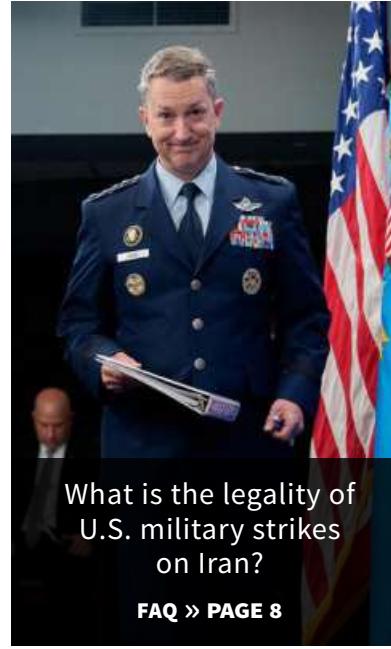


TRACING BACK

Mapping India's genetic richness

Large genetic map of Indians explores a layered history and flags hidden disease risks

SCIENCE » PAGE 10



What is the legality of U.S. military strikes on Iran?

FAQ » PAGE 8



Zohran Mamdani, the progressive man of Manhattan

PROFILES » PAGE 9



Smriti's hundred sets up big win for India in first T20I

SPORT » PAGE 13

INSIDE



Bihar becomes first State to vote using mobile app

PATNA

Bihar on Saturday became the first State in India where people voted on mobile phones. The facility was made available for senior citizens, disabled persons, and pregnant women for municipal bypolls and election in six Nagar Panchayats. » PAGE 3



China's presence in Indian Ocean Region flagged

NEW DELHI

A report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs says the growing presence of extra-regional players in the India Ocean Region, especially China gaining a foothold in the region, is one of the strategic challenges for India. » PAGE 4



Prada credits Kolhapuri inspiration

MUMBAI/BELAGAVI
Italian luxury fashion brand Prada has acknowledged that its sandals featured in the recent Men's Spring/Summer 2026 collection were inspired by 'traditional Indian handcrafted footwear', referring to India's GI-tagged Kolhapuri chappals. » PAGE 5



At least 62 killed in Gaza as truce prospects better

DEIR AL-BALAH
Israeli strikes killed at least 62 people across Gaza overnight and into Saturday, health workers said. The war has killed over 56,000 Palestinians. Meanwhile, U.S. President Donald Trump said there could be a ceasefire pact within the next week. » PAGE 12

Intensive revision of Bihar electoral rolls on

State government officials begin to distribute enumeration forms as voters who were not included in 2003 rolls have been asked to establish eligibility; 'proud moment' says CEC as Opposition brands the move dangerous; the Congress says the exercise carries a huge risk of wilful exclusion of voters, using the power of the state machinery

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

Almost 2.93 crore voters in Bihar will have to produce documents establishing the date and place of their birth as a special intensive revision (SIR) of the State's electoral rolls began on Saturday. Those born after 1987 will have to produce the documents of their parents too.

State government officials began distributing enumeration forms to all registered voters on Saturday. Bihar has 7,89,69,844 electors, of which the names of 4.96 crore were already present in the electoral rolls when the last SIR was carried out in 2003. These electors

have to verify themselves by filling the enumeration forms and submitting them. However, the Election Commission's (EC) guidelines say that anyone whose name was not recorded in the 2003 electoral rolls must establish their eligibility to be an elector, and submit proof using a wide range of eligible government documents.

Sept. 30 deadline
The SIR is scheduled to end on September 30 with the publication of the updated voter rolls.

The EC has said that it has decided to start the exercise across the country, starting with Bihar, with schedules to be issued separately.



Up to date: An official hands over an enumeration form to an elderly voter during the special intensive revision in Bihar. PTI

Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar told *The Hindu* that the exercise was a proud moment for all Indians, and added that the poll body "is and will always be" with the voters.

Opposition protests
However, Opposition par-

Criticising the move, Trinamool's Derek O'Brien said it is sinister to bring NRC through backdoor

ties are up in arms against the SIR, which they have branded as more dangerous than the National Register of Citizens.

Opposition parties have also made allegations of electoral-roll tampering and called the exercise a serious threat of disenfranchisement.

"It is a sinister move to bring the NRC through the backdoor. In 1935, under the Nazis [in Germany], you were supposed to be given an ancestor pass... Is this the new version of that Nazi ances-

tor pass?" Trinamool Congress leader Derek O'Brien said.

"Why is this exercise being suddenly done right now? We have evidence as to why it is being done now. It is because the latest internal survey of the BJP for [West] Bengal shows 46 to 49 seats for the party in the State's [upcoming] Assembly polls. In their desperation to attempt to change things you do such things," he said.

On Friday, the Congress had said the exercise carries a huge risk of wilful exclusion of voters, using the power of the state machinery.

For those born before July 1, 1987, any document establishing their own date and place of birth must be

submitted. For younger people born between July 1, 1987 and December 2, 2004, documents must be submitted to prove their own date and place of birth along with either one of their parents. For those born after December 2, 2004, the proofs of place and date of birth have to be given for themselves and both their parents.

Resource mobilisation
EC sources said the poll body already had 77,895 booth-level officers and was appointing nearly 20,603 more for new polling stations. More than one lakh volunteers would assist genuine electors, particularly the old, sick, and Persons with Disabilities (PWD) during the SIR.

Way of the chariot



Royal ride: Devotees pull the chariot of Lord Jagannath during the annual Rath Yatra in Puri, Odisha, on Saturday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Suicide attack by Taliban-linked group kills 16 soldiers in Pakistan

Agence France-Presse
PESHAWAR

A suicide attack claimed by the Pakistani Taliban in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan killed 16 soldiers and wounded more than two dozen people, civilians among them, local government officials and police officers said on Saturday.

The attack was claimed by the suicide bomber wing of the Hafiz Gul Bahadur armed group, a faction of the Pakistan Taliban.

Pakistan has witnessed a sharp rise in violence in its regions bordering Afghanistan since the Taliban's 2021 return

officer in the district said. The attack was claimed by the suicide bomber wing of the Hafiz Gul Bahadur armed group, a faction of the Pakistan Taliban.

Pakistan has witnessed a sharp rise in violence in its regions bordering Afghanistan since the Taliban returned to power in Kabul in 2021, with Islamabad accusing its western neighbour of allowing its soil to be used for attacks against

Pakistan — a claim the Talib-

an denies. Around 290 people, mostly security officials, have been killed in attacks since the start of the year by armed groups fighting the government in both Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, according to an AFP tally.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur condemned the attack and expressed his condolences and prayers for the personnel. "Security forces have made unprecedented sacrifices to establish peace in the country and eliminate terrorism," he said.

"Everyone in the nation stands with security forces in the war against terrorism," a statement added.

New U.S. draft law on foreign remittances dilutes tax rates, spares card transfers

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

U.S. legislators have significantly diluted a provision in a proposed law to tax remittances to other countries. The latest draft of the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act", released on Friday, reduces the tax on remittances to 1% from the earlier proposal of 3.5%, and also exempts remittances made from bank accounts and other financial institutions, or made using debit or credit cards.

The 1% tax will now apply only on remittances made in cash, a money order, or a cashier's cheque. According to international

Remittance relief

The latest version of the 'One Big Beautiful Bill Act' comes as a relief to non-resident Indian community in the U.S., experts say

■ Tax on remittances reduced to 1% from 3.5%, which in itself was an earlier reduction from the original 5%

■ The 1% tax apply only on remittances made in cash, money order, or cashier's cheque

■ Remittances made from U.S. bank accounts, and those via credit and debit cards exempted

tax experts, this will come as a relief to the non-resident Indians in the U.S.

version of the Bill says. "The tax imposed by this section with respect to any remittance transfer shall be paid by the sender with respect to such transfer," the latest

only to any remittance transfer for which the sender provides cash, a money order, a cashier's check, or any other similar physical instrument (as determined by the Secretary) to the remittance transfer provider," the latest draft adds. It says that remittances made from "an account held in or by a financial institution" and "funded with a debit card or a credit card which is issued in the United States" are exempt from the tax.

The Act was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in May. It is now up for debate in the U.S. Senate, following which it will be voted upon.

Kerala to go ahead with the decision to introduce Zumba

The Hindu Bureau

Kerala's Minister for General Education S. Sivankutty has said the government will go ahead with the decision to provide Zumba classes in schools at all costs.

Responding to the recent allegations made by some Muslim outfits, who are against the introduction of Zumba in schools on the grounds that it is against their religious beliefs and culture, the Minister said here on Saturday that the government was open to talks.

"No one has asked the children to wear skimpy clothes while performing Zumba. They will be wearing their school uniforms. Participating in the educational activities prescribed by the government is mandatory. The guardians have no choice in the matter," the Minister told presspersons here on Saturday.

'Nurture communalism' Activities such as Zumba, aerobics, and yoga are being introduced in schools as part of an anti-drug campaign. The opposition could be more harmful than drugs. Instead of improving the education sector, it will only nurture communalism and separation, the Minister said.

He said that sportspersons from different countries take part in sports events such as Olympics in the prescribed dress code. What is happening in the schools is a light exercise



Students taking part in Zumba at a school in Kerala as part of the government's initiative.

and the children will be wearing their uniforms, he added.

Mr. Sivankutty said that progressive organisations in the country had stood with the Muslim community during issues such as the 'hijab row,' as they believed in democratic values. But the stand taken by some organisations against Zumba will turn out in support of majority communalism. Explaining the benefits of children engaging in physical activities, he said it would be beneficial to them mentally and physically.

Inaugurating the MLA Merit Award-2025 in Alappuzha on the same day, Speaker A.N. Shamseer called those opposing Zumba ignorant. "Islam is a highly progressive religion. It is a few orthodox scholars, cloaked in the attire of Islam, who are voicing opposition. We should not give in to their demands. I will stand firmly behind Education Minister V. Sivankutty on the matter," the Speaker said.

Mullaperiyar dam's shutters to be opened today: officials

Water level at the dam stands at 135.9 ft as of 6 p.m. on Saturday; the district administration compiled a list of 3,220 people for relocation to the relief camps, but people refuse to move

The Hindu Bureau

IDUKKI

Tamil Nadu PWD officials have said that the Mullaperiyar dam's spillway shutters will be opened at 10 a.m. on Sunday. A maximum of 1,000 cusecs of water will be released from the dam.

As Tamil Nadu announced the likely opening of the dam shutters on Friday, the district administration compiled a list of 3,220 individuals for relocation to the relief camps. However, the people refused to move to the camps and continued to remain at their homes.

Shaji Kurishumood, a resident of Vallakkadavu, says that for people living in the downstream areas of



When shutters of the Mullaperiyar dam are opened, the water first reaches Vallakkadavu through the Periyar river. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Mullaperiyar, shutter opening of the dam has now become a regular scene during the monsoon. "Now, people here have accepted that there will not be any permanent

solution for their issues," he says.

P.N. Sebastian, another resident of Vallakkadavu, says that no families here have moved to the relief camps after the announce-

ments. "The shutter opening and the unavoidable flooding has all become a routine for us now. When there is any announcement of shutter opening, there will be a surge of sympathy wave for people living in the downstream areas like Vallakkadavu and Vandiperiyar. However, as the water recedes, the sympathy wave also will disappear," he says.

The water level on Saturday at 6 p.m. was 135.90 ft. The average inflow was 3,867 cusecs, and the tunnel discharge was 2,117 cu-

ments. The Tamil Nadu PWD officials had on Friday announced that the dam is likely to be opened on Saturday when the water level reaches 136 ft.

T.N. govt. not to extend Rosewood Conservation Act

Geetha Srimathi

CHENNAI

jective of bringing 33% of its total land area under green cover, in line with the National Forest Policy. According to the G.O., incentivising rosewood cultivation on private lands aligns with this goal.

Srinivas R. Reddy, PCCF (Head of Forest Force), said existing environmental laws, such as the Tamil Nadu Preservation of Private Forests Act, 1949, and the Tamil Nadu Hill Areas (Preservation of Trees) Act, 1955, were sufficient to regulate the removal of rosewood from areas outside forest limits.

Experts, however, say the two Acts are not designed to address the conservation of individual species, like rosewood, in a targeted manner.

Notably, *Dalbergia latifolia* is listed as a "vulnerable" species in the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List of Threatened Species and in Appendix II of the CITES list.

While the G.O. states farmers will benefit from cultivating rosewood, experts say that these trees take around 30 years to reach a substantial size.

Moreover, mature rosewood trees are important genetic resources for plant breeding, and their continued depletion could seriously impact the species' gene pool. As large trees have already been heavily harvested for commercial use, experts stress the need for a comprehensive inventory to assess the current population.

BRS leader held for attack on *Maha TV* channel office in Hyderabad

The Hindu Bureau

HYDERABAD

On a day of fast moving developments, Bharat Rashtriya Samithi (BRS) leader Gellu Srinivas was arrested on Saturday night in connection with the attack on the *Maha TV* office at Jubilee Hills in Hyderabad.

The arrest followed a violent episode where a group of BRS workers stormed the channel's premises,

vandalised property and created panic, allegedly over a news report involving party leader K.T. Rama Rao and a film actor.

Mr. Srinivas was picked up from Telangana Bhavan by the Banjara Hills police and handed over to the Jubilee Hills police, who had already detained five party workers for the incident. In response, security was tightened at Telangana Bhavan by the West Zone

police as a precaution.

"They resorted to damaging property over some news about KTR," an officer from the Banjara Hills police said. The security officer of the channel, Subramanyam, is the complainant. According to the police, the mob raised slogans, threw stones, and damaged vehicles parked outside the building. One employee was allegedly assaulted when he attempted

to stop them. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said such physical attacks were not justifiable in a democracy.

BRS working president K.T. Rama Rao has warned those "indulging in misinformation campaign and spreading lies" against him and other leaders of the party in the telephone tapping issue of legal action if they fail to stop their "misadventure".

The State government is currently pursuing the ob-

Global cheers



Foreign students from Botswana at Andhra University cheering a performance during the Exit-Engagement-Evening (E3), a felicitation event for Indian Council for Cultural Relations alumni, organised by the ICCR in Visakhapatnam on Saturday. K.R. DEEPAK

Three key accused arrested in tiger killing case in Karnataka's M.M. Hills

The Hindu Bureau

MYSURU

In a major breakthrough in the ongoing investigation into the death of five tigers in the Male Mahadevshwara Hills Wildlife Sanctuary in Karnataka, forest officials have arrested three persons who were allegedly directly involved in the case.

The accused have been identified as Konappa, Madaraja, and Nagaraj of Koppa village.

The officials said that based on credible information, five persons were taken into custody and interrogated, following which it transpired that the three were directly involved in poisoning the tigers.

The three accused have been arrested under the relevant sections of the



One of the five tigers that was found dead in the M.M. Hills of Karnataka on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, and the Indian Forest Act, 1969. The Forest Department produced the three before the jurisdictional magistrate and initiated further legal action.

Meanwhile, sources in the department said the viscera of the carcass col-

lected by the veterinarians

have been sent to forensic laboratories in Bengaluru and Mysuru for independent corroboration of the kind of poison used, while one set of sample has been sent to the Mysuru zoo for storage just in case it was required for future

analysis.

The arrest of the three followed an important lead that the department received on Friday evening, following which five persons were questioned, and it led to the arrest of those involved in tiger poisoning.

Sources said a few locals helped identify the owner of the cow which was killed by the tiger leading to the trail.

Senior officials said while the investigations into the case would go on, the high-level committee constituted by the State government would take up related systemic issues such as inadequate patrolling, staff shortages, and gaps in field monitoring, lack of resources, if any, whether the incident could have been prevented etc.

Turmeric Board headquarters to be opened in Nizamabad today

R. Ravikanth Reddy
HYDERABAD

The headquarters of the National Turmeric Board will be formally inaugurated in Nizamabad by Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday, fulfilling a demand that shaped the politics of Nizamabad district in Telangana involving two prominent politicians.

The ceremony will feature the unveiling of the official logo of the Board, symbolising a new era of farmer innovation and global competitiveness. Earlier this month, Mr. Shah was invited by Arvind Dharmapuri, Nizamabad



The agriculture market yard in Nizamabad district, which is one of the largest producers of turmeric in India. NAGARA GOPAL

MP, and National Turmeric Board Chairperson Palle Ganga Reddy.

The event holds a significant political hue as the issue in 2019 led to the defeat of Bharat Rashtra

Mob lynching in Mangaluru: fact-finding report demands investigation by CID

The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

Two months into the mob lynching of Mohammed Ashraf, a ragpicker from Kudupu, Mangalore, the People's Union for Civil Liberties-Karnataka, All-India Lawyers Association for Justice-Karnataka (AILAJ), and the Association for Protection of Civil Rights-Karnataka have jointly released a fact-finding report.

The report, titled 'Lost fraternity: A mob lynching in broad daylight', has alleged failure on the part of the State administration in ensuring impartial investi-



The ground at Kudupu where Mohammed Ashraf was lynched by a mob of 25 people on April 27. FILE PHOTO

gations into incidents wherein the oppressed community members were the victims. The organisations have demanded the transfer of the investigation to

the CID, appointment of a special public prosecutor, and compensation to the victim's family.

Failure of state'

Releasing the report at the Press Club of Bangalore, Mavalli Sankar, State convener, DSS - Ambedkaravaada, said, "In such cases, it is important that officials and elected representatives visit at least the family of the victims to inspire public trust in the rule of law. It has happened neither in the case of Ashraf nor after the incident in which a Dalit at Kattarghatta was killed."

Ashwini K.P., U.N. spe-

cial rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, said that given that India is a signatory to the international convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, the state is duty-bound to eliminate hate that leads to violence. Noting that the media has played a key role in communalising the Pahalgam attack and Muslims have been increasingly vilified following it, she stressed on the need to report responsibly.

Maitreyi Krishnan, president of AILAJ, said that the lynching incident was not a mere murder, but a hate crime.

Row over BrahMos unit 'delinking' in Kerala

Tiki Rajwi
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

An alleged move to 'delink' the Thiruvananthapuram unit of BrahMos from the parent BrahMos Aerospace Pvt Ltd, the Indo-Russian missile joint venture, has cast a pall of uncertainty. When contacted by *The Hindu*, BrahMos Aerospace Thiruvananthapuram Ltd (BATL) managing director A. Joseph said the Thiruvananthapuram unit has not been delinked so far, but he also did not fully rule out the possibility of such an eventuality.

Parag Jain, who had key role in Sindoos, appointed RAW chief

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

The Union government on Saturday appointed senior Indian Police Service (IPS) officer Parag Jain as the new chief of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India's external intelligence agency.

A 1989-batch IPS officer from the Punjab cadre, Mr. Jain will succeed incumbent RAW chief Ravi Sinha, who is due to retire on June 30.

Mr. Jain will assume office on July 1 for a fixed two-year term.

At present, Mr. Jain heads the Aviation Research Centre (ARC), a key wing of RAW. He is said to have played a pivotal role in Operation Sindoos by providing intelligence inputs that enabled precision missile strikes on terrorist hideouts in Pakistan.

Mr. Jain has previously served in various capacities in Punjab during its terrorism crisis, including



Parag Jain

as Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) and Deputy Inspector-General (DIG). His past assignments also include significant responsibilities on the Pakistan desk of RAW, and he was posted in Jammu and Kashmir during the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019.

Additionally, Mr. Jain has had diplomatic and intelligence stints in Sri Lanka and Canada, where he monitored Khalistani terror modules.

Over the course of his career, he has held several sensitive posts relating to national security and foreign intelligence.

Bihar becomes first State to vote using mobile app

E-SECBHR was made available for elderly, disabled persons, pregnant women to vote in municipal bypolls and election in six Nagar Panchayats; East Champaran native cast country's first e-vote

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

In a first, voters exercised their franchise through mobile phones in Bihar on Saturday. The voting was part of the municipal bypolls and election in six Nagar Panchayats in the State. The districts where the polls were held include Patna, Buxar, Rohtas and East Champaran.

