



SPACE PROGRAMME

'Indian astronaut will land on moon by 2040'

NEWS » PAGE 5



800 VILLAGES HIT
7 killed as heavy rain batters Maharashtra

NEWS » PAGE 6



BROADCASTER LICENCE FEES
Over ₹350 cr. due from Nepal and Bangladesh

BUSINESS » PAGE 12

DATA POINT

China's Ejiao boom kills 6 mn. donkeys a year

The traditional medicine is made from hides

OPINION » PAGE 9



US OPEN MIXED DOUBLES

Raducanu and Alcaraz the star attraction

SPORT » PAGE 16

INSIDE



Israel pursuing 'starvation policy' in Gaza: Amnesty

JERUSALEM

Rights group Amnesty International accused Israel of enacting a "deliberate policy" of starvation in Gaza, on Monday, as the UN and aid groups warn of famine in the Palestinian territory. However, Israel has repeatedly rejected any claims of deliberate starvation. » PAGE 14

5 electrocuted as chariot snags overhead wire

HYDERABAD

Five men were electrocuted and four others were injured during a Krishna Janmashtami procession at Ramanthapur area in Hyderabad when a 10-foot chariot came into contact with a live overhead electric wire late on Sunday. Emergency services rushed the injured to hospital. » PAGE 3

'Unemployment rate declined to 5.2% in July'

NEW DELHI

The rate of unemployment in the country declined to 5.2% in July from 5.6% in June, shows a survey released by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on Monday. The Labour Force Participation Rate for women showed a slight increase to 25.5% in July from 24.5% in June. » PAGE 6

Iran warns war with Israel could resume anytime

TEHRAN

Iran on Monday warned on that war with Israel could erupt at any moment, describing the current lull after June's 12-day conflict as only a temporary halt. "We must be prepared for confrontation; we are not even in a ceasefire (pact)," said First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref. » PAGE 14



Myanmar junta schedules polls for December 28

YANGON

Myanmar's junta said on Monday that long-promised elections will start on December 28, despite a raging civil war that has put much of the country out of its control. Analysts say the polls will likely see junta chief Min Aung Hlaing maintain his power over any new government. » PAGE 14

INDIA bloc considers moving a motion seeking removal of CEC

Leaders say Gyanesh Kumar behaved like 'BJP spokesperson' by accusing Opposition of 'spreading misinformation' during a press conference; there is consensus in the bloc on the issue and it has the numbers to move the motion, says Venugopal

Sobhana K. Nair

NEW DELHI

The INDIA bloc is considering moving a motion against Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar, seeking his removal. The idea was mooted at the meeting of the Opposition's Parliamentary floor leaders on Monday.

According to sources, the Opposition discussed if it should continue with protests against the Election Commission, especially after the Supreme Court, in an interim order, directed the poll body to publish the details of 65 lakh voters excluded from the draft electoral roll published on August 1 following the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in poll-bound Bihar.

The leaders concurred that after the CEC's Sunday press conference, in which he accused the Opposition of "spreading misinformation", the protests had to continue. Congress leaders suggested that the Opposition should step up the pressure by moving a motion against Mr. Kumar for making "politically charged accusations".

Congress general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal told *The Hindu* that there was a consensus in the INDIA bloc on the issue and that the Opposition has enough numbers to move the motion.



Leaders from INDIA bloc parties protesting in Delhi on Monday against the special intensive revision of electoral rolls in Bihar. PTI

"He (Mr. Kumar) spoke not like the Chief Election Commissioner but like a BJP politician. In the entire press conference, he did not answer the questions raised by Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and the other parties. Instead, he ridiculed the Opposition for raising the questions," he said. "Is it the duty of the CEC to indulge in politics?"

Mr. Venugopal flagged the Chief Election Commissi-

sioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023, which provides immunity to the CEC and Election Commissioners for all decisions taken by them in present and the past. He said that one should "read between the lines" why such an immunity was extended.

According to the Act, the CEC can be removed in the same manner and grounds as a Supreme Court judge. Parliament can dismiss the CEC by a motion with two-thirds majority in both the Houses. In order for the motion to be accepted, at least 50 members have to sign in its favour.

Later in the day, the INDIA bloc leaders held a press conference to "rebut" Sunday's presser by the CEC. They flagged that the CEC failed to answer questions on why the SIR was being done in "such a

hurry" when the State elections were three months away.

Samajwadi Party (SP) leader Ramgopal Yadav said that while the poll body asked Mr. Gandhi to give an affidavit, the SP had submitted affidavits with complaints of around 18,000 voters being removed from the list in 2022. "In the 2022 Uttar Pradesh polls, when Akhilesh Yadav said names of SP supporters have been removed from the voter list, we gave affidavits. But no action has been taken," he said.

Trinamool Congress leader Mahua Moitra said that if the voter list on which the last General Election was conducted was incorrect, the Lok Sabha should be dissolved.

Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Manoj Jha attacked the CEC and said: "Yesterday we were looking for our CEC, we found a new BJP spokesperson."

Zelenskyy, Trump hope for trilateral talks with Putin



Overture: U.S. President Donald Trump and Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the White House on Monday. AFP

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and U.S. President Donald Trump expressed hope that their critical meeting on Monday with European leaders at the White House could lead to three-party talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin to bring an end to his war on Ukraine.

Mr. Trump at one point needed Mr. Zelenskyy over Ukraine delaying elections. They had been scheduled for last year but were delayed because of the ongoing Russian invasion. Ukrainian law does not allow presidential elections to be held when martial law is in effect.

Trump joked that a similar circumstance wouldn't play well in the U.S. Monday's hastily assembled meeting comes after Mr. Trump met on Friday with Mr. Putin and has said that the onus is now on Mr. Zelenskyy to agree to concessions of land that he said could end the war.

"They want to give protection and they feel very strongly about it and we'll help them out with that," Mr. Trump said. "I think it's very important to get the deal done."

Mr. Trump also said Mr. Putin had at summit talks last week accepted that there would be security guarantees for Ukraine as part of any peace deal.

"In a very significant step, President Putin agreed that Russia would accept security guarantees for Ukraine and this is one of the key points that we need to consider and we're going to be considering that at the table, also who will do what essentially," Mr. Trump said as he opened talks with Euro-

pean leaders and Mr. Zelenskyy at the White House. "I think the European nations are going to take a lot of the burden. We're going to help them and we're going to make it very secure," he said.

Mr. Trump's engagement with Mr. Zelenskyy had a strikingly different feel to their last Oval Office meeting in February.

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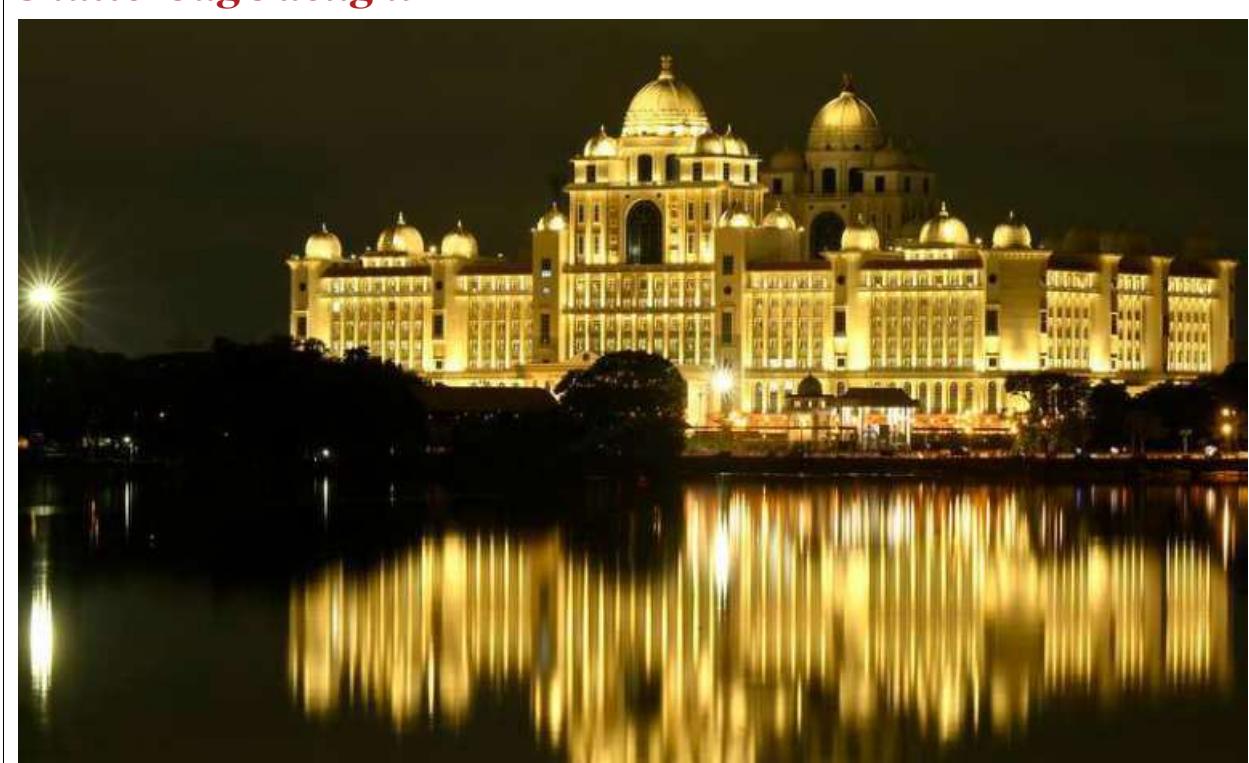
Monday's hastily assembled meeting comes after Mr. Trump met on Friday with Mr. Putin and has said that the onus is now on Mr. Zelenskyy to agree to concessions of land that he said could end the war.

"If everything works out today, we'll have a trilateral," Mr. Trump said, referring to possible three-way talks among Mr. Zelenskyy, Mr. Putin and Mr. Trump. "We're going to work with Russia, we're going to work with Ukraine." Mr. Trump also said he plans to talk to Mr. Putin after his meetings with Mr. Zelenskyy and European leaders.

Mr. Zelenskyy expressed openness to trilateral talks. "We are ready for trilateral as President said," he said.

PUTIN DIALS MODI
» PAGE 4

Shutterbug's delight



Golden glow: An illuminated Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Telangana State Secretariat building by the Hussain Sagar Lake in Hyderabad, captured on the eve of World Photography Day on Monday. NAGARA GOPAL

Opposition meet to pick V-P candidate inconclusive

Sobhana K. Nair
Sanjeev Phukan

NEW DELHI

The meeting of INDIA bloc leaders on Monday to decide the Opposition's candidate for the Vice-President's post remained inconclusive.

"A meeting of leaders of all Opposition parties in Parliament will be held at 12:30 PM tomorrow Tuesday Aug. 19th at 10, Rajaji Marg," Congress communications chief Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X.

The opposition bloc is likely to announce its choice on Tuesday.

FULL REPORT
» PAGE 5

De-escalation process on border must move forward: Jaishankar to Wang

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

The process of withdrawing troops from the Line of Actual Control needs to "move forward", External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar told Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, as the two sides began discussions to improve bilateral and trade relations in Delhi on Monday.

They also prepared for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to China for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit at the end of the month. On Tuesday, Mr. Wang will meet National Security Advisor Ajit Doval for the 24th round of Special Representa-

tive talks that focuses on the resolution of the boundary dispute between India and China.

In a special gesture, Mr. Modi is also expected to meet Mr. Wang on Tuesday, ahead of his meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping, at the SCO summit in Tianjin. "Having seen a difficult period in our relationship... our two nations now seek to move ahead," Mr. Jaishankar said in his opening remarks as the two sides met at the official venue, Hyderabad House. "The basis for any positive momentum in our ties is the ability to jointly maintain peace and tranquillity in border areas."

"It is also essential that

the de-escalation process move forward," he added, drawing attention to the fact that demobilisation at the LAC and dismantling of infrastructure, to return to the status quo before April 2020, have not been completed 10 months after the

leaders met, although other parts of the relationship have been restored.

According to a statement issued by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Wang pointed to global challenges, including "unilateral bullying" in "free trade and the international order", a reference to the U.S. trade tariffs. He said that China was prepared to work with India and other neighbours to establish five aspects of "peace, tranquillity, prosperity, beauty and friendship". "Both sides should carefully draw on the lessons learned over the past 75 years... view each other as partners," Mr. Wang added.



Building ties: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar welcomes Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, in New Delhi on Monday, as the two sides began discussions to improve bilateral relations. ANI

IN BRIEF



Free poor people's land from encroachment: U.P. CM

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday instructed officials to free poor people's land from encroachment and take strict legal action against land mafias. Speaking at a public hearing in Gorakhpur, Mr. Adityanath emphasised that if land belonging to the poor had been encroached upon, it must be immediately vacated, and those responsible should face legal consequences. Mr. Adityanath further directed that matters related to revenue and police be resolved with complete transparency, fairness, and sensitivity, so that every victim receives justice.

Toll plaza assault: 6 held, NHAI slaps ₹20 lakh fine on operator

An Army jawan returning to duty after leave was allegedly assaulted by toll plaza employees in Uttar Pradesh's Meerut district, prompting the arrest of six people, a ₹20 lakh penalty and blacklisting proceedings against the toll operator by NHAI and a strong condemnation from the Army. The incident, which sparked outrage on social media after its video surfaced, occurred on Sunday evening at Bhuni toll plaza in Sarurpur, when Kapil, a soldier posted in Srinagar, was on his way back to duty. His car was caught in a long queue, and when he asked the toll staff to clear the way faster, an altercation broke out and Kapil was beaten up by toll plaza staff. PTI

Academics object to 2 inclusions in Bengal V-C selection panels

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

A section of academicians from West Bengal has questioned the presence of certain members in the selection panels for the appointment of Vice Chancellors (V-C) to 15 universities in the State.

Graft charges

The academicians have objected to the participation in a panel of Ramesh Chandra, former V-C of Maharaja Surjyam Brij University, Bharatpur, Rajasthan, who is facing graft charges, and also retired IAS officer S.K. Pattanayak, who is serving in the West Bengal Raj Bhavan.

Prof. Chandra was recently removed by the Rajasthan Governor for allegedly misusing his position and embezzling funds. He is part of the selection panel tasked with selecting the V-C of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad University of

Technology, Kolkata, sources in the West Bengal Higher Education Department said.

Manas Kabi, general secretary of the All Bengal Principals' Council, has written a letter on August 16 to the Chief Justice of India Justice (retd.) U.U. Lalit, Chairperson of the selection panels, saying Mr. Pattnayak - part of panels to select V-Cs for Sanskrit College and University and Netaji Subhas Open University - had been included "perhaps without being aware of the fact that he had retired as an official of Raj Bhavan [and is] serving the Hon'ble Chancellor since his retirement".

Collision course
For the past several years, the West Bengal government and Raj Bhavan have been on collision course over the appointment of V-Cs. A special leave petition was filed by the State go-

vernment challenging the June 2023 judgment of the Calcutta High Court, which had upheld the interim V-C appointments for State universities made by Governor C.V. Ananda Bose.

SC intervention
In July 2024, the Supreme Court had intervened to resolve the ongoing stand-off between the State and the Governor by forming search-cum-selection committees chaired by former CJI Lalit. Earlier this month, the court modified entrust the former CJI and his panels with the responsibility of independently determining the candidates for appointment to the 15 universities.

Vice-Chancellors to 17 out of 35 State universities have already been appointed in accordance with the Supreme Court's order, and the selection process for the remaining vacancies is likely to be held in the next few days.

Entire district land
Justice Sanjay Kumar Medhi said in his order that a cursory glance at the facts of the case reveals that the land which has been allotted is about 3000 bighas "which itself appears to be extraordinary".

3,000 bighas of land for cement factory: Assam govt. pulled up

Press Trust of India
GUWAHATI

The Gauhati High Court has slammed the Assam government for allotting 3,000 bighas of land to a private cement factory in the State's tribal-majority Dima Hasao district, and observed whether this is a "joke".

The court directed the North Cachar Hills District Autonomous Council's (NCHDAC) standing counsel to obtain and place before the court the records containing the policy to allot "such a huge chunk of land" to the company.

Entire district land
Justice Sanjay Kumar Medhi said in his order that a cursory glance at the facts of the case reveals that the land which has been allotted is about 3000 bighas "which itself appears to be extraordinary".

During the hearing of the petition, the judge said, "3,000 bighas!... What is going on? 3,000 bighas allotted to a private company?... What kind of decision is this? Is this some kind of joke or what?". This could be the area of the entire district, the judge said in an observation, while hearing two sets of writ petitions last week.

One petition was filed by 22 people against the Assam government, the NCHDAC and other departments concerned, alleging that they are being evicted from their lawfully possessed land in Dima Hasao district.

The other petition was filed by the Mahabali Cement Company which has been allotted 3000 bighas of land for construction of the plant. The matter will be heard again on September 1.

SC's remarks on Enforcement Directorate based on facts: CJI

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai on Monday said any adverse oral remarks made by the Supreme Court against the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) were dispassionate and based entirely on facts, even as the Central agency's counsel ruled these comments "percolate" to create a bad impression among the people and even within the judiciary itself.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Tamil Nadu, intervened to remark that the perception of the ED was out there in the public domain, with or without the court's comments. "The perception is out there... Even if the court does not say anything, the perception remains," Mr. Sibal said.

The court had taken up a petition filed by the State of Tamil Nadu challenging the investigation and raids

Supreme Court stays HC order reversing discharge of T.N. Minister in DA case

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court, on Monday, stayed a Madras High Court order of April 28 reversing the discharge of Tamil Nadu Rural Development Minister I. Periyasamy, his wife P. Susela, and two sons P. Prabhu and P. Senthilkumar (incumbent Palani MLA) from a 2012 disproportionate assets case, and directed them to face trial.

"We cannot support him just because he is from Tamil Nadu. He is a BJP candidate and as a Vice-President, he will wield no power and will not get any benefit to Tamil Nadu," Mr. Shanmugam said.

Decision soon: Congress

Tamil Nadu Congress leaders are in touch with the party central leadership. "They told us that a decision will be taken in a couple of days," a Congress leader said.

Meanwhile, BJP Tamil Nadu president Nainar Nagnethran and Tamil Maanila Congress (Moopanar) president G.K. Vasan on Monday appealed to parties of the INDIA bloc to support Mr. Radhakrishnan's candidature for the Vice-President post, on the grounds that he is the "son of Tamil soil".

(With inputs from Udhav Naig)



2017. The High Court and the Supreme Court had not interfered with the decision subsequently.

The Minister said the present case was "foisted" when rival political party, AIADMK, was in power in the State in 2012. The Minister and his family members were charged under the Prevention of Corruption Act for acquiring assets disproportionate with their income.

Tagged with other case

The Court tagged the case with another petition filed by Mr. Periyasamy.

In that case, the top court had on April 8, last year stayed the trial in a corruption case regarding the alleged allotment of a High Income Group plot in the Mogappair Eri scheme of the Tamil Nadu Housing Board.

The trial court had discharged them in January

Rajnath Singh spoke to Stalin on a common V-P candidate before BJP named its choice

While T.N. CM is said to have been non-committal, this may be a tough call for the DMK as it may not be prudent for the party to oppose a candidate from the State ahead of 2026 Assembly polls

B. Kolappan

CHENNAI

Defence Minister and senior BJP leader Rajnath Singh had recently spoken to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK president M.K. Stalin on the phone to push for a common candidate for Vice-President, it is reliably learnt.

The two leaders spoke before the BJP fielded Maharashtra Governor C.P. Radhakrishnan - who hails from the influential Kongu Vellala Gounder community in western Tamil Nadu - as its candidate for the post.

Mr. Stalin did not commit himself to anything.

Radhakrishnan's call

Incidentally, Mr. Radhakrishnan last month called on Mr. Stalin after his brief hospitalisation.

"It [Mr. Singh's outreach] happened a few days ago and before the BJP announced Mr. Radhakrishnan's candidature. The Chief Minister, however, did not make any com-



Political acumen: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh arrives to attend the Monsoon Session of Parliament in New Delhi on Monday. PTI

mitment," an informed source in the DMK told *The Hindu* on Monday.

This could be a tough call for the DMK as it would not be prudent for the party to oppose a candidate from Tamil Nadu ahead of the 2026 Assembly election.

At the same time, the party cannot politically back a BJP candidate. The DMK is in alliance with the Congress, the Left parties, and a few others.

In the past, except for the Communists, the other

parties in Tamil Nadu had supported A.P.J. Abdul Kalam for the post of President, though he was a BJP candidate.

Meanwhile, CPI(M) general secretary M.A. Baby told *The Hindu* that his party would not support Mr. Radhakrishnan.

CPI(M) State secretary P. Shanmugam also made it

clear that there was no question of supporting Mr. Radhakrishnan, as "he is a BJP candidate and his election will not bring any benefit to Tamil Nadu."

"We cannot support him just because he is from Tamil Nadu. He is a BJP candidate and as a Vice-President, he will wield no power and will not get any benefit to Tamil Nadu," Mr. Shanmugam said.

Decision soon: Congress

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Meanwhile, BJP Tamil

Nadu president Nainar Nagnethran and Tamil Maanila Congress (Moopanar) president G.K. Vasan on Monday appealed to parties of the INDIA bloc to support Mr. Radhakrishnan's candidature for the Vice-President post, on the grounds that he is the "son of Tamil soil".

Meanwhile, senior advocate V. Giridhar and advocate Ram Sankar, challenging the High Court's decision to set aside the order of discharge of the trial court in 2017.

The Minister has argued that these cases were products of the political rivalry. He had referred to a similar disproportionate assets case registered against him and his family concerning tax returns for the period from 1996 to 2001.

The trial court had discharged them in January

Visva-Bharati

refuses

permission for lecture

on Amartya Sen by Drèze

Lavpreet Kaur

HYDERABAD

Sen is a child of the Santiniketan library... It is startling that an event celebrating his work had to be shifted out," Mr. Drèze said.

Visva-Bharati PRO Atig Ghosh said, "No one is given permission for an event in the university exactly at the same time as a heritage event is taking place. The Rabindra Saptah lecture was scheduled to take place from 7 p.m." But several professors said Rabindra Saptah was inaugurated on August 8 and the lecture was in no way interfering with the heritage event.

Visva-Bharati also issued a notification removing Apurba Kumar Chatto-padhyay as chairperson of the A.K. Dasgupta Centre for Planning and Development.

The event was later held

on the same day at a private auditorium. "Amartya

the worst, with traffic usually 20-25% higher than the usual Mondays and Fridays. Thursdays are slightly better, with a 10-15% increase," said Madhapur Traffic DCP T. Sai Mahanohar.

During peak hours between 8 a.m. and noon, as many as 89,000 to 1 lakh vehicles on the routes are linked to IT commuters alone. Breaking it down, the DCP said, "Of the 33,000 autos in all directions, about 10% (3,300) are engaged by IT employees. Of the 1.2 lakh bikes, at least 50% (60,000) belong to them. Over 80% (2,667) of the 3,347 buses cater to IT companies or ferry IT employees, while 25% (23,250) of the 93,000 cars are also used by them in just this four-hour window." On an average, over

10 lakh vehicles ply the key IT routes daily.

Police say the rush stems from employees preferring to club work-from-home days with weekends, leaving the midweek for office presence.

For employees, the choice is deliberate. Steve Abraham, 30, who works night shifts for a firm in HITEC City, said, "The mid-week office routine gives me longer weekends for chores and errands. Commuting takes three to four hours a day, so cutting that down on Mondays and Fridays saves time. Also, mid-week motivation is better when I'm physically in office."

Another product developer with a leading MNC added that team practices have shifted. "Earlier, Monday was the default for in-person meetings. Now, they happen on Wednesdays, with Mondays reserved for virtual catch-ups," the employee said.

Others see lifestyle advantages. Karthik (name changed), a tech employee with a financial services company in Gachibowli admitted that skipping office on Mondays and Fridays gives him breathing space after the weekend.

"Earlier, Sunday nights were a struggle... I'd cut short get-togethers, skip late outings as Monday meant waking up three hours early to beat traffic.

Now with Mondays at home, I can enjoy my Sundays without worry and start the week more refreshed," he said.

