead. This is the essence of what neuroscientists refer to as the plasticity of the brain; quite simply, the brain's structure and functions are shaped by experience.

But does this phenomenon extend to humans and, in particular, to adults whose brains were, for so long, considered to be static or, worse, to be condemned to suffer an inexorable decline with age? The iconic London taxi-driver study was conducted in the early 2000s, at which time the drivers were required to memorise the city's intricate network of 25,000+ streets and use this mental map to navigate their passengers on unpredictably different journeys several times a day. Using brain imaging, scientists showed that this intensive spatial memory work led to local enlargement of the posterior hippocampus of the brain, with changes strongly correlating to time spent navigating without external aids; in comparison, drivers who followed the same driving route repeatedly, such as bus drivers, showed no changes. This study not only demonstrated that repeated activation of specific regions of the brain by challenging cognitive tasks led to structural changes in the brain in humans, but that adult brains also showed neural plasticity. Of course, this also explains why speech therapy can help a person regain speech after a stroke even in late life.

Thus, science shows unequivocally that experience is essential for the brain to evolve its capabilities in diverse respects, from sensory perception and motor coordination to remembering things and making complex decisions. It also showed that failure to use these capabilities regularly can lead to the shutting down of entire brain regions. So, what's my point? That we should pause and ponder on how the takeover of our lives by digital applications, which have totally disrupted the way our brains interact with the environment, might shape our brains and, ultimately, our capabilities. This thought was triggered by a recent dinner. It was at a restaurant I had gone



CR Sasikumar

to several times but I had begun to rely on Google Maps to guide me. The directions being proposed on this occasion were clearly absurd, taking me through narrow residential streets that I had never driven through before. But I felt compelled to follow those directions and, at one point, I found myself totally lost. And then I remembered another ability I had lost: To recall phone numbers of even my closest family members (embarrassingly, including my wife). It seemed that my cognitive abilities to navigate spaces and remember things had been seriously impaired and this was unrelated to ageing. I wondered if these losses might be attributable to my growing dependence on digital apps supposedly designed to make my life easier.

The science of brain plasticity is showing that we are, in fact, losing a range of abilities, not just spatial orientation and navigation, but the ability to remember things and concentrate (no wonder newspaper reading is collapsing worldwide, especially in young people who were born into the digital age and whose brains never even had a chance to evolve the abilities I was fortunate to develop), and even our abilities to interact with other humans, regulate our emotions and plan for the future. As one example, habitual reliance on GPS navigation decreases activity in the brain's centres responsible for spatial memory and navigation. Psychological science is demonstrating that our shrinking attention spans, catalysed by the rapid-fire bursts of short text and images on social media platforms, are profoundly affecting our social behaviours, rendering us less likely to make or stick to plans, make real-life commitments and to engage with other humans. And thus, the greatest paradox of our times: While the internet supposedly helped connect humanity, it was also associated with an epidemic of loneliness.

These cumulative losses manifest in many ways, not least a deterioration in our mental health that has led governments around the world to impose strict regulations on internet use and, in particular, social media, for children and adolescents, whose brains are the most plastic. But now, with the advent of large language models (LLMs) and generative

It may well be that the generation of humans born in the new millennium will be distinguished from our ancestors in fundamental ways, with virtually no ability to map the world, remember basic information, synthesise knowledge and arrive at a decision. If these are the very features which distinguish us from our closest cousins in the animal kingdom, then will our brains wither to the extent that we will cease to be human? Contrary to the hype which accompanied the arrival of these transformative technologies as empowering humans, they may well become our enslavers. Indeed, while the AI doomsday prophets focus on technology overtaking humanity through undermining democracy and becoming completely autonomous, I fear that AI will overwhelm humanity by rendering us incapable of doing the most mundane tasks, gradually dumbing us down in perpetuity.

In the absence of any policy interventions to protect humankind from the perils of these technologies, it is up to each of us to do what we can. My resolution, then, is to be mindful of how and when I use digital apps (thankfully, some protective instinct had already ensured that I never acquired a social media presence). If I can muster the willpower, I may even switch off the internet connection on my phone until I really need it. In the end, that might well be the only way to preserve the essence of what makes us human.

The writer is the Paul Farmer Professor of Global Health at Harvard Medical School

AI, our most sophisticated capabilities to search for information, to synthesise it and to write are gradually being delegated to machines. Even more insidious is how conversational agents are replacing the need for interacting with real humans, offering easy pathways to engage in meaningful encounters that never disappoint you. What might this do to the essential skills that young people need to learn which enable them to establish long-term relationships? As the world wakes up to the spectre of unprecedented population decline, we should be even more worried about how AI may lead to fewer intimate relationships in the future.

It may well be that the generation of humans born in the new millennium will be distinguished from our ancestors in fundamental ways, with virtually no ability to map the world, remember basic information, synthesise knowledge and arrive at a decision. If these are the very features which distinguish us from our closest cousins in the animal kingdom, then will our brains wither to the extent that we will cease to be human? Contrary to the hype which accompanied the arrival of these transformative technologies as empowering humans, they may well become our enslavers. Indeed, while the AI doomsday prophets focus on technology overtaking humanity through undermining democracy and becoming completely autonomous, I fear that AI will overwhelm humanity by rendering us incapable of doing the most mundane tasks, gradually dumbing us down in perpetuity.

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WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Trump, who claimed to want to limit China's global influence, in reality is actually bolstering it through his erratic foreign policy."

— LE MONDE, FRANCE

Political morality, by law

Constitution (130th Amendment) Bill frames a welcome new principle: Government cannot be run from jail, accountability cannot be postponed



GAURAV BHATIA

UNION HOME MINISTER Amit Shah tabled the Constitution (130th Amendment) Bill in Parliament, a move that has sparked fierce opposition. But it has also renewed hope for higher standards in Indian politics. This Bill provides that if a minister is arrested and is in custody for 30 consecutive days in connection with serious offences, he or she shall cease to hold office until released.

The Bill reflects the collective will of the country and the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He declared his commitment to accountability and integrity with the words: "Na khaunga, na khane doonga". The 130th Amendment is a natural extension of that promise. It institutionalises the principle that leadership must be clean and that governance must reflect the highest ethical standards. Under PM Modi's leadership, the new governance principle is that the government cannot be run from jail. Accountability cannot be postponed till conviction.

BR Ambedkar warned that democracy in India would depend not just on constitutional provisions but on the moral fabric of those who hold office: "However good a constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it happen to be a bad lot. However bad a constitution may be, it may turn out to be good if those who are called to work it happen to be a good lot."

A minister takes an oath to uphold the Constitution and the law. When such a minister is held in custody, it signifies that serious charges are under judicial consideration. Continuing in office during this period creates a conflict of interest between personal legal defence and public duty, and public faith in government suffers irreparable damage. Ordinary government employees are suspended once taken into custody for a period of more than 48 hours. Why then should ministers, who wield far greater power, be treated differently?

Amit Shah was targeted during Congress's rule. When summoned, he resigned from office, despite political persecution. By doing so, he set a high moral benchmark. He was later discharged by the courts of the country. Similarly, Lal Krishna Advani, when accused in the Jain Hawala case, resigned as MP until his name was cleared. His statement, "I will not return until proved innocent," continues to inspire.

Contrast this with political conduct today. Arvind Kejriwal ran his government from jail for six months. The Delhi High Court, while hearing a petition for the removal of Satyendar Jain, an incarcerated minister in Kejriwal's cabinet, observed, "Even though the court cannot sit in judgement of what is good or bad, it certainly can remind constitutional functionaries to preserve, protect and promote the ethos of our Constitution. There

is a presumption that the Chief Minister would be well advised and guided by such constitutional principles." Another example is former DMK minister Senthil Balaji, who refused to resign despite being in custody, compelling the Supreme Court to reprimand his continuance.

These incidents expose the urgent need for codified discipline. The Bill ensures that morality is not left to individual choice but becomes a constitutional mandate. It is evident that there exists a vacuum around how to deal with detained and arrested constitutional and elected ministers holding public offices. The Supreme Court and high courts have also made serious observations regarding the need to fill in these gaps.

Many legislators face serious criminal charges, from corruption to organised crime. The Bill attempts to strike a balance between frivolous arrests and genuine judicial scrutiny. Being held in prolonged judicial custody is never casual; it means the judiciary has found strong grounds for arrest. Thus, the provision helps cleanse politics without undermining democratic representation.

The Bill builds upon existing constitutional architecture: Articles 75(1B) and 164(1B) disqualify defectors from holding ministerial office. Articles 102 and 191 disqualify MPs/MLAs upon conviction.

The Supreme Court in *Manoj Narula vs Union of India* (2014) observed, "... it can always be legitimately expected... the Prime Minister, while living up to the trust reposed in him, would consider not choosing a person with criminal antecedents against whom charges have been framed for heinous or serious criminal offences or charges of corruption to become a Minister of the Council of Ministers. This is what the Constitution suggests, and that is the constitutional expectation from the Prime Minister."

The 130th Amendment does exactly this: It fills the vacuum between arrest and conviction, upholding the doctrine of constitutional propriety. Critics argue that the Bill is harsh. But a closer look proves otherwise. The provision only ensures temporary removal. Once released, the minister can be reappointed. The presumption of innocence remains intact.

Opponents argue the provision could be misused politically. But this claim does not hold ground: Custody is subject to judicial scrutiny. Prolonged custody (30 days) cannot happen without judicial satisfaction.

The Bill applies uniformly across parties. The PM's office has also been kept within the purview of the law. Thus, rather than being draconian, it creates a level playing field.

The 130th Constitution Amendment Bill is not against any person or party. It is a mirror to Indian politics: A choice between clean governance and the defence of criminality. It honours the Constituent Assembly's vision, the examples of leaders like Advani and Amit Shah, and the Supreme Court's call for propriety. As HM Shah stated while introducing the Bill, its purpose is simple yet profound: To raise the moral level of public discourse and restore the dignity of governance.

The writer is senior advocate and national spokesperson, BJP

India, China, a reform deficit

Both economies show reluctance to address structural shortcomings



ISHAN BAKSHI

FOR MORE THAN a decade now, the common refrain has been that while India needs to increase the investment rate in the country, China needs to rebalance its economy away from investments towards domestic consumption, with household spending accounting for a greater share.

Both these countries have, for more than a decade, been helmed by leaders who have enjoyed and exercised power in a way that not many before them have. Yet, strangely, both these leaders, who sit at the top of their party structures in two diametrically opposite political systems, have been unable to—or are perhaps unwilling to—steer their economies in the needed direction. In India, animal spirits remain caged, with the corporate sector reluctant to invest, while in China, consumer confidence is close to historic lows.

It is not as if the ruling dispensation in India can be faulted for not taking steps to increase investments and boost manufacturing. It has, for instance, put in place the production-linked incentive schemes and introduced a lower tax rate for new manufacturing facilities, while also ramping up public investments, hoping to kickstart a private investment cycle. However, there are few indications of a pickup. In fact, signs point to domestic private capital flowing out of the country. Equally worrying is that manufacturing and investment activity have remained extremely concentrated. In 2022-23, four states — Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka — accounted for about half of manufacturing value added in the country.

The challenge to raise the share of manufacturing — in the absence of a broader manufacturing pickup, an investment boom is unlikely — is not peculiar to this government. During the UPA's tenure, the National Manufacturing Policy aimed to raise the share of manufacturing to 25 per cent of GDP by 2022. The current dispensation has set a similar target. But the sector's share has more or less remained the same (at constant prices).

The government now appears to have pivoted away from focusing on investments to boosting consumption via tax giveaways, first by lowering personal income taxes, and now by looking to bring down taxes under GST, an approach that only imposes further fiscal constraints on the state to spend on public goods.

Rebalancing the Chinese economy away from investment towards consumption would impose costs — growth would slow down as the economy adjusts — that the country's leadership seems reluctant to bear, oddly, in a political system that, unlike a democracy, does not give its citizens a regular channel to express dissatisfaction.

But, in India, where citizen backlash is captured through the never-ending cycle of elections, the costs of muted investment growth, which results in poor job creation and subdued wage growth, find reflection in the political calculus via populist measures aimed at assuaging discontent.

However, the pivot towards cash transfers — a recent report has pegged unconditional cash transfers at almost 1 per cent of GDP — and the emphasis on other populist and welfare policies is in contrast to China, where Xi has been quite forthright on the ap-

proach to be adopted. "To promote common prosperity, we cannot engage in 'welfarism,'" he has said, adding that "it is unsustainable to engage in 'welfarism' that exceeds our capabilities. It will inevitably bring about serious economic and political problems."

Only structural reforms can address the structural issues in the two economies. China's challenges revolve around overinvestment and excess capacity, low household consumption and high savings, an ageing population and high debt levels, while India's problems centre around subdued investment activity, which runs alongside the deepening capital intensity of production, a growing workforce that faces inadequate job opportunities in the non-farm sector, low household savings, high levels of informality and low productivity.

While addressing these issues is harder than many appreciate, in recent years, it does seem that the policy focus in both countries has shifted away from prioritising growth. And so, in the absence of deep reforms, China persists with its debt-fuelled investment-export-led model of growth, the limits of which are being tested in a world that is either unable or unwilling to absorb its excess capacity, while India, in the face of sluggish manufacturing and investment growth, continues to rely on domestic consumption, fuelled by debt and tax giveaways.

The question is whether the required policy changes can be engineered or if the laws of path dependency will make progress difficult.

ishan.bakshi@expressindia.com

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BALANCED APPROACH

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Think through' (IE, August 23). The Supreme Court's modified order on stray dogs offers a more balanced approach to a divisive issue. But rules are only as good as their implementation. Municipal authorities now face the challenge of scaling up sterilisation drives, vaccination and public awareness campaigns. Equally crucial is the SC's ban on feeding strays in public spaces, with instructions to create designated feeding zones. The civic bodies must act swiftly to set up such spaces.

Khokan Das, Kolkata

CULTURAL ICON

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Mohali: Mortal remains of actor Jaswinder Bhalla consigned to flames' (IE, August 24). The demise of Jaswinder Bhalla has cast a shadow over Punjab's cultural landscape. Bhalla was an educator, a mentor, a voice of satire, and a beacon of Punjabi humour grounded in sharp social insight. The Punjabi entertainment industry now faces the urgent challenge of preserving Bhalla's legacy amid shifting tastes and commercial pressures. We must revisit the values he championed: Satire rooted in truth, humour that reflects community life, and art that educates even as it entertains.

Baani Bhabha, Ambala

HARNESSING AI

THIS IS WITH reference to the article, 'Enabler, not disruptor' (IE, August 23). The authors rightly highlight the crucial distinction between automation and augmentation in the future of work, as well as the need to embed AI competencies in schools and universities. As an educator, my experience shows that AI literacy is now indispensable. If viewed only as automation, AI's transformative role is curtailed. Integrated in education, however, can augment employability, empower small businesses, and drive inclusive growth.