While voting continued through the usual method of electronic voting machines at all the polling booths, some voters were able to cast their vote from home through a mobile phone app.

The facility was made available for senior citizens, disabled persons, and pregnant women who may find it difficult to visit the booths. Polling was held across 489 booths for



Tech adopter: Senior citizens in Rohtas district after e-voting for the Bihar municipal polls on Saturday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

538 candidates. People were also able to use the State Election Commission website to vote.

"Mrs. Bibha Kumari cast the country's first e-vote creating new history with e-voting in local body elections. A symbol of convenience, security, and empowered participation," Bihar's State Election Commission (SEC) posted on X.

She is a resident of Pakriyal in East Champaran district. Munna Kumar from the same district was the first male voter to cast an e-vote.

Bihar State Election Commissioner Deepak Prasad had earlier said that eligible voters could install the E-SECBHR app and link the mobile number added in the voters' list.

The app was developed by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC).

Mr. Prasad, however, did not disclose whether this facility would be available during the upcoming Assembly election due in October-November.

Tampering concerns

Allaying concerns around the risk of tampering of e-votes. Mr. Prasad asserted that efforts have been made to maintain transparency and the voting process would be smooth and fair.

Only two registered voters are allowed to log in using one mobile number and verification of each voter is done by entering the voter identity number. The other security measures include blockchain technology, face-matching and scanning.

IN BRIEF



Bihar CM hands over 21,391 job letters to new constables

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Saturday handed over appointment letters to 21,391 new police constables at a programme in Patna. "We have been working to increase the number of police personnel in the State since 2006. In 2013, we implemented 35% reservation for women in the police force. In 2022, the number of police personnel increased to 1.10 lakh and in 2023, it increased to 2.29 lakh," Mr. Kumar said at the event. He also claimed that after Saturday's recruitment, the number of women in the Bihar police force – 36,000 – would be the highest among all States in the country.

Religious sites in Mumbai are 'loudspeaker-free': police chief

Mumbai Police Commissioner Deven Bharti on Saturday asserted that the city is now "entirely free of directional loudspeakers" after its personnel completed a comprehensive crackdown on public address systems at all religious structures while refuting claims of selective targeting. "All loudspeakers from religious structures have been removed. Religious sites in Mumbai are now 'loudspeaker-free,'" Mr. Bharti said, adding that the operation was conducted methodically and no community had been singled out. PTI

Emergency response centres to be set up in H.P. panchayats

The Himachal Pradesh government on Saturday approved the setting up of a Panchayat Emergency Response Centre in each of the 3,645 panchayats in the State, according to an official statement. In a meeting held here under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, the Cabinet gave its consent for the setting up of a Panchayat Emergency Response Centre "to ensure effective response in the event of natural disasters to save human lives and properties". PTI

Uttarakhand bus accident toll now 5 as another body found

The body of a 19-year-old native of Gujarat was retrieved from along the Alaknanda river in Uttarakhand's Pauri district, around 40 km from the spot where the bus was travelling in fell into the river on Thursday, an official said on Saturday. The 31-seater bus, taking pilgrims from Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh to Badrinath, fell into the river near Gholi between Rudraprayag and Gauchar. Four bodies had been found till Friday. After the recovery of the Gujarat native's body, the toll has risen to five. Rescue efforts are on but hampered by violent currents of the river, a State Disaster Response Force official said. PTI

Former Odisha CM Patnaik flays BJP govt. over lapses, delay in Rath Yatra rituals

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

A day after the sibling deities' journey remained incomplete, former Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik took a sharp swipe at the Mohan Majhi government, citing mismanagement of Odisha's most sacred event.

Recovering in Mumbai after a procedure for cervical arthritis, Mr. Patnaik took to social media platform X to express concern over the series of lapses that marred the Rath Yatra festivities.

"We are not here to point fingers or blame the administration for Friday's inordinate delay in pulling the Nandighosha (Lord Jagannath's chariot). But it is impossible not to voice our deep concern and anguish over how things unfolded during the most sacred event in our State," said Mr. Patnaik in his statement.

He further said, "It is hard to forget how, last



Naveen Patnaik

(lord) Jagannath forgive all those responsible for the terrible mess that has overshadowed this divine festival this year. I hope it leads to deep introspection by all in government," he said.

Mr. Patnaik also posted media reports which alleged that two ministers had provided entry passes for the inner cordon to a large number of supporters which was major reason behind the delay.

In addition to the delay, hospitalisation of 700 devotees due to a stampede-like situation and heat exhaustion in Puri was said to be upshot of mismanagement of event.

The rituals of the sibling deities of the Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri evoke deep emotions among Odias across the State. Successive governments have taken utmost care to ensure the smooth and peaceful conduct of the annual Rath Yatra.

"May Mahaprabhu

CPI(M) leaders meet kin of 9-year-old girl killed in Kaliganj bomb explosion

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Leaders of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), including the party's West Bengal secretary Mohammad Salim, on Saturday met the family of the girl who was killed in the Kaliganj bomb explosion on June 23. Mr. Salim was accompanied by Democratic Youth Federation of India State president Meenakshi Mukherjee, who met the family members.

Election to the Kaliganj Assembly seat was held on June 19, and on June 23, before the bypoll results were declared, a crude bomb hurled at the house of Tammana Khatun, 9, took her life. The police have claimed that bombs were hurled during celebratory processions. The byelection saw the Trinamool Congress candidate, Alfa Ahmed, winning the election.

Mr. Salim questioned



Probe on: Forensic team examine and collect samples from the site following a bomb explosion in Nadia. ANI

why the area had not been sanitised, and all bombs and ammunition removed, during the elections.

"I ask the local police here – there are so many police here today because we are here. Where were you when this incident happened? The authorities – SDO (Sub Divisional Magistrate), DM (District Magistrate), IC (Inspector-in-Charge) – their job is to maintain law and order in the State, following the Constitution, and conducting

fair elections. They have failed massively. We are asking for a proper investigation," the CPI(M) State secretary said.

Those who threw bombs during celebratory processions were criminals, and the Mamata Banerjee government was promoting such elements, Ms. Mukherjee said.

Khatun's family members said they were targeted because they were supporters of the CPI(M).

The police have arrested five persons in connection with the incident.

Coast Guard detains three Sri Lankans in Tamil Nadu

The Hindu Bureau
RAMESWARAM

Two Sri Lankans and one Sri Lankan Tamil arrived illegally via boat in Dhanushkodi of Tamil Nadu on Friday night. As Indian Coast Guard personnel noticed them in the morning, they were taken to their office for investigation. The two Sri Lankans were identified by the police as V. Smith Roland Fernando, 43, and M. Mathivillagun Asutha Gunathela, 35, of Colombo, and the Sri Lankan Tamil as S. Kabilan, 43, of Mullaitivu.

Police added that Kabilan was charged for possession of drugs in the Kodikamam police station in Sri Lanka and the other two were suspects in a cheating case.

Officials believed that they had fled their country fearing repercussions as the accusations against them would be confirmed.

CISF plans to integrate airport staff passes with facial tech and FASTags

Iagrati Chandra
NEW DELHI



Security vision: The move to link airport entry passes of staff will help in curbing 'insider threat'. VELANKANNI RAJ B.

ding staff, among others, for accessing airports will help in curbing "insider threat", Inspector General of CISF (Airport Sector), Vijay Prakash, told *The Hindu*. This was required as employees left their vehicles in parking area for long hours, allowing scope for misuse by miscreants who were not AEP holders or bona fide staff, the official said.

There were deliberations on the integration of

Artificial Intelligence in data analysis for gaining insights and anticipating security risks, the statement added.

These issues were discussed at a CISF workshop on Friday, attended by its senior officials, security chiefs from 69 airports, and representatives of the Civil Aviation Ministry, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS), and the Airports

Authority of India. The agencies that were present included the Delhi Police, the Bureau of Immigration, the Special Protection Group, and the National Security Guard. There were also representatives from the Delhi International Airport Limited, and airlines, including Air India Express and IndiGo.

There was also a suggestion to ensure a zoning system for AEP holders, so that if someone was permitted access to only certain part of airports, including the arrival hall, they could be restricted from going beyond that area with the help of technology along the lines of RFID (radio frequency identification), which could set off an alarm.

BCAS, the aviation security watchdog, issues AEPs for aviation personnel who need to access the airport, as well as salespersons at retail outlets and restaurants inside airports.

In letter to Modi, MP flags misuse of govt. schemes in Assam

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Assam MP Gaurav Gogoi has drawn the attention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to allegations of political favouritism and irregularities in two government-backed dairy projects, including one that entailed the eviction of migrant Muslims.

In a letter to the Prime Minister on Saturday, Mr. Gogoi, the State Congress president, called for an immediate review of the Assistance to Entrepreneur for Establishment of Commercial Dairy Farming (2022-23) scheme, meant to help entrepreneurs, but allegedly being misused.

The scheme, which provides subsidies up to ₹50 lakh per unit, was designed to support dairy entrepreneurs and strengthen regional milk production. However, several beneficiaries reported

BPCL blames rain for cars stalling in M.P. CM's convoy

Press Trust of India
BHOPAL/RATLAM

An FIR was lodged in Ratlam on Saturday in connection with the stalling of vehicles due to water-mixed fuel in Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav's convoy on June 26, an official said.

The move by the State government comes amid oil marketing firm Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited's (BPCL) claim that "unusually heavy rainfall" caused water to enter fuel storage tanks at Shakti Fuel Point in Dosigaoan of Madhya Pradesh.

As per an official release, the FIR has been lodged against the guilty pump operator under Section 377 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 as well as provisions of the Motor Spirit and High Cost Diesel (Regulation of Supply and Distribution and Prevention of Malpractices) Order, 2005.

Kolkata erupts in protests over rape of student; BJP leader held

Trinamool MP's remarks on the crime spark strong criticism, with BJP saying they were 'in favour of the rapists'; visuals of the accused with top Trinamool leaders circulate on social media; police arrest four people in connection with the case

Shrabana Chatterjee
KOLKATA

Protests intensified in Kolkata on Saturday over the alleged sexual assault on a law student in her college. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) State unit president Sukanta Majumdar was detained in one of the protests. Senior Trinamool Congress MP Kalyan Banerjee's statement on the case has sparked a backlash.

The BJP said the comments by Mr. Banerjee were made "in favour of the rapists" and "shameful". "If a friend rapes another friend, then how will the government provide protection in such cases? Police cannot be in every corner," Mr. Banerjee said. He said women's safety was at stake because of the mentality of men.

BJP leader Amit Malviya called the statement "a trivialisation of the crime", and accused the ruling Trinamool of shielding its members.

On Saturday, BJP workers organised multiple protests to condemn the



In rage: BJP protesters clash with the police at Gariahat crossing in Kolkata on Saturday while protesting against the rape of a law student. DEBASISH BHADURI

gang rape. They clashed with the police in several parts of Kolkata and on its outskirts. At Gariahat crossing, close to the college where the incident took place, Mr. Majumdar was seen being escorted into a police van during a scuffle. "This is the face of democracy in West Bengal. Police have arrested us and are not allowing us even to voice our opinions," Mr. Majumdar said before being detained. Many other BJP workers were de-

tained. Protests were organised by Congress workers outside the college. Left-led protests were seen across the city. Many Congress protesters called for an end to the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool regime in Bengal.

BJP protesters, on the other hand, said that they wanted to prove that all abusers in the State were from the Trinamool Congress.

Trinamool Congress spokesperson Kunal Ghosh

on Saturday condemned the incident, but asked leaders not to politicise the issue, and said that they were not trying to shield the accused while also calling for strict punishment.

Till now, the police have arrested four people in the case.

The Trinamool, under growing scrutiny, has distanced itself from the 31-year-old main accused. Trinamool student wing head Trinankur Bhattacharya acknowledged that Mono-

jit Mishra – one of the prime accused – had earlier links with the party but insisted that "individual misconduct does not define the party". Trinamool officials said the accused had not held any official position in the party since 2022.

Kolkata Mayor Firhad Hakim denied any official association of the main accused with the Trinamool. "They might be supporters, but they had no relation to the Trinamool. Anyone who does [join] Trinamool based on ideals can never commit such crimes," he said.

However, visuals of Monojit with top Trinamool leaders have continued to circulate on social media, further fuelling the Opposition's narrative that the ruling party has cultivated a culture of impunity.

The college where the incident took place has already increased security and installed more CCTV cameras on the campus. This has also brought criticism from political parties, as many said that the CCTV installation after the crime was a futile effort.

Cong. questions BJP over delay in implementing 27% OBC reservation in M.P.

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Accusing the Bharatiya Janata Party of being against the Backward Classes, the Congress on Saturday alleged that the BJP government in Madhya Pradesh had been wilfully delaying passing on the benefits of 27% reservation in State government jobs and institutions despite a law enacted by the Assembly.

The party demanded immediate implementation of 27% reservation for the OBCs in Madhya Pradesh, as it has been categorically cleared by the Supreme Court.

Addressing a press conference at the All India Congress Committee headquarters, senior party leaders, including former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, AICC in-charge for Madhya Pradesh Harish Chaudhary, State Congress chief Jitu Patwari, and the head of the Congress's OBC department, Anil Jaihind, said the delay in implementing the reservation was revealing the State government's anti-reservation and anti-Backward Class mindset.

Mr. Chaudhary said that in 1994, the Congress government had provided 14% reservation to the OBCs and subsequently, in 2003, proposed the quota to be raised to 27%. However, since then, the BJP had been in power in the State, and it had never taken any decision to implement the decision. When the Kamal Nath government was formed in December 2018, it brought an Ordinance to provide 27% reservation for OBCs in 2019.

"The BJP challenged it in court, which then directed that a law be enacted on the matter. We subsequently got the Bill passed in the Assembly. But the BJP formed the government again, and it did not implement the reservation," Mr. Chaudhary said, adding that the pleas against the 27% quota were



Bhupesh Baghel, Harish Chaudhary, Jitu Patwari and Anil Jaihind address a press conference on Saturday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

by the High Court and the Supreme Court.

Chhattisgarh issue

Mr. Baghel said that the Congress government in Chhattisgarh had unanimously passed a law in December 2022 for providing 27% reservation to the OBCs, but the Bill has yet to get the nod of the Governor.

"We will not only fight the issue legally, but will raise it publicly to build pressure on the BJP government to implement it," he said. Mr. Patwari said it was strange that Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he belonged to the OBCs but was not providing the community its due. "The OBC CMs of M.P. belonging to the BJP have all betrayed their own community," he said.

Investment has not grown because of govt's policies'

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday targeted the economic policies of the Narendra Modi government, alleging the "policies of suppression and oppression" had resulted in sluggish investment growth.

"Savings have dried up and household expenditures have been curbed in Amrit Kaal," party president Mallikarjun Kharge said in a post on X.

Interest rates on savings accounts were at their lowest in 25 years, and household savings at their lowest in 50 years, with a consistent decline in the past three years, Mr. Kharge alleged.

"It seems that the Modi government has taken a contract to pick the public's pockets!" Mr. Kharge said.

India's economic growth "stubbornly refuses to accelerate at the desired and perfectly feasible rate", Congress's communications chief Jairam Ramesh said in a separate post.

"The most important reason for this failure is that private corporate investment continues to remain sluggish, in spite of the generous tax cuts in September 2019 and the PLI [Production Linked Incentive] cash handouts. The Modi government's own survey indicates that private sector capital expenditure may well be 25% lower in 2025/26 as compared to the previous year," Mr. Ramesh said.

While banks were willing to lend, companies were unwilling to borrow "since the investment environment is not seen to be conducive to expansion," he said, quoting informed analysts.

Although there were global uncertainties, the growth in demand within India was being held back because of stagnant wages, a distorted GST structure, and sharpening of inequalities, Mr. Ramesh said.

A day after BJP announces Tripura schedule, rift over candidate puts internal polls on hold

Nistula Hebbar

NEW DELHI



Turn of events: BJP president J. P. Nadda with Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha and party MP Biplab Kumar Deb. PTI

ficer Samarendra Deb.

Top sources in the party confirmed that there were ongoing differences between Mr. Saha, who wants to push the candidacy of Tinku Roy, a Minister in his government in the State, and spokesperson Nabendu

du Bhattacharya. "The sanghaithan [party organisation] candidate is, however, Bhagwan Das, who has been a former Minister and is currently an MLA," said a source. Mr. Das is seen to be close to former Chief Minister Biplab Deb,

which may have been represented by Mr. Saha.

The differences within Tripura BJP are not the best news for the BJP, which has been dawdling over organisational polls for over a year, ever since the results of the Lok Sabha polls were out. Current BJP president and Union Minister J.P. Nadda is serving an extension of his term due to the party's inability to complete the polling process amid growing differences between the BJP and its ideological parent, the RSS, over who the next national president of the BJP would be.

Additionally, according to the BJP's constitution, the national president is to be elected from an electoral college of at least 50%

of all newly constituted State and Union Territory party units.

Out of the 37 such State and Union Territory units, only 14 State units have reported completion of the electoral process, falling short of the quorum required. With the notification of the Tripura polls on Friday and sources confirming that Andhra Pradesh and Telangana will also complete their poll processes by then, hopes that the technical part of the requirement would be complete before the Monsoon Session of Parliament.

"We expect the Tripura issue to be sorted out soon," said a source. BJP is still hoping to keep to its deadline.

Must clarify Trump's claim on trade deal, says Anand Sharma

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

dence," he said in a post. He said India's national interests must be protected, and it must continue to uphold and strengthen a rules-based multilateral trade regime and honour World Trade Organization agreements.

"It is equally important that India engages the partner countries and major trading blocs and regions: EU, ASEAN, African Union, GCC and LAC to deepen market access and trade," Mr. Sharma added.

His comments come a day after his party colleague Jairam Ramesh had taken a dig at the government, saying that India "gets to know decisions of great importance to it from the White House".

Panel flags China's presence in Indian Ocean Region as a strategic challenge

Saurabh Trivedi

NEW DELHI



China is developing ports and other infrastructure facilities in the littoral countries of the Indian Ocean Region. RADHIKA SANTHANAM

2017 and the creation of dual-use infrastructure astride critical maritime choke points in the IOR to serve logistics support functions.

It says as part of this strategy, China is also developing ports and other infrastructure facilities in the littoral countries of the IOR, including in the vicinity of India's maritime boundary, and has a stated goal of becoming a maritime power. India has been working closely with partner countries in the region and sensitising them to China's activities and the

long-term implications for their internal and regional security.

While the Indian government is aware of China's engagements with other countries, including Sri Lanka, India's relations with these countries stand on their own footing and are independent of the relations of these countries with third countries, the report reads.

Replying to the government's perception towards China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its debt-trap diplomacy, the report mentioned that the

Government of India has had a principled position on the initiative. Their concerns arise *inter alia* from the inclusion of the so-called illegal China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as a flagship project of BRI, which impinges on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India. The so-called illegal "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor" passes through parts of the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh, which are under the illegal occupation of Pakistan. The government has conveyed its concerns to the Chinese side on multiple occasions and has asked them to cease such activities.

"We have been clear that militarisation of the Indian Ocean Region is not desirable and it will adversely impact the security of the Indian Ocean and the wider Indo-Pacific," the report mentioned regarding potential military use of ports and infrastructures by China developed in the IOR.

Speaking at an event to release *Ambedkar's Messages*, a book compiled by former Karnataka MLC D.S. Veeriah, Mr. Dhankhar said the Preamble was its soul.

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

In response to the controversial comments by senior Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) leader Dattatreya Hosabale that "secularism" and "socialism" were not part of the Preamble to the Constitution drafted by B.R. Ambedkar, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar said here on Saturday that the words were added to the Preamble during Emergency as an "ulcer", and were a sacrilege to the spirit of *Sanatana*.