Meanwhile, some have learned the hard way. Alok (name changed), another IT employee working in Madhapur, said he switched his office days to



Chock-a-block: While hybrid work was meant to reduce congestion, it has worsened the traffic situation in Hyderabad. NAGARA GOPAL

Mondays and Thursdays to avoid the worst rush. "Earlier I was in the same gang but soon realised that Tuesdays and Wednesdays are chaos. Now, I travel when fewer people are on the road," he added.

Stagger schedules

Industry observers too believe the pattern is backfiring. Naved Khan, CEO of Society for Cyberabad Security Council (SCSC), said hybrid work was meant to reduce congestion, but it has in fact worsened it.

"By concentrating office days midweek, it has created three consecutive days of peak congestion. If companies staggered office schedules, traffic could be distributed better."

Traffic police have echoed the suggestion, urging IT firms to stagger schedules.

Five electrocuted during procession in Hyderabad

10-foot chariot being carried during the Krishna Janmashtami procession touches live wire in Ramanthapur, leading to the casualties; Minister announces ₹5 lakh ex gratia for victims' kin

Naveen Kumar
HYDERABAD

A Krishna Janmashtami procession at Ramanthapur turned tragic late on Sunday when a 10-foot chariot being carried by devotees came into contact with a live overhead electric wire, leading to the death of five men and injuries to four others.

According to Uppal police Station House Office K. Bhaskar, the victims, along with others, were taking part in a Sri Krishna Shobha Yatra from their locality to a nearby temple when their four-wheeler broke down. "Choosing to carry the metal chariot manual-



Frayed tempers: People protest before electricity department office in Hyderabad on Monday. G. RAMAKRISHNA

ly, the group attempted to move it forward. About 200 metres from the temple, the chariot touched a live electric wire, electrocuting the men. The mishap occurred around midnight in RTC Colony," the

officer said.

The injured were rushed nearby hospitals. The SHO added that the bodies of the deceased were shifted to Gandhi Hospital for post-mortem. A case has been registered

and an investigation is underway.

Ex gratia announced

Minister for IT D. Sridhar Babu announced an ex gratia of ₹5 lakh to the families of each of the victims. He said the government would bear the entire medical expenses of the injured.

"A detailed inquiry has been ordered under the District Collector's supervision, and strict action will follow against those responsible," said the Minister.

He added that a special review will be conducted in Greater Hyderabad to identify and address risks posed by hanging cable and electric wires.

Three missing after car gets washed away

P. Sridhar
JAGTIAL

Three women from TR Nagar in Telangana's Jagtial town are feared to have drowned after the car they were travelling in was washed away by floodwaters on the Udgir-Degur road in neighbouring Maharashtra on Sunday night.

The incident occurred when the hired car was swept away in a swollen stream while crossing an overflowing causeway near

Udgir, sources said. Another person who also was in the car managed to come out and swim to safety, sources added.

The women were returning to Jagtial after visiting a relative's house in Maharashtra.

A search operation is underway at Udgir to trace the three missing women.

Amid heavy rainfall in Telangana, three districts have been placed under orange alert by India Meteorological Department.

Arlekar calls for compulsory military training to 'foster patriotism' in youth

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar has called for compulsory military training to youngsters, terming it essential to instil a sense of discipline and foster patriot feelings in the youth.

Mr. Arlekar was addressing a Veterans Felicitation Ceremony organised at the Military Station, Pangode, here on Monday.

He also said that the



Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar

sense of discipline, motivation and selflessness of our armed forces personnel should be preserved and infused in the next generation of our country.

The discipline, motivation and selflessness of our armed forces must be infused in the next generation, Arlekar said

The armed forces, with their sense of discipline and sacrifice, are a model for entire society, Mr. Arlekar said.

The forces set very high standards and inspire oth-

ers, the Governor added.

"The Armed Forces choose to be awake so that all of us can sleep in peace," he was quoted as saying in a statement issued by the Raj Bhavan.

The theme of this year's felicitation was *Shaurya, Shakthi and Samman* (Valour, Strength and Honour).

Brigadier Anurag Upadhyaya, Station Commander, Pangode Military Station, presided over the function.

Letter leak row: CPI(M) hits back at Opposition

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

In the wake of a leaked letter purportedly addressed to its Polit Bureau, the CPI (M) in Kerala seemed poised to counter the Congress-BJP "campaign" accusing top party leaders and their relatives of financial collusion with a U.K.-based businessperson from the State.

In New Delhi, CPI(M) State secretary M.V. Govindan declined to comment on whether the Polit Bureau had received a confidential letter detailing the alleged financial nexus. "Absurd questions do not merit answers," he said.

The U.K.-based person's business partner-turned-rival had triggered a political controversy on Sunday by claiming he had sent the letter confidentially to the Polit Bureau, and implicated the next of kin of a top leader for leaking the missive to his opponent to help the latter in a libel suit.

V. Sivakutty, General Education Minister and CPI(M) State Committee member, said the Congress and the BJP were using an "inconsequential" document as if it were empirical evidence to malign the State government and the CPI(M) ahead of the local body polls later this year and the Assembly elections in 2026.

Local Self-Governments Minister M.B. Rajesh said in Kochi the attempt to include him among the leaders having alleged financial links with the U.K.-based Keralite businessperson was to "defame" him by raising baseless allegations ahead of the Assembly election.

Minister directs police to act against activist who accused CM of committing 'murders'



G. Parameshwara

Mr. Thimarodi and other activists have been campaigning under "Justice for Sovjanya" banner and released documents alleging irregularities in the disposal of unidentified bodies in Dharmasthala.

Reference to Poonja

Mr. Thimarodi, it may be recalled, had made the statement about Mr. Siddaramaiah in a press conference.

rence during the Assembly election campaign in 2023. He had referred to an earlier statement made by MLA Harish Poonja that Mr. Siddaramaiah was accused of "murdering 24 Hindus."

He had said then, "If this is true, Mr. Siddaramaiah should step down from the post. If this is false, then action should be taken against the MLA for this statement."

The Belthangady police, on a complaint by Namitha K. Poojary, registered a case against Mr. Poonja for his alleged derogatory statement.

Investigation into the complaint against Mr. Poonja has been stayed by the Karnataka High court. The petition will come up for hearing on August 20.

New findings may have therapeutic implications in treating diabetes: IISc

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

New findings from a study conducted by the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) claims to have important therapeutic implications in the treatment of diabetes.

An IISc release said just as smart traffic management ensures smooth vehicular movement during peak hours, our body relies on a molecular traffic system to manage the surge in glucose levels after a meal. Pancreatic beta cells play a major role in this system by taking up glucose from the blood and triggering insulin release into the bloodstream.

"Inside these cells, glucose uptake is managed by glucose transporters (GLUTs) - proteins that move to the beta cell surface when blood glucose



Deeper insights: A file photo of people attending a screening camp for diabetes in Mangalore. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

levels rise and facilitate the entry of glucose into the cell to kickstart insulin release," IISc said.

In Type-2 cases

This new study shows how this process falters in Type-2 diabetes and how restoring it could open new therapeutic avenues.

In humans, GLUT1 is the

tracked GLUT1 and GLUT2 transporters as they were recruited to the beta cell membrane under different blood glucose levels.

How cells behave

In healthy cells, rising glucose levels prompt a rapid deployment of GLUTs to the membrane. These transporters are then cycled in and out through clathrin-mediated endocytosis - a process in which cells internalise extracellular material by forming pockets made of the protein clathrin.

"Most studies have looked at what happens after glucose enters the beta cell. We focused on the step before that, the actual entry of glucose, and how this is disrupted in diabetes," said Anuma Pallavi, PhD student in DBG and first author of the study.

Alert issued against amoebic meningoencephalitis in Kozhikode; health dept. steps up awareness efforts

The Hindu Bureau
KOZHIKODE

The Health department in Kerala's Kozhikode has issued an alert against primary amoebic meningoencephalitis (PAM) in the district in view of the reporting of three cases of the infection and a death in recent days.

District Medical Officer K.K. Rajaram said in a release on Monday that though the mortality of the rare brain infection was very high, it would not transmit from person to person.

PAM is caused by *Naegleria fowleri*, a free-living



amoeba. People get infected when they swim or take a bath in stagnant waters. The amoeba enters the body through the nose and reaches the brain. Children could be more vulnerable as their cribriform plate, which separates the nasal cavity and the skull, has

more porous openings compared with the adults.

Another route of the infection is through the ear drum.

Dr. Rajaram said symptoms such as severe headache, fever, nausea, vomiting, stiff neck, and light sensitivity would appear within five to 10 days of the amoeba entering the brain.

Children may also refuse to have food, will not go out to play, and generally prefer to lay on the bed without moving their body. Fading memory, epilepsy, and fainting are indications of the infection getting severe.

Those who seek medical treatment for fever need to inform the doctor if they had ever taken bath in ponds or stagnant waterbodies.

Officials suggested that swimming and bathing in stagnant or unhygienic water bodies be avoided and nose clips be used while swimming. Those who have undergone surgeries in their nose and ears should not venture into waters.

Awareness activities are being undertaken in Thamarassery where a nine-year-old child died due to the infection.

POCSO Act is gender neutral, women can be made accused: HC

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

on behalf of the accused that aggravated sexual assaults or rape cannot be invoked against a woman, the court pointed out that Sections 4 and 6 of the POCSO Act makes it clear that anyone who "compels a minor child to do penetrative or other sexual acts with him or other persons", is an offender.

To the submission that in an intercourse the woman is only a passive participant and a man is an active participant, the court pointed out that "this thought itself is archaic".



A massive traffic snarl on the Ernakulam-Thrissur national highway at Muringur, Kerala after a lorry overturned on August 15. FILE PHOTO

SC pulls up NHAI for 12-hour traffic snarl on highway in Kerala

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday asked whether the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) ought to pay commuters for their patience and loss of fuel while waiting 12 hours at a traffic snarl on a stretch on National Highway 544 in the State during the weekend.

A Bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwal and K.V. Viswanathan gave Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia, who retired on August 9, discretion to either constitute separate or joint search-cum-selection committees, and choose the members from the names forwarded by the Kerala government and the Chancellor. The court suggested the Chairperson could take two names each from the lists of the State and the Governor, respectively.

"We firmly believe that this impasse created must be taken care of at the earliest. We hereby appoint Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia as chairperson of the search-cum-selection committee for both universities," the court recorded in an order.

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Appearing before a three-judge Bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) B.R. Gavai, Justice Vinod Chandran and Justice N.V. Anjaria, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the NHAI, said the block had been caused by an overturned truck.

Justice Chandran, who said he travels on the stretch, said the accident was hardly an "act of God" but was caused by a pothole.

"In fact, some payment has to be made by the NHAI to commuters for their patience and the fuel they lost in the traffic block... It [overturning of the truck] was not an act of God but fell into a pothole.

"Why should a person pay ₹150 if it takes 12 hours to get from one end of the road to the other end?" the CJI asked.

The CJI pointed out that commuters were expected to suffer traffic blocks for 12 hours and pay toll, too.

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To the submission that in an intercourse the woman is only a passive participant and a man is an active participant, the court pointed out that "this thought itself is archaic".

Rahul's attack on EC shows frustration at losing polls, says BJP

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



The BJP on Monday accused the Congress and the Opposition of levelling baseless allegations against the Election Commission (EC) over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of voter list, under way in Bihar, stating that the Opposition wanted to protect illegal immigrants and win elections with those votes.

At a press conference here, BJP MP from Puri, Sambit Patra, blamed Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi for attacking the EC "out of frustration."

Mr. Patra criticised Mr. Gandhi for spearheading a campaign against the poll body, alleging that the remarks that he was making against the constitutional bodies reflected the Gandhi family's frustration at remaining out of power.

'Country will ask for affidavit from EC'

Rahul Gandhi urges the people of Bihar to prevent 'vote theft' in the upcoming Assembly election and teach the poll body and the PM a 'lesson'; the Congress leader adds that when the INDIA bloc forms the government at the Centre, it will take 'strict action' against CEC Gyanesh Kumar

Amit Bhelari
AURANGABAD

A day after Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar gave an ultimatum to Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi to file an affidavit regarding his allegations of voter roll manipulations in Karnataka within a week, the Congress leader hit back at the CEC saying that "the entire country will ask for an affidavit from the Election Commission of India".

"A day will come when the INDIA bloc will have a government in Bihar as well in the Centre. Then action would be taken. Election Commissioner, you understand it very well, that if you will not do your job properly, then strict action is going to be taken against you," Mr. Gandhi, who is on his 'Vo-



Furthering a cause: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi waves during a rally in Aurangabad in Bihar on Monday. RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav and Bihar Congress president Rajesh Kumar are also seen. PTI

ter Adhikar Yatra', said at a rally in Gaya district on Monday.

"The Election Commission has said that if I do not give an affidavit in one week then what I said is baseless. Wait for some

time, the entire country will ask for an affidavit from it. We will reveal vote theft in every State. The SIR is a new way to steal votes," he alleged.

The Congress leader urged the crowd to prevent

"vote theft" in the upcoming Bihar Assembly election. Mr. Gandhi said "the people of Bihar will teach a lesson" to the poll body and Prime Minister Narendra Modi "if they attempt vote theft" in the State.

rangabad district after visiting the Sun Temple in Deo.

They took out a roadshow in Aurangabad where a large number of party workers and supporters joined in raising slogans against the SIR, the poll body, Mr. Modi and the BJP.

Mr. Gandhi, Mr. Yadav, CPI (ML) leader Dipankar Bhattacharya and Vikassheel Insaan Party chief Mukesh Sahani interacted with people who had voted in the last few elections but whose names have been struck off the draft rolls.

In a message on X, Mr. Gandhi said, "Those who voted in the last 4-5 elections, their votes were also stolen in Bihar. And, when the reason was asked, only one answer was given — orders came from above. This is a fight for the rights of the poor — we will not stop. We will put an end to vote theft."

Tejashwi's call
Mr. Yadav urged the people to support the grand alliance in Bihar to form the government.

He credited Mr. Gandhi with "destroying" the alleged "design of the BJP" to remove the names of the voters from the draft rolls.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Gandhi, and INDIA bloc leaders, resumed their march from Kutuma in Au-

Bengal CM announces scheme for migrant workers facing harassment

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday announced a new scheme to provide monthly cash incentives to migrant workers who return to the State after facing harassment in other States.

Speaking to presspersons at the State Secretariat, Ms. Banerjee said the scheme will be called 'Shramashree' and will provide a monthly stipend of ₹5,000 to such migrant workers for up to one year till they get a job.

The Chief Minister said migrant workers and their families will get the benefits of other schemes of the State government as well, including ration cards and the 'Swasthya Sathi' free healthcare scheme cards.

"All 22,40,000 workers who are outside Bengal will get the benefits of Shramashree. Those who have not registered their names will be able to register their names," Ms. Banerjee said.



The CM says about 10,000 persons have returned to the State in the past months after being targeted in different States. FILE PHOTO

Monthly stipend of ₹5,000 will be given to migrant workers for up to one year till they get a job

will be given a card. As a result, they will access facilities of the State government," Ms. Banerjee said.

Hundreds of Bengali-speaking migrants have faced detention and harassment in different States across the country and were asked to produce documents to prove that they were not Bangladeshi nationals. Some of the workers from West Bengal have said they were deported to Bangladesh but later repatriated with the help of Indian authorities.

The Trinamool has said

that the migrant workers from West Bengal are being targeted for speaking in Bengali and has launched a "language movement".

AIIMS Kalyani survey

Ms. Banerjee also alleged that the door-to-door mental health survey, conducted by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Kalyani was an "indirect" way of facilitating the National Register of Citizenship (NRC) in the State.

"If any organisation reaches your house in the name of a survey, please verify it with the State government first," she said. She urged the people to be alert and not share details with anybody other than officials of the State government.

Officials of AIIMS Kalyani said it has been conducting the study in seven districts of the State as part of the second phase of the National Mental Health Survey, under the guidance of a senior official of the State's Health and Family Welfare Department.

Any person missing from draft rolls may file a claim with copy of Aadhaar: EC

Amaranath Tewary
PATNA

On a day that the Opposition INDIA bloc again questioned the Election Commission and its functioning, the Bihar Chief Electoral Officer on Monday issued an "important public notice" stating that "the electors whose names are not included in the draft roll and are dissatisfied may file a claim along with a copy of their Aadhaar card".

After SC order

"In light of the interim order passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court on 14.08.2025 in writ petition (S) Civil No (S) 640/2025 (Association of Democratic Reforms vs Election Commission of India) it is hereby notified that the list of such electors whose names were included in the electoral roll of the year 2025 (before the draft publication) but are not included in the draft roll pu-



The EC's notice comes in light of the INDIA bloc's continued questioning of the SIR exercise.

blished on August 1, 2025

along with reasons (deceased/ permanently shifted/ absent/ repeat entry), has been published on the websites of the Chief Electoral Officer, Bihar and all District Election Officers of the State of Bihar," CEO Vinod Singh Gunjyal stated in the notice.

The notice further stated that "all such electors, whose names are not included in the draft roll, may obtain information about their entry and the reasons thereof by using their EPIC number in the published list". "The list relating to such electors

not included in the draft roll published on 1.08.2025 has also been displayed at all Block Offices, Panchayat Offices, Urban Local Body Offices, and at the polling stations. Through these, such electors can obtain information regarding their entries along with the reasons. Any person dissatisfied may file a claim along with a copy of their Aadhaar card," it stated.

'Queries unanswered'

Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition in the Bihar Assembly Tejashwi Yadav alleged that the Chief Election Commissioner of India was giving excuses rather than answering the questions raised by the Opposition.

Bihar's Minister of Industries and BJP leader Nitish Mishra said, "Some political parties are misleading voters in the name of electoral rolls". Action must be taken against those spreading misinformation, he said.

EC to conduct SIR of Odisha electoral rolls next month

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

The Election Commission (EC) will launch a special intensive revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in Odisha in September, with preparations under way to mobilise manpower for 45,000 booths across the State.

The intensive revision is being conducted after 24 years in the State. "We will conduct the SIR in addition to the special summary revision carried out annually. The EC has asked all States to perform the SIR," said R.S. Gopalan, Chief Electoral Officer, Odisha, on Monday.

"As part of SIR, we will get a form filled up by voters this year. Voters are required to submit supporting documents with the forms," he said.

"We have 90% of the Elector's Photo Identity Card numbers linked to Aadhaar numbers. The duplication of EPICs is expected to reduce," he said.

U.S. monitors India and Pak. developments daily: Rubio

Press Trust of India
NEW YORK/WASHINGTON

The U.S. keeps "an eye" on what's happening between India and Pakistan "every single day" as ceasefires can fall apart very quickly, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said.

In reply to a query on the Ukraine war during an interview with NBC News, Mr. Rubio said, "The only way to have a ceasefire is for both sides to agree to stop firing at one another. And the Russians just haven't agreed to that. Beyond that, I would say that one of the complications about ceasefires is they have to be maintained... I mean, every single day we keep an eye on what's happening between Pakistan and India, Cambodia and Thailand".

"What we're aiming for is not some permanent ceasefire. What we're aiming for here is a peace deal so there's not a war now and there's not a war in the future," Mr. Rubio said.

Nadda hails Modi, slams Nehru over Indus Waters Treaty

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Even today, India would have continued to pay the price for one man's misplaced idealism, if not for PM Modi

J.P. NADDHA
BJP president

layan Blunder. A Prime Minister who disregarded Parliament, gambled away India's lifelines, and tied India's hands for generations. Even today, India would have continued to pay the price for one man's misplaced idealism, if not for Prime Minister Modi's commitment to nation first," he added.

"The most appalling aspect was that he did it without consulting the Indian Parliament. The treaty was signed in September 1960. However, it was placed before Parliament only two months later, in November, and that too, for a token discussion of mere two hours," Mr. Nadda said.

The IWT was suspended by India following the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, which claimed 26 lives.

Two days following Trump summit, Putin talks to Modi about Ukraine, bilateral ties

Kallop Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI



Old allies: This is the second conversation between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Vladimir Putin in a fortnight. FILE PHOTO

This is the second conversation between Mr. Modi and Mr. Putin in a fortnight and was indicative of the pace of talks between Russia and India as it was held days before the arrival of the U.S. leadership. The Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement that Mr. Modi presented India's "consistent position" about finding a peaceful solution to the conflict in Ukraine while Mr. Putin presented his "assessment" of his conversation with Mr. Trump.

"India has consistently called for a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict and supports all efforts in this regard. I look forward to our continued exchanges in the days to come," Mr. Modi said, while thanking Mr. Putin for sharing the "insights on his recent meeting with President Trump in Alaska".

Earlier this week, Mr. Modi had a telephone conversation with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky in

skyy in which Mr. Zelensky reiterated the need to include Ukraine in international dialogue that would decide the fate of the country.

After Monday's phone call between Mr. Modi and Mr. Putin, the External Affairs Ministry also said that the two leaders "also touched upon a number of issues of bilateral cooperation" hinting at the India-Russia talks that are under way ahead of the annual India-Russia summit for which Mr. Putin will visit India.

"China provided Pakistan live intelligence against India according to Deputy Chief of Army Staff Lt. Gen. Rahal R. Singh, who went so far as to state on July 4, 2025, that China was one of the 'adversaries' India was fighting during Operation Sindoar," Mr. Ramesh added.

Oppn. raises issue of China's military support to Pakistan

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

so said China is constructing a 60 GW dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo river that will have implications for India and claimed that the disengagement process with China is far from what existed before May 2020, when Indian and Chinese troops faced off in eastern Ladakh.

Flagging the same issue of Chinese support to Pakistan during Operation Sindoar, All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief Asaduddin Owaisi shared a news report that claimed Indian business groups such as "Adani and Ambani are hunting for Chinese technology as ties warm on U.S. tariffs".

"Is this the reason why the Modi Govt is rushing to have friendly ties with China?" Mr. Owaisi asked on X, referring to the reports that read: "A growing wave of Indian businesses are seeking partnerships with Chinese companies for technology transfer".

The Congress leader al-

Rajnath gets YSRCP to back NDA parties' Vice-Presidential pick

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday gathered support for the National Democratic Alliance's Vice-Presidential candidate, Maharashtra Governor C.P. Radhakrishnan, reaching out to non-NDA parties such as the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), and the Biju Janata Dal (BJD).

Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Kiren Rijiju has been appointed Mr. Radhakrishnan's polling agent.

Mr. Singh managed to secure the support of the YSRCP after he spoke to party leader Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. YSRCP Lok Sabha member Maddila Gurumurthy confirmed that his party, with 11 MPs – four in the Lok Sabha and seven in the Rajya Sabha – will vote for Mr. Radhakrishnan.

The DMK is part of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), which held a meeting on Monday evening to pick its own Vice-Presidential candidate. Thus, there was not much optimism in the NDA that the DMK would support Mr. Radhakrishnan, who is

from Tamil Nadu.

Mr. Radhakrishnan arrived in Delhi on Monday, where he met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other NDA leaders at Union Minister Pralhad Joshi's residence and will likely be felicitated at the NDA's Parliamentary Party meeting on Tuesday. He is expected to file his nominations for the election on August 20.

Soon after meeting with Mr. Radhakrishnan, Mr. Modi posted on X, "Met Thiru CP Radhakrishnan Ji. Conveyed my best wishes on his being the NDA's Vice Presidential nominee. His long years of public service and experience across domains will greatly enrich our nation. May he continue to serve the nation with the same dedication and resolve he has always demonstrated."

Sobhana K. Nair
Sandeep Phukan

NEW DELHI

Former Director of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Mylswamy Annadurai and social activist Tushar Gandhi were among the names that were discussed at a meeting of INDIA bloc leaders on Monday at Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's residence to decide the Opposition candidate for the Vice-Presidential polls.

The meeting, however, remained inconclusive and another meeting will take place on Tuesday before the final announcement.

"A meeting of leaders of all Opposition parties in Parliament will be held at 12:30 PM tomorrow Tuesday Aug 19th at 10, Rajaji Marg," Congress communications chief Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X.

According to sources, the Congress president, who is also the Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the Rajya Sabha, is committed to fielding a candidate and not concede without a contest. He would be reaching



Congress's Gaurav Gogoi, Samajwadi Party's Ram Gopal Yadav, and AAP's Sanjay Singh addressing the media. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

out to top Opposition leaders on phone to arrive at the widest possible consensus.

On Sunday night, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had reached out to the leaders of some Opposition parties, including Mr. Kharge, for unanimously electing the new Vice-President.