Sarita, Delhi

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Reforming the steel frame' (IE, August 23). I disagree with the writer, and in fact, there is a need to reduce ministerial control over administration to foster better governance. Greater independence allows administrators to operate based on expertise. It promotes the direct accountability of individual civil servants to foster a culture of responsibility. Stronger legislative and judicial oversight can keep a check on the executive, avoiding ministerial overreach, while administrative bodies must be allowed to operate by striking the right balance between constraints and autonomy.

Vaibhav Goyal, Chandigarh

TOP OF THE WORLD



Italian Coast Guard rescue the migrants off Lampedusa on Sunday

ITALY

3 drown, 65 rescued from overcrowded migrant boat

Milan: Three young sisters drowned when the rubber boat carrying them and dozens of other migrants got into difficulties on the perilous central Mediterranean crossing from Libya to Italy, a German sea rescue charity said on Sunday. RESQSHIP said the bodies of the sisters, aged 9, 11 and 17, were found inside the boat, which was "dangerously overcrowded" and had been buffeted by waves of up to 1.5 metres before a rescue vessel arrived at the scene. Among the 65 people rescued by the charity's Nadir vessel were three pregnant women, children, and a seven-month-old baby. RESQSHIP added in a statement. **REUTERS**

SOUTH KOREA
Report: Seoul tells Beijing it wants ties normalised

Seoul: South Korea is hoping to normalise relations with China that have been strained in recent years, the leader of a high-level delegation from Seoul said during a visit to Beijing on Sunday. Yonhap News Agency reported. South Korean President Lee Jae Myung sent the envoys to his country's main trading partner as he travels to Washington to meet U.S. President Donald Trump. Former assembly speaker Park Byeong-seug, the head of the delegation, met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and handed over a letter from Lee to Chinese President Xi Jinping.

REUTERS

Russia
One killed by gas cylinder blast in Moscow toy shop

Moscow: At least one person was killed on Sunday when a gas cylinder exploded in an iconic Moscow toy shop, state news agencies reported. The blast occurred at the Central Children's Store, known by most Russians as the Detsky Mir toy shop. It is located on the Lubyanka square near to the headquarters of the Federal Security Service. "Sadly, as a result of the incident, there is a death and some people have been injured," Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said. **REUTERS**

RADIATION LEVELS NORMAL, NO INJURIES, SAYS PLANT

Ukraine attacks Russian nuclear plant, sparks massive blaze at northern port

GUY FAULCONBRIDGE & LIDIA KELLY
MOSCOW, AUGUST 24

UKRAINE LAUNCHED a drone attack on Russia on Sunday, forcing a sharp fall in the capacity of a reactor at one of Russia's biggest nuclear power plants and sparking a huge blaze at the major Ust-Luga fuel export terminal, Russian officials said.

Despite talk of peace by Russia and Ukraine, the deadliest European war since World War Two is continuing along the 2,000 km front line accompanied by missile and drone attacks deep into both Russia and Ukraine.

Russia's defence ministry said at least 95 Ukrainian drones had been intercepted across more than a dozen Russian regions on August 24, the day that Ukraine celebrates its declaration of independence from the USSR in 1991.

The Kursk nuclear power plant, just 60 km from the border with Ukraine, said air defences shot down a drone that detonated near the plant just after midnight, damaging an auxiliary transformer and forcing a 50% reduction in the operating capacity at reactor No. 3. Radiation levels were normal and there were no

The Kursk Nuclear Power Plant in the Kursk region. **Reutersfile**

injuries from the fire which the drone sparked, the plant said. Two other reactors are operating without power generation and one is undergoing scheduled repairs.

The International Atomic Energy Agency said it was aware of reports that a transformer at the plant caught fire due to military activity and stressed that all nuclear facilities should be protected.

A thousand km north, on the Gulf of Finland, at least 10 Ukrainian drones were downed over the port of Ust-Luga in Russia's Leningrad region, with

debris sparking fire at the Novatek-operated terminal - a huge Baltic Sea fuel export terminal and processing complex.

Unverified footage on television channels showed a drone flying directly into a fuel terminal, followed by a huge ball of fire rising high into the sky followed by black smoke billowing into the horizon. The Ust-Luga complex processes gas condensate into light and heavy naphtha, jet fuel, fuel oil and gasoil, and enables the company to ship oil products.

REUTERS

Dhaka raises 1971 war issues, seeks apology as Pak minister visits

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DHAKA, AUGUST 24



Pak Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar

BANGLADESH'S FOREIGN adviser on Sunday raised "unsettled" issues, including an apology for the 1971 war, with Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar but said he was not on the same page with the senior most leader Islamabad sent to Dhaka since 2012.

Dar, who arrived here on Saturday on a two-day visit aimed at rebuilding ties with Bangladesh following the ouster of longtime prime minister Sheikh Hasina last year, held talks with the interim government's Foreign Adviser M Touhid Hossain. "Definitely I don't agree (with Dar). Had it been so, the problems would have been solved. We explained our position and they (Pakistani side) did theirs," mass circulation Prothom Alo quoted Hossain as saying.

The foreign adviser said during the talks Dhaka sought settlement of pre-independence financial

issues, repatriation of stranded Pakistanis and "seek them to express regret, the apology for the genocide that took place here (in Bangladesh in 1971)... I have strongly upheld the Bangladesh stance," said Hosain.

Talking to journalists, Dar said the unsettled issues over 1971 were resolved twice, first in 1974 in tri-partite talks involving New Delhi in India. "Later, the then president Pervez Musharraf settled the issues of genocide again during his Dhaka visit when he talked in public with an open mind," Dar added.

The visits came amid a visible shift in regional politics in the past one year involving Bangladesh, Pakistan and India since the ouster of Hasina's Awami League regime.

After Washington, Pentagon plans troops in Chicago: Report

REUTERS
WASHINGTON, AUGUST 24

THE PENTAGON is working on plans to deploy the US military to Chicago as President Donald Trump says he is cracking down on crime, homelessness and undocumented immigration, the Washington Post reported Saturday.

The Defense Department planning, in the works for weeks, involves several options, including mobilizing at least a few thousand members of the National Guard as soon as September, the Post reported, citing officials familiar with the matter.

"Chicago is a mess," Trump said Friday, deriding its mayor as he continued his attacks on cities run by Democratic politicians. "And we'll straighten that out probably next." The Pentagon said in a statement late on Saturday: "We won't speculate on further operations. The department is a planning organization and is continuously working with other agency partners on plans to protect federal assets and personnel."

Anti-Trump protest in Washington on Saturday. **AP**

JB Pritzker, the Democratic Governor of Illinois, said in a statement the state had received no outreach from the federal government on whether it needed assistance. He said there was no emergency warranting a military deployment. "Donald Trump is attempting to manufacture a crisis, politicize Americans who serve in uniform and continue abusing his power to distract from the pain he is causing working families," Pritzker said.

Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson said Friday the city had

concerns about the impact of any unlawful deployment of National Guard troops. "The problem with the President's approach is that it is uncoordinated, uncalled for and unsound," the mayor said, adding that over the past year, homicides in Chicago have fallen by more than 30%, robberies by 35% and shootings by almost 40%.

At Trump's request last weekend, the Republican governors of three states said they were sending hundreds of National Guard troops hundreds of miles to Washington, D.C.

JUDGES GET NEW SENTENCING POWERS, CONVICTS FACE PUB, FOOTBALL MATCH BANS

With jails full, UK to restrict social freedom of convicts

REUTERS
LONDON, AUGUST 24

UK Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood. **gov.uk**

CONVICTED CRIMINALS could face being banned from going to the pub, music concerts and sports events such as soccer matches under new plans by the British government as it seeks ways to address the country's overflowing prison crisis.

Under the new sentencing powers, judges would be able to limit offenders' freedoms with a

range of measures such as driving limits, travel bans and confining them to certain zones, moves which the government says will help force them "back onto the straight-and-narrow".

"When criminals break society's rules, they must be punished. Those serving their sentences in the community must have their freedom restricted there too," Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood said.

Britain, which has western Europe's highest rate of incarceration according to the World Prison Brief database, has been forced to bring in measures such as releasing prisoners early to tackle chronic overcrowding in jails. The new steps to be unveiled on Sunday were part of wider reforms to cut crime while ensuring there were enough places for the most dangerous offenders.

Under existing rules, judges can issue soccer match bans to those who commit crimes inside stadiums but the law will

be changed to allow such bans to be given for any offence in any circumstance, the government said.

All prisoners leaving jail at the end of their sentence and supervised by the Probation Service could face similar restrictions as well as mandatory drug testing, rather than just those with a history of substance misuse. Anyone who breaks the rules risks being taken back to court or put back in prison, the government said.

"Our country is used to a very open democratic practices," said Maithripala Sirisena, who served as the president of Sri Lanka from January 2015 to November 2019.

"These sort of actions go against those basic principles," Sirisena added. Sagara Kariyawasam the general secretary of the Sri Lanka People's Front (SLPP) said his party was at vari-

ance with Wickremesinghe's politics, "but we have to oppose this act of attempting to silence opposition through intimidation by the state." Meanwhile the Colombo National Hospital this morning said that Wickremesinghe, 76, was still in the intensive care unit.

Dr Rukshan Bellana, the director of the hospital said the former President was still under observation for a dehydration condition.

REUTERS & PTI
COLOMBO, AUGUST 24

Ranil Wickremesinghe in Colombo on Friday. **Reuters**

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Dr Rukshan Bellana, the director of the hospital said the former President was still under observation for a dehydration condition.

REUTERS WITH AP INPUTS

EFFECTIVE IN COUNTERING AERIAL THREATS Z INCLUDING DRONES
N KOREA'S KIM OVERSEES ANTI-AIR MISSILE TESTS

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised the test-firing of two types of new anti-air missiles, state media said Sunday, displaying his expanding military capabilities as the South Korean and U.S. militaries carry out joint drills. The North's official Korean Central News Agency said the test Saturday proved the missiles effective in countering aerial threats such as drones and cruise missiles.

A Palestinian man mourns over the body of his son killed in an Israeli strike in Gaza City on Sunday. **Reuters**

Israel pounds outskirts of Gaza City, says attacks will continue

NIDAL AL-MUGHARBI & LILI BAYER
CAIRO, JERUSALEM, AUG 24

ISRAELI PLANES and tanks pounded the eastern and northern outskirts of Gaza City overnight Saturday to Sunday, destroying buildings and homes, residents said, as Israeli leaders vowed to press on with the offensive on the city. Katz has said that Gaza City will be razed unless Hamas agrees to end the war on Israel's terms and release all

Witnesses reported the sound of explosions non-stop overnight in the areas of Zeitoun and Shejaija, while tanks shelled houses and roads in the nearby Sabra neighbourhood and several buildings were blown up in the northern town of Jabalia.

Israeli forces shot dead four Palestinian aid-seekers traveling Sunday through a military zone south of Gaza City that is regularly used to reach a food distribution point, a hospital and witnesses said. Al-Awda Hospital and two witnesses told AP the Palestinians were killed when troops opened fire on a crowd heading to a site run by the Israel-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation in the Netzarim corridor area, hundreds of meters (yards) from the site.

4 Palestinians killed while waiting for aid

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REUTERS WITH AP INPUTS

Ranil's arrest: Sri Lanka Opposition condemns 'political vengeance'

REUTERS & PTI
COLOMBO, AUGUST 24

SRI LANKAN opposition parties gathered here on Sunday to condemn the arrest of former president Ranil Wickremesinghe calling it "undemocratic" and "petty act of political vengeance." Leaders of all opposition parties held a joint press conference in Colombo to protest the arrest of Wickremesinghe over alleged misuse of state funds.

"Our country is used to a very open democratic practices," said Maithripala Sirisena, who served as the president of Sri Lanka from January 2015 to November 2019.

"These sort of actions go against those basic principles," Sirisena added. Sagara Kariyawasam the general secretary of the Sri Lanka People's Front (SLPP) said his party was at vari-

ance with Wickremesinghe's politics, "but we have to oppose this act of attempting to silence opposition through intimidation by the state." Meanwhile the Colombo National Hospital this morning said that Wickremesinghe, 76, was still in the intensive care unit.

Dr Rukshan Bellana, the director of the hospital said the former President was still under observation for a dehydration condition.

A report published in October by a government-run human rights body identified 11 arrests in 2020, nine in 2021 and 64 in 2022. Arrests rose drastically, to 213 in 2023 and 767 over the first seven months of 2024.

In

courtrooms, most cases are pursued not by the state, but by private groups, typically led by lawyers and backed by volunteers who monitor social media.

Their aggressive efforts reflect a rising "politicization of blasphemy laws," said Peter Jacob, executive director of the Center for Social Justice Pakistan.

Groups such as the Legal Commission on Blasphemy Pakistan deny that the charges are contrived. "Never before have we seen such vile dishonoring of Islam," said Rao Abdur Raheem, a lawyer representing the group.

Accusations of blasphemy can also make for powerful leverage in extortion schemes. A 2024 po-

HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERTS SAY BAD ACTORS ONLINE LINKED TO ISLAMIST GROUPS CONTRIVE CASES TO DRUM UP SUPPORT AND FUNDING

Hundreds in Pak jails on charges of blasphemy, many caught through online chats

ZIA UR-REHMAN
RAWALPINDI, AUGUST 24

IT IS to many Pakistanis an unspeakable crime, so much so that evidence is not always required to secure a conviction. Violent rallies spring up at just rumors that it has happened. Vigilantes have hunted down the accused, and they are praised as heroes for doing it.

The crime is blaspheming Islam, and in Pakistan, it can carry a death sentence, although the country has not executed anyone for it. But identifying what constitutes blasphemy can be nearly impossible in a society

that represses conversation on the topic. Accusations have at times incited murderous mobs.

In 2023, Pakistan made punishments more severe. Arrests have since skyrocketed - from a few dozen per year to hundreds - especially on charges of online blasphemy on the internet.

Many of the accused say they were entrapped by bad actors online who sought to extort them. Human rights experts say that pointing to a rising tide of blasphemy is a sure way for Islamist groups to drum up support and attract funding.

Four men knocked on Shahida Bibi's door in 2023. At first, they

claimed to be friends of her son's. They were officers of the Federal Investigation Agency, then Pakistan's primary authority for cybercrime investigations, and her son had just been arrested on charges of online blasphemy.

Her son's account, which he later recounted to her from behind bars, matches a pattern that human rights experts say has become common. It begins with a seemingly benign online conversation.

It was on one of several WhatsApp groups for job seekers he had joined. A woman had messaged him privately, Bibi said, offering what appeared to be a promising opportunity.

Under the new sentencing powers, judges would be able to limit offenders' freedoms with a

range of measures such as driving limits, travel bans and confining them to certain zones, moves which the government says will help force them "back onto the straight-and-narrow".

"When criminals break society's rules, they must be punished. Those serving their sentences in the community must have their freedom restricted there too," Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood said.