Speaking at an event to release *Ambedkar's Messages*, a book compiled by former Karnataka MLC D.S. Veeriah, Mr. Dhankhar said the Preamble was its soul of the Constitution. It is soul of the Constitution, but this Preamble for Bharat was changed by 42nd Constitutional Amendment of 1976, adding the words 'socialist', 'secular', and 'integrity', he said.

During Emergency, the "darkest period of Indian democracy", when people were behind bars, fundamental rights were suspended. "In the name of those - 'We, the People' - who were enslaved, we just go for what? Just a flourish of words? It is to be deprecated beyond words," Mr. Dhankhar said. The founding fathers thought it fittingly wise to give us that Preamble, he said. "First, we change something which is not changeable, alterable - something that emanates from 'We, the People' - and then, you change it during Emergency. When 'We, the People' were bleeding - in heart, in soul - they were in darkness," he added.

Addition of these words during Emergency signals betrayal of the mindset of the framers of the Constitution. It is nothing but belittling the civilisational wealth and knowledge of this country for thousands of years. It is sacrilege to the spirit of '*Sanatana*', he said.



Jagdeep Dhankhar

Preamble has undergone change, and why? Preamble is not changeable. Preamble is the basis on which the Constitution has grown. Preamble is the seed of the Constitution. It is soul of the Constitution, but this Preamble for Bharat was changed by 42nd Constitutional Amendment of 1976, adding the words 'socialist', 'secular', and 'integrity', he said.

During Emergency, the "darkest period of Indian democracy", when people were behind bars, fundamental rights were suspended. "In the name of those - 'We, the People' - who were enslaved, we just go for what? Just a flourish of words? It is to be deprecated beyond words," Mr. Dhankhar said. The founding fathers thought it fittingly wise to give us that Preamble, he said. "First, we change something which is not changeable, alterable - something that emanates from 'We, the People' - and then, you change it during Emergency. When 'We, the People' were bleeding - in heart, in soul - they were in darkness," he added.

IN BRIEF



Himachal flash floods: 1 more body retrieved, toll reaches 7

The death toll in the flash floods that wreaked havoc in Himachal Pradesh's Kangra and Kullu on Wednesday has gone up to seven after the recovery of another body, officials said. The body of a minor girl, identified as Murti Devi, was recovered near the river in Bakshah village in Kullu, they said. Murti, her father and aunt were swept away in flash floods caused by cloudburst at Jeeva Nallah in Sainj area on Wednesday. The girl's father and aunt have not been located yet. Three people including Nand Lal, his daughter and sister were washed away in the deluge while trying to take away valuables from their homes at Rehla Bihal in Kullu district on Wednesday. PTI

Ahmedabad flight crash: DNA test ascertains 260th victim

More than two weeks after the Ahmedabad plane crash, DNA test has ascertained the identity of the last victim, and the death toll in the tragedy now stands at 260, officials said on Saturday. The mortal remains of the last victim were handed over to the family, they said. Medical authorities had earlier pegged the fatality count at 270. A London-bound Air India flight crashed into a hostel complex in the Mehanagar area of Ahmedabad moments after taking off from the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport in the city on June 12, killing 241 on board and several others on the ground. One passenger miraculously survived. PTI

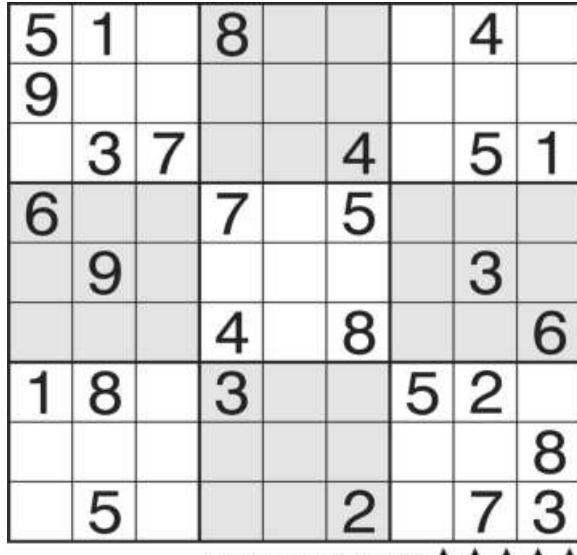
Ahead of Amarnath Yatra, J&K L-G reviews arrangements

Ahead of the annual Amarnath Yatra, Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday interacted with a broad spectrum of stakeholders in Srinagar to review preparations and ensure a smooth conduct of the pilgrimage. The interaction, held at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC), was attended by National Conference leader and former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, along with members of civil society, religious leaders, District Development Council (DDC) chairpersons, office-bearers of business and trade associations, and sitting MLAs. PTI

TV actor Shefali Jariwala dies in Mumbai at the age of 42

Popular TV actor Shefali Jariwala, who shot to fame with her breakout appearance in the remix track "Kaanta Laga" and also appeared on several reality shows, has died at the age of 42. Jariwala was rushed to Bellevue Multispeciality Hospital in suburban Mumbai by her husband, actor Parag Tyagi on Friday night. Her body later was taken to the Cooper hospital for postmortem. Many media reports claim that she died due to a cardiac arrest, though the official cause of her death is yet to be ascertained. Her funeral was held at Oshiwara Hindu crematorium on Saturday evening. The last rites were performed by Jariwala's husband, father Satish Jariwala, and younger sister Shivani Jariwala. PTI

SUDOKU



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★

No. SS6565 Distribution: www.hindufeatures.com

This widespread pre-

Prada credits Kolhapuri inspiration

After a controversy, fashion brand says it recognises cultural significance of traditional Indian craftsmanship; Maharashtra business body decides to patent Kolhapuri chappals for protection from infringement; artisans rejoice but also say that the brand should do more to help their trade

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit
Rishikesh Bahadur Desai
MUMBAI/BELAGAVI

Italian luxury fashion brand Prada has acknowledged being inspired by 'traditional Indian handcrafted footwear, with a centuries-old heritage' for its sandals featured in the recent Men's Spring/Summer 2026 collection, after being slammed for failing to acknowledge the resemblance to India's GI-tagged Kolhapuri chappals.

Representatives of the Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, which communicated with Prada, said that Prada was likely to send its team to explore any possibility of collaboration on the product in the near future. Meanwhile, the business body has decided to patent the Kolhapuri chappals to avoid any infringement of rights in the future.

The Kolhapuri chappal makers have also welcomed Prada's acknowled-

gement, but have expressed an expectation that the brand should do more to help their trade.

Two days after the Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (MACCIA) wrote to Patrizio Bertelli, chairperson of Prada's Board of Directors, the company responded,

'Responsible practices'

"We deeply recognise the cultural significance of such Indian craftsmanship. Please note that, for now, the entire collection is currently at an early stage of design development and none of the pieces are confirmed to be produced or commercialised. We are committed to responsible design practices, fostering cultural engagement, and opening a dialogue for a meaningful exchange with local Indian artisan communities as we have done in the past in other collections to ensure the rightful recognition of their craft. Prada strives to pay hom-



In vogue: A model presents a creation from Prada Spring-Summer 2026 menswear collection during the Milan Fashion Week. REUTERS

age and recognise the value of such specialised craft-peopple that represent an unrivalled standard of excellence and heritage," it said.

The letter was written to MACCIA's president Lalit Gandhi by Lorenzo Bertelli, Prada Group head of corporate social responsibility on Friday. "Prada has shown good ethics now. This has led to the acknowledgement of our traditional craft on a global plat-

form. We had made three demands to them in the communication we had sent to them on June 25. They were that Prada should acknowledge the inspiration behind the design publicly; they should explore the possibilities for collaboration or fair compensation that could benefit the artisan communities involved; and that they should consider supporting ethical fashion practices that respect traditional

knowledge and cultural rights," Mr. Gandhi told *The Hindu* from Kolhapur.

The letter written by MACCIA to Prada stated, "Such a gesture would not only uphold ethical standards in global fashion, but also foster a meaningful exchange between heritage craftsmanship and contemporary design. We trust that a brand of Prada's stature and influence will take this concern in the right spirit and initiate a thoughtful response."

Collaborating with the artisans and businesses, MACCIA has decided to patent the Kolhapuri chappals to avoid any global infringement in the future.

"The GI tag is given by the Indian government. It is not sufficient in the international market. We have now formed a separate wing. We will patent not just the Kolhapuri chappals, but also Kolhapur's jaggery," Mr. Gandhi said.

"Everyone is blaming Prada for basing its designs on the Kolhapuri chappals.

But I think they have done us a favour by taking our brand and making it global," said Shivaraj Soudagar, who runs the Athani Kolhapuri chappal cluster, a micro industry that produces the footwear in Belagavi.

Leaders and government officers are talking about taking Prada to court. But we would like them to help us improve our designs and sell them. I want Prada to realise that an average chappal maker in Athani, Nippani or surrounding villages like Madabhavi earns between ₹250 - ₹400 per pair. The middlemen who transport those goods sell them for ₹1,500 - ₹2,000 in Pune and Mumbai. The retailer sells them for up to ₹4,000 a pair. We would like a system where our goods are exported and the profits shared with us. If the Italian company is selling them for over one lakh rupees, we would be happy even if we get 10% of that amount," he said.

World is borderless... India is much larger than shown on maps: Shukla

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI



Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla, the first Indian on the International Space Station (ISS), spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday and described his view of earth as "borderless" and India as looking "much larger" than how it is projected on maps.

"India looks beautiful and much larger than how it appears relative to other countries on a map. The one-ness of the world – a sentiment that we endorse even in India – is very evident from here. No countries exist, and ultimately, we are all part of humanity. The earth is our home and we are all its citizens," he told the Prime Minister in a conversation that was also broadcast for public viewing on YouTube.

Mr. Modi told the astronaut that his space travel marked the beginning of a new era and was the first step towards Mission Gaganyaan, India's own human spaceflight project. "Shubhanshu, today you are the farthest from the land of India, but the closest to the hearts of every Indian," he said.

In a roughly 20-minute conversation, Group Captain Shukla who appeared on a screen with the tricolour in the background and string of paper flags from other countries festooned around him, answered questions from Mr. Modi on the food he had carried along, the experience of

weightlessness, the experiments he would be performing and what message he had for Indians on the earth.

"Right now, I have tied my feet to the ground to be able to speak to you, else I'll just float upwards," Mr. Shukla said, eliciting an amused chuckle from Mr. Modi. "Eating, drinking... everything feels different, and despite all the training and being fully prepared for what to expect, it takes some time to get used to everything."

Mr. Shukla told the Prime Minister that he had

(With PTI inputs)

₹1,156.15-crore worth projects sanctioned to T.N.: Fisheries Dept.

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Responding to an analysis that appeared in *The Hindu* on June 14 that Tamil Nadu's share is higher than Union government's in funding for at least six Central schemes, the Union Fisheries Ministry said that under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), the Centre sanctioned 116 projects worth ₹1,156.15 crore to the Tamil Nadu government with ₹448.65 crore of Central share.

In a statement, the Department of Fisheries under the Ministry said an additional fund of ₹262.42 crore was released for implementation of the Blue Revolution Scheme (during 2017-18) to Tamil Nadu for implementation of the projects approved under the PMMSY. The department said a total of ₹711.07 crore from the Centre and

₹460.1 crore of the State's share was approved in the total project cost.

"The share of funding by Government of India in the projects approved under PMMSY is 60% of the total government assistance. However, the States are free to decide on their contribution for implementation of the projects approved under the PMMSY," the statement said.

Secondary pollutants, especially ammonium sulphate, constitute a third of PM2.5 pollution

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI



Secondary pollutants, particularly ammonium sulphate, that results from the reaction between sulphur dioxide (SO₂) and ammonia (NH₃) in the atmosphere, are responsible for nearly one-third of India's fine particulate matter (PM2.5) pollution, said a study from the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA).

Primary pollutants are those that result from the burning of fossil fuels from automobiles, coal plants and organic matter. These pollutants, once they climb into the atmosphere, react with each other or other gases or water vapour in the atmosphere to form more complex particles – some of which are harmful. These are called secondary pollutants.

The CREA findings emerge from a combination of satellite-data imagery and modelling analysis.

"This widespread pre-

vention is also considering doing away with such a requirement altogether.

Ammonium sulphate concentrations constitute a greater proportion of particulate matter nearer to coal plants and fall with distance. It is 2.5 times higher within 10 km of coal-fired power plants (15 microgram per cubic metre) compared to areas beyond 10 km (6 microgram per cubic metre).

While the contribution to PM2.5 is 36% near coal-fired thermal power plants, it remains significant at 23% in other areas, indicating both local and trans-boundary impacts of SO₂ emissions.

"This makes them a critical target for reducing secondary PM2.5 pollution through the implementation of flue gas desulphurisation (FGD) systems," the accompanying press release noted.

CREA's study says the nationwide average concentration of ammonium sulphate is 11.9 microgram per cubic metre, accounting for approximately 34% of the PM2.5 mass. The main driver of ammonium

sulphate formation and more than 60% of SO₂ emissions in India originate from coal-fired thermal power plants.

Notably, ammonium sulphate made up more than 30% of the total PM2.5 levels in 114 out of

Sacrilege of scriptures to attract firmer penalty: Mann

Press Trust of India
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Saturday said his government will introduce a law to ensure harsher punishment for acts of sacrilege against religious scriptures.

Chairing a meeting with officers and representatives of the 'Sarb Dhamar Beabdi Rokko Kanoon Morcha' here, he also said all stakeholders, including religious organisations, would be consulted in drafting the legislation. Their views will be incorporated in the law, he said.

Mr. Mann said this process will be completed shortly to assuage the sentiments of the public and very soon a Cabinet meeting will be convened.

In an official statement, Mann reiterated that his government is firmly committed to ensuring exemplary punishment for the perpetrators of sacrilege incidents.



Geared up: Running late for a session, tribal students from the Paderu area hurry along to the Yogandhra 2025 event in Visakhapatnam. V.RAJU



Coming together: An aerial view of the Yoga Day celebrations along Beach Road in Visakhapatnam. K.R. DEEPAK



Navigating mindfully: About 500 personnel from the Indian Army, Air Force, Navy, and other forces take part in the Yoga Day event at the INS Adyar naval base in Chennai. PIB



Into the inner mind: Women wearing traditional Nauvari saris perform yoga at the Gateway of India in Mumbai on the occasion of International Day of Yoga on June 21. EMMANUEL YOGINI

Breathe, bend, belong

Rooted in Indian tradition, yoga has found significant adoption across the world, with the United Nations recognising June 21 as the International Day of Yoga

The United Nations' recognition of June 21 as the International Day of Yoga has brought global attention and a boost to the ancient Indian lifestyle practice that focuses on breathing, flexibility and strength. The origins of yoga can be traced back to thousands of years, and it holds an important place in modern lifestyles.

Yoga is one of the six orthodox schools of Indian philosophy and, just as the remaining five, focuses on attaining self-realisation through its unique teachings for the control of mind and body.

This year's International Day of Yoga, observed last week, advocated the theme "Yoga for One Earth, One Health", underlining that personal wellness and the health of the planet are linked. While people all over the country took to their mats in celebration of this wellness routine, the philosophy echoed around the world. The lawns of the United Nations headquarters in New York were lined with colourful mats with over 1,200 practising yoga together.

Terming yoga a 'pause button' that the world needs in times of instability and uncertainty,

Prime Minister Narendra Modi put forward the idea of yoga for humanity, where inner peace becomes a global policy.

Although primarily a practice of health and well-being, the International Day of Yoga also turned a platform for social media spotlight with participants being keen to take their activities online.

The UN resolution in 2014 that adopted June 21 as the International Day of Yoga had noted the "importance of individuals and populations making healthier choices and following lifestyle patterns that foster good health". The World Health Organization has urged its member states to help their citizens get over physical inactivity, which is a key risk factor for non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and diabetes.

Recognising the importance of yoga as a tool to battle physical inactivity and encourage mental stimulation as well as relaxation is one of the key missions of the International Day of Yoga and the trend visible across many countries suggests that awareness is catching on.

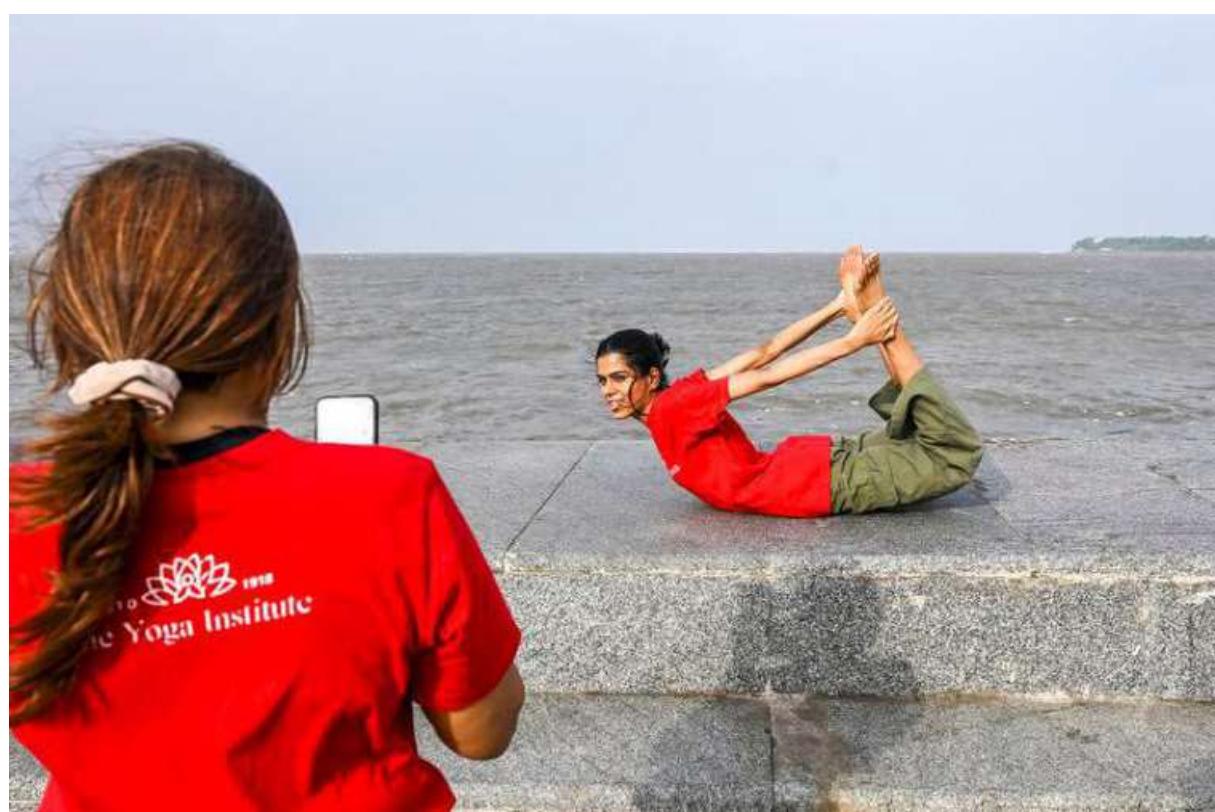
(Text by Vighnesh P. Venkitesh)



Early beginning: A mother performs yoga at Lodhi Garden in New Delhi. R.V. MOORTHY



Quiet moment: Student Police Cadets perform yoga at Government Girls High School in Thripunithura in Kerala. THULASI KAKKAT



Shoring up energy: The Marine Drive in Mumbai offers a picturesque venue for a yoga session. EMMANUEL YOGINI



Fun footwork: The Telangana Chamber of Events Industry members perform zumba as part of Yoga Day celebrations in Hyderabad. NAGARA GOPAL



Screen distraction: A girl takes a peek at her mobile phone during Yogandhra 2025 celebrations in Visakhapatnam. V. RAJU



Poses for posterity: Participants at a mass yoga event in front of the Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru. SUDHAKARA JAIN

Where does India lag in gender metrics?

What is India's standing in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index for 2025?