Sources said the Opposition wants to field a non-political face who has national standing and stature for the second-highest constitutional position in the country.

The Vice-Presidential election, necessitated by the sudden resignation of incumbent Jagdeep Dhankhar last month, is scheduled for September 9.

If a consensus on Mr. Annadurai's candidature emerges within the Oppo-

sition ranks and if he agrees to contest, it will help the DMK and its allies politically as they will not be seen as "anti-Tamil" in opposing NDA's vice-presidential choice.

The Trinamool Congress, however, was of the opinion that it would be "reactive" to field another Tamil in response to the NDA's pick.

Another name that is said to have been discussed is Tushar Gandhi, author and the great-grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, sources claimed.

There were also some reservations among RJD and SP leaders about contesting the vice-presidential polls since the numbers are loaded in favour of the NDA. They argued that since the Opposition does not have the requisite numbers, it should let this election go in view of the upcoming Bihar polls.

The SP also argued that the Opposition should focus its energy on its campaign against the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

(With inputs from B. Kolappan in Chennai)

IN BRIEF



Centre introduces Bill in LS to establish IIM in Guwahati

The Centre will set up an Indian Institute of Management (IIM) in Guwahati, Assam, with the introduction of Indian Institutes of Management (Amendment) Bill, 2025, on Monday in the Lok Sabha. The Bill was introduced by Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. According to the draft law, the Centre, the State government, and representatives of the United Liberation Front of Assam have signed a Memorandum of Settlement. "Establishing an IIM shall boost the education and development of the region and open up opportunities for the students to develop managerial skills," the Bill said.

Modi chairs high-level meet on next-generation reforms

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday chaired a high-level meeting, which included top Union Ministers, Secretaries, and economists, to deliberate on the road map for next-generation reforms. Union Ministers Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Piyush Goyal, and Lalan Singh attended the meeting. Mr. Modi had on August 15 announced the formation of a task force for 'next-generation reforms' and revision of GST laws, as he devoted a major part of his speech to making India self-reliant in a host of sectors ranging from semiconductors to fertilizers. PTI

Indian astronaut to land on moon in 2040: Jitendra Singh in Lok Sabha

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



An Indian astronaut will herald "Viksit Bharat" by landing on the moon in 2040, Union Minister Jitendra Singh informed the Lok Sabha on Monday as the House took up the discussion on astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla being the first Indian to visit the International Space Station.

Initiating the discussion on the critical role of the space programme for Viksit Bharat by 2047, Mr. Singh said Prime Minister Narendra Modi undertook space sector reforms after assuming office in 2014.

Future initiatives
Mr. Singh said that after opening up the space sector for private players in 2020, India's space economy had already reached \$8

billion and would touch \$45 billion in the next decade.

Mr. Singh said India would undertake an uncrewed space mission involving a robot, Vyommitra, in 2026, followed by its maiden human spaceflight – Gaganyaan – in 2027.

Inconclusive discussion
The discussion remained inconclusive as the House had to be adjourned be-

cause of persistent sloganizing by the Opposition members over the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar.

As soon as the proceedings of the Lower House started at 11 a.m., the Opposition members were on their feet, raising slogans and showing placards with their demand for a discussion on the SIR.

Initially, Speaker Om Birla tried to continue the business of the House – Question Hour – by allowing members to ask six questions related to several Union Ministries and departments amid the din. After 15 minutes, he adjourned the House till 12 p.m. When the House reassembled, the Opposition members trooped into the well with slogans like "Vote Chor, Gaddi Chod" (vote thief, vacate the seat).

Mr. Shukla was part of the Axiom-4 commercial mission to the ISS. Mr. Modi said on X.



Matter of pride: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Shubhanshu Shukla, at his residence in New Delhi, on Monday. PTI

PM lauds astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday met Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla, who became the first Indian astronaut to travel to the International Space Station.

Mr. Shukla was part of the Axiom-4 commercial mission to the ISS. Mr. Modi said on X.

Shukla gifted Mr. Modi the mission patch of the Axiom-4 mission and the Indian tricolour that he had taken with him to the ISS.

"We discussed a wide range of subjects, including his experiences in space, progress in science & technology, as well as India's Gaganyaan mission. India is proud of his feat," Mr. Modi said on X.

Centre rolls out PM Viksit Bharat Rojgar Yojana portal

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union government launched the Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rojgar Yojana portal on Monday. Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya asked first-time employees and employers to take benefit of the scheme.

The Centre had said that the scheme, recently approved by the Cabinet, will generate 3.5 crore jobs.

Dr. Mandaviya said all employers and first-time employees are covered under the scheme.

He said the beneficiaries can avail incentives by registering on the portal or by uploading their Universal Account Number on the UMAN application.

Part A of the scheme is for first-time employees and Part B is for em-

Rajya Sabha passes Indian Ports Bill as Oppn. boycotts debate over SIR

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Future road map: Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal speaks in the Rajya Sabha on Monday. ANI

mits of any port and to formulate a national perspective plan for maritime trade.

Mr. Sonowal said the Bill was more than a legislative change and added that despite the progress made, the sector was still governed by a colonial law, the Indian Ports Act of 1908. "This outdated statute lacks provisions for long-term planning, modern environmental safeguards, and efficient dispute reso-

lution. It is a legislative framework from a bygone era, unsuited for a modern, digitalized maritime ecosystem. The Indian Ports Bill, 2025, is our answer to this challenge. It is the product of extensive consultation with coastal States, industry stakeholders, and the public, embodying the spirit of cooperative federalism," he said.

After a brief discussion, the Bill was passed. The

Lok Sabha had passed the Bill earlier last week.

Microwave turned off

Earlier, when the House met after lunch at 2 p.m., the Opposition boycotted the discussion on the Bill and walked out of the House, demanding a discussion on the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar. Soon after Mr. Sonowal tabled the Bill, BJD's Sasmit Patra, who was in the Chair, invited Opposition leader Mallikarjun Kharge to speak. When Mr. Kharge raised the issue of SIR, his microphone was turned off twice, and Mr. Patra said *sub judice* issues should not be raised in the House. Protesting against this, the Opposition walked out. The Leader of the House, J.P. Nadda, said the Opposition had been disrupting the House over non-issues.

Govt. introduces Bill in LS to decriminalise over 200 provisions

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Govt. has asked the Speaker of the House to refer the Bill to a Select Committee for review

The government on Monday introduced the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025, in the Lok Sabha. The Bill aims to amend 355 provisions across 16 Central Acts to ease their applicability.

Of these, 288 provisions are proposed to be decriminalised, and 67 provisions are proposed to be amended to facilitate "ease of living". The government has asked the Speaker of the House to refer the Bill to a Select Committee for review. This Bill would build upon the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023, which was the first consolidated legislation to decriminalise minor offences across multiple Acts, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said in a release.

HC sets aside Magistrate's order against HDFC CEO

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court has set aside a Judicial Magistrate First Class order issuing notice to HDFC Bank Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director Sashidhar Jagdishan in connection with a private criminal defamation case.

On June 16, the Magistrate directed the issuance of notice to Mr. Jagdishan under Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023.

Mr. Jagdishan moved the High Court, contending that the Magistrate had acted prematurely by issuing notice before recording the verification statement. Justice S.M. Modak, in an order, said that the Magistrate's action was legally unsustainable and "the order of issuance of notice to accused is set aside."

IN BRIEF



SC won't intervene in quashed case linked to MP's death

The Supreme Court on Monday did not intervene in the quashing of a suicide abetment case in connection with the death of MP Mohan Delkar. The Bombay High Court had quashed the case registered against nine persons accused in the case, including Praful Khoda Patel, the Administrator of the Union Territories of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu and Lakshadweep in September 2022. On February 22, 2021, Delkar, 58, a seven-term parliamentarian, was found dead in a hotel room in Marine Drive.

Suicide prevention helpline: Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health. Telephone: 011-4076 9002

Newborn dies after falling from hospital bed in Assam

The Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) authorities have ordered investigations into the death of a newborn who fell from a phototherapy bed at the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Born on August 15, the infant had been undergoing treatment for jaundice. The baby was found hanging from the railing of a phototherapy bed at around 5:30 p.m. on Monday and declared dead later. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma warned of strong action if negligence of duty is found to be the reason behind the "unfortunate and painful incident". Utpal Bordoloi, the infant's father, said he would file a complaint with the police and take legal action.

Unemployment rate declines to 5.2% in July: govt. survey

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The rate of unemployment in the country declined to 5.2% in July from 5.6% in June, shows the Periodic Labour Force Survey released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on Monday.

The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for women showed a marginal increase to 25.5% in July from 24.5% in June. The LFPR for men stood at 57.4%, while for all persons, it was 41.4%.

The LFPR for men aged 15 and above in rural areas was 78.1% and for women, it was 36.9%. In urban areas, the LFPR among females of age 15 years and above during July was 25.8% compared with 75.1% observed for males of the same age group," the survey noted.



The number of persons covered by the survey was 3,79,222 (2,16,832 in rural areas and 1,62,390 in urban areas). FILE PHOTO

The unemployment rate (UR) for persons aged 15 and above stood at 5.2%. In rural areas, it was 4.4% and 7.2% in urban areas. For women in rural areas, the UR was 3.9%. For men, it was 4.6%. For women in urban areas, the UR was 8.7% compared with 6.6% among men.

The Worker Population Ratio (WPR), which defines the proportion of those who are employed among the total population, in ru-

7 killed as heavy rain batters Maharashtra; 800 villages hit

Four lakh hectares of cropland damaged in State; Mumbai receives 177 mm rain in six hours, leading to waterlogging in several areas; Chief Minister Fadnavis holds meeting with State officials

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

Seven people died over the past two days as heavy rain battered several parts of Maharashtra, officials said on Monday. Five people were also missing in the State, they said.

The incessant rainfall has affected more than 800 villages and four lakh hectares of agricultural land. Six deaths were reported from the Marathwada region.

Rescue and relief operations were on in at least four villages, even as 206 villagers were rescued by the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), and the armed forces in Nanded district. Several houses were damaged and livestock was lost due to heavy rainfall.

The downpour brought Mumbai to a standstill after 177 mm rain was reported in six hours on Monday.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis held a review meeting with all State government officials and directed the administrative machinery to remain prepared. "Between August 18 and August 21, there are



Deep waters: A woman wades through a waterlogged road amid heavy rain in Mumbai on Monday. The IMD has issued a red alert for the city. EMMANUEL YOGINI

chances of heavy rainfall. Around 16 districts are on red or orange alert," Mr. Fadnavis said after the briefing.

At several places, including Mumbai and Thane, schools and colleges announced a holiday on Tuesday in view of the red alert.

Discharge from dams
Panchanamas have been ordered in several districts.

The Maharashtra government is also in touch

with the governments of Telangana and Karnataka in order to discharge excess water from dams. The situation at Almatti dam is being reviewed closely, Mr. Fadnavis said.

Severe waterlogging was reported in several low-lying areas of Mumbai. Vehicles remained stuck in traffic for hours, leading to transport disruptions. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a red alert for the city and its neighbouring districts. Authorities appealed to ci-

izens to avoid unnecessary travel. Offices were asked to let employees leave early.

A protection wall constructed by the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority collapsed in Chembur on Sunday, damaging seven shanties. However, no one was injured. In another incident, a school bus carrying six children and two staff members was stranded in Matunga for some time. They were later rescued by the police.

SC defers hearing Punjab petition over delay in clearing Bills

Aaratrika Bhaumik

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday deferred hearing a petition filed by the Punjab government challenging the President's prolonged delay in acting on two State Bills referred to her by the Governor.

The State government had contended that its case is squarely covered by the court's April 8 ruling in the Tamil Nadu Governor case, which laid down timelines for gubernatorial action on Bills. Accordingly, it had urged the court either to direct the Governor to comply with the ruling or to declare the Governor's inaction illegal and treat the Bills as having received "deemed assent".

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai decided to await the outcome of a Constitution Bench hearing a Presidential Reference under its advisory jurisdiction on whether the court can prescribe timelines for Governors and the President in dealing with State Bills submitted for assent or reserved for their consideration. It declined to entertain an interim application by the Centre seeking to refer Punjab's petition to the Constitution Bench hearing the Reference.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, argued that the petition should be heard by a Constitution Bench.

However, senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, representing the Punjab government, opposed the Centre's request and sought time to file a counter-affidavit.

UNHCR suspends repatriation of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees

S. Vijay Kumar

CHENNAI

UNHCR, the refugee agency of the United Nations, has temporarily suspended the process of facilitating the repatriation of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees apprehended upon their arrival in Sri Lanka.

The repatriation of seven refugees from Tiruchi to Colombo on August 14, 2025, was called off in the last minute amid reports of at least four refugees being detained on charges of violating immigration laws on arrival in Sri Lanka.

According to official sources, Freeman Richard Velvavandram (54), whose return was facilitated by the UNHCR, was arrested on arrival at the Colombo international airport on August 12, 2025. He was produced before a judicial magistrate and let on bail. However, a review of the

Supreme Court says injured cadets can't be left 'high and dry'

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday asked the Union government to respond to a *suo motu* case registered on the basis of a media report that armed forces cadets "medically boarded out" after training accidents are left "high and dry", without any substantial efforts taken to cover their treatment expenses or rehabilitation.



The SC highlighted that the risks involved in cadets' training was very high.

Justice Nagarathna remarked how after training, cadets came out with flying colours, but there were some who quietly exited due to their injuries with only about ₹40,000 as an *ex gratia* amount.

"They undergo rigorous training. They are brave. The risks involved in their training are very high. If nothing is done when they suffer accidents, people who look up to the armed forces and want to join would be disheartened.

These are, after all, accidents, and not caused by the cadets' negligence. These are also rare occurrences. There should be some scheme worked out to protect them," Justice Nagarathna observed orally in court.

The court asked Additional Solicitor-General Aishwarya Bhati to take in-

structions from the government departments concerned, and revert on whether there would be any increase in the medical expenses allowed to cadets who had to abort their career due to injuries.

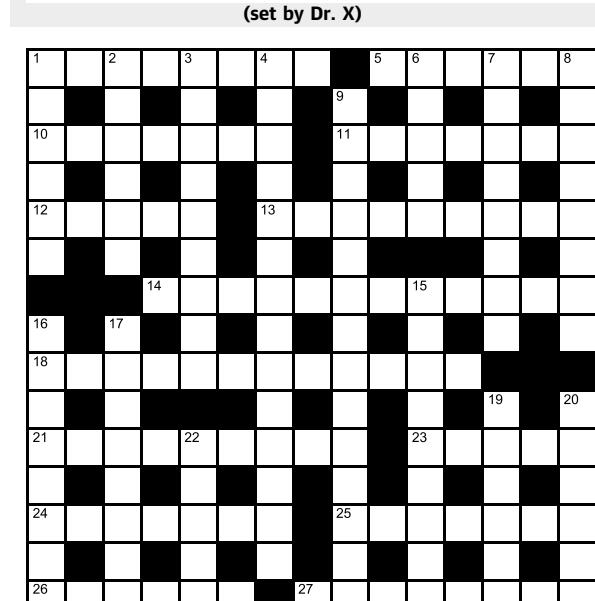
Ms. Bhati was ordered to enquire if there would be any insurance cover. "A group insurance scheme would put the burden on the insurer," Justice Nagarathna observed.

Alternative training
The court suggested the government could consider providing injured cadets alternative training and posts in the armed forces after their medical treatment.

The court scheduled the case for September 4 to hear the initial response of the Centre to the case.

TH CROSSWORD

14567



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



SUDOKU

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle

No SS681 Distribution www.knightfeathers.com

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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FAITH

The sacred 108 temples

While there are many temples for Lord Narayana, there are 108, which are called Divya Desams, because they have been praised by the Azhvars. Pillai Perumal Iyengar, who came centuries after the Azhvars, wrote a work titled *Nootrettu Tirupathi Andadi*. This work is about the 108 kshetras praised by the Azhvars, said K.B. Devarajan in a discourse. *Andadi* is a genre of literature, where the last word of a verse becomes the first word of the succeeding verse.

Pillai Perumal Iyengar tells us the location of the 108 sacred places. He records that Chola Nadu has



The government procures ethanol either from sugarcane-based raw materials like C-heavy molasses, B-heavy molasses, sugarcane juice, sugar, or sugar syrup, or damaged food grains like broken rice, maize, or cellulosic and lignocellulosic materials. KARTHIKEYAN G.

What does science say about the govt's ethanol blending plan?

The ethanol push echoes past global experiments. Unlike the most celebrated example, Brazil, which began decades ago in a studied manner, India's more rapid move towards blending has left drivers grappling with practical issues of mileage, corrosion, and higher service costs

Priyali Prakash

In 2021, the Government of India said it will move to 20% ethanol blending in petrol by 2025 with the two-pronged goal of cutting carbon emissions and reducing the country's dependence on foreign oil.

While vehicles modified to be compatible with the new composition started rolling out in April 2025, the government's push for 20% ethanol-blended petrol (E20) has left vehicle-owners worried about the impact on their older vehicles and about a surge in maintenance costs.

Ethanol, or ethyl alcohol, is a biofuel: it is made from plant waste called biomass. Regular petrol is a hydrocarbon made from the fossilised remains of organic matter buried for millions of years.

When mixed with a fossil fuel like petrol, ethanol acts as an oxygenate that helps the petrol burn better.

Making ethanol

Under India's ethanol-blending programme, the government procures ethanol either from sugarcane-based raw materials like C-heavy molasses, B-heavy molasses, sugarcane juice, sugar, or sugar syrup, or damaged food grains like broken rice, maize, or cellulosic and lignocellulosic materials.

Molasses is a byproduct of sugarcane production. It is a thick, dark syrup about 40% rich in sugars that can be fermented but which can't be extracted further.

C-heavy molasses is the final byproduct of the sugar production process, with molasses content around 28.3%. B-heavy molasses is an intermediate byproduct of the same process and has a higher molasses content, ranging from 48% to 52%.

Ethanol is made from molasses by fermentation – using yeast enzymes to catalyse the breakdown of sugar molecules in the presence of water. An everyday example of fermentation is ginger soda. If you put ginger, sugar, and water in an airtight container for a few days, it becomes fizzy.

This is because the microbes in ginger feed on the sugar, releasing carbon dioxide, which makes carbonic acid with water.

In the first step of ethanol production from molasses, sucrose molecules in the syrup are diluted with water. Then they break down into glucose molecules in the presence of invertase.

These glucose molecules further react in the presence of zymase to form ethanol and release carbon dioxide.

Producing ethanol from food grains and lignocellulosic materials also involves other processes that break them down to fermentable sugars first. Lignocellulosic biomass is plant matter with a high carbohydrate content and is usually composed of parts not used for food or feed. This biomass is rich in cellulose,

hemicellulose, and lignin.

Chemical nature, energy efficiency

Two factors are key to understanding ethanol's energy efficiency: the calorific value and the octane number.

The calorific value of a fuel denotes its yield: a higher calorific value means more energy. The calorific value of ethanol is significantly lower than that of petrol, so the fuel's overall burning efficiency should theoretically decrease. However, the government has maintained that the drop in fuel performance is not significant and that it is governed by a mix of other factors, including "driving habits, maintenance practices such as oil changes and air filter cleanliness, tyre pressure and alignment, and even air conditioning load."

The octane number is a measure of a fuel's resistance to engine knocking or burning prematurely. Ethanol has a higher octane number than petrol. Thus, it has the potential to reduce the knock resistance significantly. However, because of its lower energy content, the amount of energy the engine can extract per litre of blended fuel decreases with increasing ethanol content.

This said, the drop in mileage drivers have raised concerns about won't be significant, Sudheer Kumar Kuppili, a research fellow at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, said.

"The compensation for having lower energy would be quite low when you are moving from E10 to E20," Kuppili said. "It would be significant only when we shift to 100% ethanol. Most of the uproar these days about the reduction in vehicular mileage is fuelled by many factors, which are difficult to assess."

In fact, experts said the thing to focus on here is ethanol's hygroscopic nature. That is, ethanol has a considerable tendency to attract and attach water molecules to itself. This in turn affects the vehicle's components and fuel performance in new ways.

Independent expert Noble Varghese said the main concern is the increased possibility of corrosion.

"Ethanol affects the rubber components of a fuel system, which are mainly the piping, the fuel tank, the injectors, the filters, and the combustion chambers. The combustion chamber and the engine block itself are not as affected by ethanol, but what is affected is the fuel tank, the rubber piping, and the injector," Varghese said.

"Ethanol tends to attract water, so if the vehicle is not used everyday, water tends to collect in the fuel tank, which is corrosive for the tank. This causes another problem too: rust particles mix with fuel and go into the fuel line and clog it," he added.

"That in itself will reduce the mileage. This is not primarily because of ethanol's thermodynamic properties but more because of the components, which are



When the blending happens, it alters the stoichiometric ratio, i.e., air-to-fuel ratio, which in turn affects the speed of combustion and heat release

SUDHEER KUMAR KUPPILI
LONDON SCHOOL OF HYGIENE AND TROPICAL MEDICINE

not suited to E20 fuel."

The government has, however, maintained that replacing older rubber parts and gaskets designed for the non-blended fuel is "inexpensive and can be easily managed during routine servicing."

A statement released by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) on August 12 also said this change would be required only "once in the lifetime of the vehicle" and at "any authorised workshop."

Kuppili also said moisture won't be a significant problem.

"This might be a problem for older vehicles, which are probably already worn out. This should not be a problem for BS-IV or BS-VI vehicles. The fuel's hygroscopic nature might have a noticeable effect when you are in colder parts of the country. However, in those regions, fuels are usually mixed with additives to avoid freezing," he explained.

"Also, when you are using a vehicle regularly, any moisture that accumulates will be evaporated by the high engine temperatures (>400°C)," he said.

Kuppili wished to clarify that he hasn't worked on this particular issue of the fuels.

Comparisons with Brazil

Comparing the Indian ethanol-blending story with that of Brazil may not be justified, as the South American country currently uses E27 petrol as well and paced this upgrade out over decades.

Brazil first decided to lower its dependence on imported petrol in 1975 with its Proálcool programme during the oil crisis in the 1970s. Over the next few years, it focused on building capacity by working with researchers, expanding the production of ethanol from sugarcane with the specific purpose of mixing it with petrol, providing subsidies, incentives, and tax breaks to reduce the costs of production, and increasing the competitiveness of ethanol.

The country also has a large market for vehicles fit with flex-fuel engines that allow vehicles to readily adapt to petrol with different ethanol fractions.

This isn't the case with Indian vehicles. According to Varghese, the electronic control unit in an engine is hypersensitive to fuel content, which it detects automatically.

"If you put more ethanol in fuel, its chemical properties change, and

therefore the engine management system has to be able to adapt, and older cars might not be able to do that," he said.

By way of solution, he said mechanics could quickly connect the unit to a computer and update the fuel composition setting.

However, one senior industry executive told *The Hindu* that vehicles that don't have electronic control units and injectors can't be made compatible with E20 as fuel. The executive said "about 95%" of all vehicles until the rollout of the BS-VI emission standards (in April 2020) were mechanically carbureted, meaning they didn't utilise any electronic units with sensors to regulate the delivery and treatment of fuel.

"When the blending happens, it alters the stoichiometric ratio, i.e., air-to-fuel ratio, which in turn affects the speed of combustion and heat release," Kuppili said. "Modern vehicles have sensors called electronic control units, which monitor the oxygen content and alter the amount of fuel and air needed."

With ethanol-blended petrol, he added, "you would need less air than usual, as ethanol has an oxygen atom. So this reduction can actually reduce pollutant emissions such as NOX, PM, and CO."

"The ethanol-blending policy itself is excellent. It has been successful in other parts of the world," Varghese said. "The ideas of energy security and saving import duty are excellent and true. It just needs to be paced better."

The principle of recalibration

The executive said the sensor's main purpose is to manage the spark timing – which determines the release pattern of the fuel and combustion inside the cylinder.

The electronic control unit uses the spark plug to create the spark that ignites the fuel-air blend in the combustion chamber. Older vehicles, i.e., those lacking the unit, have been tuned to a different fuel and are thus hard-coded for a different spark timing.

Since E20 brings more oxygen to the fuel-air mix, the executive explained, engines may have to be recalibrated by, among other measures, advancing the pressure for combustion and its eventual timing by two to three degrees. In other words, the engine will have to make sure combustion happens earlier so that there are no issues with starting the vehicle and with maintaining an adequate air-fuel ratio across all load conditions and speeds.