Britain, which has western Europe's highest rate of incarceration according to the World Prison Brief database, has been forced to bring in measures such as releasing

FROM ACADEMIA TO INDUSTRY

Renewed calls for India to transform into 'a product nation' amid US tariff action

ANIL SASI
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 24

In JUNE, Ford Motor Company – America's second biggest carmaker – temporarily idled all its factories in the United States for well over three weeks due to a shortage of magnets containing rare earth minerals imported from China, after trade tensions precipitated a blockade by Beijing.

China has since instituted a new approval process for exports of rare earths that has slowed supply lines, which impacted not just Ford, but automakers all over the world. The Donald Trump administration rushed in officials to meet with Chinese negotiators and strike an interim deal, in return for a restoration of supplies of rare earth magnets, and has subsequently been accommodative of Beijing's point of view, despite the fact that China is only among a few countries that launched retaliatory action against US tariffs.

Two months on, India finds itself in a situation where it is now likely being used as a soft target to pressure Russia into ending the war – collateral damage in US President Donald Trump's ambition to squeeze Russia's crude exports and pressurise Moscow to the negotiating table for ending the Ukraine war. The problem for India is that unlike China, which has been able to weaponise trade by leveraging its stranglehold over critical processes and products, India simply does not hold the cards at this point in time to retaliate in a meaningful manner.

Relevance in the global geopolitical scene

In a way, this has intensified a consensus that cuts across academia to industry, that going forward, India has to strive to trans-

form into a 'product nation'. And that the country needs to produce some things that it does better than others, if it has to be relevant in the global geopolitical scene.

The bigger the economy, chances are that a country would be taken more seriously by others, but the more strategic its products or service offerings, the greater is its strategic leverage. Just like only Taiwan can fabricate the most advanced chips in the world, or a company in the Netherlands can make the top-of-the-line 'EUV' lithography machines needed to etch the circuits on microchip, or it's only companies in China that are the only ones that can make certain types of magnets, process rare earth minerals and put together high-end batteries or manufacture pharmaceutical ingredients.

"There is a growing consensus that India must transition from being primarily a service-driven economy to becoming a product nation – one that not only innovates but also manufactures and exports IP-driven solutions across sectors. To support this shift, India's higher education ecosystem is being strategically re-aligned," TG Sitharam, Chairman, AICTE said.

The Niti Aayog too has flagged the need for working strategically towards transitioning to a product nation, especially in the backdrop of the American tariff action. Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India Ajay Kumar Sood, in an earlier interaction with *The Indian Express* said that while there is now an increasing sensitivity in policy circles to put deep tech startups on an accelerated path, India has to aim to become a 'product nation'. "India is already very good at designing – nearly one in five of the world's semiconductor design engineers, for in-



EXPLAINED
E Need to build strategic trade leverage

UNLIKE CHINA, which has been able to weaponise trade by leveraging its stranglehold over critical processes and products, India simply does not hold the cards at this point in time to retaliate in a meaningful manner. This has intensified a consensus that cuts across academia to industry, that going forward, India has to strive to transform into a 'product nation'.

stance, are here – but the country accounts for under 10 per cent of the global chip design facilities, and much of the designing is done for specifications offered by global companies... But what we need is that we should have designing capabilities (based) on our specifications, not on someone else's specifications, which means some intellectual thinking has already (been done) somewhere else. We have to do it here... So that's what will make our country a leading product nation," Sood, who is also the Chairperson of the Prime

Minister's Science, Technology & Innovation Advisory Council and is a National Science Chair Professor at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bangalore, said in an interaction in April.

Beyond manufacturing

For this objective, India needs to think beyond manufacturing. "What do you need (to be) a 'product nation'? Think about it. It's not just manufacturing... Manufacturing, of course, is required, down the line, but it (manufacturing) is not the only thing, because then you will get into the middle income trap. Because the profits will go somewhere else," Sood said.

In sectors such as cell phone assembly and chip manufacturing, for instance, much of the profits in the value chain are before and after the manufacturing stage.

The evolving situation has also prompted deliberations on India's place in the world. "Decades ago, India did not have a big economy, but we carried certain diplomatic heft, given we were seen as standing for certain ideals. Now, even as our economy has grown, we seem to be losing that diplomatic heft. That's something worth pondering over," a government official tracking the trade negotiations with the US said.

As David Woo, market analyst and former head of Global Interest Rates, Foreign Exchange, Emerging Market Fixed Income & Economics Research at Bank of America has argued, there is a compelling argument that the punitive tariff on India for importing Russian oil is part of the larger effort to force Russia to the negotiating table on Ukraine. Though Trump had prioritised the ending of the war in Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin has not played along. According to Woo, who told CNBC earlier this month

that squeezing oil revenues is the "cheapest and easiest way to weaken Russia", and that pressuring China was off the table, India (its Russian oil imports) may have become an easy soft target to pressure Russia into ending the war. "India may well be collateral damage in Trump's illusion of stitching together a grand bargain and claiming credit for ending the Ukraine war".

The alternatives

For India, the problem is that the US is not just any country. It is the largest economy in the world and India's largest market. The two alternatives before India are to either accept the tariffs, or retaliate in some measure. The Europeans were among the first of America's trade partners who flagged an intent to retaliate, but they have since succumbed to pressure from Washington DC.

The only ones who have retaliated against US tariffs and managed to get away with it are the Chinese, who were able to do that because they control aspects of trade that could have hit the US. Like the magnets impacting Ford Motor and other American carmakers.

The problem for India, at this point in time, is that the country does not export anything to the US that is critical for that country, which is cutting edge or high tech, which is crucial for driving their technology sectors or part of their economy. What we export – garments, generic drugs, electronic components, cellphones – are all largely substitutable. There might be a cost to it that US consumers will have to bear, but that's pretty much where the trade-off ends.

The call for transforming India into a product nation is even more relevant, given the current global context, the government official quoted earlier said.

MARKET WATCH

MCAP OF 8 OF TOP-10 VALUED COS JUMPS

The combined market valuation of eight of the top-10 most valued firms jumped Rs 1,72,148.89 crore last week, with Reliance Industries leading the pack. Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 709.19 points or 0.87 per cent.

PTI

'Tax cuts may spur spending, but external environment likely to remain challenging'



THE EXPRESS
INTERVIEW

SAUGATA BHATTACHARYA
EXTERNAL MEMBER OF THE RESERVE BANK OF INDIA'S MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE

With the GST rejig, consumption demand is likely to improve. Do you think this could translate into higher private capex?

Yes, everything else remains the same. However, the present uncertainty about the direct, secondary and tertiary impacts of the tariffs and the overall external environment might deter investment decisions in the near term till more clarity emerges on the likely outcomes.

Looking forward, what structural changes in India's economy should monetary policy focus on – beyond just inflation control – to support long-term sustainable growth?

The MPC's mandate is price stability while continuing to support growth. Monetary policy cannot directly address structural changes, but is definitely affected by it. RBI and other financial sector regulators have progressively designed regulations both to make policy transmission more efficient and to foster greater financial stability.

The credit ecosystem has become deeper and more inclusive. IBC (Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code) has improved the stressed asset resolution process. The other structural reforms undertaken by the government has also enabled more micro and small borrowers to access capital flows and reduce the cost of this capital.

If monetary policy decisions are often justified as being

"data-driven," why does the MPC generally appear reactive rather than proactive – always behind the curve on inflation and growth?

Policy decisions are always data-driven, using a mix of available data and forecasts. I disagree with your view on appearing reactive. Yes, of late, inflation forecasts have tended to diverge from actuals, and the media has reported that RBI is working on improving statistical models to improve forecasts. Note also that the median inflation forecast of the RBI survey of professional forecasters has been almost as wrong on the recent vegetable price deflation. Also, as you are aware, estimates of jobs in the US have undergone significant revisions, so these problems exist across geographies.

Data shows that the bank corporate loan book in Q1 saw a muted growth. Even loans to industry slowed to a 13-quarter low in April-June 2025. When do you see private capex picking up?

As RBI Governor's statement noted, while bank credit to corporates, particularly the large segment, has been muted, the total flow of financial resources from non-banks (both domestic and foreign sources) remained at almost similar levels during April-July 2025-26 as compared with the corresponding period of last year. Given the relative drop in retrospective interest rates, there has been some shift in credit demand away from banks. This is not to say that private sector investment should not be further incentivised.

US President Donald Trump referred to India as a 'dead economy'. Do you see such comments affecting investor confidence?

It would take much more than an off the cuff comment to deter investors; the credit ratings upgrade is a testament to that. The measures on improving the investment environment, those already ongoing and more in the pipeline, will counter some of the trade related uncertainty.

Will there be any impact on domestic inflation, if India reduces oil purchases from Russia?

Global oil prices will likely rise, given reduced supply from Russia. There will be macroeconomic impacts, but the impact on retail inflation will depend on the extent petrol and diesel pump prices are increased. Note that if this happens, there is also a likelihood of the penal tariffs being removed.

FULL INTERVIEW ON www.indianexpress.com

After SBI, Bank of India puts 'fraud' tag on RCom, Anil Ambani

URVI MALVANIA

MUMBAI, AUGUST 24

AFTER STATE Bank of India, Bank of India has classified the loan account of Reliance Communications as fraudulent and named its former director Anil Ambani, citing alleged fund diversion in 2016, according to a regulatory filing.

Ambani hit back at Bank of India, calling its action selective and contrary to due process.

Ambani said he was being unfairly singled out.

"Astonishingly, after an inordinate lapse of more than 10 years, select lenders have now chosen to initiate proceedings in a staggered and selective manner," a spokesperson for Ambani said.

Bank of India granted a Rs 700-crore loan in August 2016 to Reliance Communications for its capital and operational expenditure and repayment of existing liabilities. Half of the sanctioned amount disbursed in October 2016 was invested in a fixed deposit, which was not permitted as per the sanction letter, according to the bank's letter that RCom disclosed in the stock exchange filing.

RCom said it had on August 22 received a letter from Bank of India dated August 8 stating the bank's decision "to classify the loan accounts of the company, Anil Dhirajlal Ambani (promoter and erstwhile director of the com-

CII suggests reforms in GST, trade, jobs

New Delhi: The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) on Sunday unveiled a blueprint to accelerate India's economic growth through a raft of reforms, including in factors of production, a simplified GST structure, rationalised tariffs and implementation of labour codes. The industry body, in its report "Policies for a Competitive India", laid out more than 250 actionable recommendations across 14 critical reform areas. CII said achieving the goal of 'Viksit Bharat' would require a real CAGR of 7.3 per cent.

"While India's performance in global indices, such as ease of doing business, innovation, logistics performance and competitiveness, has improved, the country still underperforms relative to its size and capabilities," it said.

Among its suggestions, CII emphasised fiscal prudence, inflation management and modernised statistical systems. To make the public sector more efficient, it recommended privatisation of non-strategic PSEs, creation of a sovereign wealth fund and stronger governance. For factor market reforms, it pushed for digitised land titling, streamlined labour codes, a national minimum wage framework, and fast-track dispute resolution. On energy security, CII recommended competitive tariffs, elimination of cross-subsidy, stronger transmission networks, private participation in nuclear energy and a green hydrocarbon roadmap.

Resumption of direct flights imminent, Indian, Chinese airlines prepare to reclaim market



Airlines gear up to resume direct flights

Chinese and Indian airlines have been keenly watching the developments, and are now preparing for direct flights. Just last week, IndiGo's CEO Pieter Elbers had said that the carrier stands ready to resume direct flights to China as soon as the bilateral arrangements between the two countries allow. Chinese carriers, too, are eager to resume direct services, it is learnt. Lack of direct flights have led to high airfares and long travel times for those flying between India and China. According to industry insiders, airlines – Chinese as well as Indian – have been looking to restart direct flights, as there is high demand for travel between the two countries.

Lack of direct air connectivity between India and mainland China, along with stringent visa restrictions, led to airlines from

the unauthorised use of connecting hubs in South and Southeast Asia – is less than half of what it was in 2019.

All of it is being catered to by airlines from regions like Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam. To be sure, the Hong Kong airport is not exactly considered a Chinese airport due to Hong Kong's special autonomous status and a different visa regime than mainland China.

It continues to be the leading connecting hub between India and mainland China.

Chinese carriers held dominant share

The normalisation of air connectivity between India and China would likely be beneficial for airlines from both countries. However, Beijing appears to believe that Chinese carriers stand to gain more, as they held the dominant share of the direct flight market before the pandemic.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

PM to flag off major EV export drive on Aug 26: Maruti's e VITARA from Gujarat plant



Minister will also inaugurate the next phase of India's battery ecosystem with the start of local production of hybrid battery electrodes at the TDS Lithium-Ion Battery plant in Gujarat. The plant, a joint venture of Toshiba, Denso and Suzuki, is expected to boost domestic manufacturing and clean energy innovation. With this, more than 80 per cent of the battery value will now be manufactured within India.

Maruti Suzuki is India's largest car manufacturer. With an existing capacity of producing 26 lakh units per year at its four plants in India, the company's export share has increased to over 3 lakh units. In FY25, Maruti Suzuki exported over 3.32 lakh units and sold 19.01 lakh units in the domestic market.

In January 2025, the company unveiled its first battery electric vehicle SUV – the e-VITARA at the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025 in New Delhi.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

DHEERAJ MISHRA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 24

AMID RECURRING threats of trade tariffs by US President Donald Trump, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday emphasised setting new records on exports in different sectors. Speaking at the Economic Times World Leaders Forum in Delhi, Modi said that India's automobile export has increased significantly.

"Till 2014, India used to export automobiles worth around Rs 50,000 crore. Today India is exporting automobiles worth Rs 1.2 lakh crore in a year. Today we have started exporting everything from metro coaches, rail coaches to locomotives. By the way, since I have come amongst you, let me tell you about another success of India. India is now going to export elec-

tric vehicles to 100 countries of the world. A major event related to this is scheduled for August 26," said Modi.

On August 26, Modi will inaugurate and flag off the e-VITARA – Maruti Suzuki's first global strategic battery electric vehicle (BEV), at the Suzuki Motor plant in Hansalpur, Ahmedabad. Officials said that these BEVs will be even exported to advanced markets like Europe and Japan.

Along with this, the Prime

minister will also inaugurate the next phase of India's battery ecosystem with the start of local production of hybrid battery electrodes at the TDS Lithium-Ion Battery plant in Gujarat. The plant, a joint venture of Toshiba, Denso and Suzuki, is expected to boost domestic manufacturing and clean energy innovation. With this, more than 80 per cent of the battery value will now be manufactured within India.

In January 2025, the company unveiled its first battery electric vehicle SUV – the e-VITARA at the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025 in New Delhi.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

BRIEFLY

'Permit to Starlink bars copying data overseas'

New Delhi: The government has approved a permit to Starlink after the company agreed to comply with domestic laws, including security conditions, which bar it from copying and decrypting data overseas and mirroring Indian user traffic on any system set up abroad, Minister of State for Communications Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar said.