Priscilla Jebaraj

The story so far:

India dropped two places in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index for 2025, slipping to the 131st rank out of 148 countries. While the gender gap has narrowed or remained stable in the case of three categories – economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; health and survival – it has worsened in the case of political empowerment. At a time when rising numbers of women are voting in elections, the number of women in the highest halls of power remain stubbornly low. This is set to change in 2029, when mandatory 33% reservation for women in State and national legislatures is set to kick in, but steps need to be taken to ensure the benefits of this law extend to the long term.

What led to the drop?

The Index uses three indicators to assess political empowerment, with India falling in two – the percentage of women in Parliament, which dropped from 14.7% (78 MPs) in 2024 to 13.79% (74 MPs) in 2025 after the general election for the 18th Lok Sabha; and the percentage of women in ministerial positions, which dropped from an already abysmal 6.45% in 2024 to just 5.56% in 2025.

What will change after women's reservation?
The legislation for 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and in State legislatures was passed after a long wait in 2023, but as it is tied to a new Census and delimitation exercise, it can only be implemented from the 2029 general election at the earliest. Women's representation

While more women may become MPs in India, it remains to be seen if ruling parties also appoint them to ministerial roles in higher numbers. In the Lok Sabha has ranged from 3.4% in 1977 to 14% in 2019. At the time of the passage of the women's reservation legislation in 2023, women accounted for only 9% of MLAs in State Assemblies, with Chhattisgarh having the highest representation (18% women MLAs), while Himachal Pradesh had just one woman MLA and Mizoram had none. Jacking these figures up to at least 33% will give a significant boost to India's political empowerment scores.

The catch is that reservation is only valid for 15 years from the time the law passes, meaning that it is likely to be implemented in only two general election cycles, 2029 and 2034, raising concerns about the sustainability of gains women would make in this period. Also, while more women may become MPs, it remains to be seen if ruling parties also appoint them to ministerial roles in higher numbers, increasing their representation in actual governance. Despite the three-decade old 33% reservation for women at the panchayat and municipality level, which has been increased to 50% in most States, there is no clear pipeline to draw such local leaders into State-level politics.

Does the rise in women voters matter?

Back in 1952, 28 lakh women were excluded from voting in the general election as they were listed on the electoral rolls only as someone's mother or wife, with their own names missing. The gender gap among voters has narrowed speedily since then, from 17 percentage points in 1962 to less than two percentage points in 2014. In fact, in the last two general elections, women voters have actually overtaken men, though this can also be partially attributed to rising male migration for employment, leaving men unable to vote in their home States. The rising numbers of women voting has led to political parties wooing women as a votebank, with a slew of welfare schemes aimed at women, ranging from free bicycles for girls to a monthly allowance for poorer women.

How to increase women candidates?

The trend with respect to women voters, however, has not translated into an increase in women's representation. "Political parties continue to give lower representation to women candidates in so-called 'good seats', often citing a lack of winnability," says Rahul Verma, a political scientist at the Centre for Policy Research, noting that many parties field women in seats reserved for Scheduled Caste/Tribe candidates, in a bid to offset that quota.

"Women voters do not automatically vote for women candidates. Gender is not like caste, where voters may vote on the basis of identity. Women are much more practical, looking for actual programmatic delivery," says Tara Krishnaswamy of Political Shakti, a non-partisan group working to improve women's representation in politics. However, she dismisses parties' excuses that women candidates are not winnable. "In every general election since 1952, women candidates have had a higher winning percentage in comparison to men. The problem is that women do not make it to the candidates list... Women candidates in the lists of recognised parties average about 8% or 9%," she says.

What are the issues around deportation?

Why is there a distinction to be made between people who are being deported and those who are being pushed back? What are the different laws that deal with immigration and foreigners in India? What is the situation on the ground in border States such as Assam and West Bengal?

Vijaita Singh

The story so far:

At least seven West Bengal residents who were pushed to Bangladesh by the Border Security Force (BSF) on suspicion of being Bangladeshi were brought back to India after the intervention of the State government. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on June 25 that residents speaking in their native Bengali language are being branded as Bangladeshi in some Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-ruled States. Several people who were pushed from Assam to Bangladesh also returned as they were found to be Indians or that their citizenship cases were sub-judice.

Why have matters escalated?

After the regime change in Bangladesh in August 2024, the police across the country were asked by the Union Home Ministry to detect Bangladeshi who had illegally entered the country and were living here on forged documents. The drive assumed momentum after the Pahalgam terror attack in April and the subsequent 'Operation Sindoor'. The Ministry has issued instructions to States to deport undocumented migrants but in most cases pushbacks are happening. Around 2,500 suspected Bangladeshi have been pushed back so far. On May 10, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that the government has decided to implement the "pushback" mechanism to check infiltration instead of going through the legal route which is a long-drawn process. Home Minister Amit Shah has asked top intelligence officials to make an example of "infiltrators" by detecting, detaining, and deporting them. In 2022, at an Intelligence Bureau meeting, Mr. Shah had asked officials to

Assam is likely to enforce a 1950 law to identify and evict illegal foreigners

identify around 100 illegal migrants in each State, check documents and arrest and deport them. He asked them to continue with the crackdown even if neighbouring countries do not accept the undocumented migrants.

What is the difference between deportation and pushback?

Deportation is a legal process which involves detaining and arresting a foreigner suspected to be living in India without documents or who has entered the country illegally. The case is presented before a court and after exhaustion of all legal avenues, which includes conviction by the court, the country which the foreigner belongs to is contacted and the deportation takes place once the identity is confirmed. Pushbacks are not a legal procedure and there are no stated rules. They happen when a foreigner has been caught by the border security force on the international border and, depending on the intensity of the case or the discretion of the border personnel, they are either arrested, made to face the law here or pushed back. Since citizenship and foreigners are Union List subjects, it is the Home Ministry which delegates powers to deport foreigners to State governments. In 2024, the Ministry told the Jharkhand High Court that since the "Central Government does not maintain a separate federal police force exclusively dedicated to the task of detection and deportation of illegally staying foreigners, action in this regard has been entrusted to the State police."

What is the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950?

On June 9, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the State government was likely to enforce a 1950 law to identify and evict illegal foreigners, adding that under the law, district commissioners are empowered to declare individuals as illegal immigrants and initiate eviction proceedings. The 1950 Act was passed by Parliament amid communal disturbance and violence following the Partition of India in 1947 and creation of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) bordering West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. The Act says that "it extends to the whole of India", but has Assam-specific provisions. Section 2 of the Act says that if the Union government is of the opinion that any person or class of persons, having been ordinarily resident in any place outside India are detrimental to the interests of the general public of India or any Scheduled Tribe in Assam, the Union government may by order, "direct such person or class of persons to remove himself or themselves from India or

Assam within such time and by such route as may be specified in the order"; and "give such further directions in regard to his or their removal from India or Assam as it may consider necessary or expedient".

What are the laws for foreigners?

Till April this year, matters relating to foreigners and immigration were administered through "pre-Constitution period" laws enacted during the First and Second World Wars, which were the Foreigners Act, 1946, Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920, the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939 and the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act, 2000. In April, Parliament enacted the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025 repealing the old laws.

Unlike Pakistan and Bangladesh borders, the rules for movement of people along Nepal and Myanmar are different. Nepal has a free-border agreement with India, and a Free Movement regime (FMR), allowing movement of people residing within 10-km on either side, exists along the India-Myanmar border. Following the May 2023 ethnic violence in Manipur, the Ministry in 2024 decided to fence the entire 1,643-km Myanmar border in the next 10 years. Post the military coup in Myanmar in February 2021, over 40,000 refugees from Myanmar belonging to the Chin ethnic group who are closely related to the Mizo community crossed over to Mizoram. On March 10, 2021, the MHA sent a letter to the State governments of Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Mizoram that the refugees should be identified and deported and that the State Governments have no powers to grant "refugee" status to any foreigner as India is not a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention of 1951 and its 1967 Protocol. The refugees continue to live here.

What is behind this recent drive?

Since the April 22 terror attack at Pahalgam, the police has intensified the drive to detect undocumented migrants. Initially, they were taken by trains to border districts and then pushed to Bangladesh by the BSF. In some instances, migrants after being picked from Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Maharashtra, were flown by planes to Agartala in Tripura and transported to the Bangladeshi border by BSF personnel. The police and the BSF record biometrics and photographs of the undocumented migrants. It is to be noted that the BSF has never acknowledged any of the pushbacks. The Ministry has asked the States to verify the claims of undocumented migrants who claim Indian nationality after which District Magistrates are to send a report within 30 days, failing which the Foreigners Regional Registration Officer would deport them. In 2022, the Unique Identification Authority of India was asked to maintain a "negative list" to stop undocumented migrants from procuring identity documents in the future.



No due process: BSF women personnel patrol along the fence on the Bangladesh border at Golakganj in Dhubri district in Assam on May 26. AFP

What is the legality of U.S. strikes on Iran?

When can a country retaliate in self-defence under the UN Charter? Why have some nations argued that the conditions are too rigid to address contemporary security threats? What is pre-emptive self-defence? Is this allowed by international law?

Aaratrika Bhattacharya

The story so far:

In June 22, U.S. President Donald Trump launched military strikes on Iran, joining its ally Israel in efforts to derail Iran's nuclear programme, which both countries claim is approaching weapons production. Iran retaliated the following day with missile attacks on Al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar, the forward headquarters of U.S. Central Command. After nearly two weeks of escalating hostilities, Iran and Israel agreed to a ceasefire on June 24.

What is a lawful exercise of self-defence?

The UN Charter, under Article 2(4), prohibits the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, except in narrowly defined circumstances – a claim of self-defence under Article 51 or with the UN Security Council's (UNSC) authorisation. The restrictive interpretation, grounded in the text of Article 51, permits self-defence only in response to an armed attack that is already under way. A more permissive interpretation allows for self-defence in response to an armed attack that is imminent. This broader interpretation, often referred to as anticipatory self-defence, has been endorsed in several UN-affiliated reports.

'Criteria for determining an imminent threat remain highly contested'

Notably, the 2004 report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change affirmed that "a threatened State, according to long-established international law, can take military action as long as the threatened attack is imminent, no other means would deflect it, and the action is proportionate". These criteria are derived from the famous Caroline case, which established that the use of force is lawful only when the need for self-defence is "instant, overwhelming, leaving no choice of means, and no moment for deliberation". Over time, many states have argued that the Caroline standard is too rigid to address contemporary security threats. This has led to attempts to reinterpret and expand the notion of imminence, giving rise to the controversial doctrine of pre-emptive self-defence. Under this doctrine, a state may use force not only in response to an attack that is imminent but also during what is perceived as the "last window of opportunity" to neutralise a threat posed by an adversary with both the intent and capability to strike. The U.S. has been a leading proponent of this doctrine, invoking it to justify the 2003 invasion of Iraq. "Pre-emptive self-defence lacks the requisite state practice and *opinio juris* to qualify as customary international law. States are generally reluctant to endorse its legality, as the absence of an imminent threat renders the doctrine highly susceptible to misuse," Prabhash Ranjan, Professor at Jindal Global Law School, told *The Hindu*.

Did Iran pose an 'imminent' threat?

The U.S. has not submitted an Article 51 notification to the UNSC declaring its strikes on Iran as self-defence. However, U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth described them as a precision operation to neutralise "threats to national interest" and an act of "collective self-defence" of U.S. forces and its ally, Israel.

Tehran has maintained that its nuclear programme is for civilian purposes and remains under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency. However, on June 12, the UN nuclear watchdog passed a resolution accusing Iran of violating its non-proliferation obligations, while noting that inspectors have

been unable to confirm whether the programme is "exclusively peaceful".

In March, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard initially told Congress that while Iran had stockpiled materials, it was not actively building a nuclear weapon. However, she later warned that Iran could do so "within weeks," after President Trump claimed Iran could develop one "within months."

Dr. Ranjan noted that the criteria for determining an 'imminent threat' remain highly contested, as the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has never ruled on the legality of anticipatory self-defence or pre-emptive strikes. "For the U.S. to credibly invoke pre-emptive self-defence, it must present clear evidence of both Iran's intent and capability to strike in the near future. This is a difficult threshold to meet, given that Iran does not yet possess a nuclear weapon," he said. He added that ongoing U.S.-Iran negotiations indicate that diplomatic means were still available.

What about collective self-defence?

Under Article 51 of the Charter, Israel can call on the assistance of its allies to exercise collective self-defence against an attack. "Israel's strikes on Iran, framed as pre-emptive action against perceived nuclear threats, are legally suspect. This, in turn, casts doubt on the legitimacy of any claim to collective self-defence," Dr. Ranjan said. Israel has also sought to justify its military offensive as part of an "ongoing armed conflict," citing a history of attacks by groups like Hamas and the Houthis, which it claims act as Iranian proxies. However, to legally sustain this argument, Israel must meet the "effective control" test set by the ICJ in *Nicaragua versus U.S.* (1986). This is a high threshold to meet since it requires proof that Iran exercises "overall control" over these groups beyond merely funding or arming them.

What are the implications?

Allowing states to invoke pre-emptive self-defence would effectively grant powerful nations the licence to unilaterally use force based on mere conjecture. This would further weaken the already fragile rules-based international order. It is, therefore, crucial to resist expanding legal definitions of what constitutes an imminent threat, particularly when punitive action by the UNSC against permanent members like the U.S. remains unlikely due to their veto power.



Unilateral force: Delegates attend a meeting of the UNSC, following the U.S. attack on Iran, at the UN headquarters in New York on June 24. REUTERS

PROFILES

Manhattan's progressive man

Zohran Mamdani

The Democrat ran a grassroots campaign focusing on livelihood-based 'bread-and-butter economic issues' and upholding principled positions, such as his strong opposition to Israel's 'genocide' in Gaza, to take lead in the New York mayoral primary

Srinivasan Ramani

In a stunning political upset that has caught the eye of political observers and could potentially upend the Democratic Party in the U.S., a new progressive star has emerged: Zohran Kwame Mamdani, the presumptive winner of the New York City mayoral primary.

For an Indian progressive uninitiated in American politics, the name Zohran Kwame Mamdani will invoke references to two familiar figures. The 33-year-old is the son of noted postcolonial theorist and academic Mahmood Mamdani, who has written extensively on the legacy of colonialism in Africa, and acclaimed film director Mira Nair. His middle name is, of course, a reference to Kwame Nkrumah, the Ghanaian Pan-Africanist revolutionary leader. But now the younger Mamdani has become a name to be reckoned with on his own accord.

By defeating a formidable establishment figure – former Governor Andrew Cuomo – in the New York City mayoral Democratic primary race, Mr. Mamdani has catalysed sharp discourse within the fractured and soul-searching Democratic Party, still reeling from stinging defeats in the presidential and Congressional races in 2024 that heralded the Trump 2.0 era. New York is largely a Democratic stronghold, and the winner of the primary typically goes on to win the mayoral race. In the November Mayoral election, Mr. Mamdani will take on the incumbent, the unpopular Eric Adams, who is expected to run as an independent.

Mr. Mamdani's political career is relatively short – he was first elected to the New York State Assembly in 2020. In the State capital of Albany, he joined a small group of lawmakers affiliated with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), a progressive and socialist organisation that was formed in 1982 but truly took flight during Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign in 2016. Since then, it has emerged as a major leftist pressure group operating both within and outside the Democratic Party. Mr. Mamdani's victory is reminiscent of a similar

triumph in New York when Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (fondly known as AOC) won a Congressional election in the city's 14th district in 2018.

While Mr. Mamdani's legislative record is relatively modest in terms of Bills passed, his colleagues acknowledge that his work helped shift the Assembly's ideological emphasis to the left. If elected, Mr. Mamdani would be the city's youngest Mayor since 1917 and the first Muslim to hold the post.

Mr. Mamdani's victory was no mean feat. He had to overcome the challenge posed by a candidate with extensive political experience – former two-term New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo. Mr. Cuomo has deep establishment ties and was endorsed by multi-billionaire Michael Bloomberg and former U.S. President Bill Clinton, among others. He was also backed by a super Political Action Committee that raised \$25 million to bankroll his candidacy. The fact that Mr. Cuomo had resigned from his gubernatorial duties a few years ago after being embroiled in sexual harassment cases did not deter him from attempting to obscure this record while running a conventional campaign that featured attack ads targeting Mr. Mamdani's identity and views.

Grassroots mobilisation

Mr. Mamdani overcame these challenges by relying on massive grassroots mobilisation – reportedly 50,000 volunteers organised by the DSA's New York Chapter conducted a door-to-door campaign that reached an astounding 1.5 million doors. Focusing on one key issue – "affordability" in New York's high-cost economy – Mr. Mamdani pledged to address this through a series of concrete measures. These included freezing rents for nearly a million New Yorkers in rent-stabilised apartments, providing free city buses (based on a pilot programme he had helped start as a lawmaker), creating city-owned grocery stores that would keep food costs low by buying wholesale and operating on city land, and providing childcare for infants and toddlers.

The focus on livelihood-based "bread-and-butter economic issues" helped his campaign build a broad



ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH

coalition of support, including in neighbourhoods that were won by Donald Trump in the 2024 elections. Notably, Mr. Mamdani's message was tailored to redirect working-class frustration away from the Right's targets – immigrants and marginalised groups – toward a different culprit: billionaires. The endorsements by the doyen of the American democratic Left, Bernie Sanders, and its key public figure, AOC, also bolstered his candidacy.

Interestingly, Mr. Mamdani managed to register a strong win while unapologetically taking a pro-Palestine position, accusing Israel of committing "apartheid and genocide in Gaza",

supporting the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, and openly embracing his Muslim identity. This stood in sharp contrast to the Democratic Presidential campaign in 2024, where candidate Kamala Harris tacked to the right of centre, refused to halt arms sales to Israel, and did not allow a Palestinian voice to speak at the Democratic Convention. In many ways, Mr. Mamdani's campaign – focused on welfare issues while celebrating his identity as the son of immigrant parents and a practising Muslim – represented everything the Trump administration has demonised during its current tenure.

Seen in this light, Mr. Mamdani's

victory could possibly be the biggest win for the democratic socialist movement that has taken root in U.S. cities since Mr. Sanders's national campaign. It offers a boost to a demoralised American Left caught between the right-wing populism of Mr. Trump (which has attracted segments of the traditional working class) and what critics see as the vapid centrism of the Democratic Party establishment that refuses to change course, particularly on foreign policy.

Inevitably, the question arises: Is Mr. Mamdani's win a blueprint for future success for the beleaguered Democratic Party? His campaign – combining modern social media tools with traditional door-to-door campaigning – managed to generate broad support across a sprawling urban metropolis, offering lessons for other Democratic mobilisations in similar environments across the U.S. A freewheeling, accessible style is clearly a more effective approach than the carefully scripted strategy that cost Democrats in 2024.

Road ahead

Yet, challenges remain. Republicans are already working to brand Mr. Mamdani as the radical face of the Democratic Party, while the media establishment that supports the GOP has sought to use his identity to tarnish his record, with one Republican Congress representative's fundraising appeal branding him as a "Hamas Terrorist sympathiser". His brand of democratic socialism may indeed prove a difficult sell in the small towns and red bastions of middle America.

Ultimately, Mr. Mamdani's victory may be less a simple blueprint to be copied and more a mirror held up to the Democratic Party. It has forced a reckoning, proving that a campaign centred on economic justice and unapologetic principles can generate a powerful movement. The question for party leadership is not whether they can perfectly replicate a New York City race, but whether they are willing to embrace the grassroots energy, class-based populism, and bold vision that this stunning victory represents. The future of the party may well depend on their answer.

THE GIST

▼ Zohran Mamdani, 33, was first elected to the New York State Assembly in 2020. In the State capital of Albany, he joined a small group of lawmakers affiliated with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA).

▼ While Mamdani's legislative record is relatively modest in terms of Bills passed, his colleagues acknowledge that his work helped shift the Assembly's ideological emphasis to the Left.