This customisation isn't possible with mechanically carbureted vehicles.

The executive also affirmed that the adjustment would increase cost.

"You have to pay the calibration engineer and the vehicle component engineers," he said. The latter "charge good money."

(With inputs from Saptaparno Ghosh priyali.prakash@thehindu.co.in



Meteorite NWA 16788 in New York on July 8, 2025.

REUTERS

Auction of Mars meteorite sparks debate on ownership

Agence France Presse

The recent auction of a Martian meteorite – for a record-grabbing \$5.3 million at Sotheby's in New York – has sparked questions over its provenance and renewed debate over who gets to claim rocks fallen from the heavens.

The hefty 25-kilogram stone is the largest Martian meteorite ever discovered on Earth, according to its Sotheby's listing, and was found in November 2023 in the vast Saharan desert in Niger.

The government of Niger has announced that it will open an investigation following the auction, saying it appears to "have all the characteristics of illicit international trafficking."

On August 8, the government suspended exports of precious stones and meteorites until further notice.

Sotheby's has rejected the accusations, insisting that the meteorite "was exported from Niger and transported in line with all relevant international procedures."

In light of the controversy, however, a review of the case is underway, a Sotheby's spokesperson said.

"The stone travelled 140 million miles through space, and hurtled through the Earth's atmosphere before crashing in the Sahara Desert," the Sotheby's listing said.

Following its discovery, the jagged, ochre-colored stone was sold to an international dealer, briefly exhibited in Italy, and eventually ended up in the auction catalog in New York.

For American paleontologist Paul Sereno, who has worked with Niger's authorities for years, all signs suggest that

Much larger than other Martian meteorites, it offers a unique insight into the geological history of the red planet

the stone left the country "illicitly."

"Everybody's anonymous – from the person who found it, the dealers, to the guy who bought it, everybody's anonymous," he told AFP, making no secret of his frustration.

"If they had put on baseball gloves and caught the meteorite as it was hurtling towards Earth before it landed in any country, they could claim it... but I'm sorry, it landed there. It belongs to Niger," he said.

We should respect it

Laws governing the ownership of meteorites vary based on point of impact.

In the United States, for example, if a rock falls on private land, the property owners have ownership rights.

In Niger, however, a law governs "national cultural patrimony," which includes rare mineralogical specimens, according to Matthieu Gounelle, a professor at France's National History Museum, and his father, Max Gounelle, a French university professor. Both are specialists in regulations governing the collection and sale of meteorites.

"In our opinion, there is no doubt that meteorites should be included among the rare mineralogical specimens" protected by Nigerien law, they said.

Beyond the legal battle and the possible involvement of a trafficking network, the sale of the meteorite also raises science ethics questions.

The rock, named NWA 16788, has unique scientific research value.

Much larger than other Martian meteorites that have been recorded to date, it offers a unique insight into the geological history of the red planet.

Like other Martian meteorites, it is believed to have been ejected into space when an asteroid slammed into Mars.

"This is nature's heritage. In many ways, it's world heritage, and it's telling us things about the cosmos. We should respect it," Sereno said.

"It's not something, to my mind, that should be auctioned off to potentially disappear into someone's mantle."

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Required reforms

Risking some revenue to boost consumption will help the economy

The central government's proposals to reform the Goods and Services Tax (GST) system are bold and timely. They stand to benefit the middle class and the business community, as the government claims. Shifting 99% of the items in the 12% slab to a 5% tax rate, and 90% of the items in the 28% slab to 18% will substantially reduce the tax burden on most consumers. Rationalising the number of slabs and shifting similar products to the same slab will also reduce ambiguity and litigation, which are the major issues businesses have with the current GST setup. Further, while most of the focus has been captured by the rate restructuring proposals, the procedural reforms regarding registration, return filing and refunds are equally important. Simplifying GST is not just about reducing the multiplicity of rates but also about making it easier and less time-consuming for tax-payers to navigate the system. Easing registration, simplifying returns and speeding up refunds, therefore, are welcome improvements the Centre is pursuing. Combined with the new Income Tax Bill and the re-jig of income-tax slabs in this year's Budget, these GST reforms will highlight 2025 as a watershed year for tax reform – direct as well as indirect tax. While the government has not made an official estimate of what the revenue impact of these reductions will be, sources have said that it expects a hit. Two years ago, the Reserve Bank of India had estimated that the average GST rate was 11.6%, which is now expected to fall substantially. However, the government is confident that an increase in consumption and a widening of the tax base will offset most of the revenue loss. With a large number of items set to be taxed at just 5%, the incentives for input tax credit scams and tax evasion will also be substantially removed.

A willingness to risk some amount of revenue in order to boost domestic consumption bodes well for the economy, especially at a time when export demand is faltering due to tariff uncertainties. It remains to be seen how the State governments will react to this proposed revenue surrender. They have already been lobbying the Sixteenth Finance Commission to increase the share of States in central taxes. These tax cuts will also make it even more unlikely that petroleum products – a major source of States' revenues – will be included in the GST any time soon. Politically, it will be difficult for the States to directly oppose these rate reductions, but they might instead pressure the Centre for compensation once again. Crucially, the Centre will be reaching out to the States over the next few weeks to put forth its case. It is important that their concerns are taken on board as well.

Familiar impasse

Talks on limiting use of plastic must be built on mutual trust

Global resistance to a universal treaty on eliminating plastic pollution remains stubborn and huge. Last week, the sixth attempt since 2022 by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to get member-nations to agree upon a treaty to address plastic pollution ran into the familiar vortex of opposition. There was disagreement among the major blocs of countries on whether comprehensively addressing plastic pollution requires eliminating plastic production itself. All countries agree that the ubiquitous polythene bag, despite its immense practicability and affordability as a container, has ballooned into a civic crisis. India generates around 3.4 million tonnes (MT) of plastic waste but recycles only about 30%. Its plastic consumption rose at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 9.7% from 14 MT in 2016-17 to over 20 MT in 2019-20. India has a production ban on about 20 single-use plastic items – cups, straws, spoons. While this has, to some extent, induced a degree of behavioural change – in greater reliance of paper and cloth bags – it has had little impact on waste management and recycling. This is also reflective of the global picture. According to the UNEP, the world produces more than 430 MT of plastic annually, two-thirds of which are short-lived products that soon become waste. Overall, 46% of plastic waste is landfilled, while 22% is mismanaged and becomes litter. In 2019, plastic, which is a derivative of fossilised crude, generated 1.8 billion metric tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions or about 3.4% of the global total.

Plastic, therefore, can be seen as a waste management problem that can be solved by improving incentives for the market to do a better job of collecting waste and recycling. However, there are countries that point to the decades of attempts made on these lines, with limited gains. To add to that, more evidence has piled up that plastic, non-biodegradable as it is, is making its way into human, animal and marine food systems. Island-nations and territories are swamped by plastic waste washing up on their shores. Then there are granular forms of plastic – or microplastics – with potential for harm. Thus, the only real solution is to reduce at source. However, nations are not all agreed upon this aspect of toxicity. Therefore, in treaty-linked talks, they view calls to cut production as tactics to impose trade barriers and add to the general climate of tariff uncertainty. Unless countries can build greater trust before such talks and hear each other out with an open mind, having more meetings will only be futile. The halcyon days, when some countries could steer resolutions on the environment assuming that the 'common good' was uncontroversial, are long past.

Alaskan winds, India and the Trump-Putin summit



Suhasini Haidar

The "Alaska Moment" between United States President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin on August 15, 2025 will translate to other objectives for Ukraine as Mr. Trump engages with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and European leaders, leading up to a possible trilateral summit in a quest for the end of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. For New Delhi, however, the Alaska Summit did not yield the clear-cut outcomes many had hoped for before the meeting between the leaders of two of India's closest friends. Nor did it help the peculiar sense of vulnerability that Indian diplomacy faced, of having so much at stake in a meeting while having so little agency in its results.

Broadly, the Narendra Modi government had hoped that a U.S.-Russia rapprochement would take off some of the pressure from the U.S. India has felt over its ties with Russia. However, while there was a visible warmth in the Trump-Putin exchanges, this did not result in a less chilling tone that Mr. Trump has had towards India. He has been taking India to task on a number of issues.

More specifically, hopes rose that the Alaska meeting would result in a rollback of the U.S.'s planned 25% secondary sanctions on India for buying Russian oil; the resumption of India-U.S. trade talks that Mr. Trump has held up over the Russia oil issue; and a subsequent revision of the 25% reciprocal tariffs already in place. In a severely-worded piece in the *Financial Times* ("India's oil lobby is funding Putin's war machine – that has to stop"), Peter Navarro, who is Mr. Trump's Senior Counselor on Trade and Manufacturing, virtually dashed such hopes, making it clear that the double tariffs were a "two-pronged policy" by the U.S. to "hit India where it hurts", for both the Russian imports and for its curbs on market access.

No change in India policies

Nor was there any indicator that Mr. Trump would let up on the other pain point: his counter-narrative to the Modi government's account of Operation Sindoos (May 7-10) and how the ceasefire was achieved. Not only did Mr. Trump repeat that he has mediated the India-Pakistan ceasefire, using trade as a leverage to corral both sides, but he now adds that a nuclear conflict would have followed as both sides were "shooting down airplanes", a version at considerable odds from that of the Modi government, which has thus far conceded that it had no losses in the conflict.

Thus, the first takeaway from the Summit must be this: while Mr. Trump's re-engagement and bonhomie with Mr. Putin may help Moscow, it does not mean a revision of his policies toward India. In any case, the rationale behind the secondary sanctions on India is dubious, and more about power games than about punishing Russia. The U.S. has itself increased its trade with Russia since Mr. Trump came to power and China imports of Russian oil have been consistently larger than India's. Hitting India with sanctions while feting the Russian President and ignoring China's actions seems to indicate that the reasons

for the U.S.'s actions lie elsewhere. Many have suggested that Mr. Trump has acted out of pique – upset that Mr. Modi ignored his claims to have mediated with the Pakistanis. Reports suggested that Mr. Modi also rebuffed U.S. moves for him to sit down with the Pakistani leadership in Riyadh or in Washington, and that the Modi-Trump call on June 17 was extremely acrimonious and awkward as a result. Mr. Trump's more obvious focus appears to be recognition for his peace-making efforts, and a possible Nobel Peace Prize, and the Modi government has already missed the bus to give him the credit for the Operation Sindoos ceasefire that Mr. Trump so clearly wants.

New Delhi must decide whether it wishes to jump through hoops for Washington, or whether it would be more sensible to step back and allow the Trump administration to do its worst before assessing a response and turn its energies to other parts of the world. There may be avenues to shore up India's options on trade relationships with Mr. Modi's upcoming visits to Japan and then to China for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meet, a possible visit to the U.S. for the United Nations General Assembly, and then South Africa for the G-20 summit. There is also Mr. Putin's visit to India soon. The bellwether event for India-U.S. ties will be the upcoming Quad Summit (India, U.S., Japan, Australia) that India is due to host later this year. It is still unclear whether Mr. Trump will visit India, especially if no India-U.S. trade deal is done by then, and whether the Indian government will be in any mood to roll out the red carpet.

Returning to substance

The second takeaway should be a lesson in not allowing "Summitry" to overtake India's broader interests. For more than a decade, the "Modi mantra" of foreign policy has been about personal magic and chemistry, of dealing one-to-one with leaders of other countries, as his imprimatur on bilateral ties. As a result, visits abroad have been judged by the number of joint public appearances, handshakes and embraces as well as special honours and awards that are given to the Prime Minister, rather than the actual agreements and concessions between them. With China, however, the 18 one-on-one meetings between Mr. Modi and China's President Xi Jinping between 2014-19 did not generate the requisite understanding to foresee Chinese People's Liberation Army's transgressions along the Line of Actual Control and the Galwan clashes.

With the U.S., too, Mr. Modi's close engagements during the Trump 1.0 tenure (the "Howdy Modi" rally in Texas in 2019 and the "Namaste Trump" rally in Gujarat in 2020), as well as his early visit to Washington under the Trump 2.0 administration in February 2025 should have given the two leaders enough of an understanding of the other. Given the shocks that have followed, it may be time to turn back the focus to substance over style. But that substance becomes more difficult to seek in Trumpian times, given that most foreign policy decisions are being taken by Mr. Trump himself and a small

ring around him in the White House, with few appointments being made on the desks that deal with India in the National Security Council or the State Department. In the 'good times' Delhi and Washington have worked well, even without a U.S. Ambassador in place in India. But at present, it is clear that a senior envoy with a keen knowledge of India as well as the U.S. President's ear are necessary to navigate the turbulence in ties.

Maintain a political balance

The third lesson of the past few months is that India must reclaim bipartisanship in diplomatic relations, and build and maintain ties on both sides of the political spectrum, regardless of which party is in power. In the U.S., the Democratic party establishment was unhappy about the Trump-Modi rallies because they were held just months before the U.S. presidential election in 2020, and India had to spend some time, subsequently, repairing ties with the Joe Biden administration. Four years later, this annoyed Mr. Trump, the Republican contender, especially as he felt the contrast between the close personal bonhomie while he was in power and the fact that the Mr. Modi and his envoys did not spend time with him when he was out of power, including during the three times Mr. Modi travelled to the U.S., in 2021, 2023 and 2024, to hold talks with Mr. Biden. Closer home, this bipartisanship has been proven to trip up India's ties in the neighbouring countries as well – Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Maldives.

Fourth, Mr. Trump's penalties on India's import of oil, after the U.S. allowed, even actively encouraged the purchases before, show how fickle the global power can be and how futile it is for India to forego its principles in order to please a particular regime. India's time-honoured principle of only acceding to UN-mandated sanctions was broken in 2018 when the government bowed to Mr. Trump's threats of sanctions against Iranian oil, and then Venezuelan oil, possibly emboldening him to demand the same against the use of Russian oil this time. By accepting such unreasonable orders, India does not just risk economic losses in foregoing cheaper oil. It also becomes complicit in the U.S.'s foreign policy objectives that do not necessarily align with India's national interests. Conversely, when India resists such moves, it wins the support of others in the Global South. And while they object, western powers grudgingly accept India's strategic autonomy in these matters.

Finally, New Delhi must consider measures and countermeasures to deal with U.S. actions that hurt India's interests acutely – like the reciprocal and penalty tariffs that will make Indian goods far less competitive than those of its exporting rivals, curbs on U.S. manufacturing in India, or the remittance taxes on Indians working in the U.S. Getting back India's agency will require a firmer stance – one that is not buffeted by the winds in Alaska, at a summit meeting thousands of kilometres away from India.

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The visible warmth in the Trump-Putin exchanges did not result in a less chilling American tone towards India; the lesson for New Delhi is that it would need to take a firmer stance if it wants to get back its agency

The path to ending global hunger runs through India



Maximo Torero Cullen

is Chief Economist, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

With global chronic undernourishment now on a downward trend, the world is beginning to turn a corner in its fight against hunger. The United Nations' newly released The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2025 reports that 673 million people (8.2% of the world's population) were undernourished in 2024. This is down from 688 million in 2023. Although we have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels (7.3% in 2018), this reversal marks a welcome shift from the sharp rise experienced during COVID-19.

India has played a decisive role in this global progress. The gains are the result of policy investments in food security and nutrition, increasingly driven by digital technology, smarter governance, and improved service delivery.

Revised estimates using the latest National Sample Survey data on household consumption show that the prevalence of undernourishment in India declined from 14.3% in 2020-22 to 12% in 2022-24. In absolute terms, this means 30 million fewer people living with hunger – an impressive achievement considering the scale of the population and the depth of disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The transformation of the PDS

At the centre of this progress is India's Public Distribution System, which has undergone a profound transformation. The system has been revitalised through digitalisation, Aadhaar-enabled targeting, real-time inventory tracking, and biometric authentication. The rollout of electronic point-of-sale systems and the One Nation One Ration Card platform have made entitlements portable across the country, which is particularly crucial for internal migrants and vulnerable households.

These innovations allowed India to rapidly scale up food support during the pandemic and to continue to ensure access to subsidised staples for more than 800 million people.

Now, progress on calories must give way to progress on nutrition. The cost of a healthy diet in India remains unaffordable for over 60% of the population, driven by high prices of nutrient-dense foods, inadequate cold chains, and inefficient market linkages. That said, India has begun investing in improving the quality of calories. For example, the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN) school-feeding scheme, launched in 2021, and the Integrated Child Development Services are now focusing on dietary diversity and nutrition sensitivity, laying the foundation for long-term improvements in child development and public health.

New data in the UN report also shows progress the country has made in making healthy diets more affordable despite food inflation.

What is happening underscores a larger structural challenge: even as hunger falls, malnutrition, obesity, and micronutrient deficiencies are rising. This is especially so among poor urban and rural populations.

The agrifood system needs transformation
India can meet this challenge by transforming its agrifood system. This means boosting the production and the affordability of nutrient-rich foods such as pulses, fruits, vegetables, and animal-source products, which are often out of reach for low-income families. It also means investing in post-harvest infrastructure such as cold storage and digital logistics systems, to reduce the estimated 13% of food lost between farm and market. These losses directly affect food availability and affordability.

In addition, India should further strengthen support for women-led food enterprises and local cooperatives, including Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), especially those cultivating climate-resilient crops, as these can enhance both nutrition and livelihoods.

India must continue to invest in its digital advantage to drive the transformation of its agrifood systems. Platforms such as AgriStack, e-NAM, and geospatial data tools can strengthen market access, improve agricultural planning, and enhance the delivery of nutrition-sensitive interventions.

A symbol of hope

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) notes that the progress of India in agrifood system transformation is not just national imperatives; they are global contributions. As a leader among developing countries, India is well-positioned to share its innovations in digital governance, social protection, and data-driven agriculture with others across the Global South. India's experience shows that reducing hunger is not only possible but that it can be scaled when backed by political will, smart investment, and inclusion.

With just five years left to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), including SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) on ending hunger, India's recent performance gives this writer hope. But sustaining this momentum will require a shift from delivering sustenance to delivering nutrition, resilience, and opportunity.

The hunger clock is ticking. India is no longer just feeding itself. The path to ending global hunger runs through India, and its continued leadership is essential to getting us there.

India's decisive role in the world's fight against hunger is a result of its policy investments in food security and nutrition

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The ECI's response

The defence provided by the Election Commission of India (ECI) regarding its refusal to publish readable voters' rolls for recognised political parties and to upload the voters' list on its website is, quite frankly, terrible. The Leader of the

Opposition in the Lok Sabha has highlighted what can be called the incompetence of the ECI. The responses given by the ECI during the recent press conference to valid questions about the lack of transparency regarding the uploading of voters' rolls

and other pertinent issues were absurd.

C. Raghavan,

Chennai

As the guardian of elections in India, the ECI must take the moral high ground, ensuring that all allegations and doubts are clarified and

checked thoroughly. This is essential to maintain public trust in our elections and in democracy itself.

N.S. Girinath Paranjoti,

Erode, Tamil Nadu

The tone and the tenor adopted by the ECI convey arrogance and an

adversarial attitude. The Congress's case is that the data relied upon by its leader are from the ECI's own database. The ECI was evasive on several key questions from the media. There was no explanation for conducting such a massive exercise in the

midst of the monsoon. The ECI has failed to live up to its constitutional mandate to be a neutral umpire. This is worrisome.

S.K. Choudhury,

Bengaluru

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

What true empowerment of women entails

The trial of former Janata Dal (Secular) MP Prajwal Revanna, tainted by every trick in the book that power can muster, from legal intimidation to procedural delays, could have been yet another grim entry in India's long and exhausting history of justice denied. However, this case was different because a 47-year-old domestic help, with no wealth, no political connections, and no media machinery at her disposal, refused to be worn down. She braved high-profile legal muscle, relentless attempts at discrediting her, and the quiet but crushing social pressures that compel victims to disappear into silence. She didn't disappear; instead, she stood her ground.

The language of empowerment
India loves the language of empowerment. We put women entrepreneurs on magazine covers, we host conferences celebrating women CEOs, and we create awards to honour women leaders in politics, business, and culture. Yet, when a woman without privilege takes on the powerful in a court of law, we often treat her as a passing headline; not as a hero whose actions have fortified the very concept of justice. Our narrative of empowerment too often belongs to those who have the resources to recover from failure, the networks to cushion backlash, and the privilege to choose their battles. We rarely extend the same recognition and support to women whose fight is not for market share or boardroom representation, but for their very survival. Women like this domestic help are not just defending their rights; they are performing a form of public service. Their win strengthens the jurisprudence for every woman who will walk into a police station trembling, unsure if she will be heard.

And yet, the moment the verdict is read, the applause dies down and the state, which was happy to bask in the optics of



Apsara Reddy
AIADMK
Spokesperson

justice served, does little to ensure that these women can rebuild their lives. The women return to the same environment where abuse took place, facing retaliatory stigma, finding themselves jobless because it is "too much trouble" to employ someone who has been in court, or sinking under the weight of legal debts incurred during the fight. If governments, corporates, and civil society are serious about "women empowerment", they must provide these women structural support – legal, economic, and psychosocial – to ensure that victory in court does not translate into defeat in life.

The way forward

We need state-funded survivor compensation schemes. Frameworks exist to provide financial compensation to families of crime victims in categories such as terrorism or industrial accidents, so why should a woman who has stood up against entrenched power, faced character assassination, and endured court battles not receive similar recognition and financial security? The compensation should be calculated not only to cover legal expenses but to secure a minimum period of stability.

We need dedicated legal aid cells with special funding. Most women in such cases are bankrupted by the legal process. While legal aid exists in theory, it is woefully under-resourced and often inaccessible. States must create specialised survivor litigation cells with professional advocates, forensic experts, and victim support officers, funded on par with public prosecutors in high-profile cases.

We need guaranteed employment pathways. Governments, public sector undertakings, and corporates should create direct employment quotas for survivors of legal battles against abuse and harassment.

We need psychological support and trauma recovery. Survivors require structured access to

long-term counselling, peer support networks, and therapy sessions, funded by the state and supplemented by CSR initiatives. Trauma recovery must be treated as a right, not as a luxury.

Most importantly, we must institutionalise survivor expertise. Women who have navigated intimidation, isolation, and legal complexity should be trained and appointed as counsellors for victims in police stations to guide them through the first and often most critical reporting stage; as mentors in community legal education programmes to demystify the justice process for other women; and as members of Internal Complaints Committees under POSH laws, where their lived experience can lend authenticity and empathy to workplace grievance redressal. This will not only provide survivors with income, but ensure that their courage is institutionalised, not forgotten.

One might ask, why should single out women like this? Why not simply improve the justice system for all? The answer is simple: they are fighting battles that, in the absence of systemic reform, remain exceptions. Supporting them visibly and meaningfully sends a signal to both potential victims and potential abusers that the state does not abandon those who resist, and that the cost of silencing them will only rise. Moreover, recognising these women's courage in concrete, life-changing ways reshapes our national idea of empowerment.

Applause is easy; it costs nothing. But when a woman risks everything to hold a powerful man accountable, society owes her more than praise; it owes her a future. That future must be secured through a combination of immediate economic support, long-term professional integration, and the legitimisation of survivor voices in policymaking and institutional culture. Only then can we say that empowerment has been delivered, not just declared.

Women who fight for justice deserve more than applause; they deserve a future

Eyeing the Bodoland pie

The BJP is carrying on a divisive campaign and who it will ally with is unclear

STATE OF PLAY

Rahul Karmakar
rahul.karmakar@thehindu.co.in

Peace sells in a region scarred by decades of extremism. In 2003, the Government of India, the Government of Assam, and the Bodo Liberation Tigers signed a peace accord, which led to the creation of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), an autonomous body to govern the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). The BTC was established as a political alternative to the demand for a separate Bodoland state.

The Bodoland People's Front (BPF), a political party formed largely by members of the disbanded Bodo Liberation Tigers, ruled the BTR until December 2020. The end of its 17-year rule was partly because of another peace accord in January 2020 and partly because of the BPF's divorce from its "big brother", the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The 2020 peace pact, catalysed by the influential All Bodoland Students' Union (ABSU), was between the government and all the factions of another set of extremists – the National Democratic Front of Bodoland. Pramod Boro, then the ABSU president and one of the key architects of the peace process, became the president of the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), the BPF's long-term rival across the BTR.