FE



Jan Vishwas 2.0: What the Bill to amend 16 laws seeks to do

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 24

THE JAN Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025, which was introduced in Lok Sabha last week, seeks to amend 16 Central Acts in order to decriminalise and rationalise certain offences and penalties.

This is the second Jan Vishwas legislation brought in by the Narendra Modi government. The first Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023, decriminalised 183 provisions in 42 central acts administered by 19 ministries/departments.

"The 2025 Bill expands this reform agenda to cover 16 Central Acts administered by 10 ministries/departments... to further enhance trust-based governance for ease of living and doing business," the press release by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said.

Why was the Bill brought in?
A database put together by the Vidhi

Centre for Legal Policy contains 882 central laws, 370 of which have criminal provisions for 7,305 crimes. More than 75% of all crimes are defined under laws that regulate areas beyond core criminal justice, such as shipping, taxation, financial institutions, and municipal governance, Vidhi's research found.

Such overreach of criminal law is criticised for a number of reasons.

■ There are some severe punishments for seemingly small offences. For instance, one can be arrested in India for milking a cow on the street or not providing proper exercise to one's pet dog.

While many such criminal provisions are rarely enforced, they leave the door open for arbitrary exercise of power by the State and run contrary to the basic legal principle of proportionality in crime and punishment. Often, such laws are a product of outdated notions of morality and an overly paternalistic outlook taken up by the State, experts believe.

■ According to a 2022 report by the Observer Research Foundation, "of the 1,536

laws that govern doing business in India, more than half carry imprisonment clauses. Of the 69,233 compliances that businesses have to follow, 37.8% carry imprisonment clauses. More than half the clauses requiring imprisonment carry a sentence of at least one year."

Such overreach of criminal law, the report argues, "[has] created barriers to the smooth flow of ideas, organisation, money, entrepreneurship and through them the creation of jobs, wealth and GDP."

■ The excessive criminalisation further impacts India's already overburdened legal system. According to the National Judicial Data Grid, as on August 24, there were more than 3.6 crore pending criminal cases in India's district courts, more than 2.3 crore of which are more than one year old.

The criminal consequences prescribed for technical/procedural lapses and minor defaults clog the justice delivery system and put adjudication of serious offences on the back

burner," a Commerce Ministry press release from 2023, when the first Jan Vishwas Bill was introduced, stated, adding that the amendment "would go a long way in reducing undue pressure on the justice system, reduce the pendency of cases and help in a more efficient and effective justice dispensation".

What does the Bill do?

The 2025 Bill proposes amending 355 provisions, "288 provisions decriminalised to foster ease of doing business, and 67 provisions proposed to be amended to facilitate ease of living".

The 16 laws that will be amended are: Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934; Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940; Road Transport Corporation Act, 1950; Tea Act, 1953; Coir Industry Act, 1953; Handlooms (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act, 1985; Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957; Apprentice Act, 1961; Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 (MVA); New Delhi Municipal Council Act, 1994;

Central Silk Board Act, 1948; Textiles Committee Act, 1963; Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act, 1985; Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Act, 2006; Legal Metrology Act, 2009 (LMA); and Electricity Act, 2003.

What are the key features of the Bill?

■ The Bill introduces concepts of "warning" and "improvement notice" for first-time offenders in 76 offences under 10 Acts, including the MVA, the Apprentice Act, and the LMA.

For instance, a first-time offender will be served an improvement notice for the use of non-standard weights and measures, an offence which currently carries a penalty of upto Rs 1 lakh. This will require the offender to rectify the non-compliance within a specified time, failing which they can be punished with a fine.

■ The Bill, like its predecessor, removes imprisonment clauses for minor, technical or procedural defaults for a number of of-

fences, and replaces them with penalties or warnings. For instance, it proposes a fine (between Rs 10,000 and Rs 10 lakh) instead of the existing three-month imprisonment for non-compliance of orders under the Electricity Act, 2023.

■ The Bill also proposes rationalisation of penalties. It proposes higher penalties for repeated offences through an automatic 10% increase in the penalty every three years. This is aimed at achieving "deterrence without legislative amendments".

"The goal of Jan Vishwas is to create a more business-friendly environment and promote ease of living by eliminating unnecessary legal hurdles and simplifying the regulatory landscape," Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said on August 18.

This has been a key plank of the NDA government for the last 11 years.

The Bill has been referred to the Select Committee of Lok Sabha, which is supposed to submit its report by the first day of the next Parliament session.

EXPLAINED GLOBAL

GAZA: HOW THE IPC GLOBAL HUNGER MONITOR DETERMINES 'FAMINE'



Palestinians at a community kitchen in Gaza City in July. AP

A GLOBAL hunger monitor determined on August 22 that famine is taking place in Gaza, nearly two years after Israel launched a military campaign in the tiny Palestinian territory in response to the Hamas attack of October 7, 2023.

Who is confirming famine?

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is an independent body funded by Western countries and widely recognised as the main global system for measuring the severity of hunger crises.

It was set up to sound the alarm so that famine and mass starvation could be prevented and to help organisations respond.

The IPC is overseen by 19 major humanitarian organisations and regional bodies. It typically partners with national governments to analyse data.

How is famine determined?

The IPC system charts acute food insecurity on a five-phase scale. Its most extreme warning is Phase 5, which has two levels: catastrophe and famine.

If the IPC or one of its partners finds that at least one area is in famine, a famine review committee, led by up to six experts, is activated.

For an area to be classified as in a famine, at least 20% of people must be suffering extreme food shortages, with one in three children acutely malnourished and two people out of every 10,000 dying daily from starvation or malnutrition and disease.

The IPC says it does not formally declare famine, but provides analysis for governments and others to do so.

Even if a region has not yet been classified as in famine, the IPC can determine that households there are suffering famine conditions, which it describes as starvation, destitution and death.

What is the current assessment in the Gaza Strip?

Of the people affected, some 280,000 are in a northern region covering Gaza City, which the IPC said was in famine. The rest are in Deir al-Balah and Khan Younis – central and southern areas that the IPC projected would be in famine by the end of next month.

The IPC said the analysis released on August 22 only covered people living in the Gaza City, Deir al-Balah and Khan Younis areas. It was unable to classify the North Gaza governorate due to access restrictions and a lack of data, and it excluded any remaining population in the southern Rafah region.

REUTERS

The IPC relies on the UN World Food Programme and other relief organisations and government agencies to provide data.

Its preferred method for assessing acute malnutrition levels is to measure children's weight and height, or if conditions do not allow that, to measure the circumference of children's upper arms.

What are the precedents?

This is the fifth time in the past 14 years that a famine has been determined by the IPC, and the first time it has confirmed famine outside Africa.

The IPC previously concluded that there was famine in areas of Somalia in 2011, South Sudan in 2017 and 2020, and Sudan in 2024.

Some have criticised the IPC for being too slow to respond to serious humanitarian catastrophes. In Gaza, it has struggled to access data, and Israel has contested its findings.

While a famine classification does not trigger any formal response, it can focus global attention.

But this isn't the case with milk.

Price competitiveness in milk

The US has a Federal Milk Marketing Order (FMMO) system. Under it, processors have to pay a minimum price for the raw milk they procure from dairy farmers. The price is fixed every month for four uniform "classes" of milk:

- Class I (for sale as fluid/beverage milk);
- Class II (for making ice-cream, yogurt, sour cream and other soft dairy products);
- Class III (for cheese); and
- Class IV (for butter and milk powder).

The FMMO prices in July 2025 were \$18.82, \$19.31, \$17.32 and \$18.89 per hundredweight (45.36 kg) respectively for the above classes of milk containing 3.5% fat, which amounts to Rs 36.7 per litre (one litre of cow milk weighs 1.03 kg).

That's close to the Re 34/litre price that Maharashtra dairies are paying farmers for cow milk with 3.5% fat and 8.5% solids-not-fat (SNF) content. This makes the farmgate price of milk in India as, if not more, competitive as that in the US.

The competitiveness is more vis-à-vis

Europe. The average price for raw milk paid to farmers in the European Union was 53.17 euros per 100 kg in July, which, at Rs 101.5-to-the-euro, comes to about Rs 55.6 per litre.

Farmgate prices in New Zealand are now around 76 NZ dollars per 100 kg or Rs 39.9 per litre at Rs 51-to-the NZD. But this is for milk with 4.2% fat and 8.5% SNF content. For milk with lower 3.5% fat and 8.5% SNF, the price would be just under Rs 35 per litre. (Dairies are selling milk fat at roughly Rs 550/kg and SNF at Rs 250/kg; the realisations from the extra 0.7% fat and 0.5% SNF must be deducted to arrive at the equivalent price for 3.5% fat and 8.5% SNF milk).

Simply put, the milk prices received by Indian farmers are marginally below that in the US and New Zealand, and substantially lower than what European producers get.

Milk yields in India are poor by western standards. The average Indian milk cow, according to US Department of Agriculture data, produced 1,64 tonnes of milk in 2024. The corresponding numbers were 4,60 tonnes for New Zealand, 7,33 tonnes for the EU and 10,97 tonnes for the US.

The low yields notwithstanding, the production cost of milk in India isn't that high because dairying is labour-intensive. Cows have

to be fed and milked multiple times daily, besides being bathed regularly along with removal of dung and cleaning of their sheds. In addition, labour is required for planting, harvesting and storing fodder and feed.

Although dairy farms in the West have automated these operations – through milking machines, forage harvesters and balers, feeding robots, sensor-based cattle health monitoring, hot water high-pressure cleaners and bulk coolers – the low cost of labour makes it still cheaper to produce milk in India. Milk has a higher labour cost component relative to corn, soyabean or wheat.

Processing efficiency

The retail price of whole milk (containing 3.25% fat and 8.25% SNF) averaged \$4.37 per gallon or Rs 100.4 per litre (one gallon=3,785 litres) last month in the US.

On the other hand, the Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation's (GCMMF) toned 'Amul Taaza' milk (with 3% fat and 8.5% SNF) is retailing at Rs 55 per litre in Gujarat and Rs 57 in the national capital region.

Taking a farmgate price of Rs 31.5/litre for toned milk in India and Rs 35/litre for whole milk in the US, after adjusting for the lower fat percentages, the Indian farmer would be

receiving 55-57% of the price paid by the consumer here. That's more than the 35% share of the consumer dollar for the US farmer.

If efficiency is measured by price spreads from the farm to consumer, the Indian dairy sector scores pretty high. GCMMF, in fact, claims its farmers in Gujarat are getting Rs 44-45 per litre for cow milk (3.5% fat and 8.5% SNF) and Rs 65-66 for buffalo milk (6.5% fat and 9% SNF) – much more than the Rs 34-35 and Rs 58-59/litre that private dairies are paying. Thus, it is sharing over three-fourths of the consumer rupee with the Gujarat farmer.

This is due to efficiency in procurement, processing, transport and marketing, enabling a compression of the value chain. A cooperative's aim is to maximise the ratio of the farm value of milk to the retail sale value of products.

The challenge

India's price competitiveness in milk derives primarily from the low cost of labour. That includes unpaid family labour having few employment avenues outside of agriculture.

The dairy farmer basically seeks to recover only paid-out costs (on feed, hired labour, veterinary care and other purchased inputs), while not imputing any value on family labour or owned land. Any money earned over and above pocket-paid expenses constitutes "return".

But this model may not be viable in the long run, with farm labour becoming increasingly scarce and expensive. As the reluctance to work on the farm goes up with rising education, even family labour has an "opportunity cost".

India, unlike New Zealand, has no abundant land to grow alfalfa fodder for cattle to graze on and sustain a low-cost pasture-based dairy farming system. Capital and energy costs are also too high to afford heavy investments in farm automation like in the US.

The US, incidentally, had a mere 24,470 dairy farms producing milk from 9.3 million cows in 2022. India has upwards of 50 million farmers engaged in dairying with some 110 million milk cows and buffaloes.

The future of Indian dairyling may lie in a different model of selective mechanisation, boosting milk yields through genetic improvement and new breeding technologies, and on-farm cultivation of high-tonnage protein-rich green fodder grasses.

The focus has to be on reducing the cost of milk production so as to maintain the global competitiveness of India's dairy sector, which cannot be based on cheap labour alone.

Arctic sea ice melting has slowed, but here is why this isn't 'good news'

ALIND CHAUHAN
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 24

FOR MORE than half a century, the melting of sea ice in the Arctic has been among the most well-known indicators of climate change. But a new study has revealed that the pace of sea ice loss has slowed down in the past 20 years.

This does not mean that the Arctic sea ice is rebounding – the slowdown is only temporary and may continue for another five to 10 years, the study said.

The research was conducted by M R England, who led the study while at the University of Exeter (the UK) with his colleagues J Screen and A C Chan, and L M Polvani of Columbia University (the US). Titled 'Minimal Arctic Sea Ice Loss in the Last 20 Years, Consistent With Internal Climate Variability', it was published in the

journal *Geophysical Research Letters* earlier this month.

England, now at the University of California, Irvine, has told *The Indian Express* over email that the findings do not affect "fundamental science and urgency for climate action... Multi-decadal fluctuations in ice loss rates do not reduce the need for immediate action to mitigate climate change impacts."

It has long been established that human activities – primarily, the burning of fossil fuels that emits heat-trapping greenhouse gases (GHGs) – have led to a rise in global temperatures. In the Arctic, this warming has resulted in the melting of sea ice.

Research has shown that the region has lost more than 10,000 cubic kilometres of sea ice since the 1980s ('Arctic sea ice thickness, volume, and multiyear ice coverage: losses and coupled variability 1958–2018').



Polar bears in Norway in 2012. AP

Environmental Research Letters, 2018.

Anthropogenic global warming, however, is not the only factor that affects the Arctic sea ice. Natural variations in the Earth's climate system are also at play. One such variation is the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO), which refers to a fluctuation in sea surface temperatures (SSTs) in

the equatorial Pacific Ocean that occurs every two to seven years. ENSO influences, alters, and interferes with global atmospheric circulation, which, in turn, influences the weather worldwide.

England suggests these natural climate variances could be behind the slowdown in the melting of Arctic sea ice.

"For the purpose of our study, we would be thinking of climate variations on a longer timescale, such as the Pacific Decadal Oscillation, which is similar to ENSO but on a longer timescale, and Atlantic Multidecadal Variability (a fluctuation of SSTs in the North Atlantic). These climate variations can bring anomalously cool waters into the Arctic region and lead to less loss of sea ice or expansion in some areas," he said.