▼ If elected, Mamdani, the son of postcolonial theorist Mahmood Mamdani and film director Mira Nair, would be New York's youngest Mayor since 1917 and the first Muslim to hold the post.

Excavating the past

Keeladi

Findings at the excavation site in Sivaganga district offer compelling evidence that urban civilisation existed in Tamil Nadu during the Sangam age

B. Kolappan

A newly laid road runs through Keeladi, a village in Sivaganga district of Tamil Nadu, that has now earned a significant place on India's political and cultural map. A steady stream of visitors, particularly students, flock to the state-of-the-art museum established by the Tamil Nadu government which showcases the findings from the Keeladi excavation site.

On the other side of the village, nestled among coconut groves, workers under the supervision of archaeologists continue to excavate land once believed to have been a thriving industrial hub. Square-shaped trenches reveal remnants of furnaces containing soot and ash, confirming that Keeladi was a centre for manufacturing beads made from quartz, carnelian, glass, agate, and other materials. Carbon dating of charcoal discovered at the site in February 2017 established that the settlement dates back to 6th century BCE. These excavations offer compelling evidence that urban civilisation existed in Tamil Nadu during the Sangam age. The findings also indicate trade and cultural exchange with the Indus Valley Civilisation.

For Tamil Nadu politicians, particularly the lead-



ers of the ruling DMK, the findings provided the much-needed grist for their political narrative. Chief Minister M.K. Stalin in January this year announced a \$1 million prize for experts or organisations that succeed in deciphering the script of the Indus Valley Civilisation, pointing out that 60% of the graffiti marks found in Tamil Nadu had parallels to the symbols found on Indus seals.

Long-standing divide The findings also fuelled the long-standing Aryan-Dravidian divide, and some expressed reservations about accepting the findings from Keeladi. This was followed by the transfer of archaeologist Amarnath Ramakrishna of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), who led the first two phases of the excavation, to Assam in 2017. The third phase was overseen by another archaeologist, P.S. Sriraman, who reported that there was no

continuity in the brick structures. Excavations resumed only after the intervention of the Madras High Court. The Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology also took up the project and, in its report, asserted that Keeladi was once a site of urban civilisation, a claim that remains a point of contention among archaeologists.

Those who dispute the claim of an urban settlement point to sites such as Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, and others in Gujarat, which, they argue, "bear testimony to the existence of an urban civilisation," whereas Keeladi, they contend, is just another excavation site without sufficient evidence to qualify as an urban centre.

The return of the 982-page report by Amarnath Ramakrishna of the ASI, with instructions to provide further evidence and rewrite it, stirred yet another controversy. In Tamil Nadu, this move is perceived as indicative of the

BJP-led NDA government's bias against discoveries emerging from the South.

The current dispensation at the Centre is seen as reluctant to accept anything projected as superior to the Indo-Aryan heritage. Given the Centre's stance on Indian culture, language, and religion, the ASI's directive to Mr. Ramakrishna and his subsequent transfer is viewed with suspicion – even if there is a genuine academic basis for it.

Mr. Ramakrishna, rather than pursuing the matter through academic channels, has joined the chorus of Tamil Nadu politicians, though many believe the Centre's motives are clear for all to see. Mr. Ramakrishna, from the beginning, has been maintaining that there has been no evidence for religious worship.

What remains undisputed is the need for extensive excavation in Keeladi and surrounding areas. Madurai and its neighbouring regions along the banks of the Vaigai are undeniably ancient settlements. It is crucial to have excavations on the scale of those at Harappa and Mohenjo-daro to substantiate the claim of a flourishing urban civilisation in Tamil Nadu. The ASI has the responsibility of undertaking this effort with the support of the Tamil Nadu government.

In 2013, Mr. Araghchi was made Iran's chief negotiator to hold talks with the support of the Tamil Nadu government.

Iran's man at the table

Abbas Araghchi

As a fragile ceasefire between Tehran and Tel Aviv holds, Iran's top diplomat has to strengthen ties with allies and manage relations with rivals

Suchitra Karthikeyan

“It was the U.S. which betrayed diplomacy, but it is Iran which must return to the table!” questioned Iranian Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi in his address to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) meeting in Istanbul on June 22, immediately after the U.S. bombed Iran's three nuclear facilities – Isfahan, Natanz and Fordow. Set against Israel and the U.S., his job was to tell the Islamic world how Iran was betrayed by the same powers with whom it was talking.

A former member of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Mr. Araghchi rose through the ranks of Tehran's foreign affairs between 1988 and 2013. Joining the IRGC during the 1979 revolution, Mr. Araghchi was reportedly chosen to be a part of the 'Quds Force', the IRGC's external affairs branch.

While Mr. Araghchi has denied his role in the Quds Force, he was inducted into Iran's Foreign Ministry as an expert in international affairs in 1989. He had served as Iran's Ambassador in Finland, Estonia and Japan, before he was made the official spokesperson of the Foreign Ministry.

In 2013, Mr. Araghchi was made Iran's chief negotiator to hold talks with

the 'P5+1' group (the U.S., China, France, Russia, the UK and Germany) on its nuclear programme. After 20 months of talks, Mr. Araghchi was successful in getting all parties to agree to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was signed in 2015.

Iran was given relief in economic sanctions and was allowed to have a limited nuclear programme under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The U.S., however, unilaterally pulled out of the JCPOA in 2018 under Donald Trump.

Israel offensive After the October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas, Iran's then Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian asserted that Tehran had no prior knowledge of the attack. Israel expanded the conflict by attacking Iran's ally in Lebanon, Hezbollah, and killing IRGC commanders in Syria. Houthi rebels in Yemen, attacked tankers in the Red Sea. In April 2024, in retaliation for an Israeli strike on the Iranian embassy in Damascus, Tehran launched ballistic missiles at Israel. On May 19, 2024, a helicopter carrying Amir-Abdollahian and Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi crashed near the Iran-Azerbaijan border and Mr. Araghchi was chosen as the country's top diplomat in the Masoud Pezeshkan government. As Israeli airstrikes killed more Hamas and Hezbollah leaders, Iran launched its second direct attack on Israel in October that year, warning Israel to end its attack across its borders. Israel retaliated with air strikes.

“Our nuclear installations have been badly damaged,” said Mr. Araghchi, accusing the U.S. of attacking the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of a UN member state. They met five times. On June 13, two days ahead of the sixth round of talks, Israel launched a massive attack on Iran's nuclear facilities, scientists and military leaders. On June 22, the U.S. joined Israel's war. Mr. Trump later claimed that U.S. strikes “obliterated” Iran's nuclear programme. He also announced a ceasefire on Israel and Iran, after an Iranian attack at the American base in Qatar on June 23.

“Our nuclear installations have been badly damaged,” said Mr. Araghchi, accusing the U.S. of attacking the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of a UN member state.

Leaked U.S. Intelligence reports suggest that the U.S.-Israeli attack set back Iran's nuclear programme by a few months. Despite Mr. Trump's claims that talks with Iran would resume, Mr. Araghchi stated that Iran has no plan to meet with the U.S. over a nuclear deal, adding, “we know our worth, value our independence, and never allow anyone else to decide our destiny”. As Iran recovers from the war, the challenge before Mr. Araghchi is to strengthen ties with the allies and manage ties with the rivals in a such a way that further external aggression would be prevented at least in the near future.



ILLUSTRATION: SREEJITH R. KUMAR

SCIENCE

Digital fossil-mining reveals origin of squids hidden inside rocks

The Hindu Bureau

Squids are some of the smartest and most agile animals in today's oceans, but their evolutionary history has been hard to figure out because their soft bodies don't fossilise well.

A new study has changed this using a method called digital fossil-mining to uncover fossils that were hidden inside rocks.

Instead of using traditional tools, which often damage fragile rocks,

scientists from Japan created a machine that slowly grinds a rock while taking detailed photographs of each layer. These images were stitched together to form a 3D model of everything inside the rock, including fossils.

The method enabled the team to detect and digitally extract small squid beaks, the hard, chitin-based mouthparts all squids have. By combining cutting-edge imaging with careful analysis of ancient

rocks, the study has filled a big gap in the story of squid evolution. It was published in *Science*.

The team collected hard, round carbonate concretions from Cretaceous-era deposits in Japan dated 110-70 million years ago. These rocks were already known to preserve fossils well. From there, the team scanned and reconstructed 263 lower beaks from squids for further analysis.

The team found that the

fossil beaks came from at least 40 squid species, divided among 23 genera and five families. This is a major discovery because previously only one fossil squid beak was known. The newfound squids belonged to two modern groups: deep-sea squids (*Oegopsida*) and coastal squids (*Myopsida*). It meant both groups existed as early as 100 million years ago, which is about 30 million years earlier than previously thought.

The earliest squids already had many different forms. Within only 6 million years, most known squid families had evolved, suggesting squids diversified very quickly once they appeared. By the Late Cretaceous, squids had become so abundant that their fossils outnumbered those of ammonites and bony fish.

The findings suggest squids became important players in marine ecosystems long before the mass

extinction 66 million years ago that wiped out dinosaurs and many marine species. In fact, squids were already replacing shelled cephalopods like belemnites and ammonites by then.

The authors have also suggested that thanks to their rise before marine mammals, squids were early pioneers of contemporary ocean life: composed of fast, intelligent animals like modern fish, whales, and dolphins.

SNAPSHOTS



Computer vision research fed surveillance technologies

Researchers who scanned 19,000+ papers and 23,000 patents found that since the 1990s, the fraction of papers used in surveillance-enabling patents jumped from 53% to 78%. The trend wasn't restricted to a few bad apples: most major universities, tech firms, countries, and research subfields produced work that ultimately powered surveillance tools. The study argued that modern computer-vision research has become a pipeline feeding surveillance, and that changing course will require conscious, ethical interventions.



New tool can rewrite single letters in mitochondrial DNA

Dutch scientists have tested a base-editor that can rewrite single letters in mitochondrial DNA, a place that CRISPR-based tools haven't been able to access. They were able to use it to correct a harmful mutation in skin cells from a patient. Cells with roughly 80% correction regained normal membrane potential, a sign of healthier energy output. To move towards therapy, the team delivered the editors as mRNA wrapped in lipid nanoparticles, boosting the editor's efficacy while causing fewer off-target changes.



Process makes lactic acid from 'solar' methanol

Industrial production of L-lactic acid banks on food feedstock. New research could change this. Scientists used CO₂, water, and green energy to make methanol, from which a photocatalyst removed hydrogen to yield formaldehyde. An organocatalyst attached it to dihydroxyacetone, which an engineered yeast fermented into L-lactic acid with a 99% conversion ratio. The team estimated the process's energy efficiency was 7x higher than photosynthesis.

Large genetic map of Indians flags hidden disease risks

Using mutations as genetic clocks, the study also confirmed that present-day Indians descend primarily from a single out-of-Africa migration around 50,000 years ago

Anirban Mukhopadhyay

India's vast linguistic, cultural, and social diversity has long been evident, but only now are scientists beginning to uncover the genetic richness underpinning it. In a new study in *Cell*, researchers reported sequencing the genomes of 2,762 Indians from 23 States and Union Territories. The data captured variation across caste, tribal groups, language, geography, and rural-to-urban settings, offering the most comprehensive genomic map of India to date.

The findings are striking. The study reaffirmed the three primary sources of Indian ancestry and explored how this layered history, along with entrenched social practices, continues to shape health and disease risk today.

Using mutations as genetic clocks, the study confirmed that present-day Indians descend primarily from a single out-of-Africa migration around 50,000 years ago. Although archaeology suggests earlier human presence in the subcontinent, "those populations may not have survived or left lasting genetic traces," said Elise Kerdoncuff, the study's first author.

The researchers modelled Indian ancestry as a blend of three ancient populations: indigenous hunter-gatherers known as Ancient Ancestral South Indians; Iranian-related Neolithic farmers, best represented by fourth millennium BCE herders from Sarazm in present-day Tajikistan; and Eurasian

Past continuous

India's deep genetic past is still shaping contemporary Indians' health

- Scientists sequenced the genomes of 2,762 Indians in 23 regions, revealing a detailed genetic map of India

- Most Indians mix hunter-gatherer, Iranian farmer, and Steppe herder roots, with eastern groups adding East Asian ancestry

- Strict marriage within communities increases shared genes, boosting chances of recessive diseases like dangerous anaesthetic reactions

- Indian genomes hold diverse Neanderthal and Denisovan segments, including a chromosome 3 piece that raises COVID-19 risk



- Researchers discovered 2.6 crore new variants, many altering proteins and tied to thalassemia, deafness, and metabolic disorders

- Scientists call for bigger, more community-focused studies so precision medicine fairly serves India's immense genetic diversity

Steppe pastoralists, who arrived around 2000 BCE and are associated with the spread of Indo-European languages. While most Indians fall along a genetic spectrum reflecting different proportions of this admixture, individuals from East and Northeast India, and a subset from Central India, carry East Asian-related ancestry, with levels reaching up to 5% in West Bengal. This likely entered around 520 CE, after the Gupta Empire's decline or with an earlier spread of rice farming.

India's population structure reflects long-standing practices of marriage within communities. This has produced strong founder effects, where a small ancestral gene pool gets amplified over generations. As a result, Indians, especially in South India, have 2-9x more homozygosity than Europeans or East Asians,

making them more likely to inherit the same version of a gene from both parents. Every individual in the study had at least one genetic relative, indicating levels of relatedness far exceeding those seen elsewhere. This tight-knit structure may make recessive disorders caused by inheriting faulty copies of the same gene from both parents more common than currently recognised.

One example is a pathogenic *BCHE* variant linked to severe anaesthetic reactions found enriched in Telangana.

Like all non-Africans, Indians carry traces of ancient interbreeding with other hominins, with Neanderthal or Denisovan segments covering up to 1.5% of the genome in some Indians. They also have the widest variety of Neanderthal segments. "Multiple waves of migration, fol-

lowed by caste-based endogamy, likely fixed archaic segments within specific groups, contributing to this high diversity," Lomos Kumar, population geneticist at the Centre for Anthropobiology and Genomics of Toulouse, France, said.

Neanderthal-derived sequences are enriched in immune system genes. A region on chromosome 3 (linked to severe COVID-19) is especially common in East and Northeast India. Denisovan variants appear in immune-related pathways and regions such as the MHC, a key genomic region involved in detecting and fighting infections. Enrichments in *TRIM* and *BTNL2*, involved in mounting immune responses to viruses, suggests that some variants were retained because they conferred an adaptive advantage," Dr. Kerdoncuff said. "As humans moved into new environments, inheriting these variations from archaic populations likely helped them adapt to unfamiliar pathogens."

The researchers uncovered 2.6 crore undocumented genetic variants. Of these, over 1.6 lakh were protein-altering variants absent from global databases and about 7% were linked to thalassemia, congenital deafness, cystic fibrosis, and metabolic disorders.

"This highlights how neglected Indians are in genomic surveys," Dr. Kerdoncuff said, "limiting scientific discovery and reducing the accuracy of risk predictions. The promise of precision medicine for underrepresented populations ultimately suffers."

Dr. Kumar added: "Within India as well, population-specific rare and unique variants continue to make the scenario complex," emphasising localised efforts are also imperative.

To help close this gap, Dr. Kerdoncuff said, the team is expanding the study to include more genetically isolated communities. They're also studying proteins and metabolism to better understand how genes influence health outcomes. In parallel, they're developing new tools to trace the origins of disease-linked genes in Indian populations.

To make medicine truly inclusive, India's vast genetic diversity must be central to global research and matched by deeper, community-level efforts at home.

(Anirban Mukhopadhyay is a geneticist by training and science communicator from Delhi)

The greening of our chemical industries



SPEAKING OF SCIENCE

D. Balasubramanian

Deepening concerns over the warming of our planet have made "green" and "sustainable" popular words. "Going green" means taking steps to lessen harm to the environment. Sustainability aims for changes that balance environmental concerns with economic realities.

Whatever term you use, the shared goal of minimising or eliminating environmental hazards points us towards green chemistry. And this field leads us away from toxicity and pollution. The 12 Principles of Green Chemistry, introduced by Paul Anastas and John Warner in 1998, focus

on basics, such as the adoption of safer solvents and reagents in chemical processes; designing energy-efficient methods that lead to safer chemicals that are as nontoxic as possible and also do not linger for too long in the environment; and preventing waste (so that you don't have anything to clean up).

An illustration of how green chemistry can be put to work comes from the production of biodiesel. The Indian Oil Corporation, as part of a green fuels mission, produces biodiesel from non-edible oil seeds such as Jatropha (jamal ghota in Hindi and kattukkotai in Tamil). The seeds have over 30% oil content, and the tree grows in lands with little rainfall and poor soils. Biodiesel is produced from a transesterification reaction, where the seed oil is

reacted with methanol to yield biodiesel and the by-product glycerol, which is commercially useful. For reducing the carbon footprint, the methanol must be derived from biomass.

Chemical reactions are sped up by catalysts. Biodiesel production is facilitated by an alkali. Sodium hydroxide is often used, but washing it away generates wastewater, which has

to be treated before it is released into the environment. Calcium oxide is a greener alternative because it is a solid, and 95% of it can be recovered after each production cycle.

Very toxic substances are used in the manufacture of pharma products as well. In the vicinity of some of these factories, the air has a strong smell that reminds you of nail-

polish: the solvent toluene is widely used in the synthesis or extraction of paracetamol and many other drugs. It is a neurotoxin. Green initiatives have led to a slow replacement of such volatile organic compounds with alternatives that are less toxic, biodegradable, and can be produced from biomass sources like sugarcane.

Another tenet of green chemistry that chemists love to work towards is the atom economy. The aim is to incorporate as many atoms present in the input mixture into the desirable product. In the biodiesel production process described above, green chemistry results in an atom economy of 90%. It is not 100% because of the atoms that are 'taken away' in the byproduct, glycerol. But then, in a sustainable initiative, the glycerol would



Ajatropha demonstration plot developed by Labland Biodiesel, a Mysuru-based company, near Mysuru. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Question Corner

Cramped muscles

What are muscle cramps?

A cramp is a sudden, involuntary tightening of a muscle or a group of muscles that a person can't immediately relax.

Because the muscle locks up all at once, it often feels like a sharp knot and can hurt for a while. Muscle cramps occur in parts of the legs or hands as a result of dehydration, exercise or low potassium or magnesium levels.

Menstrual cramps in the uterus are hormone-driven contractions to expel the uterine lining. Stomach cramps occur due to gas, infections and/or in people with irritable bowel syndrome.

In all cases, a cramp occurs when muscle cells have become stressed and start to misfire. People are at greater risk of cramped muscles if they have diabetes, thyroid problems or kidney disease or if they're taking particular drugs. To relieve a cramped muscle, doctors have advised pausing the stress-causing activity and gently stretching the muscle, massaging the area, applying heat to relax the tightness, and drinking lots of water. It also helps to warm up before the activity to prepare the muscles.

Readers may send their questions/answers to questioncorner@thehindu.co.in

IN BRIEF

**NSEL investors urge Fadnavis to back one-time settlement**

The NSEL Investors Forum (NIF) has approached Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, seeking his support for a proposed one-time settlement (OTS) between investors and the National Spot Exchange Ltd. (NSEL). In a letter addressed to the Chief Minister, the forum, representing investors impacted by the NSEL payment default crisis, has highlighted the importance of the settlement, which has been discussed over a decade.

Aurobindo arm recalling 48,000 vials of Gentamicin

Eugia US LLC, a step down subsidiary of Hyderabad-headquartered generic drugmaker Aurobindo Pharma, is recalling 48,000 vials of Gentamicin Injection paediatric doses from the U.S. The Gentamicin Injection, USP, (paediatric), 20 mg per 2 mL, 2 mL Single-Dose Vial are manufactured in India, the latest enforcement report of the U.S Food and Drug Administration (FDA) showed. It is a voluntary recall and initiated by the company on May 29.