The BJP, claiming to have brought peace to the north-east and paved the way for development, found in Mr. Boro's image as a peace broker an opportunity to penetrate the areas under the tribal council where mainstream parties had little or no traction after 2003.



The BPF, dumped by the BJP, became the single-largest party by winning 17 of the 40 seats in the 2020 BTC polls. The UPPL, which won 12 seats, and the BJP, with nine, formed the government in the BTC along with a regional party that won one seat.

The Congress managed to win one seat and became the BPF's short-term ally in February 2021. Over the next few years, defections from the BPF and Congress saw the UPPL and BJP's tally increase to 15 and 14 seats, respectively.

The UPPL-led government in the BTC, allegedly rendered bankrupt by the BPF, exuded inclusivity in the rebuilding process across the BTR, which had a history of conflicts between the dominant Bodos, the largest plains tribe in the north-east, and a majority of the 19 non-Bodo communities, including the Assamese and the Bengali-speaking Muslims.

Mr. Boro's outreach was underlined by the Bhutan-inspired Bodoland Happiness Mission launched in 2024 and a community-based road map for development of the smallest of communities. According to him, the post-2020 BTR was vastly different from the pre-2020 BTR, ruled by instability and division along community lines. The UPPL has been banking on the "unprecedented" peace and associated development across the five-district BTR for a second term, either on its own or in an alliance.

There is apparently no strain in the ties between the UPPL and the BJP, but the latter has often indicated it could befriend the BPF again. The BJP, reportedly miffed by a less pliant leadership in the BTC unlike its counterparts in the two other tribal councils – Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council and North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council – under the Sixth Schedule in Assam, has decided to go it alone in the BTC polls, likely to be held by September-end. If that is not enough, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma began campaigning in the BTR extensively, claiming that the region was reaping the benefits of peace because of the BJP. He also said that the non-tribal communities would have nothing to fear in Bodoland till he was alive. "Remember that you are safe and have equal rights because the BJP is here, and there will be no second-class citizens," he said.

Bodo organisations did not react to the Chief Minister's alleged bid to polarise the BTR electorate on ethnic lines. However, the All-Assam Tribal Sangha condemned State BJP president Dilip Saikia's assurance to non-Bodos that the laws specific to the autonomous councils would be amended for them to purchase land in the tribal blocks and belts. The BJP's approach to the BTC polls indicates a design to weaken the hold of its smaller allies in specific areas. This is evident from its oblique advice to another regional ally, the Asom Gana Parishad, to stay away from the BTC polls.

The Congress and other non-National Democratic Alliance parties have slammed the BJP's "divisive" campaign as a show of desperation to win the BTC polls.

China's Ejiao boom kills six million donkeys a year

With its own donkey population depleting, China turns to Africa for hides, hitting vulnerable communities there

DATA POINT

Sambavi Parthasarathy

According to a report published in June by a U.K.-based charity, nearly 6 million donkeys are killed every year globally to produce a traditional Chinese medicine called Ejiao. This problem of animal cruelty, according to data and reports, is fuelled by a gap between demand and supply in China. It has also led to many other issues spanning multiple countries across continents.

The demand for Ejiao in China, a medicine derived from the gelatin in donkey hides, has surged in recent decades. It is believed to have many health benefits, such as improving the immune system and curing anaemia though these benefits are not scientifically proven.

In 2013, about 3,200 tonnes of Ejiao were produced, which required more than 1 million donkey hides. The amount of Ejiao produced increased by 390% to 15,700 tonnes in 2021, which required close to 6 million donkey hides. By 2027, this figure is estimated to rise to 6.8 million donkey hides.

Data shows that meeting this surging demand for Ejiao, a booming industry in China, has come at an unsustainable cost. The donkey population in China has declined considerably in recent decades, as rising demand for donkey hides has outstripped domestic supply. The donkey population plummeted from 11 million in 1990 to just 1.5 million in 2023 – that is, by 87% over in over three decades (Chart 1).

As a result of this supply gap, China has had to import donkey hides from countries in South America, such as Colombia and Brazil; and in Africa, such as Ethiopia, and Kenya. Data shows that

African countries accounted for 51% of all equine hides imported by China in the last decade (2015–2025), followed by South America and Asia (Chart 3).

Foals, adults, pregnant, or even injured donkeys are transported in poor conditions and ultimately pushed into slaughterhouses to fuel this international trade. This poses the risk of not only zoonotic diseases, but also the exploitation of already vulnerable donkey populations worldwide.

This has been evident in some African and South American countries, which have recorded steep declines in their donkey populations as a consequence of their trade with China (Chart 4). In Egypt, for instance, the population of donkeys decreased from 3.1 million in the 1990s to 1 million in 2020s (68%). Steep declines were also recorded in South Africa, Brazil, and South Africa.

The trade has also come with a cost for communities that rely heavily on donkeys. For vulnerable groups in some of these countries, donkeys play a vital role in transporting goods and meeting domestic needs, supporting the livelihoods of many poor families.

The Donkey Sanctuary points out that when donkeys are stolen, it is often women who are forced to take on the work that the animals once did. In Ghana, girls are even pulled out of school early to shoulder these burdens.

The report also shows that the trade has led to a surge in donkey prices. For instance, the cost of a donkey in Kenya increased from £78 in 2016 to £156 in 2019. News reports show that the price of a donkey in Pakistan, China's latest market, had surged to ₹2 lakh in June this year.

Although the African Union imposed a continent-wide ban on donkey exports in 2024, there continues to be a surge in illegal trade in donkey hides in many countries, with families frequently reporting that their animals are being stolen.

Beast of burden

The data for the charts were sourced from the Donkey Sanctuary's report 'Stolen Donkeys, Stolen Futures'; the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Database, and the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC)



Chart 1: Ejiao produced and the estimated number of donkey hides required

Year	Ejiao produced (tonnes)	Minimum hides required
2013	3,200	1.2 mn
2016	6,000	2.3 mn
2020	15,288	5.7 mn
2021	15,700	5.9 mn
2027*	18,000	6.8 mn

*Projected

Chart 4: Donkey population in select African and South American countries

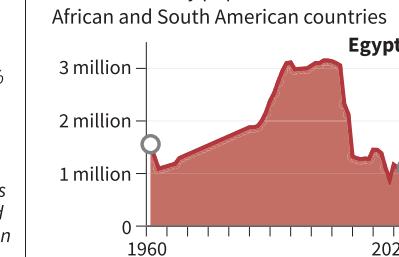


Chart 2: Donkey population in China across years (in millions)

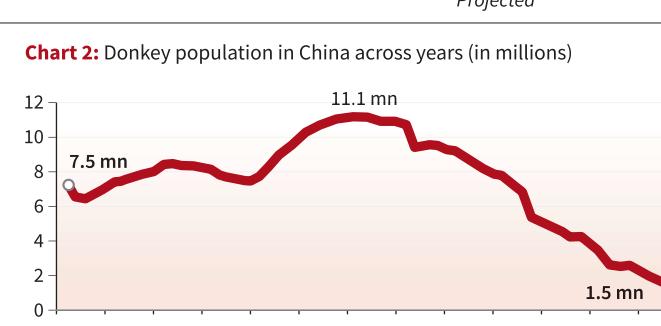
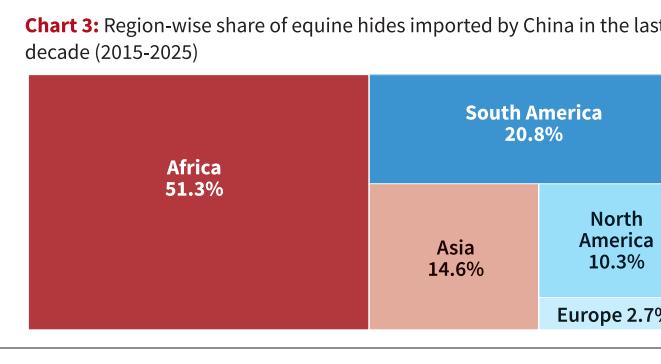


Chart 3: Region-wise share of equine hides imported by China in the last decade (2015–2025)



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO AUGUST 19, 1975

Jatti suggests use of Nagari as common script

New Delhi, Aug. 18: The Vice-President, Mr. B.D. Jatti, to-day pleaded for the use of Nagari script as an effective instrument to bring about unity, understanding and integration between different regions.

He said the use of Nagari script as the link between the South Indian languages of Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam, and between the southern and northern languages would prove of the utmost benefit both to the south and to the north.

Inaugurating the Nagari Lipi Parishad here, Mr. Jatti said the South Indian languages were close to each other but were almost rigidly confined to their respective regions, because of difference in script. For a similar reason northerners were unable to understand Malayalam or Kannada even though 70 per cent of the words in these languages were in Sanskrit.

Mr. Jatti said the Devnagari script was currently in use in the languages of Marathi and Hindi and with slight variations this script was being used in many other languages prevalent in the north. It was also used in the ancient languages of Sanskrit, Ardhamagadhi and Pali.

"It need hardly be said that the Nagari script is not needed to learn one's own language but to learn a language other than one's own. This is necessary if we are to be united and conscious of our common literary and philosophic heritage," he observed.

It had been widely recognised that Devnagari had advantages as a script which roman and other scripts did not possess. In it there was no ambiguity in utterance as there was no divergence between spelling and pronunciation.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO AUGUST 19, 1925

China's coastal traffic

Canton, Aug 18: The Chinese authorities have drawn up rules with regard to the coastal navigation, providing that steamers of any nationality except British and Japanese shall be allowed to run to and from any ports provided that they omit Hong Kong. All steamers entering that port must be inspected by a packet of Anti Imperialist Union. The export of foodstuffs or any other raw material from island will not be allowed.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Fine imposed on Qantas airline for illegally sacking staff

59 in \$ million. Qantas decided to sack the workers and outsource their jobs in August 2020 during the pandemic. Its fine is to be paid in two parts, the court said, with 50 million Australian dollars going to the Transport Workers Union and 40 million being held for future payments. AFP

Number of candidates to be fielded by AAP in Gujarat local bodies

10,000 Gujarat Aam Aadmi Party president Isudan Gadhvi and general secretary Manoj Sorathiya released "nomination papers" for candidates and claimed the party has emerged as a credible political option in the State. PTI

Amount sanctioned to improve infra in 29 Amaravati villages

904 in ₹ crore. The funds will be used to upgrade roads, drains, drinking water facilities, sewerage systems, and street lighting. Municipal Administration Minister P. Narayana said at the 51st meeting of the Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority. PTI

Number of people dead in Russian gunpowder plant blast

20 More than 100 people were wounded, the authorities said on Monday, as a probe began into possible industrial safety violations. The authorities did not officially name the plant, despite announcing Monday as a day of mourning in the region. PTI

Land allotted in tribal-majority district to cement factory

991 in acres. The Gauhati High Court has slammed the Assam government for allotting 3,000 bighas (991 acres) of land to a private cement factory in the State's tribal-majority Dima Hasao district, and observed whether this is a "joke". PTI

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Who decides nominations to UT Assemblies?

How should members be recommended to the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly? What does the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963 state with respect to nominations to the Puducherry Assembly? What was the 'triple chain of command' opined by the Supreme Court in 2023?

EXPLAINER

Rangarajan, R.

The story so far:

The Union Home Ministry, in its affidavit before the Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh High Court, has submitted that the power of the Lieutenant Governor (LG) of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) to nominate five members to the Legislative Assembly of J&K can be exercised by him without the aid and advice of its Council of Ministers.

What does the Constitution state?

The Indian Constitution provides for nominated members in the houses of Parliament and State legislature. The provision for nominating two Anglo-Indian members to the Lok Sabha and one Anglo-Indian member to State Legislative Assemblies was discontinued in 2020. The Rajya Sabha has 12 nominated members. These members are nominated by the President on the aid and advice of the Union Council of Ministers. In the six States with Legislative Councils, nearly one-sixth of the members are nominated. These members are nominated by the Governors on the advice of the States' Council of Ministers.

What about Union Territories?

The composition of the Legislative Assemblies of three Union Territories (UT) are governed by acts of Parliament. Section 3 of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991 provides for 70 elected members in the Delhi Assembly. There are no nominated MLAs in the Delhi Assembly. Section 3 of the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963 provides for 30 elected members in the Legislative Assembly of Puducherry. It also provides that the Union government may nominate up to three members to the Puducherry Assembly.

Section 14 of the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019 (as amended in 2023) provides for a total of 90 elected seats in the



Different metrics: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah during the Budget session of the J&K Assembly, in Jammu on March 7. ANI

Legislative Assembly of J&K.

In addition, Sections 15, 15A and 15B provide that the LG may nominate a total of up to five members – two women, two Kashmiri migrants and one displaced person from Pakistan occupied Kashmir – to the J&K Assembly.

What have courts ruled?

The procedure for nomination of members to the Puducherry Assembly came up before the Madras High Court in the *K. Lakshminarayanan versus Union of India* (2018) case. The court upheld the power of the Union government to nominate three members to the Assembly and that it need not be based on the advice of the UT's Council of Ministers.

Nevertheless, considering the importance of the matter as well as larger principles involved, the court provided certain recommendations for consideration of Parliament. It suggested statutory amendments to lay down a clear and unambiguous procedure for nomination of MLAs. It should provide clarity about where such nomination should emanate from and who/which office will exercise the powers of nomination. However, the Supreme Court on appeal had set aside the recommendations in this judgment of the Madras High Court.

In the *Government of NCT of Delhi versus Union of India* (2023) case, the Supreme Court had delved into the concept of 'triple chain of command' that

ensures democratic accountability. In this 'triple chain of command' opined by the court, civil servants are accountable to ministers; ministers are accountable to the legislature; and the legislature is accountable to the electorate. It therefore held that the LG is bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers in all matters except where the Delhi Assembly does not have legislative powers. While this case was related to the appointment of officers to services in the Delhi government, the rationale in this judgment may hold good for nomination of members to the Assembly as well.

What should be done?

A UT does not enjoy the same status of a full-fledged State in our federal set up. However, UTs with Assemblies have their own elected governments that is accountable to its population. The nomination of MLAs does not create any issue when the same party is in power at the Centre and the Union Territory. However, political differences between the Union government and a UT government should not derail the democratic process in the UTs. In smaller assemblies like that of J&K and Puducherry, these nominated MLAs can have the potential of converting a majority government into a minority one and vice versa, thereby rupturing popular mandates.

J&K is a case *sui generis* for it was a State till 2019 with even more autonomy than other States. While the conversion of J&K into a UT has been upheld by the Supreme Court, the Union government has informed the court that it would restore statehood to J&K at the earliest. Considering these factors, it is appropriate that the nomination of five members to the J&K Assembly is made by the LG based on the advice of its Council of Ministers. This would uphold the democratic principle.

Rangarajan, R. is a former IAS officer and author of 'Courseware on Polity Simplified'. He currently trains at Officers IAS academy. Views are personal.

THE GIST

▼ The Rajya Sabha has 12 nominated members. These members are nominated by the President on the aid and advice of the Union Council of Ministers.

▼ The composition of the Legislative Assemblies of three Union Territories (UT) are governed by acts of Parliament.

▼ In the *Government of NCT of Delhi versus Union of India* (2023) case, the Supreme Court had delved into the concept of 'triple chain of command' that ensures democratic accountability.

How should toll collection practices be reformed?

What has the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament recommended? What was said about FASTags?

Jagriti Chandra

The story so far:

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Parliament has recommended significant reforms to toll collection practices on national highways, such as calling for an end to the perpetual tolling system. The report was submitted before Parliament on August 12.

What are the key recommendations?

The PAC headed by Congress MP K.C. Venugopal has advocated for discontinuing or significantly reducing toll charges on national highways once the capital expenditure and maintenance expenses have been fully recovered. The Committee expressed concern that current toll practices allow for indefinite collection regardless of road quality, traffic volume, or user affordability, creating what it termed a "regime of

perpetual tolling". The panel emphasised that any continuation of toll collection beyond cost recovery should only be permitted with clear justification and approval from a proposed independent oversight authority. It proposed establishing a specialised regulatory authority to ensure transparency and fairness in toll determination, collection, and regulation. The PAC noted that while toll rates currently increase annually by a fixed 3% increment plus partial indexation to the Wholesale Price Index, there exists no institutional mechanism to independently evaluate whether these charges are justified relative to actual operational and maintenance costs or future service requirements. The panel has also insisted that highway users should receive toll reimbursements when construction is in progress and commuters cannot properly utilise the roadways. Regarding FASTags, the panel observed that despite their extensive

implementation, traffic bottlenecks persist on NHs due to malfunctioning scanner readings at collection points, and suggested establishing on-location services for motorists to top up, buy, or exchange FASTags.

How is toll determined?

Section 7 of the National Highways Act, 1956 empowers the Government to levy fees for services or benefits rendered on national highways while Section 9 empowers the Union government to make rules in this regard. Accordingly, the policy for the collection of user fee is formulated and governed by the National Highways Fee (Determination of Rates and Collection) Rules, 2008. The levy of user fee is based on the base rates fixed under the NH Fee Rules across the country and is not related to the cost of construction or its recovery.

The rates of fees have been increasing by 3% each year from April 1, 2008. In

order to cover the impact of variable cost of operation and maintenance, 40% of annual increase of WPI is provided. The fee is to be collected by the Union government if a highway is publicly funded or by the concessionaire if it follows any of these models – Build Operate Transfer (BOT), Toll-Operate-Transfer (TOT) or developed under Infrastructure Investment Trust.

An amendment in 2008 allowed user fees to be collected in perpetuity. So, if the concession period is over, the highway is handed over to the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), and the toll collected will go directly to the Consolidated Fund of India. The toll collection has gone up from ₹1,046 crore in 2005-06 to ₹55,000 crore in the financial year 2023-24. Of this ₹25,000 crore will go to the Consolidated Fund of India, and the remaining to the concessionaire toll plaza.

How has the Ministry responded?

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways acknowledged the Committee's concerns and informed the PAC that it has initiated a comprehensive study with NITI Aayog to revise the user fee determination framework. Ministry representatives indicated that the study's scope has been finalised and will cover parameters such as vehicle operating cost, damage to the highway due to vehicle use as well as user's willingness to pay.

THE GIST

▼ The PAC headed by Congress MP K. C. Venugopal has advocated for discontinuing or significantly reducing toll charges on national highways once the capital expenditure and maintenance expenses have been fully recovered.

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▼ The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways acknowledged the Committee's concerns and informed the PAC that it has initiated a comprehensive study with NITI Aayog to revise the user fee determination framework.

BUILDING BLOCKS



Artisan soap bars. GETTY IMAGES

On soaps and detergents: how they are made and manufactured

During World War I, there was a shortage of natural oils and fats to make soaps, which spurred some industrialists to look for alternatives that could be synthesised chemically. Thus, the first commercial soap-like detergents emerged in the mid-1930s

R. Vasudevan

There is nothing like a refreshing bath after a sweaty workout or a hard day outside. The feeling of freshness and the pleasant odour after the bath is the contribution of the ubiquitous soap. In ancient India, soap nuts were crushed and used to clean, as were the bark of certain trees and specific flowers and leaves. The first use of soap has been traced back to 2800 BC in Mesopotamia. From there this little item later spread into Europe. During the Industrial Revolution, soaps started to be mass-produced. But even until the 19th century, soaps were treated as luxury items and taxed heavily in Europe.

What is soap?

Soap is essentially a sodium (Na) or potassium (K) salt of a fatty acid based on vegetable oil or animal fat. In chemistry parlance, soap is represented by the formula RCOONa or RCOOK, where R is an organic fatty acid chain and C and O are carbon and oxygen atoms, respectively.

For example, a fatty acid based on coconut oil contains lauric acid, which has the formula C₁₂H₂₄O₂. Similarly, a palm-based fatty acid will have palmitic acid, which is represented as C₁₆H₃₂O₂. The corresponding formula of soap with lauric acid base will be C₁₂H₂₂COONa.

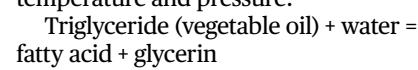
Solid soaps are generally sodium salts while liquid soaps are generally potassium salts, both of fatty acid chains.

How is soap made?

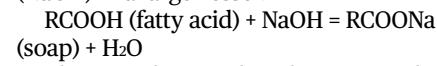
Traditionally, coconut or olive oil has been reacted with caustic soda (NaOH) to produce a crude form of soap. This process of soap-making was quite slow

and producing it in large quantities was laborious.

The contemporary process to produce soap en masse is much faster. The process begins by converting the triglycerides in the vegetable oil base to a fatty acid. This process allows the manufacturer the flexibility to use different types of vegetable oils like soya, sunflower or palm, aside from the more conventional coconut or olive oil, to make soap. The fatty acid forms when the vegetable oil is treated with hot water at a very high temperature and pressure:



The glycerin is refined to remove moisture and other impurities and converted to industrial grade or pharmaceutical grade glycerin, according to demand. The fatty acid is then used to make soap by reacting it with caustic soda (NaOH) in a large vessel:



The soap thus produced is extracted from the mix and dried to remove excess moisture using vacuum drying. The resulting mass is then extruded through a die to produce soap "noodles". These strings are much thicker than the noodles we eat but are much shorter in length.

At this juncture, a critical element of soap is the total fatty matter (TFM): it is the percentage of natural oils and fat in the mass. The higher the TFM, the better the soap is in terms of its cleaning performance. At this stage, the moisture content in the noodles are controlled depending on the end use. Soap noodles destined for bathing should have less moisture content than those destined for laundering soaps.

The manufacturer moves the soap

noodles into a blender, where they are mixed with additional ingredients to achieve the final product. To the fatty matter and moisture already present in the noodles, the manufacturer adds perfume, colour, filler material, and performance enhancers.

Some popular perfumes in India are sandal-wood oil, which is natural, or synthetic alternatives. Similarly, colours can be plant pigments or synthetic options like oxides. Soap fillers are generally talc (that is, magnesium silicate), sodium silicate or certain sulphates.

Surfactants also known as surface active agents, are added to reduce the surface tension of water and allow the soap to spread more easily when bathing. A common surfactant is sodium lauryl sulphate. Depending on the brand, some manufacturers also add antifungal, antibacterial (e.g. triclosan), and other medicinal additives (e.g. tea-tree oil or neem oil) to the soap.

Once the soap formulation is complete, the manufacturer extrudes the blended mixture to produce long soap bars, which are then stamped in a die into the desired shape, size, and weight as individual soap cakes. Finally, they are wrapped in a specifically designed wrapper and packed in cartons for shipment.

The technologies and automation in soap-making have advanced significantly over the years such that automatic production lines can deliver 600-700 soaps per minute (100 gm each) today.

Why do soaps clean?

A soap molecule has two ends: one end attracts water (that is, it's hydrophilic) and the other end repels water (hydrophobic). Thanks to the presence of surfactants,

soap also tends to reduce the surface tension of water, allowing it to spread more evenly.

During a cleaning activity, the hydrophobic end is attracted or embeds itself in grease or dirt while the hydrophilic end stays attached to water. The act of scrubbing and rinsing then dislodges the dirt, which flows out along with the water. The detergents used to wash clothes, utensils, various surfaces, etc. are also liquid soaps in a way – but their formulation consists of a large amount of surfactants along with additives like bleach, fragrances, and dyes.

During World War I, there was a shortage of natural oils and fats to make soaps, which spurred some industrialists to look for alternatives that could be synthesised chemically. Thus, the first commercial soap-like detergents emerged in the mid-1930s.

Depending on the formulation, detergents have the ability to soften hard water making the cleaning action more effective. However, their surfactants are known to be environmentally unfriendly. The use of phosphates has spurred concerns about nutrient pollution in the soil and some sulphonates have been known to linger in the environment for many years. In light of these concerns, chemical engineers are currently developing more biodegradable surfactants and enzymes that can replace phosphates.

Both soaps and detergents are a part of our everyday lives today, so any effort that makes them more ecofriendly should be welcome.

R. Vasudevan has a decade's experience in the manufacture of soaps and fatty acids.

THE DAILY QUIZ

August 19 is celebrated as World Photography Day. A quiz on the same

Prathmesh Kher

QUESTION 1

What historical breakthrough does World Photography Day pay tribute to?

QUESTION 2

Who first suggested that a dedicated day should be set aside for photography, and when did the idea take shape?

QUESTION 3

Who introduced the word 'photography', and what meaning does it carry?

QUESTION 4

What steps were involved in producing a daguerreotype image in the 19th century?

QUESTION 5

Before Daguerre's invention, what process did Joseph Nicéphore Niépce devise, and what landmark image did it yield?



Visual question:
Identify the image and explain its significance.

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. He is known as the son of the god Apollo, and the staff he held in his hand, is still relevant today in medicine. Ans: Asclepius, after whom the rod with the snake twirled on is named

2. This goddess in south Indian folklore is believed to have protected children from the pox. Ans: Mariamma

3. In Japanese myth, Sukunabikona is credited with inventing this drink. Ans: Sake

4. Roman myth boasts of this goddess who could protect people from fever and malaria. Ans: Febris

5. In Egyptian mythology, this goddess could unleash her messengers to cause plagues upon populations. Ans: Sekhmet

Visual: The twins mentioned in the Rig Veda. Ans: Ashvini Kumaras

Early Birds: Tamal Biswas| Arun Kumar Singh| Sudhir Thapa| Piyali Tuli| Arjun Debnath



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

K. Subrahmanian
S. Upendran

"Hello there! And how are you this morning?"

"What's wrong with you? You seem to be in a cheerful mood this morning!"

"I've got a good reason to be in a cheerful mood. I got a letter from my cousin Ravi yesterday. He's coming here next week."

"That's nice. I haven't seen Ravi since he was knee-high to a grasshopper."

"Since he was what?"

"Knee-high to a grasshopper. It means short and small as a child."

"I see. When I was knee-high to a grasshopper, I was very cute. Can I say that?"

"No!"

"Why not?"

"Because you could never have been cute! Your mother told me the other day she had nightmares looking at you."

"Ha! Ha! Very funny. Here's another example. I have two nieces, both knee-high to a grasshopper. My next door neighbour has... ooh, that hurts."

"What's the matter?"

"It's my stomach. It really hurts."

"It must be all that rabbit food that you ate last night. It probably..."

"...rabbit food! I didn't eat any rabbit food."

"Of course, you did. You ate a lot of salad, didn't you?"

"You mean salad is sometimes referred to as rabbit food?"

"That's right. Salad and green vegetables are sometimes jokingly referred to as rabbit food. For example, I hate rabbit food. Give me a fried puri any day."

"My father thinks that we need to have a little more rabbit food in our diet."

"Rabbit food tends to be full of vitamin C. It's good for you."

"Then, why don't you eat it?"

"Because it disagrees with me."

"Disagrees with you! Ha! Ha! That's a good one. How can green vegetables disagree with you? Can the vegetables talk to you?"

"No!"

"Then what are you talking about?"

"When you say something disagrees with you, it means eating it upsets your stomach or makes you feel unwell. For example, pumpkins always disagree with me."

"I see. Can I say garlic disagrees with me?"

"You certainly can. Here's another example. Milk disagrees with a lot of people."

"You mean they cannot even eat ice cream?"

"That's right. They cannot even eat ice cream."

"That's terrible. Instead of saying, milk disagrees with me, can I say, milk doesn't agree with me?"

"You certainly can."

"Well, in that case, you are wrong to say that rabbit food doesn't agree with me. It certainly does agree with me."

"Whatever you say Bugs Bunny!"

Published in The Hindu on September 9, 1997.

Word of the day

Meander:

a bend or curve, as in a stream or river; an aimless amble on a winding course; to move or cause to move in a sinuous, spiral, or circular course

Synonyms: ramble, thread, wander, weave, wind**Usage:** This path meanders through the vineyards.**Pronunciation:** newsth.live/meanderpro**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /mi'æn.də(r)/

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

IN BRIEF



LIC to offer concession in late fee on lapsed policies revival

LIC on Monday launched a special revival campaign for individual lapsed policies under which it will provide concession on late fee. Up to 30% concession will be provided on the late fee, subject to a maximum of ₹5,000, for all non-linked insurance policies eligible for revival under the campaign that will be in force till October 17. Policies can be revived within 5 years from date of the first unpaid premium subject to satisfying the policy terms and conditions.

Goldman Sachs opens new, expanded office in Mumbai

Goldman Sachs announced the inauguration of a new, expanded office space in Mumbai. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis inaugurated the office at Ascent Worli. "Our new Mumbai office is the next chapter in our multi-decade growth trajectory in India, underscoring the substantial opportunities we see in the market," said Kevin Sneedar, President, Asia Pacific Ex-Japan of Goldman Sachs. The new office occupies the 10th floor and half of the ninth floor of Ascent Worli.

RIL arm acquires majority stake in JV with Naturedge

Reliance Consumer Products, the FMCG arm of RIL, has forayed into the fast-growing healthy functional beverage space with the acquisition of majority stake in a JV with Naturedge Beverages Private Ltd. Through this JV, RCPL is focused on offering consumers a range of herbal-natural beverages. Founded in 2018 by Siddhesh Sharma, Naturedge Beverages has since focused on solutions that infuse the benefits of Indian Ayurveda and contemporary beverage choices.

MNCs keen on Grade A office space: Bharti Real Estate CEO

Latendu Mishra



With the Indian economy growing better than the rest of the world, multinational corporations (MNCs) operating in the country are looking to lease more office space in Grade A assets and those yet to come are making inquiries.

As a result, there is more demand for commercial real estate in India than supply, said Bharti Real Estate CEO Sushil Kumar Sayal during an interaction with *The Hindu*.

Huge potential

"India's economic growth is nothing short of remarkable. There is recognition of India's strength and capabilities and that demands high quality commercial assets to be developed. We have acknowledged this need, and furthered our office and retail leasing portfolio with an expansive addition driven by deep market research and dialogues with top businesses and brands," he said.

"Now, all the unicorns are looking for 50,000 to one lakh square feet area kind of requirements. So, who is going to give that? There are only couple of corporate developers like us who are doing these kinds of developments," Mr. Sayal added.

"And those who are not here, they are all looking at it. And those who are not looking at it now, will all come in three years because there will be nothing comparable available," the CEO averred.

"Today, in terms of [the Indian] economy rising, all the companies are making a beeline to this country,"

GST 2.0 fuels market rally; Nifty closes 1% higher after two months

Ashokamithran T.
MUMBAI

Stock markets rose sharply on Monday, with Nifty closing 1% higher to 24,877 points for the first time in two months, buoyed by the GST reforms announcement by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Accordingly, Nifty stocks of consumer-centric sectors such as automobile, consumer durables and FMCG rallied.

While Nifty Auto rose 4.18%, closing at 25,127.20 points, Nifty Consumer durables rallied 3.4% to 38,590.60 points, and Nifty Realty rose 2.18% to close at 898.45 points. BSE Sensex jumped 676.09 points, or 0.84%, to settle at 81,273.75.

Other factors

Besides the response to the GST announcement, a combination of a positive outlook on the global and domestic economy led to the rally that broke two months of a tepid market.

On the domestic front, an eight-year low inflation and S&P's credit rating upgrade to 'BBB' for the first time in 18 years, fuelled the rally. Despite nine consecutive quarters of tepid earnings, analysts said both consumer durables and staples earnings reported "better than expected revenue prints and management commentary." They added that a potential tariff relief from the U.S. and cheaper crude helped keep Nifty afloat.

Indian broadcasters staring at crores in licence fee dues

Unpaid fees by distributors in Nepal and Bangladesh are in excess of ₹350 crore; broadcasters hesitant to cut off link as firms of both countries "could simply pirate an Indian retail feed"

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

TV broadcasters in India are due hundreds of crores in overdue license fee payments from distributors in Nepal and Bangladesh, a problem that has been getting worse over the last year, two executives with knowledge of the payment issues told *The Hindu*. The problem has been particularly acute in Bangladesh, where after the ouster of former president Sheikh Hasina, TV distributors have stopped paying Indian broadcasters the fees they are due for transmitting their channels.

Many Indian channels are popular in Nepal and Bangladesh, so much so that broadcasters give distributors in that country a "clean feed," a stripped-down live broadcast with-

Payment alert

Overdue licence fee payments from distributors in Nepal and Bangladesh is said to have worsened over the last year

- Nepalese distributor dues exceeded ₹100 crore in the last few weeks; Bangladeshi broadcasters owe over ₹250 crore
- In Bangladesh, distributors stopped paying Indian broadcasters after the ouster of former president Sheikh Hasina
- In Nepal, the communication ministry gave broadcasters just 2 days to implement an 'à la carte' pricing



out Indian ads. In Nepal, which has had issues in the last few years of withheld payments to telecom companies like Airtel, the dues exceeded ₹100 crore in the last few weeks. Bangladeshi broadcasters also owe over ₹250 crore, one executive said.

In Airtel's case in 2023, the telecom company cut off its link to Nepal briefly, before turning it back on in a few hours, underlining

the stakes if payments did not come through.

One executive speaking to *The Hindu* said major Indian broadcasters are hesitating to do the same as broadcasters in both countries could simply pirate an Indian retail feed, ending any hope of recovering due license fees, and posing enormous challenges in re-entering the market.

In Nepal, Indian channels have been facing is-

sues with the government since April 2023, when the country's Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MoCIT) gave every broadcaster just two days to implement an 'à la carte' pricing system.

In Bangladesh, Beximcom, the country's largest conglomerate with over \$1 billion in assets, has not received remittance clearance from the Bank of Bangladesh to pay Indian broadcasters, and the political situation in the country has left diplomats and politicians with little interest to deal with the commercial concerns of broadcasters, one executive said.

The Hindu has sought comments from the Nepalese embassy and the High Commission of Bangladesh. The Ministry of External Affairs did not immediately respond to a query on the dues.

'50% tariff will reduce Indian goods demand very substantially'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The combined 50% tariff on Indian exports to the U.S. will reduce demand for Indian goods "very substantially", Moody's Analytics said in a report.

The report was talking about the combined effect of the ongoing 25% tariff on Indian imports imposed by U.S. President Donald Trump and his secondary tariff of 25% imposed for India's economic dealings with Russia.

MCX revises nickel future specifications to boost market efficiency

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Commodity bourse MCX on Monday announced modifications to the contract specifications of nickel futures contracts.

The modifications, ef-

fective from August 18, include changes to the trading unit, expiry date, and delivery arrangements. The modifications are part of MCX's efforts to make Nickel futures contracts more efficient, MD and CEO Praveena Rai said.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	MONDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	81,274	0.84
US Dollar	87.39	0.22
Gold	1,00,920	0.00
Brent oil	66.10	-

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	2333.60	52.00
Adani Ports	1327.20	26.90
Apollo Hosp.	7822.50	1.00
Asian Paints	2587.40	58.70
Axis Bank	1082.60	14.40
Bajaj Auto	8588.50	375.00
Bajaj FinServ	1993.50	68.40
Bajaj Finance	905.20	43.75
Bharti Airtel	1892.30	18.50
Cipla	1565.20	1.20
Coal India	387.80	3.35
Dr Reddys Lab.	1262.70	2.30
Eicher Motors	5912.00	148.00
Etemal Ltd.	314.90	-3.50
Grasim Ind.	2845.90	81.00
HCL Tech	1485.00	-4.80
HFDC Bank	2003.60	12.50
HFDC Life	791.00	2.25
Hero MotoCorp	4984.00	275.90
Hindalco	714.15	18.90
Hind Unilever	2568.10	87.50
ICICI Bank	1434.60	7.30
IndusInd Bank	788.65	18.90
Infosys	1435.80	-11.90
ITC	406.30	-5.15
Jio Financial Services	329.35	1.95
JSW Steel	1079.80	34.30
Kotak Bank	2001.40	23.20
L&T	3635.10	-41.90
M&M	3383.10	117.70
Maruti Suzuki	14068.00	1132.00
NestleIndia	1144.10	54.70
ONGC	336.05	-3.30
PowerGrid Corp	290.35	1.65
Reliance Ind.	1381.70	7.90
SBI	1863.00	22.40
State Bank	827.65	-1.10
Shriram Finance	626.80	10.35
Sun Pharma	1632.70	-8.70
Tata Consumer Product	1071.30	20.10
Tata Motors	676.00	11.40
Tata Steel	157.96	2.66
TCS	3011.20	-11.10
Tech Mahindra	1471.20	-15.50
Titan	3554.80	65.40
Trent Ltd.	5519.00	148.50
UltraTech Cement	12765.00	448.00
Wipro	245.21	-1.60

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on August 18

	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	87.15	87.47
Euro	101.84	102.22
British Pound	118.04	118.48
Japanese Yen (100)	59.11	59.33
Chinese Yuan	12.14	12.19
Swiss Franc	102.02	108.43
Singapore Dollar	67.96	68.21
Canadian Dollar	63.18	63.42
Malaysian Ringgit	20.63	20.73
Australian Dollar	56.75	56.97

Source: Indian Bank

SEBI paper moots flexible minimum shareholding norms

Ashokamithran T.
MUMBAI

Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has proposed to increase the flexibility of minimum public shareholding (MPS) and minimum public offer (MPO) for companies aspiring to get listed aimed at "simplifying fund-raising by issuers in India," as per a consultation paper.

SEBI proposed to raise the MPO for companies approaching listing, MPS post listing and extend the timelines to achieve the latter.

SEBI proposed to change threshold buckets for post-issue market capitalisation (m-cap) to ₹4,000 crore to ₹50,000 crore, ₹50,000 crore to ₹1 lakh crore, ₹1 lakh crore to

₹5 lakh crore and above ₹5 lakh crore. SEBI has also tweaked MPS timeline.

"For issuers with a post-issue market cap above ₹50,000 crore but less than or equal to ₹1 lakh crore, it is proposed timeline for compliance with the MPS requirement of 25% may be extended from 3 years to 5 years from the date of listing," SEBI said.

This was proposed to be fixed at five years to achieve 15% shareholding and 10 years to achieve 25% post listing MPS.

India bats for import tariffs for 3 years on some steel products

Reuters

India has recommended a three-year import tariff of 11%-12% on some steel products to curb shipments from top producer China.

The levy, if imposed, will start at 12%. It will be eased to 11.5% in the second year and to 11% in the third year, the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) said in a notification dated August 16.

"Therefore, safeguard duty must address, not only the serious injury suffered by the domestic industry... but also the threat of serious injury likely to arise in the future."

23% of PM Jan Dhan accounts inoperative

As many as 23% of the total 56.04 crore Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) accounts are inoperative, said Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary. Out of 56.03 crore PMJDY accounts at the end of July 31, 2025, 13.04 crore such accounts

HK property sector under rising debt repayment risk



Huge stakes: Property and its related sectors account for roughly a quarter of Hong Kong's GDP. REUTERS

NEWS ANALYSIS

Reuters
HONG KONG

Hong Kong's debt-laden developers and creditors are set to face intensifying financial pressure as bond maturities are slated to jump by nearly 70% next year amid falling sales and valuations for the city's economically-crucial property sector.

Road King last week became the first city-based developer to default on bond coupons since China's property debt crisis began in 2021, following the first loan default by listed peer Emperor International earlier this year.

Slim prospects for a revival in the commercial property sector in the near term and fewer sources of raising fresh capital mean more developers would struggle to meet repayment obligations in Hong Kong, analysts said.

Property and its related sectors account for roughly a quarter of Hong Kong's GDP, and the industry's rising non-repayments will not only weigh on its economic prospects but also cast a cloud over creditors, including HSBC, with sizeable exposure to developers in the Asian financial hub. Local property developers' bond maturities will climb to \$7.1 billion in 2026 from \$4.2 billion this year, according to LSEG data and Reuters calculations.

More defaults possible
S&P Global Ratings analyst Edward Chan said he would not rule out the possibility of more small-sized developers defaulting in the next 12-24 months because banks are cutting their loan exposure to them.

"It will be at a point where there is actually no chance for them to repay such loans," Chan said.

Developers, which hold mainly office and retail assets, are under huge pressure due to the challenge to sell assets to raise cash in those two segments that have seen valuations drop more than 50% from 2019 peaks and with no recovery in sight, he said.

More fire sales, on the other hand, would depress the valuations and affect the overall industry, including cash-rich developers, analysts said. Among cash-strapped debt issuers, New World Development, one of Hong Kong's top four developers, will face bond repayment obligations of \$168 million next year and of another \$630 million in 2027, while Lai Sun Development will have \$524 million due next year.

New World, seen as one of the biggest risks to the city's financial and property markets due to its HK\$180 billion (\$23 billion) borrowings, averted default by sealing a \$11.2 billion debt refinancing deal in June. New World did not respond to a request for comment. Mr. Lai Sun declined to comment. The majority of Hong Kong developers' debt comes from bank borrowings. In a sign of growing bad loans in the sector, Hang Seng Bank took a hefty HK\$2.5 billion charge on Hong Kong commercial real estate in the first six months of this year - up 224% from a year ago.

Fewer fake firs, higher prices: China tariff delay is of little help

Reuters
NEW YORK/SHANGHAI

U.S. shoppers looking for fake Christmas trees and holiday decor this year will have fewer choices and face higher prices as tariffs on Chinese imports force retailers to scale back orders as they assess how tight customer budgets are.

A 90-day extension to a tariff reprieve - agreed to by Washington and Beijing on August 11 - will allow retailers to rush in some last-minute shipments, but most holiday purchases are already done. Retailers typically import seasonal goods in advance because many products need six-month lead times. "We're going to have a lower supply year," said Chris Butler, CEO of National Tree Com-

pany, a New Jersey-based artificial tree importer supplying Walmart, Home Depot, Lowe's and Amazon.

The company, which sources roughly half its trees from China and the rest from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand, will hike prices by 10% to 20% on its Carolina pine, Nordic spruce, and Dunhill fir trees, Mr. Butler said. China is the biggest exporter of Christmas decorations to the U.S., accounting for 87% of such imports last year, worth roughly \$4 billion, according to United States International Trade Commission data.

"We're not overbuying (from our suppliers) because we're not sure about consumer demand and don't want expensive inventory on our books."



Huge market: China is the biggest exporter of Christmas decorations to the U.S., REUTERS

Big retailers are more keen than usual to have National Tree ship directly to consumers rather than buying them as inventory, reducing the stores' risk on balance sheets. Butler's riv-

al, Mac Harman, CEO of California-based Balsam Hill, expects about 15% fewer trees in the market this season. "Even with the extended 90 days, it's too late for any of us to add or-

- because they are unwilling to buy trees at elevated prices, said Mr. Harman. He sources trees from around 80 suppliers, half of which are in China.

Still, the latest pause has netted Balsam Hill some \$2.5 million in savings, he said. A Walmart spokesperson said the firm was confident in inventory position heading into the holiday.

Home Depot and Amazon declined to comment, while Lowe's did not respond to a Reuters request for comment.

'Still too much'
The reduced demand for fake trees, a key Christmas purchase, signals a muted shopping season. Higher prices on essentials like diapers and dish soap have already strained budgets.

Denim maker Levi Strauss said last month it will offer a leaner holiday selection.

Isaac Larian, CEO of MGA Entertainment that makes Bratz dolls, said a 30% tariff on toys "is still too much." The company has raised prices, he said.

Only goods shipped by air would benefit from the delay in higher tariffs, said Chris Rogers, head of supply chain research, S&P Global Market Intelligence. Companies including Apple that have upcoming product launches will gain from the certainty that there will be a 30% tariff, he said. Some suppliers, shippers, and retailers, however, started rushing extra orders after the moratorium was announced, industry sources said.

While most footwear

makers simplified holiday orders due to tariff uncertainty, a few are placing new orders to add variety to their inventory, said Matt Priest, CEO of industry group Footwear Distributors and Retailers of America (FDRA).

It may not be simple to ramp up orders, though. Imports face manufacturing bottlenecks as brands that diversified to other countries after initial tariffs now face delays before new manufacturers can scale up, said Dave Tu, president of DCL Logistics, which imports for clients like GoPro.

"By and large, this tariff extension changes little for holiday imports. For most companies, said FDRA's Priest, holiday inventory "is what it is."

Foxconn's Apple era fades as AI servers drive growth in Taiwan tech sector

Foxconn's cloud, networking revenue tops consumer electronics for first time; Foxconn's AI server growth driven by early investments; Taiwan tech sector shifts focus from consumer electronics to AI servers; Foxconn expects AI server revenue to grow more than 170% in third quarter year-on-year

NEWS ANALYSIS

Reuters
TAIPEI

Taiwan's Foxconn, which rose to become a global tech manufacturing juggernaut by assembling millions of iPhones, can now say its main business is no longer Apple as it takes advantage of the AI-boom to diversify its income. Its revenue from making AI servers and other cloud and networking products, including for major customer Nvidia, surpassed smart consumer products such as iPhones for the first time in the second quarter, marking the culmination of a shift that began years ago and has swept through Taiwan's tech industry.

Foxconn's heavy reliance on the smartphone business has long been viewed by investors as a significant risk, as demand growth for new iPhones has gradually weakened since they were first introduced nearly two decades ago, leaving the top iPhone assembler grappling with slowing sales momentum, analysts said.

New Businesses
Wary of the risk, Foxconn chairman Young Liu has been championing new businesses such as AI servers, electric vehicles and semiconductors since tak-



New vistas: Foxconn chairman Young Liu has been championing new businesses such as AI servers. REUTERS

ing the top job in 2019.

While its expansion into EVs and chips has yet to show a meaningful contribution to topline, Foxconn's success in AI server manufacturing - the firm is Nvidia's biggest server maker - is the result of its early bets before the technology was thrust into the limelight with the advent of ChatGPT in late 2022.

Top earner

Consumer electronics accounted for 35% of Foxconn's total revenue in the second quarter, while cloud and networking business represented 41%. In 2021, consumer electronics 54% of its revenue.

The firm's prudent wagers years back helped it cultivate a now-prized rela-

tionship with the U.S. AI chip firm and other major AI players, analysts said.

"The firm has been in the business for years, meeting higher quality requirements, diversifying assembly and operations across sites and pursuing vertical integration," said Ming-Chi Kuo, analyst at TF International Securities.

Foxconn began produc-

ing reference designs for Nvidia's graphics cards around 2002 and started making general-purpose servers for cloud service providers' data centres as early as around 2009. Its AI server business with Nvidia is in many ways the culmination of that history, analysts said.

Large supplier

Foxconn says it is now one of the world's largest suppliers of both general-purpose and AI servers, with a market share of nearly 40% in each.

The company has also shown a willingness to commit investment to a project at an earlier stage than other companies, Mr. Kuo said, citing its past investments for Apple and si-

milar moves for Nvidia. "In long-term partnerships, Foxconn is more willing to take the initiative," he said.

Foxconn's plan to build factories in Houston, Texas - part of Nvidia's \$500 billion U.S. investment plan - and in Mexico to produce AI servers for the U.S. client underscores this strategy, analysts said.

Foxconn now expects its AI server revenue would grow more than 170% in the third quarter year-on-year. Foxconn and Nvidia declined to comment. Apple did not respond to a request for comment.

Broader shift

The shift at Foxconn mirrors a broader trend in Taiwan's technology sector, where companies once

centred on consumer electronics - such as Foxconn with iPhones, and Quanta Computer and Wistron Corp with notebooks - are now investing heavily in AI servers.

Nvidia partner Wistron's revenue for January to July rose 92.7%, while Quanta's grew 65.6% in the same period.

"The monthly sales jump for Taiwan ODMs in the first half of 2025 is evidence of this trend," said Robert Cheng, head of Asia technology hardware research at BofA Global Research, referring to original design manufacturers like Foxconn that contract manufacture products for their clients.

Their fast transition into AI servers is also the result of Taiwanese tech supply chain working closely with U.S. tech giants on data centre infrastructure work for a decade now, according to Chris Wei, industry consultant at Taiwan's Market Intelligence & Consulting Institute.

He estimates Taiwan accounts for about 80% of global server shipments and more than 90% of AI servers. Mr. Cheng agrees.

"We think this shift toward AI servers, whatever form it takes, is good for Taiwan's tech industry," he said, noting Taiwanese companies' ability to rapidly shift to cater to the changing needs from their customers.

What U.S. stagflation risks mean for world markets

Reuters
LONDON

The spectre of U.S. stagflation is stalking global markets, causing some investors to position portfolios to dodge the potential damage that tariffs could wreak on growth and inflation in the world's dominant economy.

Some 70% of global investors surveyed by BofA Global Research in early August said they expect stagflation - the combination of below trend growth and above trend inflation - in the next 12 months.

Recent data showing U.S. labour market weakness, a sharp rise in U.S. core inflation and an unexpected surge in producer prices justifies this concern.

But stocks around the



Concerns galore: Data shows U.S. labour market weakness, sharp rise in U.S. core inflation and surge in producer prices. AP

world, including in the United States, remain near record highs and bond markets are calm, suggesting little panic even as U.S. stagflation risks move increasingly onto the radar.

"Stagflation is in the mind of the market, but not the price," said Carmignac fixed income manager

Marie-Anne Allier. Here's a rundown of how U.S. stagflation risks could play out across global markets.

Beware bonds

Persistent inflation, or the fear of it, can pummel longer-dated bonds by eroding the real value of fixed interest payments over

time. Paul Eitelman of Russell Investments, which helps institutions manage more than \$1 trillion of assets, said pension funds and insurers have become increasingly nervous about inflation hitting their bond portfolios. "If we had another very weak employment report, that would significantly ramp up (U.S. stagflation) concerns," he added. Nor would non-U.S. bonds offer much protection.

"Interest rates and the long end of the bond curve are highly correlated between the G7 economies," said Mayank Markanday, portfolio manager at Foresight Group. "If you see a big selloff in the long end of the U.S. curve we are likely to see impact on some of the others."

There has already been

a selloff in long-dated bonds across major markets. While 2-year yields are lower in the U.S., Germany and Britain this year, 30-year yields are higher.

If sticky inflation stops the Federal Reserve from cutting rates this year, short-dated bonds would suffer too.

Wall Street woes

Fidelity International multi-asset manager Caroline Shaw said the group expected U.S. growth to slow and stagflation was one of their two core scenarios.

She remains positive on U.S. big tech stocks but in mid-July bought derivatives called put options that would profit should the more cyclical Russell 2000 small cap index fall.

As with bonds, stocks globally are likely to suffer,

even if stagflation is confined to the U.S.

Since 1990, world stocks have fallen by an average of 15% at times when U.S. manufacturing activity data showed both a contraction and higher than average prices, according to State Street head of macro strategy Michael Metcalfe.

Stagflation presents twin risks for the greenback, said Mr. Milali, because weak growth can devalue currency and persistent inflation erodes purchasing power abroad.

GAZA CITY

Senior Hamas official says group accepts new ceasefire proposal



Hamas has accepted a new ceasefire proposal for Gaza, Bassem Naima, a senior official from the group said on Monday. Mediators Egypt and Qatar, backed by the United States, have struggled to secure a lasting truce in the conflict, which has triggered a dire humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. AFP

QUETTA

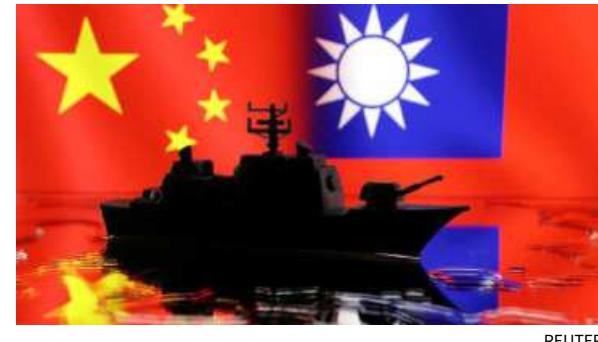
Pakistani lecturer arrested for bid to plot 'terror attack' in Balochistan



Security forces in Pakistan arrested a university lecturer for planning a foiled suicide attack at last week's Independence Day events in insurgency-hit Balochistan, officials said on Monday. The suspect is said to have links with the Majeed Brigade, part of the banned outfit Balochistan Liberation Army, Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti said. AP

BEIJING

Taiwan 'issue' is an internal matter, China says in response to Trump



"The Taiwan issue is purely an internal affair, and how to resolve the issue is a matter for the Chinese people," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said on Monday, in response to U.S. President Donald Trump saying Chinese President Xi Jinping told him he will not invade the island while Trump is in office. REUTERS

MOSCOW

Death toll from blast at Russian factory rises to 20, over 130 hurt



The death toll from an unexplained blast last week at a factory in Russia's Ryazan region has jumped to at least 20, with another 134 people injured, emergency services said on Monday. Pavel Malkov, governor of the Ryazan region, said last Friday that the incident had been triggered by a fire inside a workshop at the factory. REUTERS

Israel has a 'deliberate policy' of starvation in Gaza: Amnesty

The group accuses Israel of 'systematically destroying the health, well-being and social fabric of Palestinian life', a campaign which is 'part and parcel of Israel's ongoing genocide'; thousands of Palestinians flee Gaza city in fear of IDF's new offensive

Agence France-Presse
JERUSALEM

Rights group Amnesty International on Monday accused Israel of enacting a "deliberate policy" of starvation in Gaza, as the UN and aid groups warn of famine in the Palestinian territory.

Israel, while heavily restricting aid allowed into the Gaza Strip, has repeatedly rejected claims of deliberate starvation in the 22-month-old war.

In a report citing testimonies of displaced Palestinians and medical staff who treated malnourished children, Amnesty said that "Israel is carrying out a deliberate campaign of starvation in the occupied Gaza Strip."

The group accused Israel of "systematically destroying the health, well-being and social fabric of Palestinian life".

"It is the intended out-



Raging sight: Palestinian children wait to receive meals at a refugee camp in Gaza Strip on Monday. AFP

come of plans and policies that Israel has designed and implemented, over the past 22 months, to deliberately inflict on Palestinians in Gaza conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction – which is part and parcel of Israel's ongoing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza," Amnesty said.

The report is based on interviews conducted in recent weeks with 19 displaced Gazans sheltering in three makeshift camps as well two medical staff in two hospitals in Gaza City.

Contacted by AFP, the Israeli military and Foreign Ministry did not immediately comment on Amnesty's findings.

In a report issued last week, the Israeli Defence Ministry's COGAT, a body overseeing civil affairs in the Palestinian territories, rejected claims of widespread malnutrition in Gaza and disputed figures shared by the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

In April, Amnesty ac-

cused Israel of committing a "live-streamed genocide" against Palestinians by forcibly displacing Gazans and creating a humanitarian catastrophe in the besieged territory, claims that Israel dismissed at the time as "blatant lies".

Meanwhile, thousands of Palestinians have left their homes in eastern areas of Gaza City, now under constant Israeli bombardment, for points to the west and south in the shattered territory.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has described Gaza City as Hamas' last big urban bastion. But, with Israel already holding 75% of Gaza, the military has warned that expanding the offensive could endanger hostages still alive and draw troops into protracted and deadly guerrilla warfare. An Israeli armoured incursion into Gaza City could displace hundreds of thousands of people.

Junta sets Dec. 28 for polls in civil war-torn Myanmar

Agence France-Presse
YANGON

Myanmar's junta said on Monday that long-promised elections will start on December 28, despite a raging civil war that has put much of the country out of its control, and international monitors slating the poll as a charade.

Myanmar has been consumed by conflict since the military deposed the government of democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi in 2021, making unsubstantiated allegations of electoral fraud.

Swathes of the country are beyond military control – administered by a myriad of pro-democracy guerrillas and powerful ethnic armed organisations which have pledged to block polls in their enclaves.

Analysts say the election will likely see junta chief Min Aung Hlaing maintain his power over any new government – either as president, military leader or some new office where he will consolidate control.

The civil war has killed



Take control: Junta chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing ousted the elected government in a 2021 coup. REUTERS

thousands, left more than half the nation in poverty, and more than 3.5 million people living displaced.

Polls 'rebranded'
The junta has touted elections as a way to end the conflict and offered cash rewards to opposition fighters willing to lay down their arms ahead of the vote. Ms. Suu Kyi remains jailed and many opposition lawmakers ousted by the coup are boycotting the polls, which a UN expert has branded a "fraud" designed to rebrand continuing military rule.

Myanmar's Union Election Commission said in a statement the first votes

will be cast on December 28 and "dates for the subsequent phases will be announced later".

Conflict monitors predict the period will see an uptick in violence and unrest as the military seeks to expand the scope of the vote and opposition groups lash back.

Last month, the junta introduced new laws dictating prison sentences of up to 10 years for critics or protesters of the election.

The legislation also outlawed damaging ballot papers and polling stations, as well as the intimidation or harm of voters, candidates and election workers.

Iran warns war with Israel could resume at any time

Agence France-Presse
TEHRAN

A senior Iranian official warned on Monday that war with Israel could erupt at any moment, describing the current lull after June's 12-day conflict as only a temporary halt.

"We must be prepared at every moment for confrontation; right now, we are not even in a ceasefire (agreement); we are in a cessation of hostilities," said First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref.

The fighting in June saw Israel bombard Iranian nuclear and military sites, as well as residential areas, killing more than 1,000 people, including senior commanders and nuclear scientists.

Iran retaliated with missile and drone strikes that killed dozens in Israel.

The U.S. announced a halt in fighting on June 24, two days after it joined the war by bombing Iranian nuclear facilities. But there was no agreement formalising the ceasefire, only an undeclared pause in hostilities.

'Worst-case scenario'

On Sunday, Yahya Rahim Safavi, a military adviser to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, told Iranian media the country was "preparing plans for the worst-case scenario".

Western powers accuse Iran of pursuing nuclear weapons through its atomic programme, a charge Tehran strongly denies.

Following the war, Israel and the U.S. repeatedly threatened to attack Iran again should Tehran re-launch its nuclear sites and resume its nuclear enrichment programme.

"We are not in a ceasefire now, we are in a war phase, it could break down at any time, there is no pro-

tocol, no regulations, no agreement between us and the Israelis, between us and the Americans," he said in remarks carried by the *Shargh* daily.

"A ceasefire means ceasing attacks; that could change at any time," he added. Since then, Iranian officials have insisted the country is not seeking war but is ready for another confrontation.

Western powers accuse Iran of pursuing nuclear weapons through its atomic programme, a charge Tehran strongly denies.

Following the war, Israel and the U.S. repeatedly threatened to attack Iran again should Tehran re-launch its nuclear sites and resume its nuclear enrichment programme.

Swayed stance



Take the bait: French matador Sebastien Castella performs a pass on a fighting bull during the event 'La Feria de Beziers' in Beziers, southern France on Sunday. AFP

German FM says China 'increasingly aggressive'

Agence France-Presse
TOKYO

Germany's Foreign Minister hit out on Monday at what he called China's repeated threats to "unilaterally change borders in the Asia-Pacific region, calling Beijing "increasingly aggressive".

"China repeatedly threatens, more or less openly, to unilaterally change the status quo and shift borders in its favour," Johann Wadephul said in Japan.

"Any escalation in this sensitive hub of international trade would have serious consequences for global security and the world economy."

Bolivia heads to a presidential run-off vote as two decades of left-wing dominance ends

Associated Press

LA PAZ

Bolivia's presidential vote headed to an unprecedented run-off after elections on Sunday that ended more than two decades of left-wing dominance in the Andean nation but signalled voters' trepidation about a major lurch to the right.

A dark horse centrist, Sen. Rodrigo Paz, drew more votes than the right-wing front-runners, although not enough to secure an outright victory, early

results showed.

Mr. Paz, a former mayor who has sought to soften the edges of the opposition's push for tough austerity to rescue Bolivia from a looming economic collapse, will face off against right-wing former President Jorge 'Tuto' Quiroga, who finished second. Bolivia holds the presidential runoff – its first since its 1982 return to democracy – on October 19.

"This economic model must change," Mr. Paz declared to crowds who cheered and chanted,

"Renewal!"

Mr. Paz's campaign gained unexpected traction in recent weeks as he teamed up with Edman Lara, a social media savvy ex-police captain with evangelical backing whose supporters see him as a bold leader willing to stand up to corruption in the security forces.

With over 91% of the ballots counted Sunday, Mr. Paz received 32.8% of the votes cast. Mr. Quiroga secured 26.4%. Candidates needed to surpass 50%, or 40% with a 10-point mar-



Face-off: Presidential hopefuls Rodrigo Paz (left) and Jorge Quiroga are set for a showdown on October 19. AP



Face-off: Presidential hopefuls Rodrigo Paz (left) and Jorge Quiroga are set for a showdown on October 19. AP

pened is unprecedented," he said. "Bolivia told the world that we want to live in a free nation."

Blow to 'Socialism'
The results delivered a stunning blow to Bolivia's hegemonic Movement Toward Socialism, or MAS, party, which has governed Bolivia almost uninterruptedly since its founder, charismatic ex-President Evo Morales, rose to power as part of the "pink tide" of leftist leaders that swept into office across Latin America during the commodities

boom of the early 2000s.

The official MAS candidate, Eduardo del Castillo, finished sixth with just 3.2% of the vote. A leftist candidate considered to be the party's best hope, 36-year-old Senate president Andrónico Rodríguez, captured 8% of the vote.

During his almost 14 years in power, Mr. Morales expanded the rights of the country's Indigenous majority and poured natural gas profits into social programmes.

But his increasingly high-handed attempts to

prolong his presidency – along with allegations of sexual relations with underage girls – soured public opinion against him.

Simmering discontent turned into a tidal wave of outrage as Bolivia's economy imploded under Mr. Morales' protégé-turned-rival, President Luis Arce.

Annual inflation rate has soared from 2% less than two years ago to 25% as of last month. A desperate shortage of U.S. dollars needed to pay for essential imports like wheat has crippled the economy.



Left with little: A deforested patch on a mountain side in Tsemehou, Comoros. FILE PHOTO

Farmers, NGOs unite in fight to save last forests of Comoros

Agence France-Presse

MUTSAMUDU

Strips of bare land scar the lush and green mountainsides towering above Mutsamudu, the capital of the Indian Ocean island of Anjouan.

On the most mountainous and densely populated island in the Comoros, only the most remote forests have escaped decades of deforestation – ravages which several NGOs are now trying to repair. The production of ylang-ylang, vanilla and cloves makes up a large part of the archipelago's agricultural output, which represents a third of its GDP.

"We lost 80% of our natural forests between 1995 and 2014," Abubakar Ben Mahmoud, Environment Minister of the country off northern Mozambique said.

The clearing of the forest for cultivation has compounded damage caused by the production of ylang-ylang essential oil, used in luxury perfumes, and the manufacture of traditional carved wooden doors for which the island is renowned.

With a high population density of more than 700 residents per square kilometre, "Deforestation has been intensified as farmers are looking for arable land for their activities," the Minister said.

The NGO last year launched a reforestation programme, working hand-in-hand with local farmers who are called "water guardians".

Under a five-year conservation contract, the farmers commit to replanting their land or leaving it fallow in exchange for financial compensation, said one of the project's managers, Misbahou Mohamed.

S. Korea and U.S. begin joint drills to cope with North Korean 'threats'

Associated Press

SEOUL

South Korea and the United States began their annual large-scale joint military exercise on Monday to better cope with threats by nuclear-armed North Korea, which has warned the drills would deepen regional tensions and vowed to respond to "any provocation" against its territory.

The 11-day Ulchi Freedom Shield, the second of two large-scale exercises held annually in South Korea, after another set in March, will involve 21,000 soldiers, including 18,000 South Koreans, in computer-simulated command post operations and field training.

The drills, which the allies describe as defensive, could trigger a response



Protesters rally against the annual joint military exercise between the U.S. and South Korea, in Seoul on Monday. AFP

from North Korea, which has long portrayed the allies' exercises as invasion rehearsals and has often used them as a pretext for military demonstrations and weapons tests aimed at advancing its nuclear program.

In a statement last week, North Korean Defense Minister No Kwang

Chol said the drills show the allies' stance of "military confrontation" with the North and declared that its forces would be ready to counteract "any provocation going beyond the boundary line."

Ulchi Freedom Shield comes at a pivotal moment for South Korea's new liberal President Lee Jae My-

ung, who is preparing for an August 25 summit with U.S. President Donald Trump in Washington. Mr. Trump has raised concerns in Seoul that he may shake up the decades-old alliance by demanding higher payments for the American troop presence in South Korea and possibly reducing it as Washington shifts its focus more toward China.

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula remain high as North Korea has brushed aside Mr. Lee's calls to resume diplomacy with its war-divided rival, with relations having soured in recent years as North Korean leader Kim Jong Un accelerated his weapons programme and deepened alignment with Moscow following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Capital watch



Members of the District of Columbia National Guard stand by the Lincoln Memorial on Sunday. An increased presence of law enforcement has been seen throughout Washington since President Trump announced plans to deploy federal officers and the National Guard. AP

Ethiopian migrants face kidnappings, death, leaving families heartbroken

Associated Press

ADDIS ABABA

When 19-year-old Nigus Yosef told his parents he was going to leave home in Ethiopia's Tigray region and try to get to Saudi Arabia, they begged him not to go.

Two of their children had already made the crossing, via the Gulf of Aden and then war-torn Yemen. Mr. Yosef's brother is now in jail in Yemen for entering that country illegally. His sister made it to Saudi Arabia, also illegally, which means it will be difficult for her to leave.

On August 3, 2025, Mr. Yosef and five friends from his town of Adi Qeyih boarded a boat bound for Yemen. That night, it capsized. Only 56 people of the nearly 200 people on

board survived. Yosef was not one of them.

Nigus Yosef is one of 132 missing from the boat that capsized this month; one of countless people from African countries gone missing on a journey in search of a new life.

The families they leave behind know that there are high odds of misfortune. Boats are often overcrowded, unable to withstand rough seas.

Once on dry land, there are other dangers. Migrants are vulnerable, with few resources or protection, making them easy prey for human traffickers and kidnappers.

Senait Tadesse says that her 27-year-old daughter made it to Yemen, only to be held captive by kidnappers who communicated

with Tadesse through Facebook, demanding a \$6,000 ransom to release her only child.

Pockets of unrest

Ms. Tadesse said she sold all her belongings; they still wanted more. Not knowing what else to do, she went to the police, armed with the local bank account number that the kidnappers had been using. Meanwhile, she was on Facebook, trying to get news of her daughter. Eventually, a post from a survivor confirmed that Ms. Tadesse's daughter had been killed. To date, no arrests have been made.

Although Ethiopia has been relatively stable since the war in the country's Tigray region ended in 2022, youth unemployment is



Risky route: Ethiopian migrants walk on the shores of Ras al-Ara, Lahij, Yemen, after disembarking from a boat. FILE PHOTO

high and there are still pockets of unrest.

"Many young people no longer see a future for themselves within a nation that does not prioritise their needs," explained Yared Hailemariam, an Ethiopian human rights advocate. "The cause of this migration is lack of

economic opportunities and growing conflicts. Young people are faced with a choice of either taking up arms to fight in endless conflicts, or providing for their families."

The war in Tigray was the reason why Nigus Yosef never finished school. When the conflict started

in 2020, he was in 7th Grade, and he dropped out to join the Tigray armed forces. When the ceasefire was signed in 2022, he came back home, but couldn't find a job. After three years, he was desperate. Residents in the region say that traffickers seize on that desperation, and that their networks extend even into remote areas and rural villages.

Eden Shumiye was just 13 when she left Adi Qeyih with Mr. Yosef and his friends. Her parents say that she was preyed on by people smugglers during the town's public market day, and that they convinced her to leave with the group. Her parents heard nothing from her until one of the other migrants called them when

they reached Wuha Limat, near the Ethiopia-Djibouti border. The news left them sick with worry.

After the boat capsized, a relative of one of the survivors managed to send a voice message to them from Saudi Arabia, confirming that Eden's dead body had been recovered. Of the six young people who left Adi Qeyih, only two survived.

In response to the recent tragedy, the Ethiopian government issued a statement warning citizens "not to take the illegal route," and to "avoid the services of traffickers at all cost," while urging people to "pursue legal avenues for securing opportunities."

But Girmachew Adugna, a migration scholar specialising in Ethiopia

and the Horn of Africa, points out that legal migration channels are slow and time-consuming. "Passports are hard to obtain due to rising costs," he says. "Young people often have little or no access to legal migration pathways, which leads them to migrate through irregular means."

More than 1.1 million Ethiopians were classified as migrants who left their home country and were living abroad in 2024, up from about 200,000 recorded in 2010, according to United Nations figures.

In spite of Yemen's civil war, the number of migrants arriving there has tripled from 27,000 in 2021 to 90,000 last year, the U.N. International Organization for Migration said.

WORDS OF COMFORT

It's not easy to sit out: Shardul backs spinner Kuldeep



Shardul Thakur reflected on the disappointment of Kuldeep Yadav, who did not get a chance to play in the Anderson-Tendulkar Test series. Kuldeep, since his debut in 2017, has played 13 Tests. "As a player, you go through a lot of emotions, and it's not easy to sit out, questioning yourself," Shardul told *Revsport*.

HEALTH FIRST

Chetan backs Bumrah over playing only three Tests in England series



Jasprit Bumrah may have drawn criticism for playing only three Tests during the series against England to manage his workload, but Chetan Sharma has backed the bowler, saying players should go by the physios' advice as they are the 'better judges.' "If doctor asks to take antibiotics, then it should be consumed," he said.

ETERNAL DELIGHT

That feeling will stay with me forever: Bashir on Siraj's dismissal



Shoaib Bashir believes the joy he felt after dismissing Mohammed Siraj to seal the Lord's Test will stay with him "forever" and credited former teammate Moeen Ali for advising him to bowl the carrom ball. "That feeling will stay with me forever, at the home of cricket in front of a packed crowd," said Bashir to *The Sunday Times*.

BIG BACKING

Varun credits Surya, Gambhir for huge role in his comeback



Varun Chakaravarthy said T20I skipper Suryakumar Yadav and Gautam Gambhir played a big role in his national comeback. Varun said the captain had told him he was keen on having him in the team while Gambhir had always given him confidence and told him "no matter who's going to ignore you, I will keep you in my plans."

Mixed doubles revamp – a glorified exhibition or hard-nosed competition?

The innovative format features 16 teams, and players have been allowed to enter either with their singles ranking or as wild cards

US OPEN**N. Sudarshan**

Non-conformity is a quintessential US Open trait. From being the first to introduce a final-set tie-break way back in 1970 to allowing in-game coaching in 2022, the season's last tennis Major has defied tradition multiple times.

Tuesday, however, will see arguably the most radical and controversial of transformations, with a new mixed doubles format ready to be showcased.

It will feature only 16 teams – eight direct acceptances and eight wild cards – down from 32, and players have been allowed to enter only with their singles ranking.

The two-day affair is being played in the week preceding the Slam and will witness reduced sets (to four games, except in the final).

The who's who of singles tennis, from Carlos Alcaraz to Jannik Sinner to Iga Swiatek to Naomi Osaka, will compete without having to worry about doubles burning their singles ambitions.

Creating a buzz
For the United States Tennis Association (USTA), it is about creating a buzz around a format that doesn't exist outside the



Dream pair: Fans would be delighted to see Raducanu and Alcaraz share court space! GETTY IMAGES

Slams and quadrennial extravaganzas like the Olympics, it can help schedule matches on the biggest show-courts such as the Arthur Ashe Stadium, sell tickets, beam the action on primetime television and collect more in sponsorships.

But the change has left

the doubles stars disappointed. "As a doubles athlete, my heart is bleeding," said Wimbledon champion Sam Verbeek, and one can see why.

Already competing for a fraction of the prize money, doubles specialists have had the door shut on their faces. None among

the ATP doubles top-10 is in the draw. Nine of them had taken part in the 2025 Wimbledon mixed doubles competition.

The women fare better, with three of the WTA doubles top-10 set to compete. But the current World No. 1 is United States' Taylor Townsend and to not have

her would have been a public relations disaster.

Thus, the nearly three-fold increase in purse from \$802,000 in 2024 to \$2,360,000 will mostly be pocketed by the already highly paid singles stars.

"Doubles already plays second fiddle to singles in terms of visibility, schedul-

ing, prize money. This move just reinforces that hierarchy," former World No. 1 Rohan Bopanna told *The Hindu*. "A Grand Slam isn't just about singles. It's about the entire ecosystem. When you start trimming one part, especially something that's been a tradition, it chips away at the completeness of the event."

Unilateral decision

What has also ranked the players is the USTA's seemingly unilateral decision-making.

"I'm honoured that they asked me to play, but how they went about it wasn't really great," quipped Jessica Pegula, World No. 4 in singles and a WTA Player Council member, in Cincinnati recently.

"We were like, 'you guys (US Open) just went rogue and changed the format and didn't tell anybody,'" the American added.

The competition is also running concurrently with an ATP 250 in Winston-Salem (USA) and it is no-brainer as to who will enjoy the most coverage.

At a time when seven of nine ATP Masters 1000s – except Monte Carlo and Paris – have ballooned into 12-some snooze-fests, elbowing out smaller tournaments, US Open's move doesn't inspire confidence.

Can a global sport further allow the shrinking of its footprint?



Bottom half's top draw: Sinner has teamed up with Siniakova, a player with an impressive doubles resume. GETTY IMAGES

A quick glance at the rules and the pairs

Sports Bureau**The match-ups:****Top half**

Jessica Pegula & Jack Draper vs. Emma Raducanu & Carlos Alcaraz.

Olgia Danilovic & Novak Djokovic vs. Mirra Andreava & Daniil Medvedev.

Iga Swiatek & Casper Ruud vs. Madison Keys & Frances Tiafoe.

Naomi Osaka & Gael Monfils vs. Caty McNally & Lorenzo Musetti.

Bottom half

Katerina Siniakova & Jannik Sinner vs. Belinda Bencic & Alexander Zverev.

Taylor Townsend & Ben Shelstan vs. Amanda Anisimova & Holger Rune.

Venus Williams & Reilly Opelka vs. Karolina Muchova & Andrey Rublev.

Sara Errani & Andrea Vavassori vs. Elena Rybakina & Taylor Fritz.

Top Indians for Archery Premier League in October

Sports Bureau**KOLKATA**

Ace archers such as Olympians Deepika Kumari and B. Dhiraj in recurve and V. Jyothi Surekha and Abhishek Verma in compound are among the Indian archers named for the inaugural Archery Premier League (APL), scheduled to be held at the Yamuna Sports Complex in Delhi in October.

The Archery Association of India (AAI) picked the archers on the basis of top-20 world rankings and a recently-held selection trials. The APL, to be organised under lights, will also witness the participation of elite international archers.

Selected Indian archers:
Recurve: Men: B. Dhiraj (World Ranking 14), Tarunpreet Rai, Atanu Das, Neeraj Chahuan, Rahul, Rohit Kumar, Minal Chahuan, Sachin Gupta and Krish Kumar.
Women: Deepika Kumari (W.R. 3), Ankita Bhakat, Bhajan Kaur,



FILE PHOTO: RITU RAJ KONWAR

Gatha Khadake, Sharvari Shende, Basanti Mahato, Kumkum Mohod, Tisha Punia and Anshika Kumari.

Compound: Men: Rishabh Yadav (W.R. 9), Abhishek Verma (W.R. 10), Prathamesh Fuge (W.R. 11), Priyansh (W.R. 16), Aman Saini, Ojas Deotale, Sahil JadHAV, Chittibomma Jigyas and Pulkit Kajla.

Women: V. Jyothi Surekha (W.R. 3), Parneet Kaur (W.R. 17), Priti Pradeep, Taniparthi Chikitha, Avneet Kaur, Madala Surya Hamsini, Sudhi Dhadhwal, Madhura Dhamangaonkar and Pranjali Salve.

It's Ajay vs. Jasla in the BFI polls

Sports Bureau**KOLKATA**

Seeking a third consecutive term, Ajay Singh will have a straight fight with Olympian boxer Jasla Pradhan for the president's post in the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) elections, scheduled on Aug 21.

As per the final list of contesting candidates published on Monday, Ajay Singh, representing the Uttarakhand association, will take on 1984 Olympian Pradhan of the Sikkim unit.

Pramod Kumar, Digvijay Singh and Neeraj Jain will contest for the secretary-general's post, while Pon Baskaran, R. Gopu and Anil Bohidar are in fray for the treasurer's post.

No stay on poll
Recording submissions in a BFI election-related case on Monday, the Delhi High Court did not stay the polls while posting the matter for hearing on September 23. The election results will

After the initial notification for elections got stuck due to legal battles, the international governing body, World Boxing, formed an interim committee to run the BFI and conduct its polls.

be subject to the final outcome of the case.

After the initial notification for elections got stuck due to legal battles, the international governing body, World Boxing, formed an interim committee to run the BFI and conduct its polls.

Undemocratic
The much-delayed BFI elections have been mired in controversy as former Union Sports Minister Anurag Thakur's name, nominated from Himachal Pradesh and projected as a potential candidate for the top post, was rejected twice from the electoral college amid different allegations, including that the newly-adopted BFI constitution during the interim committee's tenure was "undemocratic."

Kapil and Girish bag gold medals in Asian meet

SHOOTING**Sports Bureau**

Kapil Bainsla won the air pistol gold in the junior men's event by beating Ilkhombek Obidjonov of Uzbekistan by 0.6 point in the 16th Asian shooting championship in Shymkent, Kazakhstan, on Monday.

Qualification top scorer, Jonathan Antony (582) won the bronze.

In men's air pistol, Amit Sharma and Varun Tomar shot high scores of 588 and 584, but they could not fight for medals as they were in the RPO section.

In the senior event, Anmol Jain alone made the final with a score of 580 and eventually placed sixth.

India did win the team silver in both the men's and junior events behind China and Korea respectively. There was some cheer for India in the youth section, with Girish Gupta and Dev Pratap winning the gold and silver respectively, and fetching a team



Top guns: Kapil and Girish were on target in the Asian shooting championship. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

silver as well behind Iran.

The results:**10m air pistol: Men:**

1. Hu Kai (Chn) 241.6 (585); 2. Hong

Suhyeon (kor) 239.0 (580); 3. Amir

Joharikhov (Uzb) 216.8 (582); 6.

Anmol Jain 155.1 (580); 13. Aditya

Malta 579; 21. Saurabh

Chaudhary 576; RPO: Amit

Sharma 588; Varun Tomar 584.

Team: 1. China 1744; 2. India

1735; 3. Iran 1733.

Juniors: 1. Kapil Bainsla 243.0

Kishan and Akash to miss Duleep quarterfinal

Press Trust of India**KOLKATA**

India pacer Akash Deep and wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan, the East Zone captain, will miss the Duleep Trophy quarterfinal match against North Zone as both the players are recovering from their injuries.

The season-opening Duleep Trophy matches are scheduled to be held at the BCCI Centre of Excellence grounds in Bengaluru from August 28, but Akash is yet to recover fully from a back injury that forced him to miss a Test on the recent tour of England.

The 28-year-old has been replaced by Bihar's Mukhtar Hussain in the squad. Kishan has been replaced by Odisha's Aashirwad Swain, even as Kumar Kushagra is likely to be the first-choice keeper.

Meanwhile, Bengal batter Abhimanyu Easwaran will lead in Kishan's absence.

A IN X

IN BRIEF



Piastri to get his grandstand for 2026 Australian GP

Formula One leader Oscar Piastri will have a grandstand named after him at the season-opening Australian Grand Prix next year. The Melbourne-born 24-year-old, who has yet to stand on the Albert Park podium in three attempts, leads British teammate Lando Norris by nine points after 14 of the season's 24 rounds. Piastri has already won more races in a single season than any other Australian driver since the World championship started in 1950, with six so far this year along with three second places.

Sumit in 57kg freestyle final at the u-20 World wrestling

Sumit Malik produced a series of excellent performances to book a berth in the men's 57kg freestyle final at the World under-20 wrestling championships in Samokov, Bulgaria, on Monday. Sumit beat Puerto Rico's Ethan Rivera 7-2, Japan's Rin Sakamoto 10-10 (via criteria), Azerbaijan's Vasif Baghirov 9-2 and Moldova's Ion Bulgaru 11-3 to reach the title clash, where he will meet European under-20 bronze medallist Magomed Ozdamirov.

Balaji-Rithvik pair loses in Sumter Challenger final

Second seeds Sriram Balaji and Rithvik Bollipalli were beaten 6-4, 7-6(3) by the fourth seeds Ryan Seggerman and Patrik Trhac in the doubles final of the \$200,000 Challenger tennis tournament in Sumter, USA. The champion team won 125 ATP points and \$9,900. The Indian pair collected 75 points and \$5,760.

The results: \$200,000 Challenger, Sumter, USA: Doubles (final): Ryan Seggerman & Patrik Trhac (USA) bt Sriram Balaji & Rithvik Bollipalli 6-4, 7-6(3); Semifinals: Balaji and Rithvik bt Vasil Kirkov (USA) & Bart Stevens (Ned) 7-5, 7-6(6).



Santos sacks coach Xavier after 6-0 drubbing by Vasco

Santos fired its coach, Cleber Xavier, after a 6-0 home loss on Sunday to Vasco Da Gama. "The club thanks the coach for the services provided," Santos said of Xavier.

Top athletes to compete in National inter-State meet

Sports Bureau
CHENNAI

With the National inter-State athletics meet at the Nehru Stadium here from August 20 to 24 being the final selection trials for next month's World championships (September 13 to 21), the majority of athletes will be eager to make the cut.

So far, only four – Neeraj Chopra (javelin), Gulveer Singh (men's 5000m), Parul Chaudhary (women's 3000m steeplechase), Praveen Chitravel (men's triple jump) – have made it to the Worlds through entry standards.

Tamil Nadu Athletics Association first hosted the National inter-State meet way back in 1968. The Senior Nationals were last held here in 2022.

Around 700 athletes representing 35 teams from across the country will be taking part in Chennai.

Some of the prominent athletes from Tamil Nadu include National women's javelin record holder Annu Rani, Punjab's double Asian Games champion and former Asian shot put record-holder Tajinderpal Toor Singh, three-time Asian silver medalist Tejaswin Shankar (Delhi) in high Jump, Kerala's former Asian champion triple jum-



pating. The other noted athletes participants include National women's javelin record holder Annu Rani, Punjab's double Asian Games champion and former Asian shot put record-holder Tajinderpal Toor Singh, three-time Asian silver medalist Tejaswin Shankar (Delhi) in high Jump, Kerala's former Asian champion triple jum-

Sarfraz's ton puts Mumbai in a commanding position

The 27-year-old batter scores an aggressive 138, studded with 10 fours and six maximums, as the visitor reaches 367 for five against TNCA XI at the end of the opening day

BUCHI BABU

S. Dipak Ragav
CHENNAI

Sarfraz Khan kick-started the new domestic season in authoritative fashion, smashing a brilliant century (138 retd. hurt, 114, 10x4, 6x6) to power Mumbai to a commanding 367 for five against TNCA XI on the opening day of the first round of the All India Buchi Babu tournament match at the Gojan College ground here on Monday.

Sarfraz was at his aggressive best, smashing an inexperienced bowling attack to all corners of the field. Sarfraz had made his Test debut last year and was dropped from the Indian team for the recently concluded Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy against England. He will need a good domestic season to fight his way back into national reckoning.



Fortune favours the brave: Sarfraz made full use of an early reprieve. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

The 27-year-old, who has recently shed more than 10kgs in a bid to become fitter, walked in with Mumbai in a spot of bother at 98 for three and took the game away from TNCA XI.

Sarfraz got an early reprieve when he was dropped on 15 by M. Shahrukh Khan at first slip off left-arm spinner M. Sidd-

harth and made the home team rue the missed chance. He was severe on Siddharth, using the sweep shot to good effect to find the boundaries, including two sixes.

Once he crossed his half-century with a flick of pacer Prem Kumar, Sarfraz stepped on the accelerator. He got to his century,

ramping pacer Lokesh Raj over slips for a boundary.

The batter also ran hard between the wickets with seven braces and two threes.

Once he crossed the landmark, Sarfraz cut loose, lofting Lokesh down the ground for consecutive sixes even while battling cramps before walking off.

Speedster Umran eyes a comeback, aims to don the India jersey again

Tarun Shastry
CHENNAI

India and Jammu & Kashmir pacer Umran Malik is optimistic about making his much-anticipated return to competitive cricket in the Buchi Babu tournament which began here on Monday.

The 25-year-old, known for his fiery pace and ability to clock more than 150kph, has been out of action since IPL 2024. He has endured a difficult phase with a series of setbacks.

Umran first suffered a hamstring injury, followed by dengue, and later underwent hip surgery. Since then, he has been undergoing extensive rehabilitation at the Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Bengaluru.

Speaking ahead of his potential return in his side's next game against



Pragmatic: Umran wants to stay in the present and perform consistently. FILE PHOTO: RITU RAJ KONWAR

Baroda, Umran expressed confidence about getting match-fit. "Firstly, it feels great to be back on the field. The more matches I play, the better it is, especially in terms of getting my body used to the workload again," said the pacer.

Reflecting on his reha-

bilitation, he added, "I was undergoing rehab at the NCA. I kept things simple to recover quickly. I want to thank Nishant bhai, Tuli sir, and Suresh sir for their guidance and support during that time. I'm also grateful to V.V.S. Laxman sir and the BCCI for providing the best facilities at the

NCA to aid my recovery."

He also acknowledged the support from his coaches, "JKCA has supported me immensely. I've been in constant touch with Mithun Manhas, who's been guiding me. Our head coach, Ajay Sharma, and the JKCA support staff have been very encouraging. A couple of weeks ago, I was in Chennai for a camp with Abhishek Nayar, and I've been working on a few variations with him as well."

With the domestic season round the corner, Umran is focused on building momentum. "My immediate goal is to perform well in this tournament and then play in the Ranji Trophy. I hope to take wickets and perform consistently. I want to play for India again," said the Kolkata Knight Riders pacer.

All-rounder Webster eyes Ashes selection

CRICKET

ANI
NEW DELHI

Australia's all-rounder Beau Webster, despite a positive start to his Test career, which includes four fifties from his seven Tests, isn't taking things for granted. Tasmania's international cricketer star who made his debut in the longest format in January this year, reasons that Cameron Green, since his return at No. 3, will return to bowling, and that might open up his spot in the lower middle-order to scrutiny.

"Green, batted at the top of the order [in the West Indies], and didn't bowl. He's obviously going to be back bowling which will put a bit more pressure on my spot at No. 6 as an all-rounder. But I welcome it," he added.

While Marnus Labuschagne has thrown his hat in the ring as a contender to open for Australia, if Green's bowling returns are encouraging, the Aus-



Webster will be keen on proving his worth. GETTY IMAGES

tralian selectors can find ways to accommodate the experienced Labuschagne.

This would leave the seven-Test-old Webster under the scanner, but the all-rounder is ready to once again prove his worth.

"I'm looking forward to show what I am capable of at [Sheffield] Shield level, and hopefully, be selected for the first Ashes Test in Perth," Webster added.

"I'm sure the team's going to change during the five Tests. I'm will do everything I can to make sure I'm there for all five."

Plucky Espanyol rallies to beat Atletico Madrid

EURO LEAGUES

Agencies
BARCELONA

Atletico Madrid started with a 2-1 defeat at Espanyol in LaLiga on Sunday as the hosts overturned Julian Alvarez's opener with late goals from substitutes Miguel Rubio and Pere Milla.

Alvarez showed his quality in the 37th minute, curling a superb free-kick into the top corner to give Atletico the lead after Espanyol's Leandro Cabrera had pushed Conor Gallagher.

The hosts levelled in the 73rd when a long set-piece dropped into the box behind the defence, allowing Rubio to race onto the ball and slide it past goalkeeper Jan Oblak.

Six minutes from time, Milla scored a spectacular winner, meeting a cross with a diving header that arched over Oblak and nestled inside the far post to complete the turnaround.

Earlier, Nico Williams

BUCHI BABU SCORES, DAY ONE



Rohit Rajawat (MPCA, 5/49), Qamran Iqbal (J&K, 138), Musaif Ajaz (J&K, 114).



Nitya Pandya (Baroda, 102), Himanshu Rana (Haryana, 100), Yashvardhan Dalal (Haryana, 120).

Group A: At Gojan-A: TNCA President's XI 256/9 in 65.3 overs (Pradosh Ranjan Paul 73, G. Ajitesh 71 batting, Abhishek Kumar 4/75) vs Himachal Pradesh. **Toss:** HP.

At Guru Nanak College: Chhattisgarh 252 in 89.3 overs (Avnish Singh Dhaliwal 52, Sanjeet Desai 93, Shubham Agrawal 41) vs Maharashtra.

Toss: Chhattisgarh.

Group B: At MRF-Pachaiyappa's College: Jammu & Kashmir 393/5 in 90 overs (Qamran Iqbal 138, Musaif Ajaz 114) vs Indian Railways.

Toss: Railways.

At CPT-IP (Turf): Baroda 381/6 in 90 overs (Nitya Pandya 102, Sukrit Pandey 85, Parth Kohli 48, Abhimanyusingh Rajput 51) vs

Punjab. **Toss:** MP.

At TI-Murugappa: Punjab 187/4 in 64 overs (Prabhsimran Singh 69, Uday Pratap Saharan 63) batting vs Hyderabad. **Toss:** Hyderabad.

Former India cricketers Anil Kumble, Sanjay Manjrekar, Sanjay Bangar and Parthiv Patel will appear as guests on the show

were ex-cricketers Madan Lal, Chetan Sharma, Murali Kartik and Akash Chopra.

Navneet Kumar Sehgal (chairman, Prasar Bharati), Gaurav Dwivedi (CEO, Prasar Bharathi) and Michael Kivido (Managing Director, CricViz) were present for the launch.

Lots of stories
"What the show promises to bring out is lots of stories with the help of stats. Cold numbers alone tell you nothing."

"With CricViz providing stats and a lot of information, good storytelling can possibly help present a different picture," said Kartik.

Sports Bureau

CHENNAI

With the National inter-State athletics meet at the Nehru Stadium here from August 20 to 24 being the final selection trials for next month's World championships (September 13 to 21), the majority of athletes will be eager to make the cut.

So far, only four – Neeraj Chopra (javelin), Gulveer Singh (men's 5000m), Parul Chaudhary (women's 3000m steeplechase), Praveen Chitravel (men's triple jump) – have made it to the Worlds through entry standards.

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DD launches new weekly cricket show

Sports Bureau

NEW DELHI

Prasar Bharati, India's public service broadcaster, launched a new weekly cricket programme in collaboration with CricViz, titled 'The Great Indian Cricket Show', in the national capital on Monday. The show, which will be telecast on Doordarshan's sports channel (DD Sports) every Saturday and Sunday at 8 p.m., aims to celebrate India's cricketing heritage with the help of enlightening data and effective storytelling.

Former India cricketers Anil Kumble, Sanjay Manjrekar, Sanjay Bangar and Parthiv Patel will appear as guests on the show and share insights and anecdotes on some of India's best cricketing moments.

Attending the launch event here on Monday

Bayindir, the custodian flapped at the ball and only managed to knock it across the line toward Riccardo Califiori, who nodded in from close range. That ultimately secured a 1-0 win for Arsenal, and Amorim was disappointed the goal was allowed to stand.

The results:
LaLiga: Athletic Bilbao 3 (N. Williams 36-pen, Sannadi 43, Navarro 81) bt Sevilla 2 (Lukebakio 60, Agoume 72). Espanyol 2 (Rubio 73, Milla 84) bt Atletico Madrid 1 (Alvarez 37).



Fine margin: Oblak's dive proved inadequate as Espanyol came from behind to seal the win. REUTERS

led Athletic Bilbao to a 3-2 win over Sevilla.

In the Premier League, Manchester United manager Ruben Amorim believed Arsenal's winning goal in the team's match at Old Trafford on Sunday should have been disallowed for a "clear" foul in the build-up.

United goalkeeper Alray Bayindir was put off by Arsenal defender William Saliba as an inswinging corner was delivered by Declan Rice in the 13th minute. As Saliba backed into



BISWARANJAN ROUT

I have learnt to handle big back-to-back events

The national sprints record holder keen to build on the experience gained in European competitions; still nurtures hopes of making it to this year's World championships

INTERVIEW

ANIMESH KUJUR

Y.B. Sarangi

Promising 22-year-old sprinter Animesh Kujur, who has been competing tirelessly and has achieved National records in the 100m and 200m this season, has set out on the path of improvement in 2025.

Having won the Asian championships 200m bronze medal with a National record of 20.32 in Gumi, South Korea, after setting the record at 20.40 at the Federation meet in Kochi, being part of the 4x100m National record making team (38.69, Reliance) at the National Open Relay in Chandigarh and bettering the National record in 100m with an effort of 10.18 in Athens, Animesh is in the middle of his breakthrough year.

Getting used to travelling, competing in different climates and going through a hectic schedule, he is gathering invaluable experience just a year before important multi-sport Games, including the Asian Games and the Commonwealth Games.

A realistic Animesh is aware of the challenge of qualifying for the World championships in Japan next month. However, he nurtures hopes, however slim they may be, of making the cut for the elite event through 'Road to Tokyo' rankings in order to gain an extraordinary exposure which may propel his growth further.

Despite his hectic schedule during India's maiden World Athletics Continental Tour Bronze event at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, he took some time to speak about his new experience this season and his quest for improvement. Excerpts:

How do you look back at your journey this season up to the Continental Tour?

I started the season with the National Games, and won three gold medals there. I tried but didn't get the National record. When I got 20.58 (over 200m) there, I felt that I

started late. Similarly, in the 100m, I did 10.28. I couldn't execute as much as I wanted to. My body had the capability for a 10.1 race. But, I couldn't push. I started working, came to the Federation meet. That was the last competition to qualify for the Asian Championships. I qualified with a gold (and a National record of 20.40 in 200m). I was very happy because it was my first international meet.

In the Asian Championships I did well. I didn't waste much of my energy during the heats and semifinals. In the 200m final, I was having fun with the crowd. Then I won bronze in 200m clocking 20.32 and broke my National record. I was very happy. Unfortunately, the 4x100m relay was not that good. I did the relay in Taiwan and we medalled there (38.75).

Then I went to Europe, did the competition in Geneva. I got good points. Before going to Greece, I was training in Switzerland. The strength-and-conditioning coach (Chris Woley at the Swiss Olympic Medical Centre), who used to be a sprinter, looked at my physique and told me 'I know where you are lacking.' So I mostly worked on the blocks.

When I went to Greece, I didn't expect to break my National record. I just wanted to start well. I got a chance in this competition (Dromia International Sprint). When I saw the time was 10.20 on the clock, I thought I could have done better. I went to the stands to be with my coach (Martin Owens). He said I did 10.18. Then I realised that I had broken my National record. Because without glasses I couldn't see too far and couldn't see the board which was placed at the starting point. The coach was happy and relieved.

In the Monaco Diamond League, I (competed in the under-23 section and) met a lot of people. I met Noah Lyles and Femke Bol. I saw Mondo Duplantis, but could not meet him.

What was your learning?

The main thing I learned was how to handle big back-to-back events. I saw the difference between the warm-up patterns of the elite athletes and our athletes and implemented those. I noticed that in big events, I did not

get under pressure. I enjoyed those moments. I was able to compete well.

It was a first time experience for me and for my coach as well. I didn't know how to manage the competition. My coach gave me a new experience. I learned a lot. I want to improve my performance for the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games next year.

How do you rate your performance at the Continental Tour Bronze event?

For 200m, it was easy to qualify for the finals. I was on home track. I had a little pressure because it was my first international meet here. So I had to perform well. In the final, the Korean (Ko Seunghwan) did not have that much of a lead. I knew I would make a comeback (in the last 30-40m and I did so to win with 20.77). The coach asked me to maintain my form. Every athlete's form dips in the last 50m. That's why the coach asked me to maintain my form.

How do you approach a 200m race?

Oh! my secrets will be out (laughs). I always push from the curve and try to win. The straight part, the 80m, that is my main part. I maintain my form there. That is the finishing part. For every athlete, their form dips but I maintain my form. That is the best part for me.

Whenever I do a competition I give my best. For example, I did 20.40 in India. After one week I did 20.45 in Dubai and I was like, why? If I perform below-par in a competition, I get disappointed.

How do you see your chances of qualifying for the World Championships?

I don't have high expectations. I just want to do well. I performed well here and I didn't disappoint the organisers. For World Championships qualification, I am looking at the rankings. Because for 20.16, I know I have to train more.

You had been competing a lot throughout the season. Are you tired?

I went to Europe. I was competing a lot. Since the time I returned from Europe, I have been struggling with a cold. I was there for one-and-a-half months. The weather was cooler over there and suddenly it's hot and humid here. But I will get used to it again.



AINX