ON THE RECENT BILLS

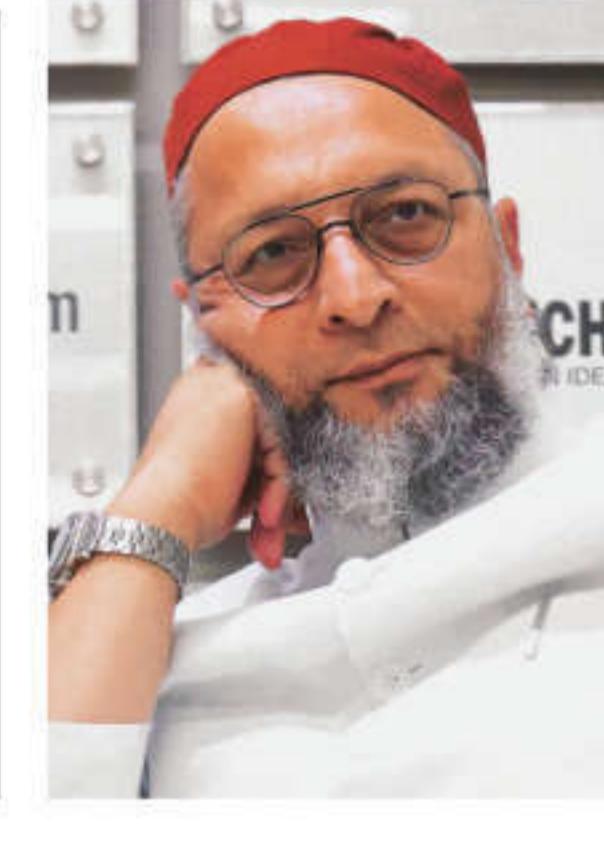
These three Bills are making the Executive very powerful, violating the principle of separation of powers, which is part of the basic structure... I feel this was the 1933 Gestapo moment in Indian political history



WHY ASADUDDIN OWAISI

Hyderabad MP and the current President of All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) Asaduddin Owaisi, 56, punches much above his electoral heft both inside and outside Parliament. A barrister from London's Lincoln's Inn, he is one of the fiercest critics of the Narendra Modi government in the Opposition

ranks and has slammed the three amendment bills introduced in Parliament. Known for his fiery oratory and forceful political rhetoric, Owaisi is among the few MPs who make powerful and well-researched interventions in Parliament. He was also part of international delegations post Operation Sindoos



ON A SHIFT IN HIS IMAGE POST PAHALGAM ATTACK SPEECHES

You don't speak for a country so that some Johnny would like you. You don't speak against a barbaric attack, which happened in Pahalgam, to appease some leader or some organisation

'For so-called secular parties, we are only good for iftar parties, Ajmer chadar... (today) anyone can marginalise the Muslim community'

AIMIM Party Chief and MP Asaduddin Owaisi on allegations of vote *chori*, Modi 3.0 and lack of Muslim leadership at the national level. The conversation was moderated by Manoj CG, Chief of Bureau (Politics), *The Indian Express*



Asaduddin Owaisi (right) in conversation with Manoj CG, Chief of National Bureau (Politics) *Tashi Tobgyal*

Manoj CG: Do you see any difference in Modi 3.0 in Parliament?

There's no difference whether it is 2014, 2019 or 2024. They are as aggressive in terms of implementing their ideology and achieving their Hindutva goals. The reason is that the parties that are supporting the BJP, whether it is TDP, JDU, Chirag Paswan's party (Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas)) — they are not able to establish their importance. That is why BJP feels that it can go ahead. In fact, I read today that even their allies didn't know that they were going to bring those three bills.

Manoj CG: You were one of the MPs who raised objections to the introduction of the three bills — The Constitution (130th Amendment) Bill, Government of Union Territories (Amendment) Bill and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill. What are your main concerns?

This practice of sending bills to the MPs at 12.30 am should change. To sit and read and then speak to some lawyers who know what it is and then file a notice to oppose their introduction — it becomes very difficult. But the important thing, for which I had given a notice to oppose, was that this violates the theory of separation of powers. The Executive would be taking over the role of Legislature. These three bills are making the Executive very powerful. Secondly, it undermines our democracy, wherein as a minister one is answerable to the people of that state. Now here you are answerable to, what I call the unelected dictators — the bureaucrats. And thirdly, can any state government take a decision, which, in their opinion, is a populist decision? The bureaucrats will refuse. And lastly, you have Article 74(1) in the Constitution that says that the President should act on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers. The Constitution says this. This bill says that the President can remove the PM. And wherever the governor is appointed by the Executive and any decision which any government takes, which is unpalatable to the Executive, then you have ED, CBI, IT entering into it. The main heads of all these organisations are appointed by the Executive. So you can expect disaster. This was the 1933 Gestapo moment in Indian political history.

Vikas Pathak: There is a line of thought that Muslims in India feel cornered but your politics ends up in seats where Muslims are in good population and divides the Muslim vote. Do you agree?

No, I am ready to debate with anyone who is making this claim. How is it that my contesting is helping X or Y? It has no role. The data tells you that the NDA Alliance is getting 50 per cent of the polled Hindu votes. Muslims are not only marginalised socially and educationally but also politically. The real question is how do you stop BJP from getting that much of the majority community votes? It is not me but if they want to give me the credit, I am ready to accept it because that makes me more important in Indian politics. But the real issue is this: even in Seemandhal last time, we were part of this alliance with Babu Singh Kushwaha. We were given 19 seats. We won five. In the remaining six, the RJD alliance won. And even if you add up the votes which our candidate got, that would not have helped the NDA alliance. The remaining nine were won by the NDA alliance. Our votes would not have really helped the RJD alliance to win. Now we have this debate about *chori*. Who stole my four MLAs? And when the same thing happened to the Shiv Sena and then in Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, it was called a murder of democracy. But you take away my four MLAs. Is that an act of Gandhianism?

Jatin Anand: You were part of the international delegations post Operation Sindoos. There have been questions on whether India was able to sustain the narrative of war against Pakistan after the Pahalgam attack.

Indian government should have spoken to international journalists immediately after May 7. They didn't do it for reasons better known to them. The delegation, which I was part of, was headed by Baijayantra Panda and wherever we went — from Bahrain and Kuwait to Saudi Arabia and Algeria — we were very well received. All these countries were telling us, why don't you speak to Pakistan? So we told them that we had spoken to them in the past — after 26/11 and then during the attack on Air Force base (2016 Pathankot attack). In fact, I criticised the PM for inviting ISI to the air base but nothing came out. I cannot speak of the others but in our delegation, we were successful in putting forward India's viewpoint.

Deeptiman Tiwary: Most parties, in the past 10 years, have been shy of talking about Muslims. Do you think BJP's

Asad Rehman: Rahul Gandhi has been raising allegations of vote *chori*. There was a large protest in Delhi. Where is your party on these allegations?

Our state president in Bihar, Akhtarul Iman, is a petitioner in the Supreme Court. Before the campaign started, all Opposition parties, including the BJP candidate and some Congress leaders, went to the Election Commission (EC) and said that in Hyderabad Parliament constituency and one Assembly segment, where our MLA was there, these things have happened. So the EC took the media to three places with video cameras. There were more than 96 per cent voters living there and EC wrote a letter saying that you have given a false complaint. So I used that letter in the election campaign to show them what they are doing. If SIR (Special Intensive Revision) happens and if names of genuine voters are not included, then there will be questions raised about their citizenship. If you read the instructions given by the EC to Electoral Registration Officer (ERO), they are that if you find someone suspicious or you don't find them after three visits, you give it to the ERO and he in turn can inform the competent authority under the Citizenship Act 1955. So, for me, SIR is important. And our experience of Bihar tells us that the majority of Muslim names are being excluded or not included. That is very worrisome.

Deeptiman Tiwary: Why hasn't an enlightened Muslim leadership risen at the national level?

How do you make a leadership? You make leadership by encouraging the community. Whether it is upper caste leadership, Dalit leadership, backward class leadership, the parties encourage them. You bring them to the forefront. But if you don't do it, BJP will never do it. They don't even

have a Muslim MP. The other parties have only made us showboys. We are only there to show that these people are secular. And we are only good for holding *iftar* parties, taking a *chadar* of flowers to Ajmer Sharif. We have been reduced to this symbolism. That is why I had said in UP 'Kab tak aap dari bichhayenge? Neta baniye' (Till when will you lay out the durries? Become a leader). No one wants to. When I talk of political empowerment of Muslims, it is looked at in a very weird way. Why is it that you have fewer number of Muslim MPs?

It is not because of Muslims who don't have enlightened leadership, it is because some people are not enlightened in terms of accepting the spirit of the Constitution. They have forgotten the independence struggle. We are living in an age wherein anyone can discard, marginalise the Muslim community.

Liz Mathew: What do you make of India's response to Gaza's situation?

We are just keeping quiet. This Modi-led government is not condemning Israel's killing of over 62,000 Palestinians. You have 20,000 children who are dead over there. Every day people are shot just because they are going to collect food and not a single word is uttered by the PM or by his government. And then you stand up and say, we stand for a two-state solution. If they come out openly and condemn it, which other global south countries have done, then that would be a great change. But if you want the global south to listen to India, then you

ON DEVELOPING MUSLIM LEADERSHIP

You make leadership by encouraging the community. You bring them to the forefront. But if you don't do it, BJP will never do it. They don't even have a Muslim MP

have to also listen to what they are doing. Now is the time for Mr Modi to be on the right side of history.

Aakash Joshi: What do you make of the relative silence of the national parties on the Bangladeshi issue, where a poor Bengali, often Muslim, is picked up without due process.

Why are we keeping that deposited leader in our country? Send her back. We will then have good relations with the present regime. You have these poor Bengali-speaking Indians who happened to be from Malda or Murshidabad, who were put on an aircraft and sent from Pune to Kolkata airport and then they were dumped in no man's land. And what right does the police have? Anyone who speaks Bengali becomes a Bangladeshi? This shows the xenophobia which has penetrated.

Shahid Parvez: After Pahalgam attack, many of your statements on Pakistan went viral and various quarters on the Right started seeing you in a new light. Why do you think this happened?

You don't speak for a country so that some Johnny would like you. You don't speak against a barbaric attack, which happened in Pahalgam, to appease some leader or some organisation. But if this brings them to, 'Oh, we didn't know this side of him', I cannot blame them. In 2012-13, too, I was part of a delegation which went to Pakistan along with Mani Shankar Aiyar and Yashwant Sinha. And in that group, there was Kirti Azad, who was in the BJP then; Supriya Sule was there. We said the same thing in Pakistan. Now they have been hating me for opposing the Bill. In a democracy, everyone has the right to criticise.

Vandita Mishra: The BJP's majoritarian politics excludes minorities in a very real sense, but what about the hesitation of the so-called secular parties in speaking up?

The so-called secular parties have just abdicated their responsibility. They have realised that we should talk less about Muslims and more about development issues and progress. How do you accept the marginalisation of 15-16 per cent of the population and talk about progress? The problem is with the Muslim community as well. They should do a political suicide by not voting for this party completely. Because even if you vote for them, BJP is still winning or some communal guy is still winning. Muslims should realise enough is enough.

You have to assert yourself and assertion does not mean helping the BJP. It means that you believe in the constitutional message that you must attain your rights. You have to achieve those liberties, that objective of fraternity, justice, equality. No one is going to come and give it to you on a platter.

Vandita Mishra: Whenever an election comes around, there is a conspiracy theory about you helping the BJP.

I want to ask them: give me proof. During elections, there are many theories which suddenly emanate and these theories start 48 hours before the polling day. How long can one talk about this nonsense when the reality is completely different?

Shalini Langer: The new NCERT module holds Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Congress and Lord Mountbatten responsible for Partition. Why is Partition still a debate?

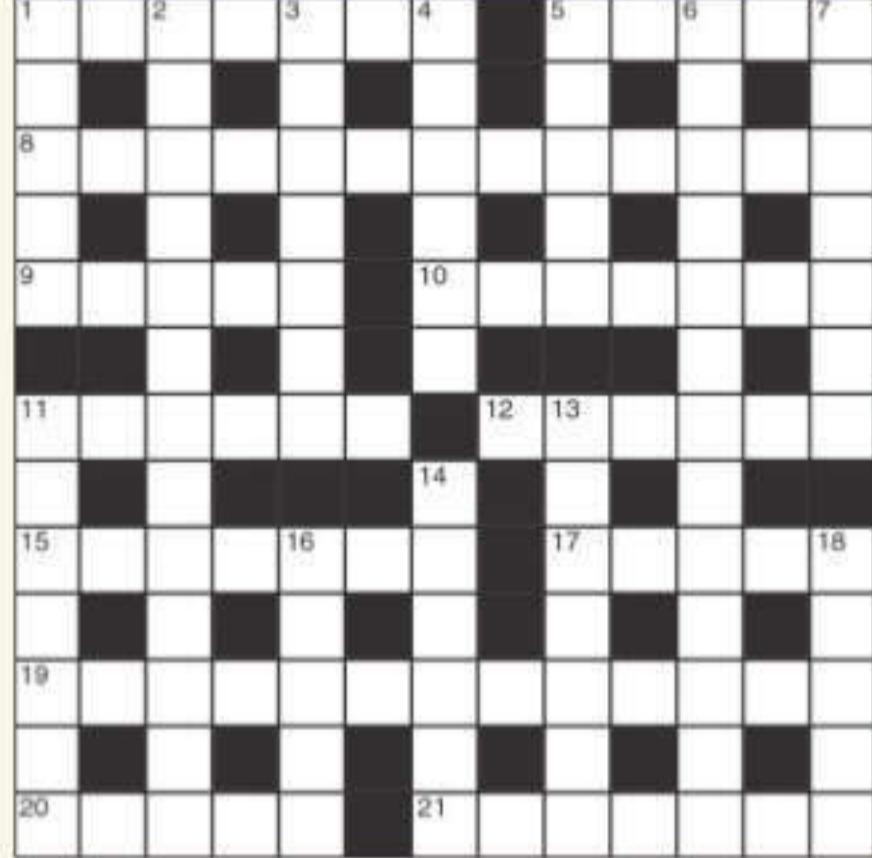
The BJP uses Partition because they don't have a single individual who participated in the freedom movement. They can't show one photograph, one name. They're very good at appropriating Subhash Chandra Bose and Baba Ambedkar. Ninety per cent Muslims didn't have the right to vote. It is only the *jagirdar* or the zamindars who did. To blame Partition on Muslims is completely wrong. That's why I said I'm going to write a letter to the NCERT that please include Shamsul Islam's book, *Muslims Against Partition*, so that people know how Partition really happened. We lost one million lives. RSS has nothing to show. Yes, that country (Pakistan) was given a religion, but this country stood for pluralism and diversity.

Sameeksha Mishra: BJP often talks of appeasement politics. How does one talk about rights of the Muslim community but also not give in to their narrative of appeasement politics?

BJP does not believe in any kind of justice to the Muslim community because of their ideology of Hindutva. How do you deflate this argument and expose BJP by giving empirical evidence. For example, what the PM said about infiltration. Demography is changing. It's completely rubbish. The population decadal growth in Bihar and Assam is lower than the state... In one place it's lower than the national decadal population growth. They refuse to give a number on infiltration. How is it that Muslim numbers have increased in self-employment and have come down in labour? So one will have to speak and expose BJP.



CROSSWORD 5763



- ACROSS**
- He won't play at any price (7)
 - 5 Worn cuffs (5)
 - 8 It will prevent the sheets getting awry (5,8)
 - 9 It happens to be heading to the exit (5)
 - 10 The ancestry of the railway era? (7)
 - 11 Reveal first woman about to be incorporated (6)
 - 12 Seize a king before all others (6)
 - 13 Conspirator who follows the flight of a plane (7)
 - 17 It's pleasant being about an hour in recess (5)
 - 19 Goes to the dogs? (5,2,6)
 - 20 How to water some flowers? (5)
 - 21 Operation giving boost to the railway? (7)
- DOWN**
- There's plenty found among damp leaves (5)
 - 2 Sweet request for a perfect arrangement (5-3,5)
 - 3 Capricious man about to betray one's trust (7)
 - 4 Actually make friends again (6)
 - 5 It's an unusual material (5)
 - 6 The time it takes for ill-feeling to be removed (13)
 - 7 A reptile makes an unusual present (7)
 - 11 Premise for breaking rules (7)
 - 13 Deep hatred privately expressed (7)
 - 14 They may advance or stop if ordered (6)
 - 16 Portion of rabbit; a style of savoury (5)
 - 18 Composition makes easy point (5)

Solutions Crossword 5763 Across: 1 Rungs, 8 Turn tail, 9 Stove, 10 Stampede, 11 Award, 12 Leo, 16 Freeze, 17 Deed, 18 Ave, 23 Embroid, 24 Salvaged, 25 Skein, 26 Loathing, 27 Brake Down: 2 Untoward, 3 Governed, 4 Auntie, 5 Gnome, 6 Paper, 7 Elves, 12 Leo, 13 Ode, 14 Toymaker, 15 Maverick, 19 Vienna, 20 Psalm, 21 Float, 22 Cache

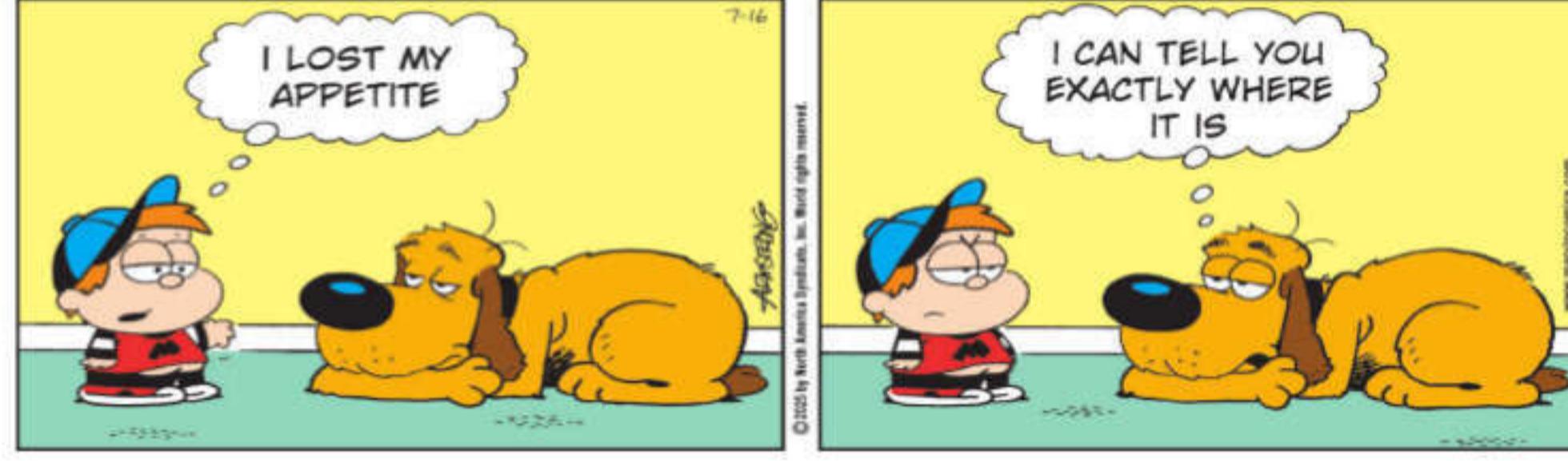
OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBES by Bill Watterson

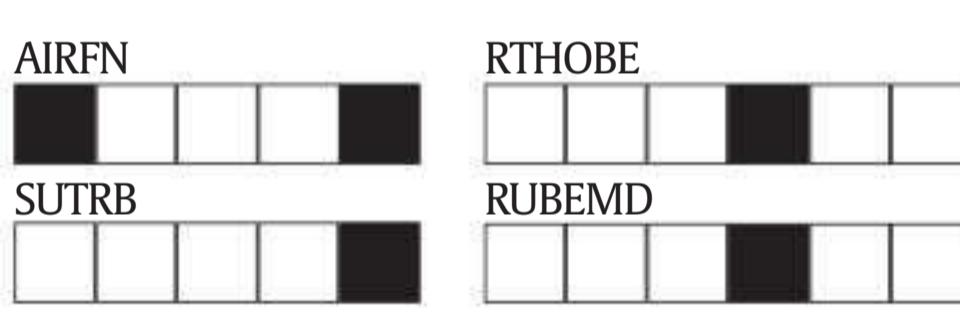


MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.
— with its iron sinews, clasps us and leads us day by day. - Alphonse de Lamartine (5)



Answers: Hand which is iron sinews, clasps us and leads us day by day - Alphonse de Lamartine
Solutions: INFRA, BURST, BROTHER DUMBER

SUDOKU 6056

Difficulty Level 5s

Instructions
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

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

Difficulty Level
1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy;
3s = Medium; 4s = Hard;
5s = Very Hard;
6s = Genius

SOLUTION SUDOKU 6055

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

DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Today it's Uranus, that most distant of celestial bodies, which gives you the chance to skip the normal preliminaries in putting your ambitions into effect. Cash questions will preoccupy you later on, perhaps with unexpected results.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Your planetary patterns are favourable, all the more so if your inclination is generally inspired. The closer you come to practical responsibilities, the greater the need for additional care and caution.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Partners can't read your mind, so tell them what you think. If your aims are professional, and if you're planning a spot of personal promotion, you could do worse than set your sights on the next few days.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

Business affairs will occupy your attention. Your financial stars are looking less complex than this time last year and today you may cut across a whole series of irrelevant hangovers like the proverbial hot knife through butter.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

The ball is in your court. Tackle private affairs and deal with professional activities only if you feel a deep motivation. Romantic encounters and sentimental journeys are desirable, if only because the results may be more delightful than expected.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

Any feelings of uncertainty or confusion should be short-lived and by late tomorrow you could be back in the driving seat. Remember that you're now into a fantastically productive long-term cycle. The world will judge you by your deeds rather than your words.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Sometimes you just have to pay more attention to your own needs. After a long period of social responsibility, you may begin to streamline your personal commitments. If you're typical of your sign, your inclination is to withdraw from a particular public arena.

SECTION 1
Executive Engineer, Chopal Division HPPWD Chopal
NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)
No. PW.CHD.CB.E-9/2025-
The Executive Engineer, Chopal Division, HPPWD Chopal on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh invites the Percentage Rate Bids, in electronic tendering system, for following work(s), from the eligible and approved contractors registered with HPPWD.

Sl. No.	Name of the work	Estimated Cost (in Rs. Lakhs) including all taxes and GST.)	Total Cost (in Rs. Lakhs) including all Taxes and 18% GST.)	Period of Completion for construction part:	Contract Period	Bid Security (in Rs. lakhs)
1	Periodic Maintenance of Nervia to Bajpal road KM 0.00 to 2.96 (SH)- Providing and laying renewal coat using Bituminous Concrete 25mm thick re-rectification of road surface and Thermoplastic Paint Strip and 3 years routine maintenance at KM 0.000 to 4/290 under Additional sanction PMGSY Incentive for the year 2023-26	36.60	30.21	Three months (90 days) for Initial Rectification+ Periodical Renewal-3 months in 90 days* 5 Year Routine Rectification and Periodical Renewal ie 60 months (1800 days)	Total is 6 months (1800 days) for Initial Rectification+ Periodical Renewal-3 months in 90 days* 5 Year Routine Rectification and Periodical Renewal ie 60 months (1800 days)	1.74

1. Cost of bid form: Rs. 2000.00 per Package (Non Refundable) only.
2. Maintenance period is Five years after completion of Initial rectification+ Periodic Renewal completion date.
3. Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement: 21/08/2025.
4. Last Date/ Time for receipt of bids through e-tendering: 02.09.2025 upto 1700 hrs.
5. The technical qualification part of the bids will be opened online at 1100 hours on 03.09.2025 in the office of Executive Engineer, Chopal Division HPPWD Chopal by the authorized officers. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened online on the next working day at the same time.
6. The bidder must have uploaded the proof of possessing HMP and Paver etc.
7. The bidder are requested to quote their rates for construction part only. The bidder is not required to quote his rates for routine maintenance as these rates are pre specified by the authority and the payment for routine maintenance to the contractor shall be regulated based on his performance of maintenance activities.
The Bidders are advised to note other details for tenders from the department website www.hptenders.gov.in and any corrigendum will be uploaded on the website only.

No. 2560/2025-2026/HP

GOVERNMENT OF NCT OF DELHI
Delhi Subordinate Services Selection Board
(D.S.S.S.B)
FC-18, INSTITUTIONAL AREA,
KARKARDOOMA, DELHI-110092
Website: <https://dsssb.delhi.gov.in>

No. F.1(383)/P&P/DSSSB/2024/Advt./3092 Dated: 21/08/2025

VACANCY NOTICE

ADVERTISEMENT NO. 04/2025

Online Applications are invited from the eligible candidates for various posts under Delhi High Court as detailed below :-

Total number of Posts / Vacancies	02 Posts/20 Vacancies
Date of Commencement of Online Applications	26th August, 2025
Last date of Online Application Submission	24th September, 2025

The eligible candidates are advised to visit DSSSB's website <https://dsssb.delhi.gov.in/dsssb-vacancies> to check the detailed advertisement and confirm their eligibility for the above vacancies based on the Recruitment Rules of the indenting department. Candidates must apply online through the website <https://dssbsonline.nic.in/>. The closing date for submission of online application is up to 24/09/2025 (Till 11:59 PM) after which the link will be disabled.

To Download Advertisement, Scan QR Code
DIP/Shabdharth/Classified/0228/25-26

Sd/- Deputy Secretary (P&P)

DIP/Shabdharth/Classified/0226/25-26

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY ROORKEE ROORKEE - 247667

REQUEST FOR BIDS

IIT Roorkee invites online bids for purchase of BROAD BAND SEISMOGRAPH under World Bank project vide following RFB:

RFB No: 2024250624/MM-5/IITR/2024-25/BROAD BAND SEISMOGRAPH/EQE/RT-1/492

Activity No: IN-IIT-441490-GO-RFB

For more details, you may visit e-Procurement portal <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>.

Deputy Registrar(MM)

BIHAR STATE MILK CO-OPERATIVE FEDERATION LTD.

Dairy Development Complex, Post - B.V. College, Patna-800014

Phone No- 224083, 2228953, 2228347, 2220387, Tel No-0612-2228306

Website : www.suda.coop Email-: marketingcooperative@gmail.com

ANNUAL RATE CONTRACT (ARC)

(Through e-tendering mode only on website- www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in)

NIT No.: Comfed: Mktg.: 8715 Date: 22.08.2025

1. Name & address of advertiser- Managing Director, Bihar State Milk Cooperative Federation Ltd (COMFED), Dairy Development Complex, P.O. - B.V. College, Patna - 800014. Bid submission end date & time by the bidders:- 17.09.2025 (Wednesday) up to 5.00 pm at COMFED HQ, Dairy Development Complex, P.O. - B.V. College, Patna-800014. Bid submission end date & time as allowed in the tender document:- 18.09.2025 (Thursday) up to 3.00 pm at COMFED HQ, Dairy Development Complex, P.O. - B.V. College, Patna-800014. 6. Date & time of placing of Techno Commercial bid (Bid Part)- 18.09.2025 (Thursday) up to 03.30 pm on www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in . 7. Date & time of opening of price bid:- www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in 8. Bid Validity:- 180 Days (One hundred eighty days) 9.0 Details of work:-

Sl. No. Name of the work/item Cost of tender documents fees to be paid through online Ernest money to be deposited through online Estimated Quantity Bid processing fees to be paid through online (Non refundable)

01 Annual Rate Contract for Supply of Cryocan to Bihar State Milk Co-operative Federation Ltd. (COMFED) ₹ 1,000/- (One Thousand) ₹ 5,00,000/- (Five lakh) 300 (Three Hundred forty five) As per Eproc2 website

10. For participation in the above e-tender process the bidders are required to give themselves registered as per details given at www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in so that the user ID, Password and digital signatures are issued to them.

11.0 Tender document can be seen and purchased on web site www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in. Any modification/amendment in tender will be notified on e-portal.

The undersigned reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason.

GENERAL MANAGER

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

BORDER SECURITY FORCE

PLAYING TODAY

■ US Open: Men's singles and Women's singles; Round 1: 8:30 pm onwards; Live on Star Sports & JioHotstar

As a little boy from the small town of Rajkot, along with my parents, I set out to aim for the stars; and dreamt to be a part of the Indian cricket team. Little did I know then that this game would give me so much... above all a chance to represent my state and this great nation.

CHETESHWAR PUJARA, ANNOUNCING HIS RETIREMENT FROM ALL FORMS OF INDIAN CRICKET

THE LAST TEST SPECIALIST

With Pujara's retirement, Test cricket has lost the last of its stonewalling greats; in the high points India scaled under Kohli, Pujara left his stamp too

SANDIP G
AUGUST 24

THE ART of batting time has lost its greatest modern devotee. Cheteshwar Pujara, whose best friend on the cricket field was time, and who in his peak batted as long as he wanted to, has bade farewell to the game he loved, and a game that loved him back. The end was as simple as his entire career was, without the obsession for limelight, with a quiet dignity and worldly-wisdom to expect a perfectly-choreographed farewell. The face when he penned the farewell note would have been as stern as his bat, when he blocked a 90mph thunderbolt rearing to his rib-cage.

The numbers he etched are admirable. He retires as his country's eighth highest run-getter in the longest format (7,195 runs and 19 hundreds at 43.60). A lean spell towards the end of his 103-Test career diminished his average. But the skinny child with gleaming eyes who faced thousands balls a day under a neem tree in Rajkot's 3, Kothi Ground from his father Arvind, a first-class cricketer and Railway employee, would gleefully and humbly accept the numbers.

The legacy he leaves behind would overwhelm him. There have been more talented Indian batsmen, more technically-refined and dominant ones, more artful purveyors. But none could lay claim to the Pujara feat—shape and define India's maiden series triumph in Australia. A hundred men had toiled for 71 years to conquer the elusive, golden peak. For this, he would be immortalised in the country's cricketing consciousness, even if his numbers are forgotten. His 521 runs, 1,258 balls he faced, three fourth of which he blunted, and three hundreds in the series would be as precious in India's cricket history as Sunil Gavaskar's 774 in West Indies in 1970-71, or the spin trifecta's 37 wickets in the epochal triumph in England the same season.

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Like most great batsmen of his era, he reserved his finest for Australia. Against them, home and away, he averaged 49.38 and wrought five hundreds. The man he inherited the No.3 throne from, Rahul Dravid, mustered 38.67 and two hundreds. He aggregated 43.47 in matches India won overseas; Kohli's corresponding average was 40.57. In winning causes abroad, he scored more hundreds than Kohli too (6 to 4), making him an understated match-winner of his times. He has faced 16,217 balls, 1,131 more than Sunil Gavaskar. Only 29 batsmen have faced more deliveries than Pujara. He was not cynically stumped, though. His passage from 50 to 100 was often a breeze, a settled phase he punished the slightest of loose balls.

There was a tragic streak to his career too. After the Australia pinnacle, when it seemed that his career would soar, it mysteriously slumped. He fought and hoped. He took the ouster from the team on his chin and hit the domestic dustbowls and county green carpets, where he grounded the runs again, and hoped he would get a shot at ending his career on a high it richly deserved. He was snubbed several times in his career, in search of more dynamic batsmen, but he kept bouncing back stronger.

With his departure, cricket has lost the last of its stonewalling tenants too. In the Bazball era, in a milieu when the shadows of the shortest format is spreading longer on the longest format, another chip off the Pujara block looks unlikely to emerge. But the world of cricket commentary would be richer, as he showed the requisite to excel with a mic in his hand with his shrewd observations and unaffected tone. He keeps loving the game and the game keeps loving him back too.

By then, his mother Reena has instilled the virtues of humility and single-mindedness in him. "His personality is because of his mother," Arvind had once told The Indian

lot of patience and commitment and put a heavy price on my wicket. It became a habit, and I carried it to international cricket.

You also prepared meticulously in the nets, whether you were in bad touch or good.

For me, it was more of a routine because you find out your success mantra there. It was about going into the nets and hitting as many balls as possible. Whether I scored runs or not didn't matter. But later on in my career, I also realised that it's not just about quantity but also quality which is important. So later on, I realised the importance of managing time and being smart. You don't need to bat for 45 minutes if you can achieve the same thing in 15 minutes. But that only comes with the experience. So earlier days, it was always about quantity, but as I played more cricket, I realised that the balance of quality and quantity is important.

How did you understand that you have hit your zone?

There was nothing specific as such. It is always about being focused and starting carefully, getting through the first half an hour, whether I had been scoring runs or not.



Like most great batsmen of his era, Cheteshwar Pujara reserved his finest for Australia. Against them, he averaged 49.38 and made five hundreds. Sportzpics

NUMBER PLATE

6529

Pujara scored 90.74% of his Test runs while batting at No 3. His tally is only behind Rahul Dravid among Indians, and sixth overall in the game's history: behind Kumar Sangakkara, Dravid, Ricky Ponting, Kane Williamson and Hashim Amla.

993 Away from India, Pujara scored the most runs in Australia, amassing 993 runs in 21 innings, with five centuries and an average of 47.28. Pujara averaged approximately 124 minutes per innings in Test cricket, behind Rahul Dravid and Sachin Tendulkar among Indians.

'ALWAYS REASSURING'

"Pujara, it was always reassuring to see you walk out at No.3. You brought calm, courage, and a deep love for Test cricket every time you played. Your solid technique, patience, and composure under pressure have been a pillar for the team."

SACHIN TENDULKAR (VIA X)

"Someone who always put his mind, body and soul for the country! Many congratulations on an outstanding career Puji!"

YUVRAJ SINGH (VIA X)

so it was important for me to concentrate my best for the first 20 minutes to feel that I am in some kind of zone. If I batted one session, I was fairly confident I would have to commit a mistake for the bowler to get me out.

Even when you were at the non-striker's end, you always used to watch the ball till it reached the fielder.

I did this just to keep the concentration going. You don't face every ball, and you are at the non-striker's end. But watching the ball, your eyes begin to open up a bit more, you become a bit more alert, your concentration intensifies, and you are telling your brain to do that little bit more. Over a period of time, it becomes a habit.

Batsmen talk about switching off between deliveries? What were your routines?

I didn't have any particular habit or routine. I used to look around the stadium. Sometimes, some of the stadiums are quite scenic and you appreciate it. Then you pick a spot in the stadium where you just look between balls. Also, I had the habit of tapping on the pitch, so I used to just walk down

Father-son journey that put Saurashtra on the map

SANDEEP DWIVEDI

AUGUST 24

A COUPLE of days back, Cheteshwar Pujara informed his father Arvind about his decision to retire from all forms of cricket. "Don't you want to play another Ranji Trophy season?" – was the reflex reaction by the man whose obsessive commitment to technically-perfect batting had made his son India's all-time Top 10 Test run-getter. "No," said Cheteshwar.

Arvind, 74, understood it was time to officially fold up the highly successful pet project. According to Cheteshwar, his father gave that wise nod, the one he gave when he connected the ball from the meat of the bat in the nets, let his body lean on the backrest of his easy chair and gave a big smile of contentment. "He looked relaxed and even I am feeling a lot lighter."

And thus ended a unique cricketing journey that began at Rajkot, successfully negotiating the twists and turns of the maze where many have lost their way, to reach the fulcrum of Indian batting.

When Cheteshwar was still Chintu, barely 3, Arvind noticed that his son would always have his eyes on the ball while smashing it with his tiny plastic bat. By 8, mother Reena had stitched a pair of mini-pads from an old mattress. At 14, Cheteshwar scored a triple hundred in a BCCI tournament. Months after turning 18, he was named Man of the Series at the Under-19 World Cup. A Test debut came at 22 and he has put his bat to rest for good at 37.

India's long-time No.3 has called it a day. Pujara finished with 103 Tests, 7,195 runs, averaging 43, just ahead of batting stalwarts like Dilip Vengsarkar and Mohammad Azharuddin. In a nation that has periodically produced internationally-acclaimed batsmen, he is the 8th highest run-maker ever. However, there was one achievement that none of the 7 above him – Tendulkar, Dravid, Gavaskar, Kohli, Laxman, Sehwag, Ganguly – could match.

In 2018, Pujara scaled a peak that no Indian cricketer had reached. He single-handedly trounced the mighty Aussies at their home. He scored three hundreds, compiled 521 runs and faced 1,258 balls to be the Man of the Series in India's first-ever Test series triumph Down Under. No Indian team had done it for 71 years and 11 tours. Others would have more runs, centuries, fame, fortune and endorsements but Pujara would have his 'Australia' – that priceless memory that no one can match.

Small-town outlier

In the Indian pantheon of greats, Pujara is an outlier, the lone specialist batsman who isn't from a major metro. In the crowd of achievers from Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad – he is the lone small-towner.

Since the time of Raj, batting was an elite pursuit. The kings would bat, their retinue would bowl. Even at the start of the century when Sourav Ganguly ensured fair representation for Little India in the Indian team, it was only bowlers who were able to break the barrier. There would be Zaheer Khan, Munaf Patel, Irfan Pathan and Harbhajan Singh, but the batting slots seemed reserved for those from the big cities.

Saurashtra, Pujara's home team, was part of cricket's history but the land of Ranji didn't enjoy the reputation it once enjoyed. Pujara, and Jamnagar's Ravindra Jadeja, have been able to retrace those fading lines on India's cricket map. But this rewrite wasn't easy.

At the West Zone level, the region Saurashtra is part of, Mumbai consumed most



Cheteshwar Pujara with his father Arvind (L), wife Puja, and daughter during his 100th Test in 2023. Sportzpics

batting spots. Despite a 300 in a under-14 tournament, Pujara wasn't included in the India team – he's too slow, holds the bat too far down, the strike-rate ghost has chased him since those junior days. It didn't bother him nor after he made his India debut. The Pujaras were stubborn, they had faced way too many detractors, but knew what they were doing. The world took its own time to understand them.

As a rule, being the highest run-getter at an under-19 World Cup would get a teenager an India call, but that wasn't the case with Pujara. He once hit 3 triple hundreds in one month, on the domestic circuit. Still he wasn't fast-tracked. But like those who have come up the hard way, when Pujara did get his chance, he never looked back.

His appetite for big scores continued. In first-class cricket, he has faced 41,715 balls and scored 66 hundreds. His double hundred count puts him in fourth spot internationally behind Don Bradman, Wally Hammond and Patsy Hendren. The Indian closest to him is the great Ranji on 14th spot.

The death of his mother when in his teens, two major injuries and demoralising vibes from those calling the shots in the dressing room were other obstacles that Pujara negotiated because of his spiritual and philosophical bent of mind.

Many times players like Pujara and VVS Laxman get bracketed as the 'unsung heroes' of Indian cricket. But that's a lazy and inaccurate judgement. The connoisseurs of Test cricket around the world value the contribution of those not on the conventional batting podiums.

Recently, during the India-England tour, Pujara was readying for his second innings, as a TV expert. Before the game, most players he had shared the dressing room with would be seen having conversations and laughs.

Back in the day when Pujara performed the miracle in Australia, present India captain Shubman Gill had made a succinct statement. He had said for a youngster like him, it wasn't just the 500-plus runs Pujara had scored that were inspiring but also the 1,200-plus balls he faced.

Having played for four English counties, Pujara had friends at most venues. They would coax him to keep travelling to England during summers even after retirement. Pujara would confide that he was keen but his priorities had changed now.

"My father is getting old, he needs me around the house. My child is growing, my wife also needs extra hands at home. These two have done so much for my career, now it is my time to be around for them," he said.

'In tough times, you need that spiritual power... I get strength'

SANDIP G

AUGUST 24

AFTER 13 years of Test cricket, 7,195 runs, 19 hundreds, soaking 16,217 balls, stitching numerous heroic efforts, battling physical pain and mental exhaustion, Cheteshwar Pujara has folded his Test whites. He talks to The Indian Express about the art of batting time?

How did you master the art of batting time?

When I played in the Under-14 age group for Saurashtra, we had a weak batting line-up. A lot depended on me, and so it was not enough for me to score just a hundred. I had to stay on and score a double hundred, perhaps triple, otherwise the team might get pulled out. So from responsibility came patience. The same applied in different age groups because until I was in the Ranji Trophy, we were not the strongest in the circuit. Even the Ranji team, even though we had good players, we were building a team. So that allowed me to become mature very quickly. I realised there is more responsibility on my shoulders. I learned to play with a

lot of patience and commitment and put a heavy price on my wicket. It became a habit, and I carried it to international cricket.

You also prepared meticulously in the nets, whether you were in bad touch or good.

For me, it was more of a routine because you find out your success mantra there. It was about going into the nets and hitting as many balls as possible. Whether I scored runs or not didn't matter. But later on in my career, I also realised that it's not just about quantity but also quality which is important. So later on, I realised the importance of managing time and being smart. You don't need to bat for 45 minutes if you can achieve the same thing in 15 minutes. But that only comes with the experience. So earlier days, it was always about quantity, but as I played more cricket, I realised that the balance of quality and quantity is important.

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Sturdy in defence, Cheteshwar Pujara says mental toughness is behind his mastery of the art of batting. Sportzpics

so it was important for me to concentrate my best for the first 20 minutes to feel that I am in some kind of zone. If I batted one session, I was fairly confident I would have to commit a mistake for the bowler to get me out.

Even when you were at the non-striker's end, you always used to watch the ball till it reached the fielder.

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Batsmen talk about switching off between deliveries? What were your routines?

I didn't have any particular habit or routine. I used to look around the stadium. Sometimes, some of the stadiums are quite scenic and you appreciate it. Then you pick a spot in the stadium where you just look between balls. Also, I had the habit of tapping on the pitch, so I used to just walk down

the pitch and tap it a few times. It helped me switch off, even though you don't need to give any signal to the brain.

Batsmen emphasise on forgetting the last ball, whether you have played or not. But how practical was it?

I learned it after a while. It's never easy because you are trying to think about what you could have done better with the previous ball. But the moment you do that, then you are not focusing on the next ball. When you're a young cricketer, it's hard to do it. As I gained more experience at the highest level, I realised that what you have done on the last ball hardly matters because it's the next ball that you're going to play.

When did you start tracking the ball from the bowler's hand? Different batsmen have different methods.

The moment the bowler started his run-up, even when it was long enough, I used to just look at the ball. The prime focus always used to start when the bowler was about to jump and at the point of release, that's when you need your concentration to be at your sharpest. When you are starting to track the ball, you are looking at the ball but you are

not intensely focussing on the ball. So when the bowler is about to jump and then at the point of release, that's when you have your intense focus and concentration. Watching the ball for a long time can be draining. But for me, it was important to observe the ball when the bowler was running in.

You coped a lot of blows on your body, especially in the 2021 tour to Australia...

In moments like these it is important to look at the bigger picture. You are batting for your team, there are billions looking up to you and wanting and praying for the team to do well with the series on the line. When you get hit on the body, you do get shattered sometimes, but then you have to keep your calm. You have to trust yourself, the

SNIPPETS



Emma Raducanu defeated Ena Shibahara 6-1, 6-2. Reuters

Raducanu records first US Open win since 2021

New York: Former champion Emma Raducanu took a step towards exorcising her recent U.S. Open demons, earning her first victory at the tournament since lifting the trophy in 2021 by beating Japan's Ena Shibahara 6-1, 6-2 in the first round on Sunday. The Briton could not get past the first round in her last two appearances after winning it all as a qualifier four years ago, but she was on the right track this time around with a near-pristine performance against Shibahara. She next faces the winner of the match between 24th seed Veronika Kudermetova and Indonesian qualifier Janice Tjen. "It's my first win here since 2021, so it's extra special," said Raducanu, who joined up with new coach Francisco Roig earlier this month. "First round's always difficult - especially at a slam." Raducanu sprinted through the opening set making just four unforced errors, winning the first five games as the Japanese qualifier did herself no favours with a pair of early double faults. **REUTERS**

Aishwary claims gold in Asian C'ship

Shymkent: Indian shooter Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar dished out a dominant show to win the gold medal in the men's 50m rifle 3 positions competition at the Asian Shooting Championship here on Sunday. In the junior men's 3P event, Adriyan Karmakar claimed the gold medal with an Asian junior record of 463.8 in the final. Aishwary shot 462.5 to finish on top. China's Wenyu Zhao won the silver medal with 462 points, while Japan's Naoya Okada claimed bronze with a score of 445.8. The 24-year-old Olympian had an excellent outing in kneeling position. **PTI**

Mirabai makes return after year-long hiatus

Ahmedabad: Mirabai Chanu will return to competitive action on Monday after a year-long hiatus, leading the home challenge at the Commonwealth Championships where Indian weightlifters are expected to bag a rich medal haul. Chanu, who has battled injuries in recent years, was last seen at the Paris Games in last August, where she missed the podium by a kilogram. With the new Olympic weight categories in force for the 2028 Los Angeles Games, the 31-year-old has decided to move down from the 49kg division to 48kg, a weight class in which she won her world championship title and two Commonwealth Games medals, but hasn't competed in it since 2018. **PTI**

INTER-STATE ATHLETICS

On comeback, Sreeshankar ticking right boxes

Sreeshankar Murali's 8.06m leap won him the Inter-state long jump event. **File**

VENKATA KRISHNAB
CHENNAI, AUGUST 24

FOR ONE last time on Sunday, Sreeshankar Murali took a shot at qualifying for next month's World Athletics Championship.