Granules arm gets U.S. FDA observation resolved

Granules India on Saturday said subsidiary Granules Pharmaceuticals Inc. addressed and resolved a U.S. Food and Drug Administration observation during the same inspection when it was issued by the regulator. The U.S. FDA had completed a pre-approval inspection for a first to file controlled substance ANDA (abbreviated new drug application) at the facility of Granules Pharmaceuticals Inc. in Chantilly, Virginia, USA from June 23-27 with one Form 483 observation.

Retail sector may soon jump into 9-10% growth mode: RAI**Mini Tejaswi**
BENGALURU

The Indian retail sector, pegged at \$900 billion and growing at 5% currently, is expected to soon jump into a 9-10% growth pace, as markets seem ready with the right consumer base and increasing spending power, according to the Retailers' Association of India (RAI), a trade body which represents chain store retailers, independent retailers, e-commerce players and retail service/technology providers across the country.

"Immediately after the pandemic, the retail sector got into a 20% growth rate, but in the last one year the growth has slowed to 5%, but we expect the growth to get into 9% to 10% range soon," CEO Kumar Rajagopalan told *The Hindu*.

He said the emerging industry trends indicated increased consumption backed by the right consumer base and growing disposable incomes. "So, we are soon expecting a jump in the pace of growth from current levels to match the market demand. We've got the population to support." According to him, India's growth towards becoming the third-largest economy is making a significant difference. "So, everything is going towards better consumption, as per capita income increases, consumption increases. So I think there's a lot that's happening; however, the competitive framework of Indian retailing is also changing drastically," he added.

He further said the country's retail industry was increasingly becoming

**Too soon to look past the risk of rising oil prices: FinMin report****T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan**
NEW DELHI

It is too soon to sound the 'all clear' on the risk of rising oil prices, even though the risk from the Israel-Iran conflict has receded following the ceasefire between the two countries, the Ministry of Finance said in a report.

According to the Monthly Economic Report (MER) for May 2025 released by the Department of Economic Affairs on Friday, the Israel-Iran war could have threatened India's growth and fiscal outlook for the current financial year 2025-26.

However, the two countries agreed to a ceasefire earlier this month and oil prices have since fallen by about 6.7%. "There is ample global supply of oil, but insurance costs and the perceived risk of potential closure of choke points might cause the landed price to rise."

price to rise," the report warned. "Therein lies the risk to India. For now, the risk has receded."

"But, it is too soon to sound the 'all clear' for the rest of the year," it added. "But, then, we have to get used to doing the balancing act or the high-wire act for some time to come. In this, India is on a better footing than many other nations."

The Department of Economic Affairs report said that the Indian economy may experience "nervous but exciting times" in the days ahead.

The report said that the first two months of 2025-26 also point to resilience in economic activity.

E-comm firm Meesho gets shareholder nod to raise ₹4,250 cr. via IPO**Press Trust of India**
NEW DELHI

SoftBank-backed Meesho has received shareholders' approval to raise up to ₹4,250 crore through an initial public offering, according to the company's regulatory filing.

The resolution for IPO was passed in the EGM on June 25, the filing said.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

The development comes after Meesho completed its domicile shift to India from the U.S. The shareholders also approved a change in designation of Meesho Co-Founder and CEO Vidit Aatrey as chairman and MD of the company.

According to the filing

dated June 27, the shareholders approved raising up to ₹4,250 crore through issuance of fresh equities.

SANA

Missile launched by Houthis is 'most likely' intercepted, says Israel



The Israeli Army said on Saturday that a missile fired from Yemen towards Israeli territory had been "most likely successfully intercepted", while Yemen's Houthi forces claimed responsibility for the launch. Israel has threatened the Iran-aligned Houthi movement with a naval and air blockade if its attacks on Israel persist. REUTERS

JOHANNESBURG

South African coalition party withdraws from national dialogue



South Africa's Democratic Alliance, a member of the ruling unity government, said it was withdrawing from a "national dialogue" grouping aimed at tackling the problems dogging the country. The initiative has been criticised by DA leader John Steenhuisen saying it was nothing more than a "waste of time and money". AFP

KYIV

Russian drone strike in Ukraine's Odesa kills two, injures 17 others



Two persons died and at least 17 more were injured as Russian drones overnight struck the southern Ukrainian port city of Odesa, Ukrainian authorities said on Saturday. A drone slammed into a residential tower block in the city, causing damage to three floors and trapping residents. AP

BUDAPEST

Major turnout as Budapest Pride defies Orban's ban in Hungary



Tens of thousands began marching on Saturday for the Budapest Pride parade, defying a government ban that marks a major pushback against LGBTQ rights in the European Union. Organisers expect a record turnout of 35,000 people, despite a police ban imposed by Prime Minister Viktor Orban's government. AFP

Israeli PM slams report criticising troops

Associated Press
JERUSALEM

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz emphatically rejected a report in the Israeli daily *Haaretz*, which claimed Israeli soldiers were ordered to shoot at Palestinians approaching aid sites inside Gaza. They called the report's findings "malicious falsehoods to defame" the military.

More than 500 Palestinians have been killed and hundreds more wounded while seeking food since the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation began distributing aid in the territory about a month ago. Witnesses say Israeli troops have opened fire at crowds heading toward the sites.

At least 62 killed in Gaza as truce prospects inch closer

Three children and their parents killed in an Israeli strike on a tent camp in Muwasi near the southern city of Khan Younis; Trump says there could be a ceasefire within the next week

Associated Press
DEIR AL-BALAH

Israeli strikes killed at least 62 people across Gaza overnight and into Saturday, health workers said, as ceasefire prospects were said to be improving.

Three children and their parents were killed in an Israeli strike on a tent camp in Muwasi near the southern city of Khan Younis. They were struck while sleeping, relatives said.

Also among the dead were 12 persons near the Palestine Stadium in Gaza City, which was sheltering displaced people, and eight more in apartments. More than 20 bodies were



Sifting through: Palestinians dig through sand looking for belongings after an Israeli strike hit a camp in Gaza City. AP

taken to Nasser Hospital.

A midday strike killed 11 persons on a street in eastern Gaza City. A strike on a gathering at the entrance to the Bureij refugee camp

in central Gaza killed two.

U.S. President Donald Trump says there could be a ceasefire agreement within the next week. Taking questions from repor-

ters, he said, "We are working on Gaza and trying to get it taken care of."

An official with knowledge of the situation said Israeli Minister for Strategic Affairs Ron Dermer will arrive in Washington next week for talks on a Gaza ceasefire and Iran.

Indirect talks between Israel and Hamas have been on again, off again since Israel broke the latest ceasefire in March, continuing its military campaign in Gaza and furthering the territory's dire humanitarian crisis.

The war has killed over 56,000 Palestinians. The dead include 6,089 killed since the end of the latest ceasefire.

But the supreme leader himself stayed away.

Iran holds state funeral for top brass slain in Israel war

Agence France-Presse
TEHRAN

Iran held a state funeral on Saturday for some 60 scientists and commanders killed in its war with Israel, after its top diplomat condemned the latest White House tirade against supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

State television aired footage of thousands of black-clad mourners chanting "Death to America" and "Death to Israel" as they held aloft photographs of the dead.

President Masoud Peshkian attended the ceremony as did Rear Admiral Ali Shamkhani, a senior adviser to Khamenei who used a walking cane after being wounded in an Israeli strike in the war.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi paid tribute to the war effort in a post on his Instagram account.



Abbas Araghchi mourning at the coffin of Revolutionary Guards commander Hossein Salami in Tehran on Saturday. AFP

"Iranians gave blood, not land; gave their loved ones, not honour; they withdrew a thousand-ton rain of bombs, but did not surrender," the top diplomat said, adding that Iran does not recognise the word "surrender."

Among the dead was armed forces chief of staff Major General Mohammad Bagheri, who will be buried with his wife and journalist daughter who were killed alongside him.

Of the 60 people who are to be laid to rest, four are children and four are women.

Rwanda, DR Congo sign an agreement in U.S. to end fighting

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

Claiming credit, Trump says the region begins a new chapter of hope and opportunity

Hutu militants should be the "first order of business."

The process would be "accompanied by a lifting of Rwanda's defensive measures," Mr. Nduhungirehe said at a signing ceremony at the State Department.

But he added: "We must acknowledge that there is a great deal of uncertainty in our region, and beyond, because many previous agreements have not been implemented."

His Congolese counterpart, Therese Kayikwamba Wagner, highlighted the agreement's call for respecting state sovereignty.

"It offers a rare chance to turn the page, not just with words but with real change on the ground. Some wounds will heal, but they will never fully disappear," she said.

The agreement also sets up a joint security coordination body to monitor progress and calls vaguely for a "regional economic integration framework" within three months.

Minerals deal
Mr. Trump has trumpeted the diplomacy that led to the deal, and started his White House event by bringing up a journalist who said he deserved the Nobel Peace Prize.

Speaking to reporters earlier on Friday, Mr. Trump said the United States will be able to secure "a lot of mineral rights from the Congo."

Final bell'



A brig with scarlet sails floats through the Dvortsovyy (Palace) drawbridge on the Neva River during a rehearsal for the Scarlet Sails festivities marking school graduation in St. Petersburg in Russia early on Saturday. AP

Bangladesh reaffirms commitment to minority rights after temple demolition

Press Trust of India

DHAKA
Bangladesh has said that it remains firmly committed to safeguarding the rights of all communities and protecting places of worship but building religious structures on public land is not permissible "under any circumstance".

The Foreign Ministry's statement on Friday came a day after India denounced the reported destruction of a Durga temple in Dhaka and stressed the responsibility of Bangladesh's interim government to protect Hindus as well as religious institutions. The Ministry said the



Ripple effects: The move comes a day after India denounced the reported destruction of a Durga temple in Dhaka. FILE PHOTO

temple in Dhaka's Khilkhet area was built on land owned by Bangladesh Railways, and its removal was carried out following due process to recover public

land. It alleged that the temple started as a makeshift pavilion, with organisers attempting to make the temporary structure permanent despite re-

peated reminders.

On June 26, Bangladesh Railways proceeded with the "peaceful eviction of all unauthorised structures along the rail track in Khilkhet area," it said.

"While the laws of the land ensure full protection to all places of worship without discriminating against any built-in conformity with law, it is not permissible for any to build any religious structure encroaching public land," the Ministry said.

Bangladesh remains firmly committed to safeguarding the rights of all communities, including protection of the places of worship," it added.

Thousands demand Thailand PM quit over border dispute

Reuters
BANGKOK

Thousands of protesters rallied in the Thai capital Bangkok on Saturday to demand the resignation of Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra, piling pressure on a government at risk of collapse over a border dispute with neighbouring Cambodia.

In the largest such rally since the ruling Pheu Thai party came to power in 2023, crowds braved heavy monsoon rain to demonstrate against Ms. Paetongtarn, 38, who is also battling to revive a faltering economy and keep a fragile coalition together ahead of a potential no-confidence vote next month. "She should step aside because she is the problem," Parthep Pourpongpan, a protest leader, said.

The latest dispute started with a skirmish between Thailand and Cambodia over a disputed patch of border territory in May. Thai nationalist groups called for Ms. Paetongtarn to go after she appeared to criticise a Thai Army commander and kowtow to Cambodia's former leader, Hun Sen, in a leaked phone call with him.

Public criticism of the Army is a red line in a country where the military has significant clout. Ms. Paetongtarn apologised for her comments after the protest.

Parthep, the protest leader, said many Thai people felt the Prime Minister and her influential father, Thaksin Shinawatra, were being manipulated by Hun Sen, a former ally of the family who has turned



Paetongtarn Shinawatra

against them.

Blocking the busy intersection at Victory Monument, a war memorial, crowds including many elderly people waved flags bearing Thailand's national tricolor.

"Ung Ing, get out," the crowd occasionally chanted in unison, calling the premier by a nickname.

Thapanawat Aramroong, 73, said Paetongtarn's comments about the army commander and seeming eagerness to please Hun Sen were unacceptable.

The demonstration was organised by the United Force of the Land, a coalition of largely nationalist activists who have rallied against other Shinawatra-backed governments over the last two decades.

In a statement read aloud before the crowds, the group said "the executive branch" and parliament were not working "in the interest of democracy and constitutional monarchy".

Remaining coalition partners should quit immediately, they said.

While past protests against the Shinawatras did not directly cause the downfall of those governments, they built up pressure that led to judicial interventions and military coups in 2006 and 2014.

BREAKING THROUGH

My teammates told me it was high time I got a hundred, says Smriti



GETTY IMAGES

(A maiden T20I century) took a long time to come. I had a habit of getting out in the 70s and 80s. My teammates and me, before this series, were talking about how it's high time I get a hundred. (The win) is just the start, we need to keep the momentum going and get into good habits - Smriti Mandhana.

MEMORABLE OUTING

Shree Charani steals the limelight on debut



GETTY IMAGES

Shree Charani had a debut to remember against England. She registered the second-best figures (four for 12) by an Indian woman on T20I debut to inflict England's biggest loss in the format. Suvashini Naidu's four for nine against Bangladesh at Cox's Bazar in 2014 is the best figures by an Indian on maiden appearance.

WHY NOT?

Neeraj backs India speedster Bumrah to excel in javelin



REUTERS

Olympic gold medallist javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra feels that India pacer Jasprit Bumrah can excel in his discipline. "I think it would be a fast bowler (a good javelin thrower from another sport), for sure. So, I think a fully fit Jasprit Bumrah, in his prime, will be good at it," Neeraj told Star Sports.

HARD-FOUGHT WIN

Paulinho's strike takes Palmeiras into Club World Cup quarterfinals



AFP

Palmeiras edged out Botafogo 1-0 in extra time to enter the quarterfinals of the Club World Cup at the Lincoln Financial Field Stadium in Philadelphia on Saturday. Paulinho scored the winner in the 100th minute after the two Brazilian sides failed to break the deadlock in regulation time.

Smriti's maiden T20I ton powers India to big win

Stand-in skipper's quickfire opening stand with Shafali sets the tone for the visiting team; Harleen weighs in with a 23-ball 43; debutant Shree Charani's four for 12 sends the host hurtling to defeat

INDIA IN ENGLAND**Press Trust of India**

NOTTINGHAM

Stand-in skipper Smriti Mandhana's maiden T20 International hundred powered India to a 97-run win over England in the opening match here on Saturday.

The visitors lead the five-match T20I series 1-0.

Smriti (112, 62b, 15x4, 3x6) and Harleen Deol (43, 23b, 7x4) added 94 runs for the second wicket as India posted a commanding 210 for five after being invited to bat.

Lone battle

Skipper Nat Sciver-Brunt (66, 42 balls) waged a lone battle as England was bundled out 113 in 14.5 overs.

For India, debutant left-arm spinner Shree Charani (four for 12) was the most successful bowler.

Smriti, who led the team in the absence of regular captain Harmanpreet Kaur, gave the Indian innings early impetus and put on 77 runs for the opening wicket with Shafali Varma (20, 22b).

Shafali's dismissal did not deter Smriti as Harleen joined the left-hander. Harleen was dropped on 26 by Danny Wyatt-Hodge off



Top stuff: Smriti's knock included 15 fours and three sixes as she became India's highest scorer in T20Is. AP

spinner Alice Capsey near mid-wicket. Smriti brought up her fifty in 27 balls, and the next 50 came off just 24 balls.

In style

She reached the century in style, hammering pacer Lauren Bell for two consecutive boundaries.

Her knock is the highest for India in T20Is, surpassing Harmanpreet's 103.

England tried to stage a late comeback as Bell removed Richa Ghosh (12) and Jemimah Rodrigues (0) in the 18th over but by then the Women in Blue were already closing in on the 200-run mark.

The scores: India 210/5 in 20 overs (Smriti Mandhana 112, Harleen Deol 43, Lauren Bell 3/27) bt England 113 in 14.5 overs (Nat Sciver-Brunt 66, Deepa Sharma 2/32, Shree Charani 4/12, Radha Yadav 2/15).

Toss: England; **PoM:** Smriti. **India won by 97 runs to lead five-match series 1-0.**

Second T20I: July 1, Bristol, 11 p.m. IST.

Wickets remain top priority for Prasidh, not the economy rate

N. Sudarshan

BIRMINGHAM

Prasidh Krishna has had a tough initiation into Test cricket. Having made his debut 18 months ago in the Centurion Test against South Africa, he has had a stop-start career. He has played just four matches, secured 13 wickets, leaked runs at more than five an over and lost eight months to a quadriceps injury.

Yet, there is a quiet confidence in the Indian think-tank that the 29-year-old who measures at 6'2" is a supremely viable option. The first Test against England in Leeds may not have been pretty for Prasidh, as he bowled 35 overs across two innings, conceded a whopping 220 runs and scalped five wickets.

But he is the kind of hit-the-deck bowler India has long desired, one who can generate disconcerting bounce and threaten the top-half of the bat.

With Ishant Sharma no longer involved, Prasidh is seen as that bowler who can extract more from the turf. One bad match, and that too at a ground that has historically helped those who have bowled fuller, is not going to change that.

"I definitely did not bowl the lengths that I wanted," Prasidh admitted after the five-wicket loss in



Problem areas: Prasidh says he did not get the line and length quite right in the series opener. GETTY IMAGES

Headingly. "Not wanting to float it up is definitely one of the reasons. In the first innings, I was a little shorter than where I wanted to be. That six to eight [metre length] is ideal."

"The second innings got better because the wicket was slightly slower. I had to pitch slightly behind and then go fuller when I was trying to get a wicket."

"Somebody in the team had to do it," Prasidh said. "If I sit back and say, 'I want to look at my numbers, what my economy is,'

and not really look at the wickets... It cost me a four and a six, but Jamie Smith got out. If it means that I do that and get a wicket, I'm happy to do it."

But deep down, Prasidh is clear about his own expectations. "Every time I bowl, I'm definitely looking to bowl a maiden," he stated. "The outfield [at Headingley] was fast, the lengths, lines that I bowled were not perfect, and they took me on."

"Some of them were edges, some of them I tried bowling bouncers and ended up giving runs. I definitely would want to bring that [economy] down. I'm learning as well and it's my responsibility to get better."

It is imperative that this happens fast as India will be significantly weakened by Jasprit Bumrah's absence in two of the four remaining Tests.

"We are learning off each other," the lanky speedster said. "He's [Bumrah] been talking to all of us all even before coming here. [Mohammed] Siraj has played a lot of games, and he's going to continue."

"One thing you cannot get is experience. That you have to earn yourself, and all of us are excited. Whoever comes in, or whatever happens later, it's [going to be] an opportunity for us".



Wrecker-in-chief: Hazlewood exults after snaring West Indies captain Chase. AFP

Hazlewood bowls Australia to victory

AUSTRALIA IN WI**Agence France-Presse**

BRIDGETOWN

Australia's vaunted pace attack demolished West Indies' fragile batting, routing the hosts for just 141 off 33.4 overs to complete a comprehensive 159-run victory in the final over of the third day of the first Test at the Kensington Oval on Friday.

Josh Hazlewood was the chief destroyer with figures of five for 43 as the tourists dominated the day with both bat and ball.

Half-centuries from Alex Carey, Beau Webster and Travis Head were the fulcrum of a recovery from 65 for four late on day two



Jayasuriya propels SL to series win

Associated Press

COLOMBO

Left-arm spinner Prabath Jayasuriya took his 12th five-wicket haul to lead Sri Lanka to a win over Bangladesh in an innings and 78 runs in the second Test and a 1-0 victory in the two-match series.

The fourth day started with Bangladesh on 115 for six, needing 97 more runs to make Lanka bat again. But the rest of the match lasted less than 30 minutes as Jayasuriya polished off the tail by taking three of the last four wickets at the Singhalese Club.

Najmul Hossain Shanto stepped down as the Bangladesh Test captain after his side's loss.

The scores: Bangladesh 247 & 133 in 44.2 overs (Jayasuriya 5/56) lost to Sri Lanka 458. **PoM & PoS:** Nissanka.

Pretorius and Bosch punish Zimbabwe

Agence France-Presse

BULAWAYO

Teenager Lhuan-dre Pretorius hit a dazzling 153 on debut and transformed South Africa's fortunes on the first day of the first Test against Zimbabwe at Queens Sports Club on Saturday.

South Africa scored 418 for nine, a total which seemed unlikely when Pretorius arrived at the crease with his team in trouble at 23 for three.

Fast bowling all-rounder Corbin Bosch, batting at No. 8, was batting on 100 at stumps.

Pretorius, a solidly-built left-hander aged 19 years and 93 days, became the youngest South African to hit a Test century while Bosch brought up his maiden First Class ton.

Pretorius gave no chances, but the Zimbabwean players seemed convinced that he had edged a ball from Chivanga to wicket-keeper Tafadzwa Tsiga when he was on 30. No decision review system is in place for the series.

Chivanga, who took the first three wickets while conceding only eight runs,



Pretorius became the youngest South African to hit a Test century while Bosch brought up his maiden First Class ton.

The scores: South Africa 418/9 in 90 overs (Pretorius 153, Brevis 51, Bosch 100 batting, Chivanga 4/83) vs Zimbabwe; **Toss:** SA.



Right on cue: The Indian team tamed the higher-rated Malaysia for the title. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Norris takes pole for Austrian GP

Associated Press

SPIELBERG

Lando Norris took pole position for the Austrian Grand Prix even as his teammate and championship leader Oscar Piastri could only manage third. Ferrari's Charles Leclerc will start second.

The grid: **First row:** Norris (McLaren) and Leclerc (Ferrari); **Second:** Piastri (McLaren) and Hamilton (Ferrari); **Third:** Russell (Mercedes); **Fourth:** Verstappen (Racing Bull); **Fifth:** Antonelli (Mercedes) and Gasky (Alpine); **Sixth:** Alonso (Aston Martin) and Albon (Williams); **Seventh:** Hadjar (Racing Bull) and Colapinto (Alpine); **Eighth:** Bearman (Haas) and Stroll (Aston Martin); **Ninth:** Ocon (Haas) and Tsunoda (Red Bull); **Tenth:** Sainz (Williams) and Hulkenberg (Sauber).

Press Trust of India

COLOMBO

Pankaj Advani and Brijesh Damani dug deep as India scored a 3-1 win over Malaysia to regain the team gold in the ACBS Asian snooker championship in Colombo on Saturday. For India, which last won the gold two years ago in Iran, this was its fifth gold.

Having been put through the wringer in the semifinals earlier in the morning by Hong Kong 1 (3-2), the Indians without Aditya Mehta, who suffered a neck niggle, for both the matches, came

back recharged for the final. Advani, who dropped a frame in the semis against Kwok Wai Fung, brushed aside Lim Kok Long to make it one-frame apiece.

The Indians won the doubles before Advani sealed the gold with a victory over Chuan Leong.

The results: **Final:** India bt Malaysia 3-1 (Brijesh Damani lost to Thor Chuan Leong 52-68; Pankaj Advani bt Lim Kok Leong 66 (51)-25; Advani/Damani bt Thor Chuan/ Lim Kok 76 (60)-33; Advani/bt Thor Chuan Leong 58-1).

Semifinals: India beat Hong Kong 1 (3-2).

AINX

IN BRIEF



Khaleel Ahmed joins English County Essex

India's left-arm seamer Khaleel Ahmed will play for Essex, until the conclusion of the 2025 English County season. He will be available for both the Rothesay County Championship and the Metro Bank One-Day Cup. He has represented the country in 11 ODIs and 18 T20Is. "I am thrilled to sign for Essex. I'm excited to be part of it and will look to make an immediate impact."

Nikhhat off to a winning start; Anjali causes an upset

Two-time World champion Nikhat Zareen registered a 4-1 win against Uttar Pradesh's Rashi Sharma in the 48-51kg category in the Elite Women's Boxing Tournament in Hyderabad on Saturday. Haryana's Anjali caused an upset on the opening day when she got the better of World Championships bronze medallist Manisha Moun 3-1 in the 57-60 kg category. Former world champion Nitu's 5-0 win (45-48kg) against Rajani Singh and Telangana's Yashi Sharma defeating Tamil Nadu's K. Monisha 5-0 in the 60-65kg category were among the other notable results.



Giroud to part ways with LAFC, expected to join Lille

Olivier Giroud is parting ways with Los Angeles FC after one disappointing year with the Major League Soccer club. The 38-year-old Giroud and LAFC announced the decision Friday on social media. He will play in his final match on Sunday at home against Vancouver. After scoring only five goals in 37 matches for LAFC, Giroud will become a free agent after his departure. He is widely expected to join Lille, which finished fifth in the French league last season, on a free transfer.

Yuki-Galloway duo goes down fighting in final

Santiago Gonzalez and Austin Krajicek survived three match points to beat Yuki Bhambri and Robert Galloway 6-1, 1-6, [15-13] in the doubles final of the €596,035 ATP, Mallorca, Spain: Doubles (final): Santiago Gonzalez (Mex) & Austin Krajicek (USA) bt Yuki Bhambri & Robert Galloway (USA) 6-1, 1-6, [15-13].

\$15,000 ITF men, Monastir, Tunisia: Doubles (final): Alejandro Pertusa (Esp) & Nitin Kumar Sinha bt Grigoriy Lomakin (Kaz) & Luca Pow (GBR) 7-6(11), 6-3.

Fraser-Pryce enters her ninth World c'ships



Stellar show: Fraser-Pryce clocked 10.91 seconds to finish third in the women's 100m final. AFP

Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce punched her ticket to a ninth World Championships with a third-placed finish in the 100m at the Jamaican national athletics trials on Friday.

Fraser-Pryce, a three-time Olympic gold medalist and 10-time world champion, clocked 10.91 seconds to finish third in the women's 100m final and secure a berth for the Worlds in Tokyo in September.

Tina Clayton won her first national title in a personal best of 10.81 with reigning 200m world champion Shericka Jackson second in 10.88.

Fraser-Pryce won her first Worlds medal at Osaka in 2007 – a silver in the 4x100m relay – before go-

ing on to win 10 world titles, five of them in the 100m. "It's been a long journey," Fraser-Pryce said. "But it was not about making the team, it was about celebrating the journey and I am grateful for

those who have been part of the journey."

In the men's 100m final, Paris Olympics silver medalist Kishane Thompson delivered a blistering 9.75 (wind .8m/sec), his personal best, making him the

sixth-fastest performer in history.

Only Justin Gatlin (9.74), Asafa Powell (9.72), Yohan Blake (9.69), Tyson Gay (9.69) and world record-holder Bolt (9.58) have gone faster.

Someone who wants to

succeed in the business world long after she no longer swings a racket on tour.

"It's definitely something that I want to start to step up for post-career. Kind of start building that process, which is why I wanted to do it early. Because I didn't want to feel like I was playing catch-up at the end of my career," said Gauff, who will face Dayana Yastremska in the first round at the All England Club on Tuesday.

"On the business side of things, it doesn't come as natural as tennis feels. I'm still learning, and I have a lot to learn about," Gauff said.

"I've debated different things and what paths I wanted to take when it came to just stimulating my brain outside of the court".

Someone who wants to

succeed in the business world long after she no longer swings a racket on tour.

"It's definitely something that I want to start to step up for post-career. Kind of start building that process, which is why I wanted to do it early. Because I didn't want to feel like I was playing catch-up at the end of my career," said Gauff, who will face Dayana Yastremska in the first round at the All England Club on Tuesday.

"On the business side of things, it doesn't come as natural as tennis feels. I'm still learning, and I have a lot to learn about," Gauff said.

"I've debated different things and what paths I wanted to take when it came to just stimulating my brain outside of the court".

Someone who wants to

succeed in the business world long after she no longer swings a racket on tour.

"It's definitely something that I want to start to step up for post-career. Kind of start building that process, which is why I wanted to do it early. Because I didn't want to feel like I was playing catch-up at the end of my career," said Gauff, who will face Dayana Yastremska in the first round at the All England Club on Tuesday.

"On the business side of things, it doesn't come as natural as tennis feels. I'm still learning, and I have a lot to learn about," Gauff said.

"I've debated different things and what paths I wanted to take when it came to just stimulating my brain outside of the court".

Someone who wants to

succeed in the business world long after she no longer swings a racket on tour.

"It's definitely something that I want to start to step up for post-career. Kind of start building that process, which is why I wanted to do it early. Because I didn't want to feel like I was playing catch-up at the end of my career," said Gauff, who will face Dayana Yastremska in the first round at the All England Club on Tuesday.

"On the business side of things, it doesn't come as natural as tennis feels. I'm still learning, and I have a lot to learn about," Gauff said.

"I've debated different things and what paths I wanted to take when it came to just stimulating my brain outside of the court".

Someone who wants to

succeed in the business world long after she no longer swings a racket on tour.

"It's definitely something that I want to start to step up for post-career. Kind of start building that process, which is why I wanted to do it early. Because I didn't want to feel like I was playing catch-up at the end of my career," said Gauff, who will face Dayana Yastremska in the first round at the All England Club on Tuesday.

"On the business side of things, it doesn't come as natural as tennis feels. I'm still learning, and I have a lot to learn about," Gauff said.

"I've debated different things and what paths I wanted to take when it came to just stimulating my brain outside of the court".

Someone who wants to

succeed in the business world long after she no longer swings a racket on tour.

"It's definitely something that I want to start to step up for post-career. Kind of start building that process, which is why I wanted to do it early. Because I didn't want to feel like I was playing catch-up at the end of my career," said Gauff, who will face Dayana Yastremska in the first round at the All England Club on Tuesday.

"On the business side of things, it doesn't come as natural as tennis feels. I'm still learning, and I have a lot to learn about," Gauff said.

"I've debated different things and what paths I wanted to take when it came to just stimulating my brain outside of the court".

Someone who wants to

succeed in the business world long after she no longer swings a racket on tour.

"It's definitely something that I want to start to step up for post-career. Kind of start building that process, which is why I wanted to do it early. Because I didn't want to feel like I was playing catch-up at the end of my career," said Gauff, who will face Dayana Yastremska in the first round at the All England Club on Tuesday.

"On the business side of things, it doesn't come as natural as tennis feels. I'm still learning, and I have a lot to learn about," Gauff said.

"I've debated different things and what paths I wanted to take when it came to just stimulating my brain outside of the court".

Someone who wants to

succeed in the business world long after she no longer swings a racket on tour.

"It's definitely something that I want to start to step up for post-career. Kind of start building that process, which is why I wanted to do it early. Because I didn't want to feel like I was playing catch-up at the end of my career," said Gauff, who will face Dayana Yastremska in the first round at the All England Club on Tuesday.

"On the business side of things, it doesn't come as natural as tennis feels. I'm still learning, and I have a lot to learn about," Gauff said.

"I've debated different things and what paths I wanted to take when it came to just stimulating my brain outside of the court".

Someone who wants to

succeed in the business world long after she no longer swings a racket on tour.

"It's definitely something that I want to start to step up for post-career. Kind of start building that process, which is why I wanted to do it early. Because I didn't want to feel like I was playing catch-up at the end of my career," said Gauff, who will face Dayana Yastremska in the first round at the All England Club on Tuesday.

"On the business side of things, it doesn't come as natural as tennis feels. I'm still learning, and I have a lot to learn about," Gauff said.

"I've debated different things and what paths I wanted to take when it came to just stimulating my brain outside of the court".

Someone who wants to

succeed in the business world long after she no longer swings a racket on tour.

"It's definitely something that I want to start to step up for post-career. Kind of start building that process, which is why I wanted to do it early. Because I didn't want to feel like I was playing catch-up at the end of my career," said Gauff, who will face Dayana Yastremska in the first round at the All England Club on Tuesday.

"On the business side of things, it doesn't come as natural as tennis feels. I'm still learning, and I have a lot to learn about," Gauff said.

"I've debated different things and what paths I wanted to take when it came to just stimulating my brain outside of the court".

Someone who wants to

succeed in the business world long after she no longer swings a racket on tour.

"It's definitely something that I want to start to step up for post-career. Kind of start building that process, which is why I wanted to do it early. Because I didn't want to feel like I was playing catch-up at the end of my career," said Gauff, who will face Dayana Yastremska in the first round at the All England Club on Tuesday.

"On the business side of things, it doesn't come as natural as tennis feels. I'm still learning, and I have a lot to learn about," Gauff said.

"I've debated different things and what paths I wanted to take when it came to just stimulating my brain outside of the court".

Someone who wants to

succeed in the business world long after she no longer swings a racket on tour.

"It's definitely something that I want to start to step up for post-career. Kind of start building that process, which is why I wanted to do it early. Because I didn't want to feel like I was playing catch-up at the end of my career," said Gauff, who will face Dayana Yastremska in the first round at the All England Club on Tuesday.

"On the business side of things, it doesn't come as natural as tennis feels. I'm still learning, and I have a lot to learn about," Gauff said.

"I've debated different things and what paths I wanted to take when it came to just stimulating my brain outside of the court".

Someone who wants to

succeed in the business world long after she no longer swings a racket on tour.

"It's definitely something that I want to start to step up for post-career. Kind of start building that process, which is why I wanted to do it early. Because I didn't want to feel like I was playing catch-up at the end of my career," said Gauff, who will face Dayana Yastremska in the first round at the All England Club on Tuesday.

"On the business side of things, it doesn't come as natural as tennis feels. I'm still learning, and I have a lot to learn about," Gauff said.

"I've debated different things and what paths I wanted to take when it came to just stimulating my brain outside of the court".

Someone who wants to

succeed in the business world long after she no longer swings a racket on tour.

"It's definitely something that I want to start to step up for post-career. Kind of start building that process, which is why I wanted to do it early. Because I didn't want to feel like I was playing catch-up at the end of my career," said Gauff, who will face Dayana Yastremska in the first round at the All England Club on Tuesday.

"On the business side of things, it doesn't come as natural as tennis feels. I'm still learning, and I have a lot to learn about," Gauff said.

"I've debated different things and what paths I wanted to take when it came to just stimulating my brain outside of the court".

Someone who wants to

succeed in the business world long after she no longer swings a racket on tour.

"It's definitely something that I want to start to step up for post-career. Kind of start building that process, which is why I wanted to do it early. Because I didn't want to feel like I was playing catch-up at the end of my career," said Gauff, who will face Dayana Yastremska in the first round at the All England Club on Tuesday.

"On the business side of things, it doesn't come as natural as tennis feels. I'm still learning, and I have a lot to learn about," Gauff said.

"I've debated different things and what paths I wanted to take when it came to just stimulating my brain outside of the court".

Someone who wants to

succeed in the business world long after she no longer swings a racket on tour.

"It's definitely something that I want to start to step up for post-career. Kind of start building that process, which is why I wanted to do it early. Because I didn't want to feel like I was playing catch-up at the end of my career," said Gauff, who will face Dayana Yastremska in the first round at the All England Club on Tuesday.

"On the business side of things, it doesn't come as natural as tennis feels. I'm still learning, and I have a lot to learn about," Gauff said.

"I've debated different things and what paths I wanted to take when it came to just stimulating my brain outside of the court".

Someone who wants to

succeed in the business world long after she no longer swings a racket on tour.

"It's definitely something that I want to start to step up for post-career. Kind of start building that process, which is why I wanted to do it early. Because I didn't want to feel like I was playing catch-up at the end of my career," said Gauff, who will face Dayana Yastremska in the first round at the All England Club on Tuesday.

"On the business side of things, it doesn't come as natural as tennis feels. I'm still learning, and I have a lot to learn about," Gauff said.

"I've debated different things and what paths I wanted to take when it came to just stimulating my brain outside of the court".

Someone who wants to

succeed in the business world long after she no longer swings a racket on tour.

"It's definitely something that I want to start to step up for post-career. Kind of start building that process, which is why I wanted to do it early. Because I didn't want to feel like I was playing catch-up at the end of my career," said Gauff, who will face Dayana Yastremska in the first round at the All England Club on Tuesday.

"On the business side of things, it doesn't come as natural as tennis feels. I'm still learning, and I have a lot to learn about," Gauff said.

"I've debated different things and what paths I wanted to take when it came to just stimulating my brain outside of the court".

TAMIL NADU

What to B.E.

It is the admission season again in engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu and early trends show that Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, Machine Learning are top choices of students, reflecting the national mood. **R. Sujatha** speaks to academics, who point to the worrisome, continuing trend of lack of patronage for core courses such as Civil and Mechanical Engineering.

Over 2.5 lakh students are expected to take part in the Tamil Nadu Engineering Admissions (TNEA) 2025 counselling from July 14. The merit list was released Friday last. Early trends suggest a continued preference for Computer Science-centric courses – though surprises cannot be ruled out. Private engineering colleges report that courses like Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, Machine Learning, and Cybersecurity are in high demand, in line with the industrial trend nationwide. In contrast, traditional core branches such as Civil and Mechanical Engineering continue to struggle for patronage, despite recent efforts at reviving interest in these courses.

Principals across engineering colleges agree that students mostly prefer Computer Science and allied fields. "In our institution, Artificial Intelligence and Data Science are the top picks, followed by Computer Science and Engineering [CSE], and Electronics and Communication Engineering [ECE]," said T. Saravanan, principal, New Prince Shri Bhavani College of Engineering and Technology, Chennai.

ECE has gained popularity owing to the government's push in the semiconductor sector, while Electrical and Electronics Engineering (EEE) and Mechanical Engineering are regaining traction. However, Civil Engineering continues to evoke low interest, with only 30% of seats filled at his college, he added.

Under the TNEA 2024 single-window counselling system for colleges affiliated to Anna University, only 4,451 candidates opted for Civil Engineering-related courses as against 10,772 available seats.

A few years ago, the AICTE allowed colleges to surrender seats in less popular disciplines so as to start new courses. Many colleges relinquished nearly 50% of their Civil and Mechanical Engineering seats and then expanded Artificial Intelligence and data-centric courses

"Civil Engineering is still not preferred. We offer only 30 seats, and just 35% of them are filled under the management quota," noted K. Palanikumar, principal, Sairam Engineering College in Chennai. "Interestingly, students opting for Civil Engineering often have parents working in the construction sector. What we have noticed is that there is a disconnect between job opportunities in government departments and public perception."

He added that the fear of lay-offs in information technology companies has slightly slowed the admission to CSE, while the government push for manufacturing has sparked interest in Mechanical Engineering and EEE.

Staging a comeback

In Coimbatore, the Dhaanish Ahmed Institute of Technology has recorded a surge in interest. "Cybersecurity is the buzzword in information technology companies such as TCS, Wipro, Infosys, and CTS. After computing, semiconductors are next in demand," said its principal K.G. Parthiban. He added that Mechanical Engineering and allied branches – such as Robotics, Automation, and Mechatronics – are on the radar again, thanks to the growing demand in the auto and industrial automation sectors. "There's even an increase in girl students choosing Mechanical Engineering."

At Vivekananda Educational Institutions, Tiruchengode, girl students mostly opt for Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, CSE, ECE, and IT – in that order, said executive director S. Kuppuswamy. Biomedical Engineering and Biotechnology rank fourth, while core engineering courses trail. Despite his personal efforts to advocate for core courses like Civil Engineering, students remain unconvinced. "We have 30 Civil Engineering seats and fill them through government counselling. We've chosen not to surrender the branch, hoping that the interest in it will revive over time," he said.

A few years ago, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) allowed colleges to surrender seats in less popular disciplines so as to start new courses. Many colleges relinquished nearly 50% of their Civil and Mechanical Engineering seats and then expanded Artificial Intelligence and data-centric courses. While some institutions are attempting to revive core branches, IT-related programmes continue to shape the engineering education in Tamil Nadu, fuelled by immediate job prospects. This is not limited to Tier-2 and Tier-3 engineering colleges. Even the country's premier institution – the Indian Institute of Technology – is no exception.