Despite spending 18 months in an injury lay-off, gold at the 64th Senior National Athletics Championship was never in doubt for the long jumper from Kerala. Truth be told, there was no competition as such, as his 8.06m jump was the only instance of anyone touching 8m. S Lokesha, who took silver with a jump of 7.71m was still 0.09m short of the least that Sreeshankar leapt on a humid evening at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium.

But the 26-year-old Sreeshankar didn't come to Chennai searching for gold, but a spot at the Tokyo Worlds.

As he lined up for his final jump, Sreeshankar took more time than usual to start his run-up. With his father Murali anxiously watching from the stands, he completed his jump, turned around, saw the mark and fell flat, looking at the skies. A spot in the Worlds wasn't in his hands now.

"I tried my best. I wanted this season to be a kick-starter for the next, which has the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games. Next season is more important. I don't think I've done enough (for the World Championship). The season is over for me. Unless a miracle happens, I think I will miss it by one or two spots," he said. Having been out for a long time due to injury, Sreeshankar returned to action only in

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS PREVIEW

Long shot for the big shot

If Sindhu can take bold risks, get aggressive on her defensive patterns, she can once again strut around the badminton world

SHIVANI NAIK
MUMBAI, AUGUST 24

NO ONE is quite predicting miracles, given PV Sindhu runs into World No 2 Wang Zhi Yi early at the Paris World Championships. But known for her power-game, her work ethic and carefully preserved fitness, Sindhu and her big-smashing game, doesn't need miracles.

Exactly like Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, with their massive attacking games, confidence is hugely overrated. Their form might be patchy, like Satwik-Chirag's. Or deeply in doldrums like Sindhu's, but there's just too many weapons residing in them, for them to be written off at the first glimpse of a tough draw. (Satwik-Chirag have to beat Chinese Liang WeiKeng-Wang Chang and potentially Aaron Chia-Soh Wooi Yik for a second World's medal).

The thing with an enduring big smash, like Sindhu's is it stays in currency as long as she can whip it across. She's 30, not 35, like a seasoned coach, notes. And the fitness, though far off the absolute ideal at 25, hasn't totally come apart. They say she's a training beast - in volume. The strategy and smarts though, have been in shambles for 6 years, which is what seasoned Indonesian Irwansyah is tasked with salvaging.

The double Olympic medallist always starts a match 30-70 - be it picking World's and Olympic medals, or since 2022-23 when the big-event spell lifted, and she started looking ordinary. 30-70 odds are the only consistency she's ever struck. That 30 comes from an assured big power-game - nobody quite has answers when she nails that monster cross-court hit. It stays hot. Sindhu could smash it hard, in her sleep. Where she cedes the 70% is the inconsistency - which is a feature not of the last 3-4 years of struggle, but of all her career. Consistency flatters people's perception of legacy, it isn't necessary for Sindhu, though. So chasing it has been the most ridiculous endeavor of her life. "She can lose 10 matches in a row, and still win the 11th - a big one," a coach explains.

Confidence = overrated. Form = inconsequential.

For the skilled players, those that rely on reflexes and deft touch and timing, intuitive strokeplay, like Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo or Tai Tzu-ying or even Kidambi Srikanth, confidence would matter bigly. It would need slow accumulation - win, after win. Sindhu and Satwik-Chirag on the other hand, are dam-bursts: they explode on opponents suddenly, and that doesn't need tune-ups. But remember, that's just the 30 of the 30-70.

Sindhu, quite simply, has fallen into a playing pattern. And patterns get picked, deciphered, and neutralised soon enough. She's in a limbo-loop of playing crosscourt-defend-defend-desperately-search frantically for the opponent's lift to pulp it down-get drawn into out-of-position drives-finally get opened up for opponent to smash on her body, from where she can't retrieve. She doesn't really vary her plans.

While in an attempt to be proactive, she tends to stab on the drops and goes looking for a smash, the defensive patterns are littered with mistakes, and very predictable. Opponent drops - Sindhu lifts, isn't exactly a variation that allows her to do much, when her idea of attacking aggression is simply increasing her windmill speed on the smash, and finding a way, any way, to elicit a lift to play a downward stroke. There is a sense that Sindhu is far better than that though Irwansyah could convince her to take bolder risks and get

On Day 1, Lakshya faces World No 1



One of the most anticipated opening-round matches of the World Championships sees India's Lakshya Sen take on top seed Shi Yu Qi of China. Sen trails 1-3 in the Head-to-Head against the current World No 1. "It's a tough draw for me. So from the first round, I'll treat it as a final. It's a good opportunity for me to play him in the early rounds," he told BWF. "He can be a really tricky opponent up in the semifinals or quarterfinals or the final. He's been very, very strong, very consistent." **ENS**

aggressive on her defensive patterns.

The big smash is not defined by Sindhu responding with a cross-court to a straight shot from the opponent, or vice versa - her going down the line, when the opponent hits cross. That is Sindhu simply thinking distance, reducing badminton to geometry, when the smash weapon offers her so many more options.

Somebody needs to encourage Sindhu to think out of the box, and that 'somebody' needs to be Irwansyah right now.

In doubles, Malaysian coach Tan Kim Her is bringing about this exact variety in thinking in Satwik-Chirag. They may be up and down, but they are settling into a rhythm and evolving - and they got down to business as soon as opponents had them strait-jacketed for the big game. Both mix things up, aren't afraid to switch roles, play completely unexpected strokes, unleash the crazy, knowing that there's a dozen ways to reach that smash-kill.

They pick new skills, can convert defence to attack, and Satwik can completely go bonkers shape-shifting to subtle skills and serves, hiding nicely behind that Hulk's smash-mask. Easily India's best bet for a medal, they have evolved in the last difficult year.

The reason why coaches are stupefied Sindhu loses so many matches is also the general state of women's singles beyond An Se-young. Slayer of the Chinese all her life, neither Han Yue nor Wang Zhi Yi are unbeatable for Sindhu. It's an ageing field largely, and Sindhu with that big game only needs to play it smart, and stay sturdy and patient on defense, for the opportunity to hit will come. She really doesn't need to rush it.

There is one quality that her coaches, well-wishers, demand of her - be a little irrational, a bit crazy, slightly audacious. Do not go gently & all that. Like when she beat Tai Tzu-ying at Basel in 2019. It is very difficult to baffle the Taiwanese, but Sindhu did something mad that day. Gopichand had prompted this one. She blindly listened and jumped in. She served, and plonked herself at the net - taking control of the rally, snatching initiative. It threw off Tzu-ying, who loves her filigree artwork on court, using the whole canvas. Sindhu stomped that day, cut the angles and made the big game count. She didn't necessarily need the big smash, but the uncharacteristic aggression of looming large at the net, was enough.

KEY MATCH ON DAY 1: Lakshya Sen vs Shi Yu Qi; 5:30 PM, Live on JioHotstar

PV Sindhu has a tough path to a Worlds medal with a possible quarterfinal matchup against World No 2 Wang Zhi Yi. **BAI**

SatChi return to the city of their love

VINAYAK MOHANARANGAN
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 24

"THEY SAY you're the city of love, and I can't tell you how much I love you." That was Satwiksairaj Rankireddy's caption for his Instagram post in March last year after he and Chirag Shetty won their second French Open title. It is something of a tradition for both Satwik and Chirag to post photos in front of the Eiffel Tower after their visit to Paris. It's a city where they have had many memorable moments throughout their careers. In 2019, they put together a sensational run, beating their idols, the Daddies, Mohammad Ahsan and Hendra Setiawan in the second round, and then accounting for two more dangerous pairs on their way to a final. Then came the two titles in 2022 and 2024, the latter in the tune-up for the Paris Olympics, establishing themselves as one of the medal favourites.

But what's love without heartbreak? At the Olympic Games, where they carried the hopes of Indian badminton and were seen as even contenders for gold, they suffered a quarterfinals defeat. This week at the BWF World Championships, they return to the same venue - the Adidas Arena - once more as India's best bet for a medal. India have won at least one medal in each of the last 10 editions of the sport's most prestigious event apart from the Olympics.

"We've just always liked it, and there's a connection with the French crowd. We've played really well, and that run is here to stay. One thing we always do is visit the Eiffel Tower, and if we win, we go there with the title trophy. It's the City of Lights and also the City of Love; we genuinely love the vibe there. I learnt French for 4 years in school, but I can barely

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will be India's best medal bet. **BAI**

speak a word," Chirag had told *The Indian Express* in an interview before the Olympics.

French connection

"Everyone has a favourite tournament, ours is the French Open. We always play well in Paris. The home crowd supports us. The food is good as well, and there's good weather to go out and have something to eat. It's not too hot, not too cold. So we can just go for a walk. We have a good history there," Satwik had added.

Just one forgettable tournament doesn't suddenly change that narrative, but it just so happens to be the biggest one of their careers yet. After the Tokyo heartbreak in 2021 - where they were the only pair to defeat the eventual champions but didn't get out of the Group of Death by the smallest margins - Satwik-Chirag went on to win bronze in the subsequent World Championships at the same venue one year later. That's a good omen they can tap into.

Since Paris 2024, however, both of them have had to work through off-court issues. As far as life-changing years ago, 2024 will be right

NUMBER PLATE

10

India have won at least one medal in each of the last 10 editions of the badminton World Championships. HS Prannoy last won a men's singles bronze at the 2023 Worlds.

up there for me," Satwik wrote for *Indian Express* at year-end. "It was all going good until suddenly, out of nowhere, I had a back injury, from nowhere I had an elbow tear...."

He also spoke about how it was more difficult for Chirag at times, for a while, they had to manage their training routines and such after coach Mathias Boe had left. There was a lot of uncertainty. Then, earlier this year, Satwik had to deal with the loss of his father. As he started to make his way back from all the turmoil, Chirag suffered a back injury that led to them pulling out of All England midway. It was followed by another spell away from tournaments till the Singapore Open.

But having worked through all that, they have still been India's most consistent performers on the World Tour. On their day, they still go toe-to-toe with the best in the world - they are, of course, one among those pairs as well, even though they have slid to No 9 in the world. The draw hasn't been kind, with Liang Wei Keng-Wang Chang and Aaron Chia-Soh Wooi Yik - two pairs they have struggled against - obstructing their path to the podium. If they are able to click together, both fit at the same time and not battling niggles, there is no reason why they can't find love in Paris once more.

Rohit seeks World C'ship berth after personal best

PRITISH RAJ
AUGUST 24

RETURNING FROM an elbow injury, javelin thrower Rohit Yadav clinched the national title at the inter-state meet with a personal best of 83.65m in Chennai on Sunday. It may be enough to make the cut for the Tokyo World Championships via the rankings quota, but he will have to wait for the final list.

"I wanted to breach the direct qualification mark of 85.50m as my body was feeling good, but I am happy with a personal best," Rohit said after the event.

He had a solid outing at the Nationals in a quality field including World Championships-bound Sachin Yadav and Yashvir Singh along with latest 80m club entrant Shivam Lohakare. Rohit's first two throws were under 80m - 77.31m and 79.67m - but in his third attempt, he set the third-best mark by an Indian in the season behind reigning World champion Neeraj Chopra and Sachin.

"My coaches were confident about me. I didn't start well as the javelin gained elevation resulting in below 80m throws. After that, coach Sergey Makarov asked me to

throw flat and I followed that which resulted in two 82m-plus throws," Rohit said. "The idea was to put on a good show in the World Continental tour and inter-state, so that I get a shot at Worlds berth."

After returning from injury, Rohit had a sub-par 2024 season but started 2025 with a silver medal at the National Games (80.47m). Earlier this month at the Indian Open World Athletics Continental meet in Bhubaneswar, he finished fourth with an 80.35m throw, giving him confidence.

"At the continental meet also, one of my throws was close to 84m but it was deemed a foul. Neeraj bhai texted me saying that it was a good throw. So, I know that I will do well here," he said.

Rohit's performance at the inter-state meet will earn him valuable ranking points that can push his case for World Championships as 36 athletes qualify for the event. India has four quotas this year given Neeraj has qualified directly by the virtue of being the defending champion.

Currently training under Russian Makarov, a former world champion, and his long-time coach Prabir Singh, Rohit had an elbow injury right before 2023 World Championships and missed not only the World Championships but also the 2024 Paris Olympics.

"The pain keeps coming back but the good throws give me confidence and energy. Injuries and pain are part of the game," he said.

VENKATA KRISHNAB
CHENNAI, AUGUST 24

FOR ONE last time on Sunday, Sreeshankar Murali took a shot at qualifying for next month's World Athletics Championship.

Despite spending 18 months in an injury lay-off, gold at the 64th Senior National Athletics Championship was never in doubt for the long jumper from Kerala. Truth be told, there was no competition as such, as his 8.06m jump was the only instance of anyone touching 8m. S Lokesha, who took silver with a jump of 7.71m was still 0.09m short of the least that Sreeshankar leapt on a humid evening at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium.

But the 26-year-old Sreeshankar didn't

come to Chennai searching for gold, but a spot at the Tokyo Worlds.

As he lined up for his final jump, Sreeshankar took more time than usual to start his run-up. With his father Murali anxiously watching from the stands, he completed his jump, turned around, saw the mark and fell flat, looking at the skies. A spot in the Worlds wasn't in his hands now.

"I tried my best. I wanted this season to be a kick-starter for the next, which has the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games. Next season is more important. I don't think I've done enough (for the World Championship). The season is over for me. Unless a miracle happens, I think I will miss it by one or two spots," he said. Having been out for a long time due to injury, Sreeshankar returned to action only in

July, when in his first tournament back in Poland, he crossed 8m. From there on, he has featured in four more events, with the goal of making it to the Worlds.

"I was trying to chase something that has to be done in a year. I opened my season on July 12 and in a month and a half, have been trying to chase the qualification mark," the Palakkad native said. A year back, the story was totally different. Just ahead of the Paris Olympics, Sreeshankar suffered what he calls a rare injury - the patellar tendon connecting the kneecap to the top of the shin bone had ruptured. Despite undergoing surgery, there was

no guarantee that he could jump again. "I'd not even started running last August. Whatever I got this season, I'm happy. I will embrace it because last year, this day, I was not even sure I would be jumping again. So I'm happy that this happened. I can actually train like a fully fit athlete without talking about rehabilitation," he said.