A recent event organised by the Pan-IIT Alumni Leadership Series (PALS) in Chennai discussed ways to improve candidates' choices. Directors of



Opting for the best: Over 2.5 lakh students are expected to take part in the TNEA 2025 counselling from July 14. Trends suggest a continued preference for Computer Science. Private colleges report that Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, Machine Learning, and Cybersecurity are in high demand. Civil and Mechanical Engineering continue to struggle for patronage. FILE PHOTO



The AICTE and the UGC have permitted colleges to offer 20% skill-oriented courses. These courses could be taught by industry experts, and students could be assigned credits.

V. KAMAKOTI,
Director,
IIT-Madras

several IITs took part at the event. A recurrent theme was the need to encourage students to choose core engineering programmes. PALS has adopted 50 Tier-2 and Tier-3 engineering colleges to help them improve performance.

A model for other students

IIT-Madras Director V. Kamakoti acknowledged that in the past decade, 99.9% of the toppers in the Joint Entrance Examination (Advanced) – the qualifying examination for admission to the IITs – opted for CSE. Students did not choose Electrical Engineering. This is a matter of concern against the backdrop of two major occurrences – the COVID-19 pandemic and Operation Sindoos. "In the first one, a solution came from biological sciences and in the second, from multiple disciplines. It is not just Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence. It was the multidisciplinary approach, much beyond traditional AI," he pointed out. "We must reach out to people who studied in these core disciplines and are now doing well for themselves. They could be examples for younger students."

Mr. Kamakoti gave a wide range of suggestions, from improving syllabus to encouraging students to appear for competitive tests to help them evaluate themselves against their peers. He suggested that autonomous colleges fine-tune their syllabus to attract students. Colleges could call on their alumni in core engineering programmes to interact with the aspirants. Institutions could focus on interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary education. Candidates should be

encouraged to take up dual-degree programmes. Every institution must encourage students to take 40% of their credit through advanced courses to prepare themselves for the industry, he said.

The AICTE and the University Grants Commission have permitted colleges to offer 20% skill-oriented courses. These courses could be taught by industry experts, and students could be assigned credits. Faculty members should encourage students to take the Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineering to help them understand their self-worth among peers, the IIT-M Director said.

Instead of focusing only on engineering education, college faculty members could offer students wider choices, encouraging them to go in for even the Civil Services Examination. The country would benefit from tech-savvy engineering graduates who could shape technology-driven policies, he pointed out.

IIT-Tirupati Director K.N. Satyanarayana suggested that students be given more time for practicals. Introducing Artificial Intelligence in Civil, Electrical, and Mechanical Engineering is the way forward, he said. But there are no teachers for the subject.

Lack of engineers

He pointed out that India had built only 50% of the infrastructure it needed. It aspires to be the manufacturing hub for semiconductors and electronic chips. Lack of trained engineers resulted in an Indian company advertising for workers in Taiwan to work in its semiconductor industry. While it is true that civil engineers get paid lower than a software engineer or a CSE graduate initially, a level playing field is achieved for a core engineering graduate when the candidate completes 30 years in service, he added.

AI: Where demand for courses is high, but supply of teachers, poor

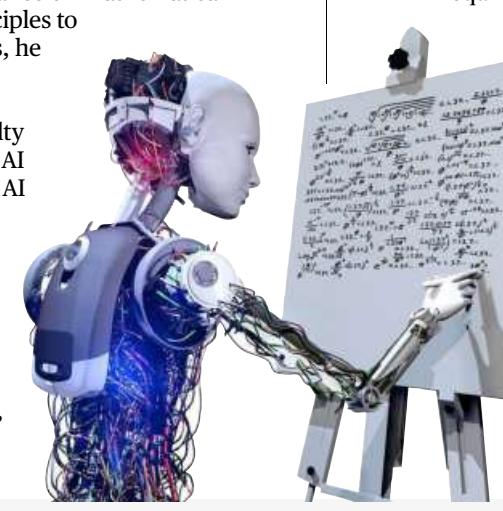
Saptarshi Bhattacharya

In the past three years, the intake in Artificial Intelligence (AI) courses has almost doubled in Tamil Nadu. It is expected to be at its highest this year. Looking at only the AI and Data Science course at the undergraduate level, the intake has gone up from 7,049 in 2022-23 to 15,702 in 2024-25.

The number of courses on AI has grown proportionately. According to estimates, there are 800 B.Tech courses on AI offered by institutions across India, said Balaraman Ravindran, head, Department of Data Science and Artificial Intelligence, Indian Institute of Technology-Madras. However, there aren't enough faculty members with a qualified AI background to teach these courses. Besides, Computer Science, which provides the foundational tools for AI, does not form the core component of the emerging field since AI requires heavy reliance on mathematical concepts and principles to develop algorithms, he said.

It is, therefore, pertinent that faculty members teaching AI have to be from an AI background or should equip themselves through Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs).

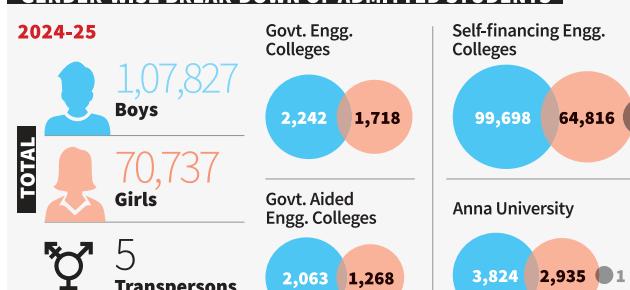
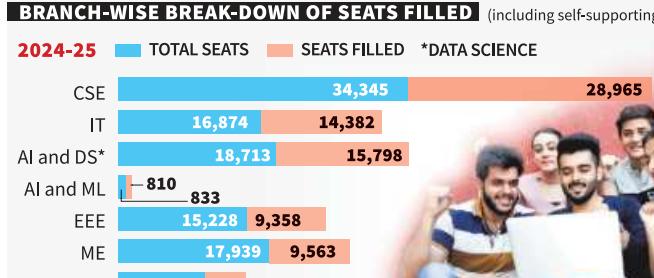
Subalalitha C.N., professor,



Department of Computing Technologies, SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST), concurred with this view. SRMIST offers 10 different AI courses, and finding faculty members has been a challenge. "Certifications and FDPs are the ways through which the faculty members are equipping themselves, especially since more students are opting for AI courses," she said.

There is also a move towards integrating AI with other core engineering subjects. Such multidisciplinary approach, she said, has also attracted funding from institutions. "AI is full of maths. All algorithms have core mathematics in their background. Hence, the integration is easy," she said. Also, the requirements of different professionals working on AI – researchers, faculty members, or developers – are different. Those developing applications may not require heavy reliance on mathematics, but those developing language models would require it. "They would align according to their priority or preference," she added.

The dearth of AI teachers is a matter of concern. Experts say collaboration with industry could bridge the gap to some extent, but there should be a road map for faculty development. Besides the training programmes for the faculty members, efforts are needed to attract talented youngsters proficient in AI to academics.

Reality check | Engineering education remains a priority among students. The demand for CSE is slowly waning, with students warming to new courses such as Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, and Machine Learning**GENDER-WISE BREAK-DOWN OF ADMITTED STUDENTS****BRANCH-WISE BREAK-DOWN OF SEATS FILLED** (including self-supporting)

Source for the data on seats and break-down of candidates admitted: Directorate of Technical Education

UG ADMISSION IN TAMIL NADU ENGINEERING COLLEGES

Type of Institution	2021-22			2022-23			2023-24			2024-25		
	No. of Institutions	Sanctioned Intake	Admitted	% Admission	No. of Institutions	Sanctioned Intake	Admitted	% Admission	No. of Institutions	Sanctioned Intake	Admitted	% Admission
Govt. Engg. Colleges	11	4,320	3,707	85.8	11	4,320	3,917	90.7	11	4,320	3,930	90.9
Govt. Aided Engg. Colleges	3	2,960	2,796	94.4	3	3,119	3,040	97.5	3	3,263	3,263	100
Self-financing Engg. Colleges	446	1,84,278	1,16,018	63	444	1,94,567	1,36,395	70.1	440	2,05,593	1,56,185	75.7
Anna University (Dept. and Constituent Colleges)	20	8,790	5,893	67.1	20	8,290	5,725	69.1	20	8,350	6,509	77.1
Total	480	2,00,348	1,28,414	64.1	478	2,10,296	1,49,077	70.9	474	2,21,526	1,69,887	76.6

1 Year-on-year data reveal that job market dictates admission.

2 On an average, around 70% of the sanctioned seats get filled.

3 Self-financing institutions rank lower, despite rigorous marketing. Anna University's admission has suffered owing to delayed counselling for MBBS



UTTAR PRADESH



Scarred by violence: The family members of Om Prakash Rampal, whose daughters' weddings were held under police protection, in Rehadra village, Amroha district, Uttar Pradesh. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

Weddings, interrupted

Incidents of violence have been reported from pockets of Uttar Pradesh against Dalit families for holding wedding processions. In most cases, people from upper caste communities have objected to a *baraat*, a man getting on a horse to go to his bride, or a DJ playing music. **Samridhi Tewari** reports on how Dalits are using weddings as a form of resistance

As men arrange themselves comfortably on a charpoy, Munnish Devi, 50, finds herself a spot on the mud floor of her three-room house at Bhureka village in Uttar Pradesh's Mathura district. Devi, whose husband passed away a few years ago, has four daughters. One of them is Kalpana, 20, who married Akash, 21, in May this year. The only memory Devi has from the wedding is a blood-stained pair of white pyjamas, which she has kept in a stainless steel trunk. It's a reminder of the day a celebration turned violent.

Akash, a member of the Dalit community, was dragged off the chariot he was riding joyously to his bride's house. Many wedding guests were allegedly assaulted by a group of men from the Jat community because members of the Dalit community had organised a wedding procession.

In Uttar Pradesh, numerous cases have been reported where Dalit families have faced violence from upper caste communities for organising wedding ceremonies in smaller towns and villages. As many as 15,368 cases of atrocities against Scheduled Castes and five against Scheduled Tribes were registered in the State in 2022, as per the National Crime Records Bureau data. There is no separate data on atrocities against Dalits during celebrations.

Every month though, there are incidents of Dalit wedding processions being attacked in the State. On June 21, Arti Kumari, 19, and Vikas Singh, 21, were getting married in Etah district's Dhapkura village. When their *baraat* reached a Rajput-dominant settlement, they allegedly faced threats and stones were pelted. The wedding ultimately took place under police protection.

A 'bidai' under police watch

In Bhureka, where mud houses dot green fields, people primarily engage in farming. Despite being located just off the Yamuna Expressway – the 165-km, high-speed road that connects Noida with Agra – people in the village have a slow life.

Inside Devi's barely constructed house, open from all sides, men discuss the heatwave. Kalpana's cousin, Anil Kumar, 25, shows videos of the wedding day. He explains how, on May 22, a group of people allegedly from the Jat community in the neighbouring village disrupted the wedding procession. They were upset with the DJ playing music and Akash riding a chariot, he says. "They hurled casteist abuses and attacked our *baraatis* (members of the bridegroom's procession). It was shameful. We were all so excited about the wedding. Akash's family had come from Aligarh. When the men started threatening our *baraatis*, we called the police," Anil says.

After the police arrived at the marriage hall, barely a few kilometres away, the couple completed their *phasas* (seven rounds around the fire) at midnight.

The next day at 8 a.m., Anil says, the same group, and 20-25 others, returned to the house, holding weapons. They tore the *baraatis'* clothes, hit them, and damaged the tent and everything in the vicinity. They hurled casteist abuses and insulted the women and children, he says.

"We couldn't sit there and see our guests being insulted, so we retaliated, and many of us, including the elderly, got hurt. Look at our stained pyjamas," he says, pointing to a video of the incident. "These were brand new, and now, this is the only memory we hold." Anil looks away as other family members show their wounds.

An FIR has been registered at the Naujheel police station against 20-25 people for rioting, house trespassing, and criminal intimidation under sections of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled

QQ
The family has stopped responding. They said they wouldn't send their *baraat* to our village because they would get attacked. This is what the attack has done to our people

RAM KHLADI
Resident of Bhureka village that saw caste-based violence during a wedding

Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

Circle Officer (Mant) Gunjan Singh says six persons from the village have been arrested in connection with the incident. "The allegation that the *baraat* was stopped is false. Our investigation did not reveal it. The argument took place only because the DJ played loud music at night," he says, adding that only three persons asked for the volume to be turned down.

During the *'bidai'* (giving away of the bride), Kalpana's family was at the police station, waiting to give their statements. "The last thing I could have given my daughter was a peaceful goodbye; even that wasn't allowed," Devi adds.

Kalpana studied till Class 8; Akash works as a carpenter. The family felt that their daughter would have a better life in a city. Many young women in the village marry in that hope. Not many have access to higher education. A marriage that will take women to a city is seen as a way out of both poverty and suppression.

Soon after the incident, which was reported across newspapers, Ram Khladi, 60, a resident of Bhureka village, says his daughter's *'rishta'* (match) from Palwal in Rajasthan seems to have fallen through. "The family has stopped responding. They said they wouldn't send their *baraat* to our village because they would get attacked. This is what the attack has done to our people," he says.

While the *'pradhan'* (village head) is usually the first to respond to local matters, villagers say it depends a lot on which community they are from and which community is at the receiving end. In Bhureka, the *pradhan*, Bhuvnesh Sharma, hails from the Brahmin community, and he did not offer any support, they say.

Sharma says he did. "I even met the family," he says, though he does not give details of what they spoke about.

A form of resistance

Sushil Gautam, a Dalit rights activist, who has been working on ground for more than 20 years, believes that even though times are changing, "issues still persist". He talks about how the traditional system of marriage has evolved in the Dalit community over the past few years. "With access to social media and education, people from the Dalit community have understood what the term 'resistance' means. It is about creating a safe space for ourselves and accessing rights, be it marriage, education, or something as small as keeping a moustache," he explains.

Gautam says even during wedding ceremonies, photographs of Dalit icons such as Dr. B.R.

Ambedkar, Ravidas, and Jyotibha Phule take centre stage. "In several instances, when a Dalit wears bright colours, like yellow or green, casteist slurs are hurled at them." This behaviour was endorsed by the caste system for centuries to make the so-called lowest castes unseen and unheard, he says. "Now, people from the Dalit community dress up and the women wear the bridal red. Nobody can take that away from us," he says.

Professor Ravikant, a Dalit scholar from Lucknow University who has been teaching Hindi since 2006, says, "Dalits have had to experience life from a *jhoothan* and *utran* (leftover and second-hand) standpoint." He talks about how Buddhist weddings have become a tradition in many Dalit families, especially Jatav households (landless leather workers) owing to the influence of social media.

"No Brahmin priest wants to enter the house, and it helped us in understanding how people from our community can celebrate marriage. A wedding card now has a photo of Bahujan figures, not Hindu gods. We don't have *shlokas* (verses) in Sanskrit," he says, adding that people have replaced wedding gifts with texts and paintings of Bahujan figures or the Constitution.

Pushpendra Chahar has a brass band shop in the middle of the hustle and bustle of Akola, 20 km from Agra. Chahar has had a busy month, coordinating *baraat* preparations across western Uttar Pradesh. He has horses and chariots, with many preferring the more ornate way of getting to the bride's house. Chahar's father started the business 70 years ago. He has seen weddings change from simple single-horse affairs to Bollywood-scale celebrations.

Chahar has organised *baraats* for people from the Dalit community, but says there is always the fear of an attack. When the groom climbs atop a horse or a chariot, that becomes a talking point in smaller neighbourhoods, he says. "We try to avoid any such route that could lead to trouble. Who wants to have an argument on such an auspicious day?" People can identify a Dalit wedding because it often won't have photos of Hindu gods like Ram, Krishna, Hanuman, or Shiva. "A sure-shot giveaway is a photo of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar or Gautam Buddha," he says.

Embarrassed and embittered

In Rehadra village in Amroha district, Om Prakash Rampal, 36, a tailor, has been busy. He sits under a barely functional fan, with the temperature touching 45 degrees Celsius. Two portraits of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar hang on a blue wall in an otherwise unpainted home. Two of his daughters have just married. The family took a loan of ₹2 lakh and sold land to get another ₹4 lakh, he says.

Rampal is stressed; so is his wife Anita. Their daughters, Sonam, 22, and Sonika, 19, bought a *laal joda* (red *lehenga-choli*) from the market, along with make-up, bangles, and other accessories, in their excitement for their weddings. Sonam married Satish Kumar, 24, who works at a private company; Sonika married Amit Kumar, 20, who owns a shop.

On June 2, Sonam and Sonika's wedding processions came to the village. Around 5.30 p.m., 15-20 people from the Yadav community allegedly entered the procession and stopped people from dancing. Loud music was playing, and the Yadavs told the *baraatis* they needed them to clear the road. When they refused, the Yadavs hurled casteist abuses and started attacking people with sticks, rods, knives, and sharp-edged weapons. Rampal says,

When he talks, the women, with their heads covered, surround him, fanning him with a hand-made fan. Most of them sit on the muddy floor,

the men on the charpoy.

Police say they had to resort to mild force to disperse the crowd and restore order. In view of the heightened tensions, a police force has been deployed to maintain law and order in the village. Sonam's wedding took place under police presence. The family didn't get enough time for the *bidai*. "The *baraatis* refused to eat food; they were embarrassed. We too were," Anita says.

Circle Officer (Gajrala) Shwetabh Bhaskar says, "Since the victims sustained injuries that were not serious, the three accused were arrested and let off after paying the surety."

A call for help

Ravikant says despite several such incidents, there is lack of support from the government and the Opposition. "The national commissions (for minorities, SCs, STs) rarely take a stand when such incidents happen. They don't even take cognisance of the matter. Even BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party) leaders hardly react. SP (Samajwadi Party) leaders post on X, and Azaad Samaj Party leaders reach when the incident hits national headlines. The community needs much more than a social media post," he says. The three parties have traditionally supported the Dalit cause.

Rashmi Verma is a member of the not-for-profit organisation, Dalit Dignity and Justice Centre, and a lawyer who has been taking on cases pertaining to violence against the Dalit community in the State. She says in most of the cases she has dealt with, people weren't aware of the provisions under the SC/ST Act.

"People are not educated, so they rely on the police. When they go to a local police station, the police register an FIR, but may not book the case under the stringent SC/ST Act. Compensation is a key point that is usually missed," she explains over a phone call.

While getting an FIR registered is a task, so is the long road to justice, Verma says, adding, "When the court cases start, the victims don't know they have access to a government lawyer, and sometimes pay for private lawyers, who charge hefty amounts. Most victims come from rural communities, where they earn meagre amounts through farming and labour work, so they also have to give up a full day's work."

35 years later

On June 21-22, 1990, violence broke out in Agra's Panwari village over a Dalit groom riding a horse. Men from the Jat community had allegedly attacked the *baraat*. A Dalit man was killed and many injured, leading to riots, houses being set on fire, and many Dalits fleeing the village.

In May this year, a special court sentenced 32 men to five years in jail. While 72 people were named as accused, 22 have died during the trial.

In Akola, primarily where the Jatav community resides, people recall the incident as "Panwari kaand (murder)". Around 8.30 a.m. in the area, many have gathered on the street as a snake charmer reads palms.

Standing between two motorcycles that occupy the width of the *kaccha* road, Manoj (name changed to protect privacy), 46, recalls he was only 10 at the time of the incident.

Hesitantly, he says, "After that, many of my neighbours fled and settled in neighbouring districts. People were scared to live here."

Manoj says there is peace within the Dalit and Jat neighbourhoods, but little interaction between them, with weddings largely confined to their own neighbourhoods. As he watches the snake charmer, he says, "We're not allowed to enter their temples, so we created our own."

samridhi.tewari@thehindu.co.in



Kalpana's uncle, who was injured in the alleged attack in Mathura's Bhureka village. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP