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Eight held in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh over 'links' to Pak.-based terror outfit

Abhinav Deshpande
AHMEDABAD

Eight persons, including two teenagers, have been arrested by the Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) for their alleged links with the Pakistan-based terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), officials said on Friday.

They were arrested from Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh in simultaneous operations on Thursday. ATS officials said they were

They were trying to establish a Jaish network in the country, say Gujarat ATS officials

trying to establish a Jaish network in Gujarat and other parts of the country, and planning terror attacks. The arrested accused have been identified as Mudassar Ghaziwala, 22; Ibrahim Ghagha, 30; Zakariya Durani Mohammed

Ammar Ghagha, 21; Ahmed Gajiwala, 19; Mohammed Abdul Saadi, 22; Mufti Faujan Dauwa, 40; Bilal Durani Ghagha, 18; and Mohammed Amin Palanpur, 21.

"They are residents of Gujarat's Patan, Navsari and Banaskantha districts, and Dewas district in Madhya Pradesh. They are active members of the Jaish-e-Mohammed, and were actively working on its behalf to set up an active terror network in Gujarat," an

officer told *The Hindu*. They were also involved in recruiting members, propagating the organisation's extremist ideology, and creating a support network to carry out both ongoing and future plans, he said.

The accused have been booked under relevant provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967, and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Officials said over 250 pieces of jihadi literature were recovered from them.

Centre opens power bids to four China-linked firms

The Finance Ministry says the exemption is valid for two years and should not be treated as a precedent; decision follows a request from the Power Ministry and inter-ministerial consultations

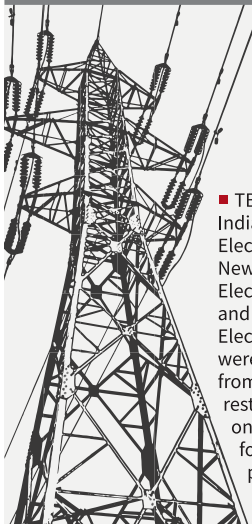
T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

In a sign of a continuing thaw in India's stance on Chinese investments, the government has issued an order allowing four companies with Chinese ownership or links to bid for projects tendered by the Indian government in the power sector.

The order, dated June 24, 2026, was issued by the Procurement Policy Division of the Finance Ministry's Expenditure Department and has been reviewed by *The Hindu*.

In January, the Power Ministry had written to the Finance Ministry seeking an exemption from a previous order which mandated that companies located in countries that share a land border with India must register with the Indian government before they can bid for critical public power projects. The approval of this registration was solely at the discretion of the government.

Following this, the Committee of Secretaries and the Registration Committee under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)



Power play
The Centre has eased procurement restrictions in the power sector, granting a limited exemption to select Chinese-linked companies

- TBEA Energy India, Nanjing Electric India, New Northeast Electric India, and Taikai Electric (India) were exempted from restrictions on bidding for govt. power projects
- Multi-Ministry decision:** The Committee of Secretaries and the Registration Committee under the DPIIT deliberated on the matter before passing its order
- The order specifies that this relaxation should not be considered a precedent

deliberated on the matter before passing the relaxation order.

Two-year exemption

Under the latest order, four companies – TBEA Energy India, Nanjing Electric India, New Northeast Electric India, and Taikai Electric (India) – have been granted exemption from the restrictions for a two-year period.

TBEA Energy India is the wholly-owned subsidiary of the Chinese company TBEA Group, while Nanjing Electric India is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Chinese power equipment manufacturer

Nanjing Electric.

New Northeast Electric India has technology transfer ties with Chinese power sector companies, and Taikai Electric (India) is a subsidiary of the China-headquartered Taikai Group.

The Procurement Policy Division's order, however, made sure to state that "such exemption for firms may not be considered as a precedent [sic]".

This order also builds on other partial relaxations the government has recently offered to companies that have investments from China and other countries that share a land

India-Japan ties should not target third party: China

BEIJING

China on Friday said that bilateral ties between countries should not target any third party, a day after India and Japan unveiled key initiatives during Japanese leader Sanae Takaichi's visit. "Cooperation among countries should enhance understanding and trust among regional countries," Foreign Ministry spokesperson said. » PAGE 3

Spiritual ascent



First batch of pilgrims cross mountain trails amid rainfall during their religious journey to the Amarnath cave on the Baltal route, northeast of Srinagar, on Friday. IMRAN NISSAR (REPORT ON: PAGE 5)

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Creche employee held for cruelty, abuse of children

BENGALURU

Police arrested a caregiver, identified as Vijayalakshmi, at a creche at Capgemini in Bengaluru, in connection with allegations of physical abuse and cruelty towards children. A police officer told *The Hindu* Ms. Vijayalakshmi was seen in the videos in which children were allegedly being 'scolded in an intimidating manner', and mistreated. » PAGE 2

Ladakh will get custom model of governance: pact

SRINAGAR

A customised *sui generis* model, which is most suitable for Ladakh, will be adopted under the Article 371, said the draft shared by the Ministry of Home Affairs with leaders of civil society groups on Friday. Referring to the meet held on May 22 of the sub-committee of a High-Powered Committee on Ladakh, the Ministry team released the minutes of the meeting agreed upon by the Centre and the leaders of civil society groups. » PAGE 3

SIT likely to re-audit Ram Temple Trust's accounts for past five years

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya is likely to conduct a repeat audit of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust's accounts for the past five years, government sources said on Friday. This comes after the preliminary investigation hinted at large-scale anomalies and irregularities.

The re-audit is likely to cover construction-related expenditure as well as the jewellery, gold, and silver items received as donations.

The SIT team will also carry out a detailed scrutiny of the Trust's financial records over the entire five-year period.

Suspect questioned

The SIT – comprising Lucknow Divisional Commissioner Vijay Vishwas Pant, Inspector General (Lucknow Range) Kiran S., and Special Secretary in the State Finance Department Neelratn Kumar – reached the Ram Temple on Friday and spoke with multiple people. In the evening, they reached the Saryu Guest House.

Meanwhile, the Ayodhya police interrogated key



Under the law: Avinash Shukla, accused in the Ram Temple theft case, being escorted by the police in Ayodhya on Friday. PTI

Ram Temple 'theft' has hurt sentiment of Hindus, says RSS

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

In its first official reaction to the Ayodhya Ram Temple embezzlement controversy, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh on Friday appealed to Hindus to "remain united", and urged the authorities to

ensure strict punishment for those found guilty. It cautioned against "conspiracies (by) anti-Hindu, anti-national forces" to exploit the incident and "malign Hinduism and society".

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suspect Avinash Shukla, who was part of the donation-counting process at the temple, and had previously been arrested in

connection with the case. A local court remanded him in police custody for 24 hours on Thursday. He is among eight ac-

cused who have been arrested in the case so far.

The SIT has already questioned Trust general secretary Champat Rai, trustee Anil Mishra, and Gopal Rao, who has been involved in the temple's construction and management.

Mr. Rai and Mr. Mishra have submitted their resignations from their respective positions, and the Trust is expected to take a call on them at its meeting on July 6.

'Have faith in police'

Amid a political firestorm over the case, Uttar Pradesh Minister Sanjay Nishad said that people should have faith in the probe. "Corruption existed in the past too, but everything used to be hushed up. Previous governments used to give protection to the corrupt. In our tenure, however, these cases are being exposed, and punishments are being handed out," he said.

"One should have faith in the investigation. Instead of making statements to shield the accused and mislead the public, one should support the action taken against corruption. The investigation follows a specific process until the file is closed. No one can be accused without evidence," he added.

DMK MLA arrested over remarks on T.N. CM Vijay

The Hindu Bureau
THOOTHUKUDI/CHENNAI

Tiruchendur DMK MLA and former Fisheries Minister Anitha R. Radhakrishnan was arrested at Aathoor in Thoothukudi on Friday for allegedly making remarks against Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay at a public meeting held on June 20.

The arrest came shortly after the Madras High Court dismissed an anticipatory bail petition filed by Mr. Radhakrishnan in a case registered by the Aathoor police.

Mr. Radhakrishnan on Friday evening alleged that while he was in police custody, there were attempts to pressure him to resign from his post as an MLA and join the ruling Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam. After the arrest, Mr. Radhakrishnan was taken to the office of the District Superintendent of Police in Thoothukudi for further probe.

After nearly five-and-a-half hours of inquiry, he was brought out of the SP office at around 6:15 p.m. and taken to Thoothukudi Government Medical College and Hospital for medical examination. Speaking to the reporters before leaving for the hospital, Mr. Radhakrishnan said he would remain firmly committed to the DMK.



Following his arrest on Friday, Anitha R. Radhakrishnan, flanked by DMK cadre, at the SP office in Thoothukudi. SPECIAL ARRANGMENT

Stop 'threatening' comments by TVK leaders, DMK tells SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The DMK moved the Supreme Court on Friday, seeking a judicial direction to bar leaders of the ruling TVC, including CM Vijay and Minister Aadhav Arjuna, from making

"threatening" public statements or levelling "false accusations" against political opponents in connection with the Karur stampede during the ongoing probe by the CBI.

FULL REPORT ON
» PAGE 2

"Whatever the circumstances, I will remain steadfast in the DMK and continue to follow the path of my leader," he said.

DMK president and former Chief Minister M.K. Stalin condemned the arrest and said, "What was the urgent need to hastily arrest someone who was carrying out public work

and conducting inspections in his constituency? The Chief Minister is running a police raj in a cinema-action style."

He asked why the government had not shown the same urgency in acting on a complaint filed by a "gang rape survivor" against the Srivaikuntam TVK MLA.



Shwetha Menon

Internal rift in Malayalam film actors' body deepens

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

The internal friction in the Association of Malayalam Movie Artistes (AMMA) deepened on Friday as Joy Mathew, Jayan Cherthala, and Kailash submitted their official resignations from the executive committee against the stand taken by its president, Shwetha Menon, that the committee would continue until the next election.

Ms. Menon, who had announced her resignation from the post of president following a stormy general body meeting held on June 21, had said in a social media post on Thursday that she would not step down until she proved her innocence.

The 17-member panel led by her decided to step down after a section of the association moved a no-confidence motion against the leadership at the general body meeting. The executive committee was accused of failing to run the day-to-day affairs of the organisation and resolve the disputes within the outfit.

Woman caregiver arrested in Bengaluru creche abuse case

Special team scrutinises all footage from childcare facility at IT firm; more arrests likely; City Police Commissioner announces review of all daycare centres to check for compliance with regulations

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Bengaluru Police have arrested a caregiver, identified as Vijayalakshmi, at a creche at Caggemini in Bengaluru, in connection with allegations of physical abuse and cruelty towards the children of IT employees.

A senior police officer told *The Hindu* that Ms. Vijayalakshmi was seen in the videos in which children were allegedly being 'scolded in an intimidating manner', and mistreated.

"We analysed the videos, and it was clear that Ms. Vijayalakshmi was at fault. We have sought her custody for questioning," the officer said.

The police are prepar-



The alleged abuse took place in a creche for children of employees working at IT firm Caggemini in Bengaluru.

ing for further arrests. "There are legal challenges to making further arrests, which are being addressed," he added.

Physical, mental abuse

The case came to light after purported videos showing the alleged mistreatment of children at the creche, Little Buds Day Care, sur-

faced on social media.

A complaint was registered by Tilekesh Kumar at the HAL Police Station, resulting in the filing of an FIR under Section 351(2) (criminal intimidation) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, and Section 75 of the Juvenile Justice Act.

The complainant alleged that the creche staff

subjected children to physical and mental abuse.

The complaint stated that children who cried or created a disturbance were beaten, dragged, forcibly handled, confined inside a washroom, had water poured on them, and were otherwise subjected to physical assault.

A special team headed by a Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) is probing the case. The team is reviewing all the available footage from the daycare centre to establish the facts.

Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh has announced a review of all daycare centres, including those run by companies in Bengaluru, to check compliance with prescribed norms.

TVK leaders making false accusations on stampede: DMK

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The DMK moved the Supreme Court on Friday, seeking a judicial direction to bar leaders of the ruling Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam, including Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay and Minister Aadhar Arjuna, from making "threatening" public statements or levelling "false accusations" against political opponents in connection with the Karur stampede during the ongoing CBI probe into the tragedy.

Forty-one people died and 142 were injured in the stampede at a TVK rally on September 27 last year.

The application, filed by DMK organising secretary R.S. Bharathi, who has sought impleadment in the case pending before the court in connection with the stampede, stems from public statements allegedly made by Mr. Arjuna, the Minister for Public Works and Sports Development, against former Chief Minister M.K. Stalin in connection with the incident.

'Prejudicial to probe'

Mr. Bharathi said Mr. Arjuna's statements on July 2 were intended to shift the blame for the stampede onto Mr. Stalin, who was the Chief Minister at the time, in a bid to prejudice the ongoing Supreme Court-ordered CBI investigation into the incident. The statements, in substance, claimed that the previous DMK government had "killed Karur people"

Minister's statements aimed at shifting blame onto Stalin, who was CM at the time, DMK tells court

through police action against the crowd at the rally, he said.

The DMK leader said Mr. Arjuna's conduct was prejudicial to the fairness of the CBI probe, he said. The application sought a direction to the CBI to register a complaint and proceed against Mr. Arjuna for "influencing, tampering with witnesses and impeding" the probe.

Mr. Bharathi further submitted that Mr. Vijay was likely to travel to Karur on or around July 10 to meet the families of those who died or were injured in the stampede, and hand over government benefits, including orders of compassionate appointment. The State government had announced an *ex gratia* of ₹10 lakh each to the affected families, said the application filed by advocate Anuradha Arputham.

The DMK leader clarified that he had no objection to the State government extending *ex gratia*, compassionate appointments, or other benefits to the grieving families, but was apprehensive of the fact that the members of these families and those injured were witnesses in an active investigation. This could give rise to apprehensions on the fairness of the probe, he said.

HC quashes plea for CBI probe in ED attack case

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

The Kerala High Court has dismissed a public interest litigation (PIL) petition seeking a probe by the CBI into the attack on Enforcement Directorate officials following a raid at Leader of the Opposition Pinarayi Vijayan's house in May.

The court noted the "substantial progress" made by the Kerala Police in the investigation into the attack. It held that there was no need to direct a CBI probe at this stage.

The Commissioner of Police, Thiruvananthapuram City, updated the court regarding the investigation. The court was informed that an FIR was registered with the Museum police station under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1984, and was submitted before the Judicial First Class Magistrate, Thiruvananthapuram.

Twenty-five accused have been identified, arrested, and sent to judicial custody. The wound certificates of those among the accused, and the officials who were injured in the attack, have also been collected. Relevant footage of the incident was obtained from the media that had reported it, and 44 witnesses were examined, the report stated.

The Commissioner assured the court that the final report on the case will be filed without any delay and sought for the PIL to be set aside.

Alert locopilots stop train going in the wrong direction in Chennai Division

S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

Alert locopilots prevented a potential tragedy by stopping an express train going in the wrong route to a different destination in Chennai Division on the night of June 28, 2026.

According to official sources, the incident occurred last Sunday after Train No. 17654, Puducher-

ry-Kacheguda Express, departed the Arakkonam railway station. While the signal was cleared for the train to proceed towards Renigunta, the point was set for the Katpadi line.

Realising the train with about 900 passengers on board was running in the wrong direction, the locopilots slammed the brakes and brought it to a halt. Wireless communication

confirmed that the train had entered the wrong track. The locopilots, after alerting the Station Manager, rolled the train back to Arakkonam, sources said.

The incident took place on a day when Southern Railway had completed the multi-crore remodelling of the Arakkonam yard.

Sources said the signal and points were being manually operated due to on-

going works in the section. Though the signal was cleared for the train to proceed towards Arakkonam, the point was set to the track heading to Katpadi.

Had the locopilots not sensed trouble and stopped the train, the possibility of an accident could not have been ruled out. However, there was no formal statement by the Railways on the incident.

INBRIEF



Mohanlal seeks to declare ivory in his possession

Actor Mohanlal, who had been booked for the alleged illegal possession of ivory, has approached the Kerala Forest department to declare its possession and seek immunity from legal action. He made use of the recent one-time amnesty scheme offered by the Forest department to declare the wildlife article in his possession following an observation of the Kerala High Court. A senior functionary of the Forest department carried out an inquiry regarding the article in his possession at his Kochi residence.

Kidnapped one-month-old rescued in Hyderabad; 5 held

The police have rescued a one-month-old baby girl who was kidnapped near the Lingampally Railway Station in Hyderabad and arrested five persons. On June 30, two men abducted the baby who was sleeping with her mother near the railway station. The mother woke up on hearing the child's cries and tried to chase the vehicle, but the accused escaped. The police analysed CCTV footage and traced the two. The other accused include a woman from Kolkata who had agreed to take the baby in exchange for money.

Labour officials stall U.S. tech firm's layoff bid in Kerala

A move by a U.S.-based technology company, to shut down its offices in Kochi and Kozhikode, rendering nearly 800 people jobless without notice, was stalled on Friday after intervention of political leaders and Labour department. Around 600 employees of the firm, CorroHealth Infotech Pvt. Ltd., who reported for duty were informed that they had been terminated with immediate effect. Local leaders and trade unions arrived at the scene and the Labour department authorities directed the firm to maintain status quo.

Up close



Beach attraction: Tourists brave the inclement weather at the INS Kurusura Submarine Museum in Visakhapatnam on Friday, as the city experiences overcast skies and intermittent rain under the influence of a low-pressure system over the Bay of Bengal. K.R. DEEPAK

Panel to study issues faced by Totapuri mango farmers in A.P.

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union Agriculture Ministry has decided to constitute a high-level expert committee on Friday under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) to examine the challenges being faced by Totapuri mango growers in Andhra Pradesh.

The panel will recommend appropriate measures for the long-term development of the sector.

The Ministry said in a release that Union Minister for Agriculture Shivraj Singh Chouhan had recently visited Andhra Pradesh, during which he interacted with Totapuri mango growers.



Prices of Totapuri mangoes have fallen in recent months.

"During these interactions, farmers informed the Minister that prices of the Totapuri mango variety, which is cultivated extensively for the processing industry, have declined significantly in recent months. They highlighted that the sustained fall in prices has adversely affected their incomes," the government said.

Radio telemetry almost saved this vulture from death

Prince Frederick
CHENNAI

Vultures are drawn to 'the dead'. This one was drawn to the living. Captive-bred and released in the wild, this white-rumped vulture consistently displayed a tendency to be within earshot of smartphone-carrying primates. It had taken into its bald head that humans are providers of food. The idea was likely seeded in there when the bird had a brief stay at the Kalaburagi Zoological Park in Karnataka, and had been nurtured in the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve where it had the fortune, nay, misfortune of finding human feeders from time to time.

This female vulture was being spied upon. Radio-tagged, the bird had its movements tracked in real time. Records of its peregrinations at the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve were showing up on screens at the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)'s establishment at Tadoba-Andhari in Maharashtra.

From radio telemetry data, it was evident the vulture was not fit for the wild, and the BNHS team was considering relocating it to a breeding centre where it could be used for breeding.

Before the conservationists could act on that decision, the vulture met with a tragic end, being electrocuted at a power



A file photo of 'Z25', a white-rumped vulture that was fitted with a radio transmitter. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

transmission line in the Nilgiris in Mudumalai. If that plan had fructified, the bird would have come full circle, as it had been captive-bred at the Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre in Pinjore, Haryana, run by the Haryana Forest Department along with BNHS.

Jonathan D'Costa, conservation biologist at BNHS, points out this bird (Z25, its radio-tagged identity) was one of five white-rumped vultures to be radio-tagged at Tadoba on December 22, 2025. The

carrion-devouring quintet were released at the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve on December 30.

"After their release, the five white-rumped vultures were monitored. And Z25 in particular was observed to have not stuck around much in Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve. In a week or two, it flew out of the reserve and kept going south, eventually reaching Kalaburagi city in Karnataka," Mr. D'Costa said.

Slipping out of the wild Karnataka Forest Department personnel captured the bird and kept it at the Kalaburagi Zoological Park and following consultations with their counterparts in Tamil Nadu, it was

decided the vulture would go to Mudumalai Tiger Reserve where a white-rumped vulture population existed. Amidst familiar plumage, Z25 had a reasonably good chance of getting acclimatised to the wild. But radio telemetry data showed the bird was slipping out of the wild; and this behaviour was observed on the field.

This fatal flaw in the vulture was noticed thanks to radio telemetry, and the data did help protect the bird till it ran into that power transmission line.

Radio telemetry is a potent tool to study the movements of critically endangered bird species and "herd" straying individual birds into safe zones.

DAC gives approval for military purchase worth ₹52,000 crore

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, on Friday accorded Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for defence acquisition proposals worth nearly ₹52,000 crore aimed at enhancing the operational capabilities of the Army, Navy and Air Force.

The Ministry of Defence stated that the DAC approved the procurement of Anti-Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Electronic Warfare System Akash Tarang, Man Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile (MPATGM) systems, Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missile (MRSAM) weapon systems, Very Short Range Air Defence Systems (V-SHORADS), Active Protection Systems for tanks and jet-based Kamikaze drone systems, for the Indian Army.

Akash Tarang is designed to provide effective protection against hostile drones, while the MPATGM

will strengthen the infantry's capability to counter enemy armoured formations. The MRSAM system will enhance medium-range air defence against a range of aerial threats. The Kamikaze drone system will provide enhanced electronic warfare capability with greater lethality and cost-effectiveness.

For the Indian Navy, the Council approved the acquisition of Multi Influence Ground Mines (MIGM), Naval Shipborne Unmanned Aerial Systems (NSUAS) and the establishment of a Land Based Testing Facility (LBTF) for Electric Propulsion Systems, it added.

The DAC also approved the procurement of Fixed-Wing High Altitude Pseudo Satellites (FW-HAPS) and other proposals for the Indian Air Force. The FW-HAPS platform will provide intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, telecommunications and remote sensing capabilities, enhancing the Air Force's operational reach.

Ladakh to have customised self-governance framework

U.T.-level elected body will be established, say minutes of meeting between Centre and leaders of civil society groups; model of constitutional safeguards under Article 371 discussed in proposal

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

A customised *sui generis* model, which is most suitable for Ladakh, will be adopted under the provisions of Article 371 for the Union Territory (U.T.) of Ladakh, said the draft shared by a team from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) with leaders of civil society groups of the region on Friday.

Referring to the fifth meeting held on May 22 this year of the sub-committee of the High-Powered Committee (HPC) on Ladakh, the MHA team released the minutes of the meeting agreed upon by the Centre and leaders of civil society groups of the Leh Apex Body and the Kargil Democratic Alliance. The MHA note said the next logical step would be to further empower the U.T. through a democratic



Civil society groups in Ladakh have been consistently demanding Statehood for the Union Territory. FILE PHOTO

institutional framework that provided a political voice. It was unanimously decided that while Statehood would remain the long-term aspiration of Ladakh, in the present situation, as a first step, an appropriate customised model of governance, that is, a U.T.-level elected body would be established. A draft proposal covering the

powers and functions – executive, financial and legislative – of this U.T.-level elected body in harmonious relations with the Panchayati Raj Institutions would be prepared for further discussion and fine-tuning.

The minutes of the meeting said the model of constitutional safeguards with Article 371 was also

discussed. "There have been instances of invoking Article 371(A to J) and it was agreed that a customised model which is most suitable for Ladakh would be adopted," it said.

Demand for Statehood

It is the first time that the MHA has made public a detailed presentation on the progress achieved through five rounds of meetings between the Centre and representatives of Ladakh. "The presentation also outlined the probable structure of self-governance in Ladakh. The representatives from Ladakh reiterated the demand for Statehood and Sixth schedule for Ladakh. They also reiterated the demand regarding Ladakh Administrative and Police Service and regarding withdrawal of cases of 24, September 2025 incident," reads the minutes of the meeting.

India-Japan relations should not target third party: China

Press Trust of India
BEIJING

China said on Friday that bilateral cooperation between countries should not target any third party or undermine the interests of another nation, a day after India and Japan unveiled a raft of landmark initiatives during Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's visit to Delhi. "Cooperation between countries should be conducive to enhancing the understanding and trust among regional countries and safeguarding peace and stability in the region," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun told the media in Beijing.

He was replying to a question on cooperation between India and Japan on critical minerals to boost resilience in supply chains after talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Japanese premier. "Such cooperation should not target any third party or harm the interests

On July 2, India and Japan unveiled a raft of landmark initiatives, including an economic partnership framework

of any third party," Mr. Guo said. "It is the responsibility of all countries to keep the global industrial and supply chains safe and stable. All parties should champion openness and cooperation and play a constructive role in the process," he added.

On July 2, India and Japan unveiled a raft of landmark initiatives, including an economic partnership framework. They also expressed "serious concern" at the situation in the East China Sea and South China Sea, and opposed unilateral actions that endanger freedom of navigation as well as attempts to change the status quo by force, as per a joint statement.

PM Modi to visit Australia, Indonesia and New Zealand

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will embark on a three-nation visit to Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand from July 6-11 to deepen India's engagement with the three countries, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Friday. The first leg of his visit will be to Indonesia, after which he will travel to Australia where his main engagements will be held in Melbourne. He will conclude the tour with a visit to New Zealand.

Rudrendra Tandon, Secretary (East) in the MEA, said that Mr. Modi's visit to New Zealand would be special as it would be the first by an Indian Prime Minister in nearly 40 years.

India and New Zealand signed a Free Trade Agreement earlier this year to boost commerce in goods and services and to promote investments.

Will factor all related developments in approach to Teesta issue: India

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Days after Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman visited China where the two sides discussed the Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project (TRCMRP), India on Friday said its development assistance to projects in Bangladesh work on the basis of a "mutually agreed roadmap", and that India will consider "all related developments" in formulating an "overall approach" to the Teesta river-related project.

The issue came up during a press briefing when the official spokesperson of the External Affairs Ministry, Randhir Jaiswal, was asked a question on whether the Bangladesh-China decision to have a feasibility report on the TRCMRP will impact India's projects in Bangladesh. "India's development assistance for



Pristine waters: A view of the Teesta river at Sevok, some 20 km from Siliguri. AFP

projects in Bangladesh is based on a mutually agreed road map, which is regularly reviewed. Our views on the Teesta river project have been previously conveyed to the Bangladesh side. We will factor all related developments in our overall approach to the Teesta issue," said Mr. Jaiswal.

Officials later clarified that India's statement did not indicate any displeasure at Bangladesh's decision to go ahead with discussing the Teesta project

with China as India-Bangladesh ties stand on their own merit.

The sharing of the Teesta river water has been under discussion between India and Bangladesh for decades but since 2011, the two neighbours have remained in a deadlock with regards to an agreement.

Bangladesh started discussions with China on building a restoration and management project along the river during Sheikh Hasina's prime ministership. In 2024, India shared its

plans on the river with Ms. Hasina when then Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra had visited Dhaka. In June that year, Ms. Hasina paid a visit to India when a joint statement mentioned that India would provide assistance for "conservation and management" of the Teesta river inside Bangladesh.

Ms. Hasina's government was toppled in a public uprising in August 2024 and subsequently discussions did not take place during the 15-month long interim government.

While the Teesta issue has received attention during Tarique Rahman's China visit in the last week of June, there are big ticket issues in India-Bangladesh ties that require attention. Diplomats here have pointed out that the renewal of the Ganga water treaty is one such matter that requires urgent attention as the agreement has to be renewed by December 31 this year.

Judge facing threats over lynching verdict needs protection: HC

Mehul Malpani
BHOPAL

The Madhya Pradesh High Court has directed the State police to provide protection to judge Tabassum Khan who is facing threats after sentencing seven cow vigilantes to life term in a mob lynching case. Taking *suo motu* cognisance of reports on July 1, a Division Bench of Justices Vivek Agarwal and Avinandra Kumar Singh said such threats "directly hamper the judicial independence and fearless working of our judicial officers".

Issued notices

Ms. Khan, an Additional Sessions Judge in Narmadapuram district, has faced online abuse and threats after her June 12 judgment in which she convicted a group of cow vigilantes and awarded them life imprisonment for beating to death a truck driver, Sheikh Lala Nazir

Ahmed, on suspicion of cow smuggling in 2022.

The High Court issued notices to the Director-General of Police (DGP) and the Additional Chief Secretary or the Principal Secretary (Home), asking them to file their responses within three days. "It has been brought to our notice by the learned counsel for the High Court as well as through media reports that one of the Judicial Officers at Narmadapuram has been subjected to constant threats by certain members of society for passing an order against one of the stakeholders. This is a serious matter," the Bench said, while asking the police and government authorities what steps are being taken to book the "miscreants, who have created an atmosphere of fear for our judicial officer at Narmadapuram".

The Narmadapuram police have already lodged an FIR in the case.



Jairam Ramesh

Cong. accuses Modi govt. of 'calibrated capitulation' to China

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday alleged that the Union government's "calibrated capitulation" to China is continuing even as India's trade deficit with that country reaches record levels "destroying large sections of industry".

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh shared a media report on X which said that India had allowed four Chinese power equipment manufacturers with factories in the country to participate in government tenders for critical power projects.

In his post, Mr. Ramesh said, "The Modi Government's calibrated capitulation to China continues even as India's trade deficit with that country reaches record levels destroying large sections of our industry specially MSMEs." China's provocative actions in relation to Arunachal Pradesh are unabated, he said.

"The world's largest hydroelectric project in Medog continues, imperilling India's water security in relation to the Brahmaputra. India's traditional patrolling and herding rights in many places in Eastern Ladakh have been given up," Mr. Ramesh said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi "infamously gave a public clean chit" to China on June 19, 2020 even after 20 of India's armed forces personnel were martyred in Ladakh, he said. China's pivotal role in Pakistan's actions during Operation Sindoor were acknowledged by the Deputy Chief of Army Staff and are documented, the Congress leader said, adding, "And yet, the 'capitulation' to China continues apace".

Home Minister Amit Shah to review security situation in Manipur today

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

As violence expands to new areas in Manipur, Union Home Minister Amit Shah is likely to review the security scenario in the Northeast State at a meeting in New Delhi on Saturday, while Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh is expected to visit Churachandpur, a Kuki-Zo-majority district, on the same day, government officials told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Shah will hold the meeting with Manipur government's Security Adviser Kuldip Singh and State Director General of Police Mukesh Singh, Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) and D-Gs of Assam Rifles, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Border Security Force (BSF), amid continued violence in the State that has claimed at least 40 lives since President's Rule was revoked on February 4. He had last reviewed the se-



Taking stock: Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla calls on Union Home Minister Amit Shah, in New Delhi on June 17. ANI

curity situation on March 20, when he asked the Chief Minister to crack down on drug cartels and prioritise the resettlement of people displaced after ethnic violence erupted between the Kuki-Zo and Meitei people in the State on May 3, 2023.

Mr. Shah's meeting is likely to discuss the emerging pockets of violence and take a stock of the adherence of ground rules by Kuki and Meitei insurgent groups in peace talks with

the government. The recovery of looted police weapons and other armory along with the fresh influx of refugees from Myanmar is also likely to be discussed, said a government official.

Chief Minister Khemchand Singh is not part of Saturday's meeting. He is likely to travel to Churachandpur, a Kuki-Zo district on Saturday where he is expected to meet the family of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA Vungzagin

Valte, who died on February 21, another government official said.

Last rites of BJP MLA

The last rites of Valte, who was from the Zomi tribe, is all set to be performed on Saturday as the family had refused to bury the body till the attackers were arrested. Valte was physically assaulted by a mob in Imphal on May 4, 2023 and passed away at a hospital in Haryana's Gurugram on February 21 this year. His body is preserved at Churachandpur district hospital's mortuary.

Mr. Khemchand's visit, if it materialises, would be the first by a Manipur Chief Minister to the hill district since ethnic violence between the tribal Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities broke out in the State in 2023. Security has been tightened for the Chief Minister's proposed visit even as Kuki civil society organisations have decided to boycott his arrival.

'No revival of Indus treaty if Pak. does not end terror'

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

India on Friday said the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) will remain in "abeyance" till Pakistan "credibly and irrevocably" stops supporting cross-border terrorism. Official spokesperson of the External Affairs Ministry Randhir Jaiswal made the remark in the context of a recent international conference held in Pakistan where it called for the restoration of the treaty. The country is dealing with a severe heatwave. "The Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 will be held in abeyance with immediate effect, until Pakistan credibly and irrevocably abjures its support for cross-border terrorism," said Mr. Jaiswal at a media briefing.

Earlier this week, Pakistan organised a conference on the Indus and water sharing where the country's Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar referred to the IWT



Point of contention: India's Cabinet Committee on Security had put the IWT in abeyance after the Pahalgam attack. PTI

as vital for "regional peace, stability and cooperation".

The Cabinet Committee on Security had put the treaty in abeyance a day after the Pahalgam terror attack on April 22, 2025, killed 26 civilians and injured dozens. The attack led to India's strikes on terror targets inside Pakistan under Operation Sindoor.

"The IWT was concluded in the spirit of goodwill and friendship as specified in the preamble of the treaty. However, Pakistan has held these principles in abeyance by its promotion

of cross-border terrorism for decades," Mr. Jaiswal had said on May 13, 2025.

On May 22 last year, Mr. Jaiswal had said that India was willing to discuss with Pakistan the modality to get custody of "noted terrorists whose list was provided to Pakistan some years ago". Citing PM Narendra Modi's remarks, he said, "Water and blood cannot flow together". India has intensified the rhetoric on Pakistan recently, especially against the backdrop of protests in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.

Democracy is in jeopardy, INDIA bloc writes to CJI

Opposition leaders express concern over SIR in Bengal and Bihar; allege manipulation of polls in Delhi, Haryana, Maharashtra; the EC's independence has eroded in recent years, they say in letter

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

Alleging manipulation of elections, partisan conduct by the Election Commission (EC), and the misuse of Central investigation agencies against Opposition parties, leaders of the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance, in a joint memorandum addressed to Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, said they were taking the unusual step of reaching out to the CJI because they believed that “democracy is in jeopardy”.

‘Manipulated elections’

The June 28 letter was released to the media by the Opposition on Friday. Signed by leaders of 23 Opposition parties and Independent MP Kapil Sibal, it detailed concerns over the special intensive revision (SIR) in West Bengal and Bihar. The leaders alleged that the recent elections in Delhi, Haryana, and Maharashtra had been “manipulated”. The leaders said they were approaching the court because they believed democratic institutions were under strain and that electoral outcomes in several instances did not accurately reflect the will of the people.

Delineating the EC's conduct from 2014, the Opposition parties said there were hardly any instances, barring a few exceptions, when questions were



The Opposition parties raised concerns over the brazenly biased conduct of the Chief Election Commissioner.

raised about the integrity of persons in the commission before 2014. “But since 2014, almost every appointment made by the government has been of persons closely associated with it and seen to be doing the bidding of the government, brazenly, to manipulate the outcome of election results,” the letter said.

The Opposition leaders alleged that the Election Commission's independence had eroded in recent years. Referring to the Supreme Court's judgment in the *Anoop Baranwal* case, they argued that judicial concerns about the process of appointing Election Commissioners remained relevant. The letter criticised changes made through subsequent legislation, which removed the Chief Justice of India from the committee responsible for appointing the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and other Election Commissioners.

Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar's

“brazenly biased conduct”, coupled with his “open, unabashed support of the BJP during the course of and in the outcome of electoral processes”, was a matter of grave concern, the Opposition said in its letter. They accused the EC of not being “even-handed” in the application of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) ahead of elections, “by choosing not to take action when the MCC is breached by the political party in power – all this while targeting those in the Opposition”.

The parties questioned the rationale behind conducting the SIR. The political rhetoric surrounding the exercise, the Opposition claimed, centred on the alleged infiltration of Bangladeshis into the Bihar electoral rolls. “Now that the Bihar Assembly elections are over, there is absolutely no data to suggest that such an infiltration indeed took place, nor has the Election Commission made public any data

with respect to the number of Bangladeshis having illegally acquired the right to vote in India,” the letter noted.

The situation became worse in West Bengal, where, the Opposition said, the government was under siege with the presence of 2.4 lakh CAPF personnel. “To put this in context, 3.5 lakh CAPF personnel were deployed for the entire Lok Sabha election in 2024,” the letter pointed out. It also complained of the arbitrary removal of voters under a “never used before category” of logical discrepancies.

“We believe that recently conducted elections in Delhi, Haryana and Maharashtra were also manipulated,” the letter said.

Suspension of SIR

The Opposition has demanded the immediate suspension of the SIR, arguing that such a comprehensive overhaul of the electoral rolls should be undertaken only when the next Assembly election is at least five years away.

“Judges do not live in ivory towers. You too are aware of what is happening on the ground. The legacy media is largely compromised, but there are many independent platforms that are still speaking truth to power,” the letter said. At the same time, the Opposition maintained that it was not questioning the judiciary.

BJP terms the letter a ‘dangerous conspiracy’

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday targeted the Congress and its allies, alleging a “dangerous conspiracy to malign Indian democracy” through attempts to delegitimise democratic processes and constitutional institutions, particularly the Election Commission.

Reacting sharply to a letter written by 23 Opposition parties to the Chief Justice of India, alleging “biased” conduct by the Election Commission and questioning the special intensive revision (SIR) process, BJP MP and spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi described the move as an “attack on democracy”.

“The language and tone used in the letter are reminiscent of the arrogant attitude witnessed during the Emergency,” said Mr. Trivedi.

He said the SIR process had already been held to be completely reasonable and lawful by various courts. “From the constitutional point of view, they have failed to place any factual matter before the court,” he said.

“Is it not true that senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor remarked on a television programme that the Congress benefited from SIR in Kerala? In Karnataka, Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar is directing his party workers to participate actively in the SIR process, while you cast aspersions on the very same process,” claimed the BJP leader.

Ram Temple ‘theft’ has hurt sentiment of Hindus, says RSS

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

In its first official reaction to the Ayodhya Ram Temple embezzlement controversy, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) on Friday appealed to Hindus to “remain united”, and urged the authorities to ensure strict punishment for those found guilty. It cautioned against “conspiracies (by) anti-Hindu, anti-national forces” to exploit the incident and “malign Hinduism and society”.

In a video statement, RSS general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale said the temple, built after the “struggles of generations” and the “sacrifices” of crores of Ram devotees, had become a centre of reverence and faith for the Hindu community.

Calling the alleged theft from the temple's donation boxes “unfortunate”, Mr. Hosabale said the incident had hurt the sentiments of devotees and the wider Hindu society.

Referring to the steps taken by the Uttar Pradesh government, he said a special investigation team (SIT) had been constituted at the request of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust and that legal proceedings had been initiated based on its recommendations. He said those found guilty in the investigation should face strict punishment.

The RSS said the incident should be treated as an “exceptional case”, and called for comprehensive



Dattatreya Hosabale

measures to address deficiencies in the temple's administrative and operational systems.

It said the confusion surrounding the matter should be brought to an end through corrective action by the temple management and the SIT.

The organisation expressed confidence that transparent financial management, efficient operations and systems ensuring accountability would help reinforce public confidence in the Trust and preserve the faith of devotees.

‘Insult to injury’

Reacting to the RSS statement, Congress leader Pawan Khera said, “The loot of Ram Mandir funds has deeply hurt the faith of Hindus across the country. But what adds insult to this injury is the RSS's sudden outrage over the alleged theft of Ram Mandir donations. The truth is that if the RSS were sincerely committed to safeguarding devotees' donations, embezzlement on such a scale would never have taken place at a temple that is directly under its watch.”

Senior Trust officials being shielded, says Congress

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday questioned the investigation into the alleged theft of donations from the Ram temple in Ayodhya, accusing the BJP governments at the Centre and Uttar Pradesh of shielding senior functionaries of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, including its former general secretary Champat Rai, by making junior employees the scapegoats.

The party asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had taken “full credit” for the construction of the temple, to break his silence on the issue and accept responsibility for what it termed as a “breach of public trust”.

Addressing a press conference, Congress spokesperson Ragini Nayak demanded that the accounts of nearly ₹1,400 crore collected from devotees for the construction of the temple before the formation of the Trust be made public.

Ms. Nayak demanded the immediate dissolution of the Trust and a Supreme Court-monitored probe into its functioning and financial transactions, while questioning why the report of the special investigation team (SIT), constituted by the State government, had not been made public.

She questioned whether the Trust had been deliberately kept outside the ambit of the Right to Information Act to shield its financial dealings from public scrutiny.

Legislative debates should focus on solutions: Om Birla

Senjuti Sengupta
KOLKATA

Legislative debates in the Houses must focus on solutions, not merely criticism, said Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Friday, launching a two-day orientation programme for the members of the West Bengal Assembly.

“Constructive debate is the hallmark of a vibrant democracy. While criticism is an essential component of legislative functioning, every discussion should also offer practical solutions to public problems. Legislators should base their interventions on facts, research, and reasoned arguments to enrich the quality of democratic discourse. Every debate,

law, and policy should be guided by public welfare and aimed at finding practical solutions to citizens' challenges,” said Mr. Birla, addressing the event.

“Agreement and disagreement are natural features of democracy,” he added. However, Mr. Birla emphasised that differences must always be expressed through reasoned, dignified, and respectful debate. “Legislatures should remain institutions where ideas compete but democratic values prevail.”

Calling upon the MLAs to remain lifelong learners, Mr. Birla urged them to regularly study previous debates, landmark legislations, and best parliamentary practices from across India and the world.

Fresh turbulence in Punjab Congress as Channi holds show of strength, Randhawa meets Home Minister

Sandeep Phukan
NEW DELHI

The revamp of the Punjab Congress has triggered fresh turbulence in the State unit, with former Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi on Friday convening a meeting of party leaders and supporters to press the high command to appoint him president of the Punjab Congress Committee (PCC).

Mr. Channi, the Lok Sabha member from Jalandhar and a Dalit, met his loyalists at his residence in Morinda, about 30 km from Chandigarh.

In Delhi, senior Congress leader and Gurdaspur Lok Sabha member Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa's meeting with Union



Congress leader Charanjit Singh Channi with Punjab Congress Legislature Party leader Partap Singh Bajwa. FILE PHOTO

Home Minister Amit Shah only added to the sense of turmoil within the State unit, though he maintained that the interaction was solely to discuss Punjab's deteriorating law and order situation.

The All India Congress Committee (AICC), while

announcing several election-related committees for Punjab on Wednesday, appointed Mr. Channi as the chairperson of the Campaign Committee but retained Amrinder Singh Raja Warring as PCC president.

The decision, sources

said, had upset Mr. Channi, and Friday's meeting was intended to convey his displeasure to the party leadership.

“We have no issues with the high command, but we do have some objections. We want the leadership to hear our grievances and resolve them so that the Congress party comes to power,” Tripart Rajinder Singh Bajwa, MLA, told presspersons.

Sharing a video of Mr. Bajwa's remarks on X, Mr. Channi posted, “Congress party leadership called on me at my residence and urged me to present the sentiments and aspirations of the people of Punjab before the high command.”

Among those present at the meeting were former Deputy Chief Minister O.P.

Soni, former Ministers Bharat Bhushan Ashu and Gurpreet Singh Kangar, former MP Mohd. Sadiq, and former MLAs Nazir Singh Manshahia, Gurkirat Singh Kotli, Lakhvir Singh Lakha, Darshan Singh Brar and Tarsem Singh.

Discontent brews

Mr. Randhawa, who has been appointed chairperson of the Core Committee in Punjab, said his meeting with the Home Minister was a follow-up to a letter he had written to the Prime Minister on law and order issues, including the predominance of gangsters, extortion and Pakistan-sponsored narco-terrorism, particularly in Punjab's border districts.

The senior Congress leader, however, acknow-

ledged a sense of disquiet within the party and said only AICC observer Ajay Maken could explain the basis of the report he had submitted to the high command on the changes to be made in the State unit.

“It certainly hurts when all this is happening after a list comes out. I have the habit of speaking out the truth, and I don't know what it means,” Mr. Randhawa said. “The situation is not as bad as you think. But it is a matter to ponder that it should not have come to this. It is unfortunate that after so many meetings, people are still not satisfied,” he added.

Earlier, *The Hindu* had reported that senior leader Manish Tewari had been left out of all the election-related committees.

Schism within Trinamool grows as Ritabrata faction ‘takes control’ of party headquarters

Shiv Sahay Singh
Senjuti Sengupta
KOLKATA

The tussle between the rival camps of the Trinamool Congress on Friday manifested on the streets of Kolkata when a faction led by the Leader of the Opposition, Ritabrata Banerjee, occupied and locked the party headquarters located next to the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass.

Accompanied by a group of MLAs, including Firdad Hakim, Sandipan Saha, Javed Khan, Akhruzzaman, Mr. Ritabrata went to the party headquarters.



A banner of the rebel faction of Trinamool Congress displayed outside the party headquarters in Kolkata on Friday. PTI

“We are the real Trinamool. This is our office. Trinamool's emotions are associated with this office,”

he said. He added that he had a discussion with the owner on rent-related issues.

On receiving information that the Ritabrata camp was trying to occupy the party office, leaders loyal to former West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee – MLA Kunal Ghosh and Baishwari Chatterjee – arrived at the office to stake claim.

Mr. Chatterjee told presspersons that they had a rent agreement till October 2027 and the party office belonged to them. “There is no party without Mamata Banerjee and it is her office. I don't know at whose behest they (the rival faction) are doing this. We will fight it in accor-

dance with law,” he said.

Meanwhile, the rebels put a banner with a photo of their newly elected chairperson Arup Roy at the building.

The development comes a day after Mr. Ritabrata and other MLAs belonging to his camp met the full bench of Election Commission in Delhi and staked claim to the party.

Mr. Ritabrata was elected as the Leader of the Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly on June 3, with the support of 58 MLAs. The rebel camp now claims the support of 65 of 80 MLAs.

Abhishek faces fresh FIR over ‘illegal use of medical equipment’

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

A fresh case has been registered against Trinamool Congress general secretary Abhishek Banerjee over the alleged illegal use of diagnostic equipment during Sebaashray health camps.

The FIR has been registered on the basis of a complaint by Sukdeb Das, a resident of Raynagar. Sebaashray, a community health initiative launched by Mr. Banerjee for his Diamond Harbour constituency, drew large crowds during the Trinamool regime. In the FIR, Mr. Banerjee



Abhishek Banerjee

has been charged with furtherance of a criminal conspiracy and common intention in allegedly operating unauthorised medical and diagnostic establishments at different places and times. The case has been registered under

multiple provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the Drugs & Cosmetics Act, the Atomic Energy Act, the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, the National Medical Commission Act and West Bengal Clinical Establishments Act.

Since the defeat of the Trinamool in the 2026 Assembly election, almost half a dozen FIRs have been registered against Mr. Banerjee. During the day, the Calcutta High Court granted relief to Mr. Banerjee, saying that the police cannot take any action against him in the signature-forgery case till July 17.

IN BRIEF



SC refuses to stay bail granted to Sonam in murder case

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to stay the bail granted to Sonam Raghuvanshi, who was arrested in connection with the May 23 murder of her newly wed husband, Raja Raghuvanshi, during their honeymoon in Meghalaya. While the court acknowledged that the allegations against Ms. Raghuvanshi were "quite serious", it declined to send her back to judicial custody after being informed that she had already been released. Reiterating the settled principle of criminal jurisprudence, the judges observed, "We are conscious that, howsoever grave the alleged offence is, there is a presumption of innocence."

HC asks Centre to decide on plea against YouTube video

The Delhi High Court on Friday directed the Centre's Grievance Appellate Committee to decide within 15 days an appeal seeking the removal of a video by YouTuber Dhruv Rathee. Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma passed the direction while hearing a petition by advocate Amita Sachdeva, who said statements made in the video were "patently false, misleading and deliberately distorted" and capable of promoting communal disharmony. Additional Solicitor-General Chetan Sharma said either YouTube should remove the video or the court should pass appropriate directions for its takedown.

Three more arrested in Maharashtra TET leak case

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Maharashtra Police made three more arrests in the Teacher Eligibility Test paper leak scam on Thursday. The accused were arrested from Pathankot in Punjab and Samastipur in Bihar. The accused have been remanded in police custody till July 9. This has taken the total number of arrests in the case to seven. But the alleged mastermind is still on the run. Kapil Dahiya was nabbed in Pathankot. He was one of the four men who had arrived in Mumbai to sell the TET leaked paper. The police also arrested Mithunkumar Subal Singh, a resident of Samastipur in Bihar, who had gone to Pune to sell papers and assist in providing answers.

ED to share foreign funds probe findings with the CBI

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has decided to share its findings with the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for further legal action in the case of routing foreign funds into India, including in areas affected by left-wing extremism, through foreign debit cards allegedly linked to the U.S.-based Timothy Initiative (TTI), according to agency officials. The ED has alleged that at least ₹92.55 crore was used in India in violation of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) and the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) provisions.

Based on its complaints, an FIR was registered at the Dhamtari police station in Chhattisgarh on May 11, and another at the Kothanpur police station in Karnataka's Bengaluru city on June 11.

Initially, a Suspicious Transaction Report generated by the Financial Intelligence Unit-India flagged the modus operandi of routing funds through bank debit cards issued by Truist Bank, U.S., "bypassing prescribed banking and regulatory channels".

Centre set to summon Meta over child sexual abuse advertisements

A media report had pointed to proliferation of such ads on the Instagram platform; the company says it has a 'zero-tolerance' policy towards CSAM

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology is set to summon Meta over a recent report about the proliferation of advertisements for child sexual abuse material (CSAM) on Instagram. IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw directed "Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) officials to summon Meta on the matter of Instagram ads promoting child sexual abuse material in India", an official said.

Separately, Meta officials also met with IT Ministry officials to discuss the username feature on WhatsApp, which the latter are worried could lead to an increase in fraud on the messaging platform.

On the summons, a Meta spokesperson told *The Hindu* that it had a "zero tolerance" policy towards CSAM.

"We use advanced AI technology to proactively



Ashwini Vaishnaw

detect violating content and individuals, but we are in a constant battle with criminals who hide among our 3.5 billion users and try to evade our detection," the spokesperson said.

"That is why our expert teams are constantly working to improve our defences, develop new technology to root out predators, block links to violating websites, and share intelligence with other companies so they can take action too."

CSAM is illegal, and Meta policies also forbid pornographic content featuring adults. Yet, during a

test phase, a *BBC* report noted that the broadcaster was shown over two dozen ads promoting CSAM, with links to Telegram channels.

The IT Ministry will "seek explanation" from Meta regarding the issue.

WhatsApp issue

On the WhatsApp username issue, Meta has said that it would only roll it out in the coming months and that it would notify users of the country of origin of the people who message someone for the first time without exposing their phone number. IT Secretary S. Krishnan said on the sidelines of an industry event that WhatsApp would be asked to explain the feature in more detail in writing. The deadline for a written response is Saturday.

The IT Ministry has argued that the feature could lead to impersonation and scams, while protecting scammers' phone numbers, making it harder to trace them.

Protest against govt. cannot be ground for externment, says HC

Chinmay Gaikwad
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Thursday quashed an externment order passed against Saeed Ahmad Abdul Wahid Chaudhary, the general secretary of the Socialist Democratic Party of India (SDPI), stating that opposition to government decisions does not constitute grounds for externment under the Maharashtra Police Act.

The court held that protesting against Union government decisions and raising slogans does not constitute grounds for externment and that such action affects the fundamental rights under Articles 19 and 21. Justice Madhav Jamdar, while hearing the petition, observed that the Mumbai Police had passed the externment order based on five FIRs lodged against Mr. Chaudhary for organising protests against the Union government's decisions, including on the Gyanvapi Masjid controversy and on amendments to the Citizenship Act.

The externment order was initially passed by the Deputy Commissioner of Police on December 3, 2025, and confirmed by the Divisional Commis-

sioner, Konkan Division, on March 27, 2026, externing Mr. Chaudhary for a period of one year.

Fundamental rights

Justice Jamdar remarked that police officers are not servants of the Chief Minister or the Prime Minister. The court indicated that the action taken against the petitioner appeared to be *malafide* in nature. The court further noted that citizens have the right to express their opinions and live with dignity under Articles 19 and 21 of the Constitution. The judge stated that the externment order for opposing government decisions affected these fundamental rights.

During the proceedings, Justice Jamdar made observations regarding the political situation in Maharashtra, noting instances of MPs and MLAs switching parties. The judge remarked on the political developments in the State, including discussions in the State Assembly regarding the election of the Presiding Officer. Justice Jamdar recorded that the petitioner's Morchas and Dharnas against certain decisions by the Government of India could not be grounds for externment.

Over 12,000 pilgrims visit cave shrine on the first day of Amarnath Yatra

The Hindu Bureau
SRINAGAR

More than 12,000 pilgrims paid obeisance to the naturally formed ice *Shivling* at the Amarnath cave shrine on the opening day of the 57-day annual pilgrimage on Friday, officials said.

The pilgrims included about 9,350 men, 2,250 women, over 200 children, 70 sadhus, nine transgender devotees, and more than 260 security personnel, they said.

Earlier in the day, pilgrims began the trek from the Nunwan base camp in Pahalgam and the Baltal base camp in Ganderbal, even as inclement weather played spoilsport in the morning.

'Symbol of cleanliness'

On the occasion, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a two-page letter, wished devotees undertaking the pilgrimage. He urged them to



Path to devotion: Pilgrims trek to the Amarnath cave shrine using the Baltal route on Friday. IMRAN NISSAR

make the journey a symbol of cleanliness, safety, environmental protection, and support for local livelihoods and nation-building.

He asked pilgrims to maintain cleanliness, hygiene and ensure that the route is clean. "The Amarnath Yatra in Jammu and Kashmir as a reflection of India's rich spiritual and cultural heritage. Devotees across the country eagerly await the opportunity to

undertake the pilgrimage every year. It embodies the spirit of unity in diversity by bringing together devotees from different parts of the country," said Mr. Modi.

'Efficiency, dedication'

Mr. Modi praised the efforts of the Amarnath Shrine Board, the Jammu & Kashmir administration, and security agencies for ensuring the smooth con-

duct of the pilgrimage.

"For several decades, this pilgrimage has been managed with great efficiency and dedication," Mr. Modi said, while referring to the role of the Indian Army, CRPF, Jammu & Kashmir Police, ITBP, BSF, NDRF, doctors, healthcare workers, sanitation staff, administrative officials and volunteers involved in facilitating the pilgrimage.

The Prime Minister said thousands of personnel fulfilled their responsibilities with commitment. He underlined the role of local communities and said the pilgrimage reflected the hospitality of the people of Jammu & Kashmir, while referring to pony operators, porters and palanquin bearers. "Their service on the difficult mountain route exemplifies India's long-standing tradition of selfless service," he added. (With inputs from PTI)

Govt. can acquire religious sites for public projects: HC

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

The Allahabad High Court on Thursday held that the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, protects the religious character of places of worship but does not prohibit the State from acquiring such properties for a genuine public purpose, such as road widening or infrastructure development.

The observation was made by a Division Bench of Justice J.J. Munir and Justice Arun Kumar while dismissing a petition filed by six shopkeepers from Varanasi's Dalmandi area challenging the proposed road-widening project linked to the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor. The petitioners alleged that the project would lead to the demolition of their shops.

The petitioners had also sought a direction restraining the State from acquiring six mosques in the Dal-



Workers demolish a portion of the Mirza Karimullah Beg Mosque during a road-widening drive in Varanasi on Wednesday. PTI

mandi area - Anjuman Intezamia Masjid, Masjid Rangile Shah, Masjid Ali Raza Khan, Masjid Karimullah Baig, Masjid Nisarman and Masjid Sangamar - as they claimed those mosques had existed before August 15, 1947.

They argued that any acquisition of these mosques would violate the Places of Worship Act. Rejecting the contention, the court held that the 1991 law was enacted to maintain the religious

character of places of worship as they existed on August 15, 1947 and does not restrict the State's power to acquire land for a legitimate public purpose.

"Act of 1991 prohibits the conversion of place of worship of one religious denomination into another. It does not derogate from the State's authority to acquire any place of religious worship for a secular and public purpose," the Bench observed.

THE CROSSWORD+ 14837 (set by Arden)

Solve this puzzle online and access more puzzles at <https://thehindu.com/crosswords>

SCAN TO PLAY

ACROSS

- Cheer about Oscar, it reverberates twice (6)
- Stays silent on how dad stays married (5,3)
- Concluding comments covering lots of pages on a soft drink (5,4)
- Repetition reviewed during tenure regularly (5)
- Told you to use silent instrument (7)

DOWN

- Race ends - Aintree, perhaps, is an option (8)
- Top of the world, always is in Paris... (7)
- ...instead bifurcated a hacienda, perhaps (9)
- Material gain is unexpected considering everyone's equal (14)
- Hilton, perhaps, is capital (5)
- Losing them makes one go insane (7)
- Spaceman tracking to include the tag-line (6)
- Short book list - find book in a large fancy cover on this subject (7,7)
- "Red China is covered in smog", says Turner (9)
- Space traveller finds a chemical substance (8)
- Mean to collect for example, NO bio-fuel (7)
- I criticize accepting order to quarantine (7)
- Puts up with an alternative to lethargy (6)
- Among strangers, no adult gets legal rights over property (5)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

S	L	I	C	K	L	Y	A	D	V	I	C	E
S	E	T	T	I	N	G	P	L	E	A	S	E
S	L	I	D	E	L	G	R					
P	L	E	A	S	A	N	T	L	I	N	C	H
T	H	E	R	E								
E	X	P	L	O	R	E	R	T	A	N	K	S
O	B	E	Y	D	E	T	E	R	M	I	N	E
S	O	L	I	N	G	D	E	L	I	V	E	R
K	I	T	S									
S	T	Y	L	E	S							

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

To gossip is to sin

It is universally acknowledged that to gossip is to sin. In his Kural, Valluvar says, "It is more virtuous to die than to live as a false tale-bearer, sowing discord." One should not gossip anywhere, anytime, especially in temples, said Tirukudanthai Dr. Venkatesh.

Once there lived a poor but honest pandit whose family was struggling for even one full meal a day. Serendipitously, the local chieftain honoured the pandit and sent him away with a bowl of rice. Happy at the thought of feeding his family, he rushed home and asked his wife to prepare a meal. She joyously prepared a quick meal. Soon their children and the couple had a hot meal, but they fell dead. Yama, the God of Death, was caught in the horns of a dilemma. To whose account should he attribute the untimely death so that the book of sins is balanced? The king had only done a charitable deed and therefore he was not at fault. The pandit merely carried it home, so no fault lay there either. Similarly, the wife prepared the rice into a meal by following standard practices, so she was not at fault either. How did the death itself happen? When the pandit was carrying the rice and rushing home, a drop of poison fell into the bowl from a dead snake carried in its talons by an eagle which flew over the pandit at the exact moment. The eagle was merely living its life, its dharma is to hunt prey. No fault can be laid on the snake that spewed the poison, for it was already dead. While Yama was deliberating, three men were gossiping nearby, all blaming the king for the death of the family of pandits. Yama immediately held them responsible for the death: to gossip is even more heinous than causing death.



Manufacturing justice

Use of AI-fabricated judicial 'precedents' amounts to criminal misconduct

But for its serious implications, a judge relying on Artificial Intelligence (AI) hallucinations to arrive at a judicial determination would have been comical. Given the serious miscarriage of justice that such hallucinations can lead to, if used in the judicial processes, the Supreme Court of India has likened it to methyl isocyanate, the poisonous gas that led to the Bhopal gas tragedy in 1984 – “invisible, insidious, and catastrophic by the time anyone notices”. The Court made these observations while setting aside the orders of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) in an insolvency case after finding that the NCLT had relied on fictitious AI-generated legal citations, a lapse overlooked by the appellate tribunal. This is the latest in a series of interventions by the Court this year, cautioning against the use of AI-generated fictitious judicial precedents in court proceedings. Through its rulings and oral observations, the Court has consistently adopted a strict and cautious approach to the deployment of AI in the justice delivery system. On February 27, the same Bench of Justices P.S. Narasimha and Alok Aradhe took cognisance of a trial court relying on AI-generated fictitious case laws and underlined that it was not merely “an error in decision-making” but amounted to judicial “misconduct”.

The Court has made clear that AI may serve as an assistive tool to improve efficiency, but it can never replace independent human reasoning, judicial discretion or professional accountability. In AI, humanity is encountering what many experts fear might well be an existential question. AI disruption is a known unknown – everyone knows that it is happening but nobody quite knows its extent or implications. There is, however, enough evidence of a combination of human stupidity and deliberate design leading to dangerous social outcomes being derived from AI. Human oversight is the essential counter to these dangers. The Court has said that presenting fabricated, machine-generated judgments to a court constitutes professional misconduct for advocates and a serious lapse of duty for judges; and any judgment influenced by an iota of fake or hallucinated AI material is “no decision in the eyes of law”. The draft ‘Regulations for Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Courts, 2026’ prohibits AI in the making of judicial outcomes such as the function of adjudication, sentencing, or deciding bail eligibility and evaluating the credibility of parties or witnesses. Even as the draft is open for public consultation, the Court has directed the Bar Council of India (BCI) to set up a dedicated committee to formulate strict norms and define disciplinary actions for lawyers who cite unverified AI material. Justice must be done and seen; not hallucinated.

Counting cancer

Making cancer a notifiable disease at the national level is the way forward

What's good for the goose is surely good for the geese. What the States will benefit from, the country could too. In India, cancer is not a notifiable disease at the national level, keeping with the Health Ministry's position that such notification is only for communicable diseases. Population-based cancer registries and hospital-based cancer registries are currently the only national tool at the disposal of the Centre to count cancer cases. Unfortunately, these registries cover about 10%-16% of the population, and have an urban, government health care set-up skew. However, several States have taken the lead on this front, making cancer a notifiable disease within their boundaries. Telangana is the latest to join the list of States that have made cancer a notifiable disease, bringing the total number of States doing so to 17.

With the Global Cancer Observatory (affiliated to the World Health Organization) projecting an estimated increase of 1.05 million cases between 2022 (1.41 million) and 2045 (2.46 million), the rise is expected to be a staggering over 74%. Given these projections, thanks to an increasing life span and ageing demographics, changes in lifestyle and diet, it becomes all the more important to be armed with data and get ready for vanguard action from a public health point of view. While State action can, to an extent, solve the data question, any benefit thus derived from notifying health authorities of every single case of cancer, it cannot become a rubric by which the nation can contour its cancer control programme. Apart from existing registries covering mostly urban and semi-urban posts, care in India is also delivered in good measure through the private sector and that data set is not uniformly captured. The Indian government must pay heed to its own counsel, the Indian Council of Medical Research, National Centre for Disease Informatics and Research (now ICMR-NINE) had recommended that cancer be made a notifiable disease years ago. It is a fact that establishing cancer as a notifiable disease will mean a sudden increase in the number of cases being recorded, but it must not be considered a liability. Instead, it is merely part of the process of crafting a studied, and evidence-based response – health care and information, education, and communication (IEC) – to cancer at the country level. While bold advances in research and treatment methodologies have retrieved cancer from the fear and the utter helplessness surrounding it, the heart of the issue remains the lack of data. Taking lessons from the States, the Centre must recalibrate and make cancer a notifiable disease in India.

Ever since 1945, the dominance of the United States and western Europe in world affairs has been taken for granted, largely because of their military power, technological innovations, and financial strength. This situation continued until fairly recently. However, the rise of China, along with the growing prominence of certain “middle powers” in recent years, has begun to dent – though not eclipse – the image of the U.S. as a superpower.

As China's influence over world affairs has grown, driven by its technological and innovative capabilities and its stranglehold over scarce strategic resources, the supremacy of the U.S. and the West has, however, appeared to wane. Many experts, nevertheless, continued to believe that there was still time before the West faced an effective challenge to its leadership. Concerns had, no doubt, grown about the U.S.'s structural vulnerabilities, though few expected that a country such as Iran would effectively deal a mortal blow to the image of the U.S. as the world's leading power.

The (now deceased) Iranian Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, had once observed that, while Americans constantly threatened war, they lacked “staying power”. This has now become apparent in ample measure. By contrast, in the course of the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), Iran's Islamic regime demonstrated remarkable endurance, resilience, and determination to preserve the regime by all means necessary. U.S. President Donald Trump's failure to recognise this aspect has since cost him dearly. One leader who is seen to have emerged from the ashes of the U.S.-Iran conflict is Ali Khamenei's presumed successor, his son Mojtaba Khamenei, who is presently viewed by many as a “living martyr”.

The new Iran-U.S. framework

Even prior to embarking upon substantive negotiations in Switzerland on all contentious issues, the U.S. and Iran entered into an “initial deal” (mid-June 2026) to end the war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz. The announcement of the talks was cautiously welcomed by world leaders, though all agreed that difficult negotiations lay ahead. Prior to the formal talks, a 14-point Memorandum of Understanding was, interestingly enough, signed by Mr. Trump at the Palace of Versailles, France, on June 17, 2026, evoking comparisons with the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, which is widely regarded as having imposed humiliating terms on Germany following the First World War.

The June 17 agreement was widely criticised as little more than a latter-day endorsement of the status quo that had existed prior to the U.S.-Israel strikes on Iran, on February 28, 2026. The terms of the agreement included the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, the lifting of the U.S. blockade, and a vague commitment by the U.S. and its regional partners to initiate plan, for at least \$300 billion, for the reconstruction and economic



M.K. Narayanan

Former Director, Intelligence Bureau, a former National Security Adviser, and a former Governor of West Bengal

Power realignments may follow the United States-Iran deal

development of Iran – the U.S. has since declared that no U.S. funds would flow directly to Iran. If so, this commitment could possibly refer to the release of Iranian assets that have been frozen by the U.S. over the years. The agreement also reportedly contains an important pledge by Iran not to develop a nuclear weapon.

The talks in Switzerland soon thereafter seemed little more than a formality, with the U.S. claiming, following their successful conclusion, that it had achieved a major milestone by persuading Tehran to allow inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency back into the country, thereby opening a pathway to international monitoring of its nuclear programme. But Iran is said to have told its state media that Tehran had made “no new commitments” on nuclear inspections. The conclusion of the talks appeared to many observers to represent a “desperately needed truce” for the U.S., as it was followed shortly thereafter by the lifting of U.S. oil sanctions on Iran and the issuance of a 60-day waiver authorising the sale and transport of Iranian crude oil and petroleum products.

Newspaper headlines across the world had little to say about the deal and instead harped on the enormity of the setback to the image of the U.S. resulting from its coming to terms with Iran. Perhaps the most telling headline appeared on the front page of The Times of India (June 19, 2026): “Versailles II: Trump rushes where historians would dread to tread”. Apart from the fact that the U.S. and its President have been excoriated for what critics have termed the “surrender blunder”, the reality is that the deal has brought the U.S. few tangible benefits.

Intrinsic to, or as part of the deal are several other aspects of considerable interest, apart from sanctions relief for Iran's oil exports, viz., the possibility of Iran assuming a formal role in managing traffic through the Strait of Hormuz and, (potentially), charging transit fees for passage through the Strait. Questions remain, however, regarding the safety of shipping routes, vessel security procedures, naval protection, and emergency response mechanisms. Many of these issues remain to be clarified.

The deal is important, even though its wording remains inchoate. It is widely portrayed as a deal between unequals, with Goliath having been worsted – or at least caught unawares by David. It also does not read like a standard diplomatic document. The implications of a superpower – the world's leading nuclear power – conceding ground to a battered Iran are huge and are unlikely to be lost on nations and major powers across the globe.

Israel-U.S. relations fracture

It also entails an important rupture in relations between the U.S. and Israel. Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's devious plans to inveigle the U.S. in a conflict in West Asia, which was aimed at decimating Iran and establishing Israel's

undisputed supremacy over the region has now become part of the detritus of history. The Israel-U.S. rupture, unless Tel Aviv bends substantially hereafter, could alter power equations in West Asia, leading to either an unsettled peace or further wranglings among Arabs, Iranians and Israelis.

What is also quite plausible is that Iran's claims to have bested the Great Satan, could lead the new Iranian regime, now increasingly under the tutelage of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) hotheads rather than the Ayatollahs, to revive conflicts with other Arab nations, apart from Israel itself. Such ‘adventurism’ could lead to more disparate conflicts in a vital region, which incorporates a critical artery of global energy supplies.

Many imponderables are still present. For one, the U.S.-Iran Agreement is almost certain to give a boost to hardliners in Iran who may believe that they have managed to ‘defeat’ the mighty U.S., signalling scope for a still more hardline policy, vis-à-vis not only Israel, the U.S., and other Arab States in the region but also their own people as well. For another, the IRGC, already on the ascendant, could feel more emboldened to act with impunity, having a new Ayatollah identified with it. The impact of all this would be felt not only in Iran but also in countries with large Shia populations, including India. A worsening of Shia-Sunni tensions in different pockets across the globe cannot, therefore, be ignored.

For a third, Israel and its leaders could be expected to behave like ‘wounded tigers’. Their ploy of inveigling the U.S. into supporting their bid for supremacy in West Asia having failed – and with the U.S. President distancing himself from Mr. Netanyahu – they could be expected to embark on a fresh bout of ‘adventurism’, especially with their Arab neighbours and across West Asia. This could aggravate tensions and undermine the fragile peace that has existed since the Abraham Accords. Furthermore, with the U.S. seen as a major loser and its influence across the region set to wane, Gulf nations may be prompted to take a hard look at relying on the U.S. for protection against external threats, including a resurgent Iran. Interestingly, there could also be growing demands to reduce the presence of U.S. troops in West Asia.

Radical groups could regain ground

Neither Russia nor China have gained much from the conflict, even as both claim to have supported Iran and some of the other Arab countries. What the world needs to examine closely is whether this level of uncertainty could lead to the re-emergence of well-organised terrorist organisations and entities such as al Qaeda, capable of even greater destruction than their forebears. They could well become the forerunners of many more disparate Arab groups and forces centred in West Asia, capable of extending their activities from Africa and parts of Asia to Europe, if not the U.S. itself.

Building water security in a rapidly drying India

Indian cities – from Bengaluru to Mussoorie (Uttarakhand) – are reeling under severe water stress. June saw a monsoon rainfall deficit of over 40%. Delhi is facing a severe shortage, and water supply has plummeted to about 70% of the total demand of 1,250 million gallons per day. Research by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) further finds that 11 out of 15 major river basins in India are experiencing water stress, with annual water availability below 1,700 m³ per person. Several of them, including the Krishna, Cauvery, Mahi, and Tapi basins, are below the water scarcity threshold of 1,000 m³ per person.

A recent report by the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH) warns of global water bankruptcy. Several river basins are polluted and closed, with no outflow to the sea. Aquifers are being depleted beyond safe limits. Nearly three-quarters of the global population lives in water-insecure countries, with four billion people facing severe water scarcity for at least one month a year.

Water infrastructure gaps

India has an uneven distribution of water resources. With 4% of the world's water resources supporting 18% of the population, historically, the country has lived and grown with water uncertainty. While schemes such as the Jal Jeevan Mission and Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana have helped develop water supply infrastructure, concerns remain regarding the poor upkeep of existing infrastructure, inadequate wastewater treatment facilities, substantial conveyance losses, high levels of water pollution, and low cost recovery.

There are four interrelated actions that can help India navigate the ‘state of bankruptcy’ to become water secure.

First, invest in climate-proofing water systems



Nitin Bassi

Fellow at the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW)

The monsoon cannot fix India's water problem; policy could

through granular climate risk assessments of water infrastructure and services. The CEEW's analysis of India's urban flood risk management shows that such assessments help prioritise investments in high to very high-risk locations, including coastal and low-lying areas such as Thane (Maharashtra) and Navsari (Gujarat), or areas with critical infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, and electricity grids, as seen in Ahmedabad. These assessments are especially important for cash-strapped urban local bodies and panchayats. Cities should leverage existing mechanisms like the Urban Challenge Fund (UCF) to finance them—for instance, Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh) recently secured ₹1,501 crore under the UCF for water supply and drainage, part of which could support water risk assessments.

Second, enable water reuse for non-potable purposes in urban areas. Shifting from a linear to a circular approach to water use is essential to reduce pressure on freshwater resources. Used water can be treated and reused for activities such as car washing, landscaping, and cooling data centres. City-level reuse planning is key to achieving this. The Thane Municipal Corporation is adopting a scientific approach to scale up treated wastewater reuse, including for construction, to reduce its annual freshwater deficit of 53 million litres per day and generate revenue. According to CEEW analysis, the economic opportunity from the sale of treated wastewater could reach ₹3 lakh crore and generate 1,00,000 additional jobs by 2047.

Third, scale up micro-irrigation systems, including drip and sprinkler technologies that deliver water to crops more efficiently than flood irrigation. Expanding these systems beyond the current 20% coverage of India's potential 72 million hectares of irrigated area requires large-scale interventions. First, the CEEW's Gujarat research shows that micro-irrigation

subsidies should be redesigned for small and marginal farmers by using 0.4 hectares instead of one hectare as the base unit. Second, farmers need support to shift to low-water, higher-value crops such as horticulture and oilseeds to recover costs, as seen in Andhra Pradesh's Rayalaseema region. Third, low-cost insurance with faster claims, including through a strengthened Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, can help smallholders manage climate and crop risks.

Close water data gaps

Finally, generate data at the river basin level to improve decision-making. India has good data on water availability, but limited data on withdrawals, losses, and consumption at the basin scale. This makes it difficult to assess actual water use, gauge efficiency gains, or allocate water judiciously – often leading one sector to gain at the expense of others, while the lack of data encourages “free riding”, with users extracting as much as the source allows. Artificial Intelligence-based monitoring of water conveyance infrastructure can help detect and measure losses and also generate data. Cities such as Delhi and Bhubaneswar (Odisha) are installing smart bulk water meters to identify and reduce physical losses during distribution. Equally important is analysing end-user consumption by scaling up smart metering and using advanced water accounting tools. India's rollout of over 4.93 crore smart electricity meters can serve as a model for the water sector.

Water is an economic resource – it powers lives, livelihoods, and ecosystems. Reversing water bankruptcy will be the foundation of social welfare. Political will, transparent governance, and societal trust are the levers. Pull them, and India can still turn the tide toward a water-secure future.

The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Judicial reliance on AI

It is astounding that the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), Mumbai, used an AI-generated case law without verifying its authenticity and delivered an order under Section 7 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) in a ₹200 crore credit facility

case against a bank (Front page, July 3). The incident shows that the NCLTs are not fully aware of the pitfalls of using AI indiscriminately. The temptation for judicial authorities to rely on AI may be considerable, but the Supreme Court of India's advice to adopt “zero

tolerance” towards reliance on AI should be scrupulously followed by all courts in the interest of the judicial system. **Kosaraju Chandramouli,** Hyderabad

Meaningful advertising

It was interesting to read the column “From the

Archives: Fifty Years Ago” on the necessity of conviction in advertisements. Fifty years on, despite the

availability of advanced techniques and technologies, the quality of advertisements has only

Corrections & Clarifications

In a report, “GST revenues up 14% in June amid dependence on imports” (Page 1, July 2), a sentence should have read: “Revenue from imports... grew nearly 35% in June 2026 to ₹0.6 lakh crore”, and not ₹6 lakh crore.

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deteriorated, with many becoming loud, gaudy, and meaningless. There is a glaring excess instead of dignified moderation.

Balasubramaniam Pavani, Secunderabad

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



CBSE directed all affiliated schools to implement the three-language formula under NEP 2020, from Class 6. The policy requires that two of the three languages be native Indian languages. Students attend school for the new academic year. G.N. RAO

Inside India's language conundrum

The CBSE's move to implement the National Education Policy 2020's three-language formula from Class 6 has caused confusion across the country. The transition has led to teacher losses, curriculum disruptions, and concerns from parents, students, and foreign embassies. **Maitri Porecha** reports on the many challenges in implementing the three-language formula in a country as diverse as India

When the summer break came to an end, 10-year-old Adya Pandey, a Class 6 student of Seth Anandram Jaipuria School in Greater Noida West, packed her bag for school. She stuffed a bunch of books inside, including her French textbook, but then, on a sudden realisation, pulled it out and tossed it on the table.

"It hasn't sunk in yet that I won't be studying French at school any more," she said. Adya, who studies in an English-medium school, had been learning French and Hindi. She had chosen French as her third language a year ago, when she was in Class 5. In April, when the academic session of 2026-27 began, she attended French classes at school and diligently finished studying three chapters from her textbook.

However, in the same month, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) directed all affiliated schools, with altogether about 40 lakh children, to implement the three-language formula under the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, from Class 6. The policy requires that two of the three languages be native Indian languages (*Bhartiya Bhasha*).

Following this, many English-medium schools, including Adya's, issued circulars in May saying they would discontinue foreign languages such as French as the third language. The CBSE also considers English a foreign language, despite it being one of the 22 official languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

In place of foreign languages, many schools decided to offer Sanskrit as the third language. A circular from Delhi Public School in Greater Noida West explained, "Because of the linguistic diversity of our learners, implementation of any other native Indian language is not logistically viable. Therefore, as a school, we have decided to offer Sanskrit as the third language."

Adya said she was shocked to receive a circular from her school asking students to stop learning German and French at school. "Around 25 of us had chosen French, 20 had opted for German, and only 15 had chosen Sanskrit. Now, all 60 of us will have to learn Sanskrit," she said.

Her mother, Monika, said that Sanskrit has become largely obsolete today. "Adya can fluently recite shlokas from Hindu scriptures such as the *Ramcharitmanas* and the *Hanuman Chalisa*. These are the values we inculcate at home, but I believe learning a foreign language will help her from a career perspective," said Monika.

The three-language formula proposed by the NEP, 2020, which mandates that students learn at least two native Indian languages, has departed from the previous policy of 1968, which had emphasised the study of Hindi, English, and a modern Indian language (preferably one of the southern languages) in Hindi-speaking States, and Hindi, English, and a regional language in the non-Hindi speaking States.

The hasty roll-out of the policy, and the subsequent change in rules by the government, have caused chaos in CBSE schools across the country, with parents and students struggling with curriculum shifts and shortage of teachers.

Backlash and brief respite

Bani, 12, is a Class 8 student at Delhi Public School, Vasant Kunj. She was admitted under the Economically Weaker Section quota and has been studying French for the last four years. Her father, Navraj, works as a driver, while her moth-



Adya can fluently recite shlokas from Hindu scriptures. These are the values we inculcate at home, but I believe learning a foreign language will help her from a career perspective.

MONIKA
Mother of Adya Pandey, a Class 6 CBSE student

er, Saraswati, takes up cooking and housekeeping jobs to help support the family.

In May, Navraj was among the many parents who moved the Supreme Court challenging another CBSE circular, issued on May 15. It stated that all Class 9 students – including those who had previously been studying foreign languages – would instead study three languages, two of which must be native to India. Until this circular was issued, Class 9 students were required to study only two languages.

Although the directive applied only to Class 9, many schools forced students in Classes 7 and 8 to drop foreign languages as well, say parents. After the Court refused to stay the CBSE circular, the hopes of students of continuing to study the foreign language of their choice were dashed.

On June 25, however, following a backlash, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan clarified that the CBSE would relax its requirement for the present students of Classes 7, 8, and 9 to switch abruptly, mid-session, from studying a foreign language to studying a native Indian one. However, Classes 7, 8, and 9 students will still have to study a third language native to India.

For instance, if a student studying in an English-medium school chose French as her second language, she would, as per the May circular, have had to drop French and learn two languages native to India. But following the clarification, she can continue learning French but will still have to study a native tongue, which can be Hindi or any other regional language.

Bani falls under this category. "I am glad I can continue learning the language I have been learning since Class 4," she said.

This indecisiveness on the part of the Ministry of Education regarding the language policy has caused confusion across schools. After the CBSE stated that Class 9 students would have to switch mid-session from foreign to native languages, many schools, such as Heritage Xperiential Learning School in Gurugram, either let go of their foreign language teachers or reassigned them to teach other subjects.

A principal from a private CBSE English-medium school in Mangaluru, Karnataka, said, "Earlier, we offered French, but after the CBSE circular in May, we let go of the French teacher. We also had an option for students to learn Konkani, but since we could not find a qualified Konkani teacher, we dropped it from the list. Now, we offer only English, Hindi, Kannada, and Sanskrit."



Around 40 lakh students study across various CBSE schools in India. SRIBHARATH G.

CBSE-affiliated schools in Puducherry had dropped French from the 2026-27 curriculum. This raised concerns over the livelihoods of French teachers in the Union Territory where French enjoys constitutional recognition.

Foreign languages impacted

According to data accessed by *The Hindu*, about 4.5 lakh students in India study French in school, while nearly 1.5 lakh learn German. In many schools, students begin learning these foreign languages as early as Classes 4, 5, or 6.

CBSE has stated that it has relaxed norms only for students in Classes 7, 8, and 9 who have already chosen a foreign language, but students in Class 6 will have to opt to learn three languages, of which two will have to be native to India. This essentially means that foreign language teaching will eventually be phased out of CBSE schools.

This decision has ruffled feathers in diplomatic circles. Sources said that the German and French embassies, which invest "significant funds" running into millions of euros in developing teaching infrastructure, preparing course materials, training teachers, and conducting language exams jointly "pushed back" against the Indian government's decision. A spokesperson of the German embassy said to *The Hindu*, "The embassy has confirmed that it is in contact with the Indian government on the issue."

The Centre's decision to reduce the role of foreign languages such as French and German in schools appears to be at odds with its broader efforts to strengthen educational and diplomatic ties with European countries.

Earlier this year, during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Germany, he and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz noted the growing number of Indian students pursuing higher education in Germany and welcomed the creation of an Indo-German Comprehensive Roadmap on Higher Education, according to a statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs.

"Germany is an attractive market for skilled Indian labour and there is an ambitious plan in place there for the migration of skilled labour," said a source. "Learning German is important for this community. How can you fulfil their ambitions if you don't support foreign language learning?"

Anuradha Karkun, a French language trainer and teacher based in the National Capital Region, said, "Students perceive learning foreign languages like French and German useful as it also helps them gain admission in renowned universities abroad. A working knowledge of the country's language in which a student wishes to pursue higher education is favourable even if the course is being taught in English."

Karkun is also a qualified examiner for the Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française (DEL F). The DELF and the DALF (Diplôme Approfondi de Langue Française) are official international French language diplomas issued by the French Ministry of Education and are recognised for study, work, and immigration in French-speaking countries.

She explained that DELF certificates are in high demand among school students. According to data cited by *The Hindu*, around 11,000 candidates take the DELF examinations each year, including about 4,000 students who appear for DELF Junior, designed for school learners.

"Candidates as young as 11 years old (Class 6) prepare for DELF A1 levels," said Karkun. "By the time they are in Class 12, many progress to fairly advanced levels of B2. Early learning is made possible because they are already studying French at school. Learning a foreign language, in this case French, enables students to gain a broader intercultural world view empowering them as future ambassadors of India and global citizens."

The cost of compulsion

The NEP 2020 states that it offers greater flexibility in the three-language formula and that no language will be imposed on any State. It says that the three languages learned by students will be determined by the choices of States, regions, and the students themselves, provided that at least two of the three languages are native to India. However, data indicate that the implementa-



We respect Sanskrit as a language of immense historical and classical value. But for children of Nagaland, studying Sanskrit as their third language will not help them connect with their Angami grandmother, their Konyak grandfather, or the oral stories of their own community.

PRINCIPAL
CBSE school, Nagaland

tion of the three-language policy varies widely across States. According to an analysis of the share of schools based on languages taught at the primary stage (Classes 1-5), conducted by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in 2009, Hindi-speaking States largely opt for Sanskrit as the third language in school. This is the last such data available on language preferences in schools across India, as no follow-up survey was conducted by the NCERT. It is not available in the public domain and was accessed by *The Hindu* through sources.

This is largely why implementation of the three-language formula under the NEP, 2020, has seen intense political opposition from some States. Tamil Nadu's resistance to learning three languages dates back to the pre-Independence era. The 1968 draft of the NEP proposed that regions in southern India learn a north Indian language, and vice versa, in order to foster "national integration"; however, Tamil Nadu rejected this position and excluded the proposed introduction of Hindi from its curriculum. Six decades later, little has changed. Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay has said that students in the State will learn only two languages, with Tamil and English being the primary choices.

Anita Rampal, who was Professor and Dean at the Faculty of Education, Delhi University, said Tamil Nadu's two-language formula is not, as is often assumed, Tamil and English, but rather the mother tongue and English. "It is important to note that even after the implementation of the Tamil Nadu Tamil Learning Act, 2006, and the Tamil Nadu Tamil Learning Rules, 2012, minority-language schools, such as Urdu schools, are exempted from learning Tamil," she explained.

Even States such as Kerala, which have generally supported the three-language formula, are now facing uncertainty over the latest CBSE decision. Many elite and private CBSE schools in Kerala previously allowed students to opt for popular foreign languages such as French, German, or Arabic – sometimes in place of Hindi or Malayalam – given the State's strong links with the Gulf region. This will no longer be possible in the coming years as the CBSE is set to implement the revised three-language framework prospectively from Class 6 in the 2026-27 academic year, eventually extending it to Class 10 by 2030-31.

For State Board schools, Telangana has typically followed the three-language policy, with an emphasis on the mandatory learning of Telugu. Alongside Telugu, students can choose any two languages from English, Hindi, and Urdu.

However, policies that mandate language instruction often face resistance, and the Telangana (Compulsory Teaching and Learning of Telugu in Schools) Act, 2018, is no exception.

"We were unable to fully implement the policy, especially due to resistance from students and schools affiliated to central and international boards, since its enactment in 2018," said a senior official in the Telangana School Education Department. The latest CBSE directive on the mandatory three-language policy for Class 6 has now paved the way for the State government to fully implement the aforementioned Act.

The infrastructure hurdle

Mostly, challenges in implementing the three-language formula arise from a lack of adequately trained teachers and the unavailability of learning material across regional languages.

According to the Unified District Information System for Education 2023-24, the government's primary management information system for school education, 61.6% schools across India teach three languages. The rest (38.4%) teach either one or two languages.

The State Board in Uttar Pradesh, for instance, had expressed interest in introducing the three-language formula for students from Class 9 onwards last year. However, officials told *The Hindu* that the policy has not been implemented in the academic years 2025-26 and 2026-27. In the case of south Indian languages, State Education Department officials said there are very few available teachers. "We had 17 students of Kannada, 10 students of Tamil, and 133 students of Telugu registered with us in the academic year 2025-26. These students appeared as private candidates and prepared on their own for language exams," said Bhagwati Singh, Secretary, Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad, the State Board of U.P. entrusted to conduct exams for Classes 10 and 12.

Nagaland in the north-east, which has a distinct socio-linguistic context, has also expressed resistance to the three-language formula. This is partly because the State and Centre have yet to provide adequate learning infrastructure for classrooms comprising children from over 30 different linguistic backgrounds.

"Naga students find it difficult to follow Hindi," said a principal of a CBSE school in Nagaland. "Schools in Nagaland seeking a workable path within the current policy framework are facing a difficult dilemma and are converging on a troubling default – Sanskrit. We respect Sanskrit as a language of immense historical and classical value. But we must be candid: for children of Nagaland, studying Sanskrit as their third language will not help them connect with their Angami grandmother, their Konyak grandfather, or the oral stories of their own community."

With inputs from B. Pradeep in Hyderabad, Mayank Kumar in Uttar Pradesh, and Rashmi Patil in Mangaluru

KARNATAKA



Watery hurdle: People struggling to navigate a road filled with sewage at Hennur. ALLEN EGENUSE J.



When nature falls: A tree that fell on vehicles at Cunningham Road on July 14, 2023. K. MURALI KUMAR



Big branch theory: Hanging branches at R.T. Nagar pose a safety risk. ALLEN EGENUSE J.



Not so majestic: A withered tree in Basavanagudi poses a risk to passers-by, especially during heavy rain and strong winds. SUDHAKARA JAIN

Help from above: Fire and Emergency Services personnel during an operation to rescue people trapped in a car submerged at the flooded K.R. Circle underpass on May 21, 2023. K. MURALI KUMAR



A reinforcement structure for a metro pillar collapsed on the Outer Ring Road near HBR Layout, killing a mother and a child on January 10, 2023. K. MURALI KUMAR

Danger lurking all around

For six consecutive years, Bengaluru has recorded the highest number of deaths owing to civic negligence among metropolitan cities. Has much changed on the ground with major administrative overhauls? **Chetan B.C.** explores.

It was around 8 p.m. on July 14, 2023, when tragedy struck 18-year-old Rajashekar K.V. He was walking on Cunningham Road in the heart of the city when a huge peepal tree fell on him, causing severe pelvic injuries that left his lower body immobilised.

Rajashekar had come to Bengaluru from Chickballapur just 20 days earlier to pursue an aviation course, and had begun his training. His father, Venkataravanappa, who is physically challenged, works as a waterman at the panchayat office, while his mother is a daily wage labourer.

Speaking to *The Hindu* three years later, Venkataravanappa said Rajashekar is yet to recover fully and can barely walk 10 metres. He has undergone eight surgeries so far, and one more is likely.

Rajashekar, however, remains optimistic about getting back on his feet and supporting his family within a few years.

He says the pain persists, especially while travelling or trying to walk, but what hurts more is the feeling of betrayal by the now-dissolved Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP). The family's combined monthly income is between ₹20,000 and ₹22,000. Rajashekar's medicines cost around ₹2,000 a month. He has to visit the hospital once every month and can travel only by taxi, which costs between ₹5,000 and ₹6,000 for each visit. In addition, the family has to bear consultation expenses.

Choked by concrete

The tree that crashed on Rajashekar had been pruned recently and was reportedly healthy. However, according to sources, its base had been choked by concretisation. The larger concern, however, is that no reactive measure or corrective intervention was planned or initiated, and the incident was treated as a one-off accident.

Tree-fall and branch-snapping incidents have continued across the city, claiming more than five lives since. In 2025 alone, three people died in tree branch-snapping incidents. In a recent case, a 52-year-old man slipped into a coma after a branch snapped and struck his head. He is currently under observation in the intensive care unit (ICU).

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data suggests that Bengaluru has become India's deadliest metropolitan city for deaths arising from civic negligence. For six consecutive years, the city has recorded the highest number of deaths ow-

ing to civic body negligence among metropolitan cities. According to the data, Bengaluru recorded 17 such deaths in 2024, 20 in 2023, 21 in 2022, and 31 in 2021.

Although the data shows a declining trend, Bengaluru remains the only metropolitan city to record such deaths consistently year after year. Significantly, people have lost their lives in more than eight different ways linked to civic body negligence.

Civic activists point to a recurring pattern in which such incidents have no meaningful consequences or a concrete plan for corrective action. Most cases have ended with compensation, the suspension of lower-ranking officials, and criminal cases that continue to move at a snail's pace. The broader systemic problem remains, they argue, as civic bodies continue to prioritise short-term responses over addressing the root causes.

Repeated incidents, no changes

Clement Jayakumar of Mahadevapura Task Force, a civic group, points out that despite repeated incidents, the complaint-based working culture continues, suggesting no changes.

"There is no mechanism for officials to visit sites and identify problems that need fixing. It is only when a complaint crops up that the issue is attended to and resolved," Clement noted.

For instance, he explained, civic bodies release data on the number of potholes they have repaired within a specific period and those that are yet to be filled. The figures they rely on come from the Sahaya portal and lists shared by the Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP). No proactive on-ground inspection is carried out by field staff. As a result, this complaint-based approach to repairs leaves several hazards on the streets unaddressed, leading to injuries and even deaths.

Murali K., a resident of Rajarajeshwari Nagar, pointed to the failure of civic bodies in understanding the sense of urgency. "Even when there is an urgent need to prune a tree, there will always be a delay in getting permission. You need to visit their office, fill out a form, and then wait for them to arrive," he said.

Sujith Cariappa, a member of the Social Amenities Association, pointed out the widespread flouting of protocols during infrastructure works. "Safety measures at work sites are mandatory, especially for pedestrians and commuters who pass through these areas. Contractors fail to make proper temporary arrangements to eliminate in-

convenience to the public, often leading to injuries," he said.

A senior officer from the Forest wing admitted that safety protocols are often flouted because they require coordination between different departments, which rarely happens. "Contractors are usually in a hurry to finish the work, while clearances and compliances from multiple departments take time. So, they simply write a letter and begin work without waiting for the other stakeholders to do their part," he said.

The officer pointed out that there should be a dedicated online platform with time-bound disposal of requests to facilitate coordination among departments, but no such mechanism exists.

Accountability and the vicious cycle

A volunteer of Whitefield Rising points out that infrastructure failures are often the result of fragmented responsibility. "With multiple agencies working on the same public spaces without adequate coordination or oversight, poor execution compounds over time, creating persistent hazards on our streets," she said.

Clement added that although engineers are assigned responsibility for wards, their job descriptions do not make them accountable for specific works or preventive maintenance. This creates room to shift responsibility in the event of mishaps, often resulting in no action being taken.

Both the volunteer and Clement describe this as a vicious cycle. When a death occurs owing to civic negligence, it is typically followed by an announcement of compensation, the formation of a committee to identify the cause, the suspension of a lower-ranking officer, and departmental enquiries whose findings are rarely made public. Only in a few cases that attract widespread public attention, a criminal case is registered.

Once the committee reports are submitted, their recommendations are implemented, audits are conducted, and surveys continue for a few weeks. These efforts are widely publicised through the media, but as public outrage gradually subsides, so does civic action. They stress that the root causes are never addressed, while quick fixes are prioritised. As a result, no meaningful reforms emerge, leading to the repeated occurrence of the same problems.

A missing law

The Whitefield Rising volunteer stressed that there is no comprehensive civic liability law to fix

accountability in cases of damages or injuries caused by civic negligence. Such a law is crucial because accountability is questioned and fixed only in cases of serious negligence, while thousands of incidents causing injuries to citizens go unreported.

The absence of a liability law forces aggrieved citizens to file civil suits seeking compensation if civic bodies or government agencies fail to offer it. However, according to advocates who spoke to *The Hindu*, most citizens do not pursue civil litigation.

Narasimhamurthy, a human rights activist and advocate, explained that the other option is to pursue criminal proceedings, which are unlikely to be initiated even in cases involving serious injuries.

"Government agencies always try to avoid cases by promising compensation, after which people give up. In many instances, those affected belong to vulnerable sections of society, so they are reluctant to file cases and fight prolonged legal battles," he explained.

Narasimhamurthy argued that the compensation offered by government agencies is often inadequate and that pursuing a legal case could result in better compensation for the aggrieved party. However, he added that citizens generally fear taking legal action.

Besides, criminal cases take a long time to be investigated. In 2023, Bathula Bhanu Rekha, a 23-year-old techie from Andhra Pradesh, drowned in the flooded K.R. Circle underpass in central Bengaluru. A senior police officer told *The Hindu* that the chargesheet was filed only at the beginning of 2025, two years later, as investigators had to wait a long time for prosecution sanction. Ironically, the same underpass was completely flooded again last month.

Problems continue on the ground. Meanwhile, the reality on the ground remains the same. State Highway 35 between Varthur and Sarjapur has been undergoing road widening for the past year. A visit to the stretch revealed numerous hazards, including dug-up roads, broken footpaths, mounds of mud, and snapped cables.

Similarly, stretches such as Srinivagilu Road and Hennur-Bagalur Road, where white-topping works are under way, remain in poor condition, with construction equipment left unattended and drainage slabs removed, creating conditions that could potentially lead to tragedy.

Audits and surveys intended to identify long-term solutions have shown little progress. The tree census has been under way for the past six years but is yet to be completed. More recently, a proposal for scientific tree management was prepared, but the file continues to gather dust as the final decision is still pending.

Accident blackspots, which arise from engineering defects, require coordinated action by multiple agencies. In 2023, Bengaluru had 60 identified blackspots. According to the latest report, the number has increased to 63. While three blackspots were rectified over the past two years, six new ones were added during the same period.

Staff shortage, an issue

Despite the mounting challenges, the newly formed Bengaluru corporations are grappling with a shortage of engineers and staff, according to a Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) official. A city corporation commissioner also pointed out that when a single official is burdened with multiple responsibilities, fixing accountability becomes very difficult.

The shortage extends to the forest wing as well. The city's entire green cover is managed by just 19 officials, including Deputy Conservators of Forests (DCF), Assistant Conservators of Forests (ACF), and Range Forest Officers (RFO).

In this situation, mishaps continue to recur. Just a week after a motorist slipped into a coma after a tree branch fell on his head, a 24-year-old man and a woman sitting on a bench at B.M. Kaval Park in Indiranagar were struck by a falling tree on June 29. As these administrative issues continue to plague the city, victims suffer in silence, hoping their ordeal will eventually come to an end.

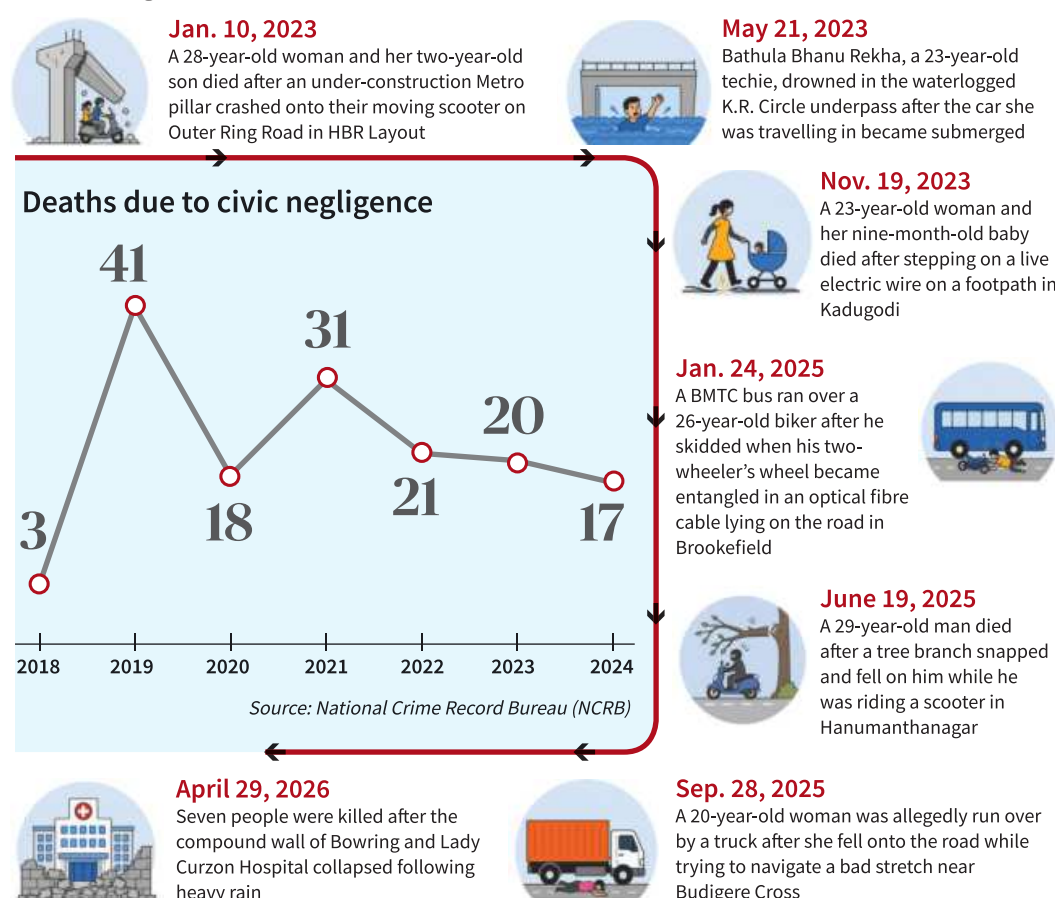


The aftermath: The area around Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital has been restricted following the wall collapse. ALLEN EGENUSE J.

There is no mechanism for officials to visit sites and identify problems that need fixing. It is only when a complaint crops up that the issue is attended to and resolved

CLEMENT JAYAKUMAR,
Mahadevapura Task Force

Past tragedies



UTTARAKHAND



Famous for a natural snow formation that resembles the sacred Hindu symbol Om, Om Parvat is inhabited by the indigenous Rung community. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

The Himalayas as a battleground of belief

When Uttarakhand's indigenous Rung community stopped a group from installing a Shivling near Om Parvat, which they consider sacred, the dispute was about far more than an idol. **Ishita Mishra** finds that the Rungs, who worship Shiva in the form of mountains and rivers of the Himalayas, feared the installation would mark the beginning of a larger transformation, which would erode their centuries-old traditions and turn a sacred natural landscape into a commercial pilgrimage site

At an altitude of nearly 5,500 metres in the western Himalayas, where India's frontier dissolves into Tibet and Nepal, rises Om Parvat. The mountain is famous for a natural snow formation that resembles the sacred Hindu symbol Om, which many devotees regard as a manifestation of Lord Shiva. The remote valley is inhabited by the indigenous Rung community who believe in the divinity of Om Parvat.

This month, the community drew a line they felt could not be crossed. On June 15, members of the Shri Adi Kailash Group 2020 Trust, an organisation formed by Hindu devotees from Patna, Nashik, Jodhpur, Surat, and Noida to promote religious and charitable activities, arrived in Uttarakhand's Nabadang. At this viewpoint on Om Parvat, they had planned to install a three-tonne Shivling. This was met with strong opposition from the Rungs. The Shivling, crafted in Rajasthan and transported by truck, was eventually stopped by the district administration at Garbhadhar, a key halt on the Kailash Mansarovar and Adi Kailash pilgrimage routes.

The resistance by the Rungs was dubbed "anti-Hindu" by the members of Adi Kailash Group. But for the community, which inhabits the border valleys of Vyans, Darma, and Chaudans in the Pithoragarh district, behind the action lies a deeper anxiety. Rungs insist that they too are Hindus and devotees of Shiva, but they see and worship him in the natural form of mountains, glaciers, and rivers. Their objection, they say, was not to the Shivling, but to the idea of introducing man-made religious structures into a landscape they already regard as divine.

"A mountain peak does not need a temple to become sacred. A river does not require an idol to be worshipped. The natural form is the deity for us," said Prakash Singh Gunjyal, 67, president of the Rung Kalyan Sanstha, a trust created for the upliftment of Rungs, who prefer calling themselves a community rather than a Schedule Tribe, though that is how they are mentioned in government records. Gunjyal, who retired from the Central Bank of India and served in many tribal areas, said the community comprises some 21,000 people in India and abroad.

"The fear is that once a religious structure enters a sacred landscape, the transformation rarely stops there. First a statue will come, then there will be fencing. Then a donation box will be placed, which will be followed by construction of a temple. Gradually, the land will be encroached upon and the entire landscape will change, leaving behind a distorted history and eroded culture," he said.

Contradictions within

Om Parvat and Adi Kailash are among the most revered pilgrimage sites in the Kumaon region. Until 2020, they were also among the most difficult to reach. A 90-100-kilometre trek from Dharchula, the closest town in the Pithoragarh district, took 7-10 days. Pilgrims had to navigate deep gorges, near-vertical cliff faces, and landslide-prone stretches. The journey itself was considered an act of devotion. That changed when the Border Roads Organisation built and opened

The fear is that once a religious structure enters a sacred landscape, the transformation rarely stops there. First a statue will come, then there will be fencing... Gradually, the land will be encroached upon..."

PRAKASH SINGH GUNJYAL, President of Rung Kalyan Sanstha

roads to the region.

"Since the roads have come up, these valleys have witnessed dramatic changes; there is growing religious tourism," said Jaman Singh Routela, 76, who retired from the Reserve Bank of India. "The influx of devotees has created economic opportunities, but it has also posed serious challenges to the local environment and culture," he said.

Routela has trekked to Om Parvat and Adi Kailash many times in his youth. Today, like many others, he makes the journey in an SUV. "The difference," he said with a smile, "is that I have chosen convenience without forgetting my culture."

At a spot on the highway, about 40 km from Dharchula, which he called Jyungru-tha, Routela and Gunjyal stopped beside a cement structure no larger than a roadside shrine. White sacred threads were wrapped around it and a few copper bells hung from its corners. The two took out a handful of rice from a bag and quietly placed it before the structure. "This is our river deity," Routela explained.

Behind the shrine, a gorge, nearly 200 feet deep plunged towards the Kali River, which tumbled over rocks and boulders below. Across the valley, towering mountains dominated the horizon.

The next stop was Malpa, known for the landslide on August 18, 1998, which completely wiped out the village. The tragedy claimed 221 lives, including 60 pilgrims taking the Kailash-Manasarovar Yatra, one of whom was the renowned Indian classical dancer Protima Bedi. The two throw some rice in the air here as a mark of respect to the deceased and ancestors of the community.

About 15 km ahead at Chialekhi, the first Indo-Tibetan Border Police checkpoint where pilgrims travelling to Om Parvat and Adi Kailash undergo document verification, Routela stopped once again. Near the checkpoint stood a newly built temple, roughly the size of a single-storey

house. He barely glanced at it.

Instead, he walked into the village and stopped at a rocky corner that resembled a cave. It was decorated with a white cloth and bells. "This is where we pray to the mountain deity," he said. "The temple near the checkpoint was built recently. It has no significance for us. This is the place where our people have worshipped for centuries."

He half-bent and offered blades of grass and a few stones at the site. As he prayed in silence, a white Scorpio bearing a Delhi registration plate sped past, loud music echoing across the valley.

"This is the problem. They make a mockery of a pilgrimage. For them, this is a weekend getaway. They will drink and do all kinds of things forbidden in our religion," he said, as he lit a cigarette.

The Rungs' faith overlaps with mainstream Hinduism in some ways and diverges from it in others. "Mainstream Hindu society is largely patriarchal, but in our tradition women enjoy equal respect," said Gunjyal. "We do not worship idols, but we light lamps and cremate our dead. We worship Shiva, but gods like Hanuman have no place in our religious history. Our practices are different, but that does not make us anti-Hindu," he said.

The Adi Kailash Group had installed a statue of Hanuman at Kalapani last year, the tri-junction of India, Nepal, and Tibet. India has maintained troops there for decades under its administrative control, viewing the area as part of the Pithoragarh district. This has led to ongoing diplomatic disputes, as Nepal also lays claim to the region based on colonial-era treaties.

A few kilometres later, Routela lowered the window of his vehicle and poured a small quantity of locally brewed barley wine from a soft drink bottle onto the roadside. "I am passing through my wife's village," he said. "This offering is for the deity that protects her village. It is our custom." He took a small sip before moving ahead.

Both rice and barley have significance in Hinduism here. The Navratri Puja, held twice a year, is incomplete without the sowing of barley while rice, called *akshat*, is an irreplaceable part of the puja.

Faith and trust

For Bharat Joshi, founder of the Adi Kailash Group Trust and a stitching-centre operator from Nashik, the issue looks entirely different. He rejects suggestions that the trust is affiliated with any hardline Hindu organisation.

"We are simply a group of devotees who met during the Adi Kailash Yatra," he said, adding that the organisation has six members in its executive body and has around 100 members across the country. Asked why the trust wanted to instal statues in the Himalayas, Joshi offered this explanation: "In the past, when people had to trek to these places, there were no signs showing where they were headed or whether they were on the

correct route. These idols can serve as markers. They tell devotees they are on the right path and encourage them to keep walking."

Gunjyal disagrees with Joshi's reasoning. "Mountains do not have crossroads and multiple routes. There is only one stretch leading to the destination," he said. "The argument that pilgrims might lose their way is baseless," he added.

The trust had installed a Trishul (trident) and a Nandi statue (the sacred bull) at Adi Kailash in 2022 without encountering significant opposition. When Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Adi Kailash in 2023, he had prayed before the Trishul, while also speaking about the traditions of the Rungs.

For Pankaj Kumar, another member of the trust from Patna, the opposition remains deeply hurtful. "That area is in India. As an Indian, I am free to install an idol of my lord anywhere in my country," he said.

The Shivling currently remains at the home of a trust member in Haldwani. Kumar says another attempt to install it near Om Parvat will be made. "This time," he said, "we will try to convince the Rung community that we do not have any bad intentions."

Long fight for survival

For former Uttarakhand Chief Secretary Nrip Singh Napalchyal, the dispute over the proposed Shivling at Om Parvat is not merely about an idol or Hinduism. As founder of the Rung Kalyan Sanstha, he sees it as part of the community's centuries-long struggle to preserve its identity.

The Rungs are an agri-pastoral and trading community whose lives were historically linked to trans-Himalayan trade routes connecting India, Tibet, and Nepal. For generations, they relied on seasonal migration, trade, and barter across some of the world's highest mountain passes.

According to Napalchyal, the community has repeatedly faced threats to its culture and way of life, but serious challenges were felt after the British came.

"They brought new pressures through missionary activity. The greatest disruption, however, followed the 1962 India-China war, which sealed traditional trade routes that had sustained generations of Rungs," he said. Families lost livelihoods, homes, and access to ancestral networks almost overnight, he added. To survive, many migrated to the plains, pursued education, and rebuilt their lives.

This adaptation came at a cultural cost. Migration and urbanisation weakened many traditional practices. For decades, the Rung Kalyan Sanstha has worked to document and preserve Rung heritage, particularly the Runglwo language, a Tibeto-Burman language with no widely used script. Because cultural knowledge is largely transmitted orally, the loss of elders and the migration of younger generations threaten its survival.

Sandesh Rayapa Garbiyal, Assistant Professor in the Linguistic Empowerment Cell at Jawaharlal Nehru University, argues that language preservation and revitalisation are inseparable from cultural preservation as every lost word carries stories, beliefs, and unique ways of understanding the world. Efforts to preserve Runglwo received national recognition in 2019 when Prime Minister Modi praised initiatives aimed at safeguarding indigenous heritage in his Mann Ki Baat programme.

For Garbiyal, the Om Parvat debate reflects these larger concerns. "The Rungs have long regarded mountains, rivers, glaciers, and forests as sacred living entities. Traditional customs helped protect biodiversity and maintain ecological balance. From this perspective, the sanctity of the Himalayas lies in preserving nature rather than transforming it through monumental constructions," she said.

The disagreement, however, is far from settled. Among those invited to participate in the proposed Shivling installation at Nabadang was retired Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) Inspector General A.P.S. Nimbadia, who spent more than a decade serving in the region.

Nimbadia rejects the argument that the introduction of Hindu symbols necessarily threatens indigenous traditions. He points to several Tibeto-Burman communities in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam that continue to practise nature worship while also incorporating elements of Hindu belief.

"In Ziro valley, a giant rock came to be worshipped as Siddheshwar Nath Temple, also known as Kardo Mahadev," he said. "Large numbers of devotees visit the site, including political leaders. The introduction of Hindu symbols and practices did not destroy the cultural identity of the Apatani tribe," he argued.

For Nimbadia, cultural coexistence is possible. For many Rungs, however, the example points in the opposite direction. Community members argue that experiences elsewhere show how the boundaries between indigenous faiths and mainstream religious traditions can gradually blur over time. What begins as accommodation, they fear, can eventually lead to assimilation.

The concern is not only cultural but also territorial. Several Rungs expressed apprehension that religious structures could eventually lead to permanent claims over land. They point to the large tracts of land occupied by security forces, including the Army and the ITBP, in the border region, for military and strategic purposes. "We gave land willingly because it was necessary for the country's security," said Gunjyal. "But we cannot allow encroachment in the name of temples when it goes against our beliefs."

Standing before Om Parvat, Gunjyal tore down a poster announcing the proposed Shivling installation. The mountain towered above him. "Sometimes," he said, looking up at the snow-marked peak, "the highest form of reverence is to leave the mountains alone."

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About 40 kilometres from Dharchula, Routela (right) and Gunjyal (left) offer rice at a shrine. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

TELANGANA



Patients and their family members wait outside the outpatient block of the MNJ Institute of Oncology and Regional Cancer Centre at Red Hills in Hyderabad. SIDDHANT THAKUR

Mapping cancer, testing capacity

The Telangana government's decision to make cancer a notifiable disease promises to reveal its true burden in the State. But unless treatment infrastructure expands beyond Hyderabad, identifying more patients may only expose a healthcare system already stretched to its limits, writes Siddharth Kumar Singh

The waiting begins long before the outpatient department at Hyderabad's Mehdi Nawaz Jung Institute of Oncology and Regional Cancer Centre — commonly known as MNJ Cancer Hospital — opens its doors.

By mid-morning, the hospital is already teeming with patients. Cars, two-wheelers and ambulances jostle for every available parking space as people, many accompanied by anxious family members, make their way towards the outpatient block carrying thick bundles of medical records, scan reports and medicine packets. Some have travelled overnight from districts hundreds of kilometres away, while others have been referred from government hospitals that lack specialised oncology services.

Every seat inside the outpatient block is occupied. Those who arrive late settle on the steps outside, inching forward as the queues move. Across from the entrance, the public toilets emit an unpleasant odour, adding to the discomfort of patients already bracing themselves for a long day.

The crowds grow denser with each step inside. Long queues snake towards the registration counters while an even larger gathering waits outside the radiation oncology section. Despite the congestion, there is little impatience. For many, this is not their first visit.

"My mother was diagnosed with brain tumour about two years ago. We first went to Osmania General Hospital, Hyderabad, but she was referred here. Since then, we have been coming regularly. The doctors are good and we get medicines from the hospital pharmacy," says 26-year-old Mohammed Usman, a resident of Moula Ali in the city.

Among those waiting is 44-year-old Shekhar from Adilabad, watching as his son checks on the schedule for his next radiotherapy session. "I was diagnosed with mouth cancer last year, possibly due to chewing gutka. We went to a government hospital in our district, but they said such cases are treated only in Hyderabad. It is crowded here, but treatment that would cost lakhs at a private hospital is available free here," he says.

For thousands, MNJ is far more than Telangana's largest government cancer hospital. It is the last stop in a referral chain stretching across the State and into neighbouring Andhra Pradesh. The crowds that fill its corridors each day speak not only of the growing burden of cancer but also of a healthcare system still centred around a handful of specialised facilities in Hyderabad, a reality the government now hopes to better understand through its first comprehensive cancer registry.

According to the Telangana Cancer Atlas, prepared using data from the Rajiv Aarogyasri Health Care Trust between April 2020 and September 2025, more than 1,00,294 unique cancer patients received treatment under the State's flagship health insurance scheme over the five-and-a-half-year period, averaging about 18,235 patients annually. Cancer emerged as the second most treated condition under Aarogyasri after kidney ailments, accounting for nearly 4,96,552

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SHEKHAR
from
Adilabad

treatment episodes.

MNJ itself treated 34,256 patients during the study period, making it the single largest cancer treatment facility in Telangana. It was followed by the Basavatarakam Indo American Cancer Hospital and Research Institute with 21,508 patients and Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS) with 8,641.

A rising burden

The findings suggest that despite government institutions accounting for the largest individual cancer centres, private hospitals collectively treat a slightly larger share of patients under the Aarogyasri scheme. Of the 1,00,294 patients analysed, 53,523 (53.4%) received treatment in private hospitals, compared with 43,480 (43.4%) in government hospitals, while 3,291 (3.3%) underwent treatment in both sectors.

The cancer burden is spread across all 33 districts of Telangana, although not evenly. Hyderabad accounted for the highest number of patients treated under Aarogyasri (12,517), followed by Rangareddy (6,372) and Medchal (5,483).

Adjusted for population, however, Hanumakonda reported the highest annual incidence at 79 cases per one lakh population, ahead of Hyderabad (72) and Karimnagar (65). Overall, 25 districts recorded incidence rates above 45 per one lakh population, underscoring that cancer is no longer confined to the State's largest urban centres.

The disease was also found to be affecting people in their most productive years. Patient numbers rise sharply after the age of 33, with the highest number of cases recorded in the 39-48 age group, followed by those aged above 62 years. Women accounted for nearly 60% of all patients treated under Aarogyasri, with breast and cervical cancers majorly contributing to the overall burden.

Health Department estimates suggest Telangana now records 55,000 to 60,000 new cancer cases annually, a figure expected to rise in com-

ing years. Yet, even these numbers tell only a part of the story. The Cancer Atlas is limited to Aarogyasri beneficiaries, leaving out thousands of patients who seek treatment outside the scheme or in healthcare facilities not linked to it.

For years, that has left policymakers trying to plan cancer services without knowing the true scale or geographical spread of the disease. It is a gap the government is now attempting to close.

The count begins

On April 6 this year, Telangana declared cancer a notifiable disease, making it one of the few States in the country to mandate reporting of every diagnosed case. Until now, cancer data was largely confined to institutional registries maintained by MNJ and NIMS, offering only a fragmented picture of the disease burden.

Under the new policy, every diagnosed case, whether identified at a government or private hospital, pathology laboratory or diagnostic centre, must be reported through an online portal within a month of diagnosis.

The registry will capture data on cancer incidence, prevalence, mortality, treatment patterns and geographical distribution, with MNJ designated as the State's Centre of Excellence to validate the information before forwarding it to the National Cancer Registry Programme under the Indian Council of Medical Research.

"We have started collecting this year's data and hospitals have already begun entering cases every day. The data also has to be filtered carefully to eliminate duplicate entries because the same patient may visit multiple hospitals. It will take at least six months before we begin seeing meaningful trends and about a year before we get a clearer picture of the cancer burden across Telangana," says MNJ director Sadashivudu Gundeti.

Once district-wise patterns emerge, the data can help the government identify high-burden areas, strengthen screening and awareness programmes, improve palliative care and plan new cancer facilities where they are needed most. Regular review meetings are already being held with District Medical and Health Officers to improve reporting, Dr. Gundeti says.

The pressure is evident at MNJ itself, which registers around 500 new outpatients every day, besides thousands of follow-up visits every month. The government has also begun decentralising

cancer care. In September last year, it inaugurated Day Care Cancer Centres in 34 Government General Hospitals across Telangana, offering screening, diagnosis, chemotherapy and palliative care, allowing many patients to receive follow-up chemotherapy closer to home instead of travelling repeatedly to Hyderabad. Regional Cancer Centres are also planned across the State by 2030.

But many oncologists believe better data alone will not ease the burden on hospitals like MNJ.

A senior oncologist, requesting anonymity, says identifying more patients will inevitably place greater pressure on a healthcare system that is already stretched. While the State has expanded bed strength at MNJ over the years, the doctor argues that increasing capacity within a single hospital cannot substitute for developing comprehensive oncology services across the districts.

The Telangana Cancer Atlas appears to reinforce those concerns. Although government hospitals constitute nearly two-thirds of the 81 hospitals empanelled under Aarogyasri for cancer care, private hospitals treated a slightly larger share of patients, accounting for 53.4% of all cases under the scheme compared with 43.4% in government institutions. Doctors say this reflects not only patient preference but also disparities in infrastructure and the availability of advanced treatment options.

"Patients from Adilabad and several other districts travel hundreds of kilometres to Hyderabad because treatment simply isn't available closer to home. Increasing beds alone at MNJ will not solve the problem. Similar infrastructure, specialists and treatment facilities have to be developed in peripheral districts so that patients can receive care nearer their homes," the doctor says.

A stretched system

The gaps extend beyond accessibility. While Aarogyasri has substantially reduced out-of-pocket expenditure for patients receiving treatment in government hospitals, advanced therapies such as immunotherapy and targeted therapy remain largely unavailable in the public sector, forcing many patients to turn to private hospitals despite higher costs.

Infrastructure constraints are perhaps most visible in radiation oncology. According to another doctor, MNJ has four radiotherapy machines, but only one remains fully operational. Despite this, the institute continues to manage 400 to 500 patients requiring radiation therapy every day using the single functioning machine.

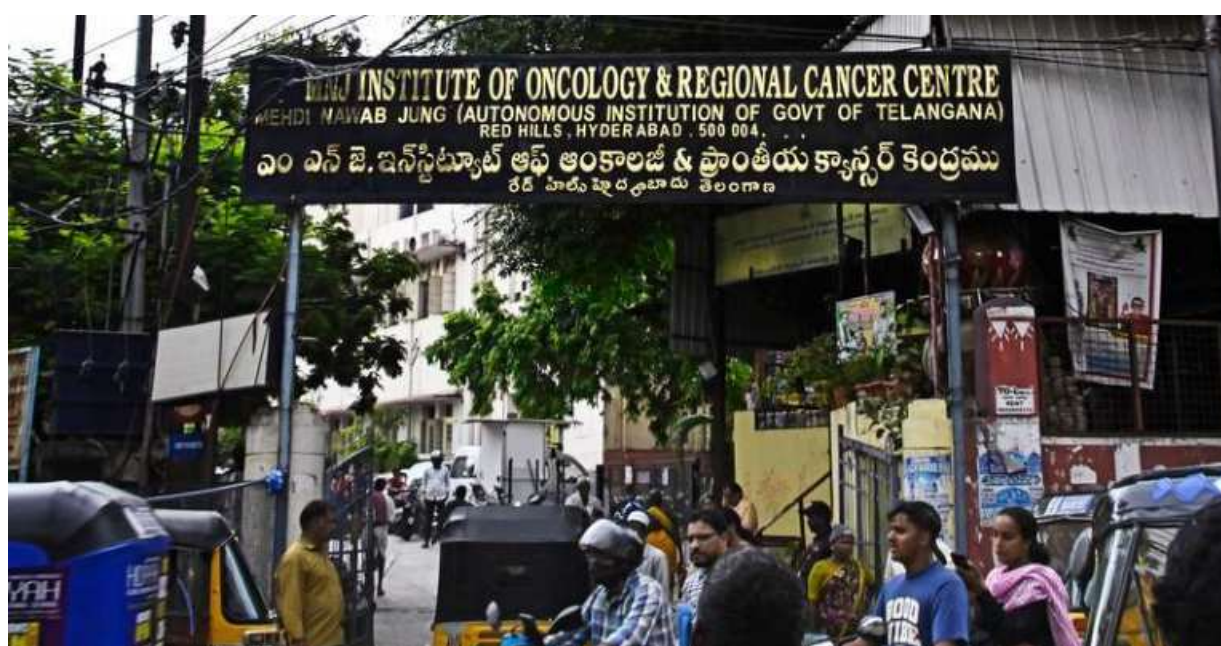
"Radiotherapy equipment requires a substantial capital investment. Each machine costs around ₹30 crore. Replacing ageing machines and expanding radiotherapy capacity should be among the State's priorities if it wants to improve cancer care," the doctor says.

The challenge extends beyond equipment. A comprehensive cancer care system also requires trained oncologists, oncology nurses, pathology services, chemotherapy units, operation theatres and palliative care facilities, particularly outside Hyderabad.

For patients waiting outside MNJ every day, however, debates around registries and healthcare planning remain far removed from their immediate concerns.

Their priorities are far more basic: securing an outpatient appointment, completing chemotherapy on schedule or obtaining a slot for radiotherapy.

Telangana's decision to make cancer a notifiable disease promises, for the first time, to provide a comprehensive picture of the State's cancer burden. But the true measure of the initiative will not lie in the number of cases entered into a database; it will depend on whether those numbers translate into more hospitals, more specialists, better-equipped cancer centres and treatment that is available closer to patients' homes. For the crowds that gather outside MNJ each morning, that transformation cannot come soon enough.



IN BRIEF



HCLTech bags \$1.14 billion deal from European firm

HCLTech on Friday said it has secured a \$1.14 billion deal from a Europe-headquartered Fortune Global 50 company to transform and manage its digital workplace and enterprise networks. HCLTech will establish an AI-driven operating model for the client, according to a regulatory filing. The initial term of the agreement spans five-and-a-half years, from July 2026 to December 2031, with an option to extend the partnership for a further period of 5 years. PTI

Nayara's gasoline sold to Russia via traders, sources say

Traders have sold gasoline produced by Indian refiner Nayara Energy to Russia, which is grappling with fuel shortages triggered by Ukrainian attacks on its energy infrastructure, two sources with direct knowledge of the matter said on Thursday. Reuters reported on Wednesday that Russia had begun seaborne imports of gasoline from India, without naming the supplier. Nayara did not respond to an email from Reuters seeking comment.

IIFL Finance raised \$300 mn via social debt issue: Bankers

IIFL Finance has accepted bids worth \$300 million for a four-year social dollar bond, in its second such fundraising in less than a month, two merchant bankers said on Friday. The non-banking finance company will offer a yield of 7.75% to investors, slightly below the initial price guidance at about 7.85%, the bankers added, requesting anonymity as they are not authorised to speak to the media. IIFL Finance did not reply to a Reuters email seeking comment.

Centre orders blocking of battery management apps

Action comes after e-rickshaws in various parts of the country were turned off via apps developed by Chinese firms to manage lithium ion battery packs; extortion incident reported in Ujjain

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union government on Friday issued orders to block battery management apps after some users discovered they were able to remotely use them to shut down e-rickshaw batteries even as those vehicles were transporting passengers, an official said.

The apps, mostly developed by Chinese firms, appeared to be designed for legitimate battery owners.

The developers of three such apps – named by a Ministry official – Shenzhen Grenergy Technology, Shenzhen Ruichuang Linneng Technology, and Daly BMS, did not respond to queries from The Hindu.

It is unclear if banning the apps would completely eliminate the vulnerability, as these apps do not require Internet access to hijack and shut off battery units without a configured password or PIN. Testing standards to certify e-rick-



Soft targets: Testing standards to certify e-rickshaws do not include cybersecurity requirements. FILE PHOTO

shaws do not include cybersecurity requirements.

Lithium ion battery packs include battery management systems to monitor charge, voltage, temperature and cell health. Instagram reels demonstrating this vulnerability on roads went viral over the week, showing rickshaws grinding to a halt.

A senior official pointed out to The Hindu that stranding vehicles like this was a punishable offence, and that “regular IPC/BNS sections of criminal mis-

chief will apply”.

The Information Technology Act, 2000 also contains anti-hacking provisions that could apply to smart battery systems.

In Ujjain, the police even caught a person demanding money from e-rickshaw drivers after using the exploit to disable their vehicles. Neel Ganga Police Station in-charge Tarun Kuril stated that the racket came to light following a targeted extortion incident at Loti Tiraha.

“We received informa-

tion that an auto-rickshaw driver's vehicle had stalled at Loti Tiraha, and a young man charged him ₹200 on the pretext of fixing it.

Upon inquiry, the driver revealed that e-rickshaws in the city are being shut down remotely. Specifically, their batteries are being disabled via a mobile app.

“Some miscreants use this app to immobilise the vehicles and then demand money to restart them,” Mr. Kuril said.

Three-wheeler e-rickshaws are typically categorised as L5M vehicles, and manufacturers such as Speego obtain certifications from the International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT). A review of the certification requirements on ICAT's website shows that while electrical and mechanical safety and roadworthiness are covered, cybersecurity requirements enumerated in standards such as AIS-189 are not required for e-rickshaws.

(With agency inputs)

'Indian firms will have to leave comfort zone to achieve \$1 tn exports'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Piyush Goyal

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday reiterated his target of \$1 trillion of exports this year, but also said that Indian companies would have to push themselves out of their “cosy and comfortable” domestic market and actively work towards building their brands abroad.

'Difficult, yet possible' Speaking at the Board of Trade meeting at the Ministry of Commerce, Mr. Goyal admitted that the \$1 trillion export target would be difficult to achieve, but added that it was possible since the other countries were keen to trade with India.

“The world wants to work with us,” he said. “We have to go out and capture those world markets. Wherever I go in the world, they are very keen to work with us. It's our industry that shows weakness. We are cosy and comfortable in our domestic market, but to get into the export market, we need

scale, quality, and outreach. It will not happen by just sitting at home.”

He told the gathered export promotion councils that the government's Export Promotion Mission would help them set up overseas branding, warehousing, and exhibitions if they needed.

“Please demand what you need, so your products can go to developed countries and countries with whom we have Free Trade Agreements,” Mr. Goyal said.

Several trade bodies made presentations at the meeting. According to sources present during the meeting, a common demand was for greater export-related credit.

SIFs see rapid adoption; asset base grows to ₹13,500 cr. by May-end

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The newly introduced Specialised Investment Funds (SIFs) have witnessed rapid adoption, with the category crossing ₹13,814 crore in assets under management (AUM) since the regulatory

framework was introduced in February, a top Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) official said on Friday.

SEBI introduced SIFs to bridge the gap between regular mutual funds and high-ticket Portfolio Management Services (PMS).

SIFs target sophisticated investors through flexible hedging, derivatives, and long-short strategy.

Speaking at Assocham's 17th Mutual Fund Summit, SEBI Whole-Time Member Amarjeet Singh said, “The regulatory framework for Specialised Investment

Fund (SIF) was introduced last year. The early response has been encouraging.”

Giving details, he said, “As on May 31 2026, SIFs have already garnered net assets under management of over ₹13,500 crore, spread across more than

56,000 investor folios”. SIFs requires a minimum investment of ₹10 lakh and allow fund managers to use advanced strategies such as derivatives and long-short equity.

According to Mr. Singh, across 21 investment strategies launched, the maxi-

mum funds have been mobilised under the Hybrid Long Short investment strategy.

“This indicates a growing investor appetite for differentiated investment solutions within a well-regulated ecosystem,” the SEBI official added

'Signs of stress in small ticket loans'

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Signs of delay in loan repayment has started to emerge in some segments of business loans even as the overall number suggests higher asset quality.

Unsecured business loans to MSMEs due for payment for more than 90 days (90+DPD), constituted 7.2% of the total unsecured outstanding business loans, as of March 2026, as per a CIBIL and SIDBI report. This is a rise of 274 basis points from March 2023.

Share of 90+DPD loans in total outstanding commercial balances reduced to 1.8% in March 2026 against 2.7% in the corresponding month in 2023 suggesting overall healthy performance by commercial lenders. This, howev-



MSME loans show some stress.

er, masks emerging slippages in unsecured business loan segment.

The statistic is crucial as share of individuals borrowing business loans rose to ₹18.3 lakh crore as of March 2026 of the total business loan book of ₹65.8 lakh crore. Individual business loans were just ₹10 lakh crore of total loan book which was also at much lower ₹42 lakh crore in March 2023.

Salt of life



Climate of change: French salt maker Annabelle Poinot harvests salt flower at a salt marsh in Oleron Island, France. The profession of salt worker, which disappeared from Oléron Island in the 1980s, was reintroduced with the support of local authorities as salt marshes, as “buffer” zones, can absorb part of the marine flooding, which is becoming increasingly frequent with climate change. AFP

India's services PMI growth at new low

Gurmehar Kaur
NEW DELHI

Activity in India's services sector eased to its lowest level in 17 months, according to a private sector survey, driven by weak growth in new order intakes in over two-and-a-half years.

The HSBC India Services PMI Business Activity Index eased to 57.4 in June from 59.8 in May.

While the reading remained comfortably above the neutral 50-mark that separates expansion from contraction and above its long run average, it marked the slowest upturn since January 2025, the report noted.

“The loss of momentum points to more challenging market conditions and weaker demand, particularly at home,” said Pranjul Bhandari, chief India eco-

At home, firms cited intensifying competition and reduced client interest as main drag

nomist at HSBC.

New export orders rose at the fastest pace in three months with firms citing stronger demand from markets including Australia, Germany, Singapore, the UAE and the U.S., offering a rare pocket of momentum in an otherwise cooling month.

At home, firms pointed out to intensifying competition and reduced client interest as the main drag, even as some units reported gains from competitive pricing, stronger e-commerce demand, higher customer bookings and improved local tourism.

Assam estate sells country's first commercially produced matcha tea

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

An Assam tea estate on Friday sold India's first commercially-produced matcha tea, marking a significant shift from conventional teas.

Matcha is made after shading Camellia sinensis tea leaves for three to four weeks before harvest. According to tea planters, blocking 90% of sunlight from the leaves boosts chlorophyll and amino acid levels and gives them distinct colour and flavour. “Five kilograms of the first-ever batch of India-



Matcha tea field in Japan. (For representational purpose only)

produced matcha tea was sold at the Guwahati Tea Auction Centre during sale number 27. Auctioned by J. Thomas & C. Pvt. Ltd. and bought by Guwahati-based

Sheosons Chai Co., the premium tea fetched ₹3,000 per kg,” Dinesh Bihani, the secretary of Guwahati Tea Auction Buyers' Association, said.

Making of matcha

“Matcha is made by finely grinding shade-grown tea leaves into vibrant green powder. Unlike usual green tea where leaves are steeped and discarded, matcha is whisked into water and taken entirely, giving higher levels of antioxidants, amino acids and natural caffeine,” he said.

The matcha came from Chota Tingrai Tea Estate in

eastern Assam's Tinsukia district. Mrityunjay Jalan, the Chota Tingrai's director, said his estate spent a decade collaborating closely with Japanese tea makers, agronomists, equipment suppliers and tea experts for matcha.

“We sought to bridge traditional Assam tea heritage with authentic Japanese expertise by establishing a fully automated, state-of-the-art Japanese tea manufacturing facility on our estate. We are confident matcha from Chota Tingrai will appeal to Indian and international households,” he said.

AI hiring outpaces overall IT recruitment in India: report

Reuters
BENGALURU

Hiring for AI roles within India's IT sector outpaced overall recruitment within the industry last month, a survey showed on Friday, indicating a push from companies to reorient themselves in the face of evolving technology.

The sector's AI hiring rose 16% year-on-year in June, while overall IT jobs declined 3%, according to job portal Naukri's monthly JobSpeak report that collated job listings from more than 1,50,000 firms on its website.

India's \$315 billion IT in-

The sector's AI hiring rose 16% year-on-year in June while overall IT jobs slid 3% as per the report

dustry has been under pressure with clients holding back on spending on technology due to a weak macroeconomic environment and the advent of AI that threatens their traditional business model.

“The divergence (between AI and overall IT hiring) is important because it shows where tech companies are still investing. AI is increasingly becoming a

core capability area, especially as demand shifts towards more senior and specialised talent,” said Hitesh Oberoi, CEO at Info Edge, which owns Naukri. The country's No.1 software exporter, Tata Consultancy Services, last month said it expects IT firms to slow down hiring, with the Tata Group firm moving towards having an equal number of employees and AI agents in its workforce.

Last July, the firm cut more than 12,000 jobs, while headcount fell by more than 23,000 on a net basis in the fiscal year ended March 2026.

Manipal Health gets SEBI nod for India IPO

Reuters
HYDERABAD/BENGALURU

India's Manipal Health Enterprises, backed by Singapore's Temasek, has received approval for its stock market listing from market regulator SEBI, two sources familiar with the matter told Reuters.

The hospital chain is targeting a market debut in late July/early August, said the sources, who asked not to be named as the information was not yet public. This is expected to be one of the largest IPOs by an Indian healthcare company.

WASHINGTON

Trump says 'ridiculous' for U.S. to maintain current NATO support



REUTERS

President Donald Trump said on Thursday it is "ridiculous" for the United States to continue its "one sided" relationship with NATO, less than a week before a NATO summit in Ankara. Mr. Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform: "They were not there for us!!" and Washington's relationship with NATO "is not reciprocal". AFP

ABUJA

U.S. withdrew forces from Nigeria after mission against IS: AFRICOM



AP

The United States has withdrawn most of the forces it deployed for an operation against Islamic State militants in Nigeria and is now providing intelligence support at Abuja's request, the head of U.S. Africa Command said. "Nigeria has been active since the operation in May," AFRICOM Commander Gen. Dagvin Anderson said. REUTERS

GENEVA

UN human rights chief sounds 'red alert' over violence in Sudan



AFP

The United Nations human rights chief, Volker Turk, on Friday sounded a "red alert" about possible atrocity crimes in and near el-Obeid in central Sudan, calling on world leaders to do more to help stop the bloodshed in the country's ongoing war between the army and paramilitary forces. AP

BRASILIA

Lula blasts Flavio Bolsonaro for requesting delay in U.S. tariff hike



AP

Brazil's leader Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on Thursday lashed out at his right-wing rival Flavio Bolsonaro for looking to postpone potential U.S. tariff hikes until after the South American country's elections. "Asking that the brutal rate hike against our country be postponed until after the elections is yet another act of treason." AFP

Khamenei lies in state in Tehran for week of mass funeral events

Parliament Speaker Ghalibaf says Iran's 'call for vengeance must ring in the ears of the whole world'; Pakistan says Shehbaz Sharif will attend the ceremony; China, Afghanistan, and Caucasian countries say they will also be sending representatives

Agence France-Presse
TEHRAN

Iranian leaders began paying their respects on Friday before the coffin of the country's late Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, killed by U.S.-Israeli strikes on February 28, as Tehran prepared for a vast funeral.

Khamenei's body arrived at Tehran's Grand Mosalla on Friday ahead of ceremonies which are expected to draw millions.

A coterie of foreign dignitaries is also due to attend Saturday's official ceremony, with Tehran's chief negotiator calling for a massive turnout to

avenge his death.

State TV broadcast footage of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian paying his respects on Friday afternoon alongside Parliament Speaker and chief negotiator Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf.

Ahmad Vahidi, head of the Revolutionary Guards, the ideological arm of the military, also appeared, making his first appearance since the start of the war.

Preparations for Khamenei's public funeral are taking place as Iran and the U.S. observe a fragile ceasefire.

Pakistan, a key mediator in the U.S.-Iran talks, said



Mourners pay their respects before the coffins of Ali Khamenei and members of his family at the Grand Mosalla in Tehran on Friday. AP

its Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif would attend the ceremony.

China, Afghanistan and Iran's neighbours in the Caucasus region said they would also be sending

representatives.

On behalf of Indian government, Union Minister of State Pabitra Margherita and Bihar Governor Syed Ata Hasnain attended the ceremony on Friday and

paid their respects.

Mr. Ghalibaf had called on Thursday for "all the Iranian people... to write a glorious page in the history of Islamic Iran through your presence".

"The nation's call for vengeance must ring in the ears of the whole world," Mr. Ghalibaf added in a statement.

Khamenei will lie in state for three days at the colossal Grand Mosalla, which has been draped in banners featuring his image and quotes.

The bodies of his slain relatives, including his three-year-old granddaughter, will also be present.

Russia, Ukraine exchange strikes after attack on Kyiv

Agence France-Presse
KYIV

At least 10 people were killed in Ukrainian attacks on Russia and Moscow-held territory, local officials said on Friday, as Ukraine reported five killed in Russian attacks.

The exchange of deadly strikes comes a day after Russia unleashed an overnight pummeling — one of the worst of the conflict — on Ukraine's capital Kyiv, leaving at least 30 dead.

On Friday, a Ukrainian strike on a market in the Russian-held part of the southern Zaporizhzhia region killed five persons, the Kremlin-appointed governor said.

"This is a strike against civilian life — against people who had come to buy groceries," Yevgeny Balit-



The site of what Ukrainian media reported was a Russian strike on the Ukrainian Red Cross warehouse in Kyiv on Friday. REUTERS

sky said on Telegram.

He earlier said three people had been killed in separate attacks in the region.

Ukraine meanwhile reported a strike on its north-eastern region of Sumy that set a house ablaze and killed four people — including a toddler. Three more people were wounded in the attack.

Kyiv's air force said on Friday that Russia launched two missiles and 105 drones at Ukraine overnight.

Russia, meanwhile, shot down 155 Ukrainian drones overnight from Thursday to Friday over its regions and annexed Crimea, according to the Russian Defence Ministry.

Houthis threaten Saudi after alleged airspace intrusion

Agence France-Presse
SANAA

Yemen's Houthis threatened on Friday Saudi airports and vital assets should Riyadh violate its airspace or attempt to attack it, as the rebels accused the kingdom of trying to stop an Iranian plane from landing.

The threats followed a time of relative calm between Saudi Arabia and the Iran-backed rebels, which did not target Gulf states during the West Asia war that saw Iran pummel its oil-rich neighbours.

"We warn the criminal Saudi enemy against repeating any attempt to vio-

late our airspace or any aggression targeting our country," military spokesperson Yahya Saree said.

"Such actions will be met with a comprehensive response targeting its airports and vital interests on land and sea."

Mr. Saree said the rebels had thwarted an attempt by Saudi warplanes to infiltrate their airspace in a bid "to prevent an Iranian civilian aircraft from landing at Sanaa International Airport".

Houthi media earlier reported that the aircraft had headed back to Tehran carrying the Houthi delegation meant to attend the funeral of Ali Khamenei.

Glowing avalanche



Risky venture: People watch as Mount Merapi volcano spews hot lava and steam as seen from Srumbung, in Magelang, Central Java province, Indonesia, on Friday. Its frequent eruptions have earned it the title 'Mountain of Fire'. REUTERS

Venezuela's interim leader Delcy defends earthquake response

Associated Press
CATIA LA MAR

Venezuela's U.S.-backed acting President Delcy Rodriguez on Thursday issued a fiery defence of her government's response to last week's devastating earthquakes, lashing out at critics who say authorities reacted too slowly, pushing back on suggestions that the true death toll is far higher than the government has acknowledged and rejecting accusations that the nation's shoddily constructed social housing exacerbated the disaster.

At a press conference, Ms. Rodriguez refused to accept the criticism.



Delcy Rodriguez

"We did not wait one day, two days or three days. We activated immediately," she said, lacing into media outlets that she accused of spreading misinformation.

Authorities have counted at least 2,295 people killed by the quake so far.

Sri Lanka ex-Navy chief arrested over 'illegal' recruitment of Rajapaksa's son

Meera Srinivasan
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's anti-graft authorities on Friday arrested former Navy Commander Wasantha Karannagoda in connection with the alleged illegal recruitment and overseas training of Yoshitha Rajapaksa, son of former President Mahinda Rajapaksa. The Colombo Chief Magistrate's Court later granted him bail.

Issuing a statement following the arrest, the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC) said Admiral of the Fleet Karannagoda was taken into custody over the "unlawful recruitment" of Mr. Yoshitha as a cadet executive officer despite his failing to meet



Wasantha Karannagoda

the required qualifications. It also alleged that Mr. Karannagoda facilitated Mr. Yoshitha's training at the Royal Naval Academy in the United Kingdom at the state's expense.

Mr. Karannagoda commanded the Sri Lankan Navy when the state forces defeated the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), ending the coun-

try's nearly three-decade civil war in May 2009.

In 2019, he was conferred the Admiral of the Fleet rank.

Mr. Karannagoda has previously been accused of abduction and conspiracy to murder in a sensational case, commonly referred to as the "Navy II" case in Sri Lanka, linked to the disappearance of 11 youth in 2008 and 2009. The case drew international attention, including from the United Nations and global rights groups, with many seeing it as emblematic of crimes committed by the military.

Investigators traced the disappearance and alleged murder of the young men to an elaborate ransom scheme carried out by Na-

vy personnel. The charges against Mr. Karannagoda were dropped in October 2021 during President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's time in office. Within months, President Gotabaya appointed him as the Governor of the North Western Province, sparking serious concern among victims' families and rights activists.

After President Anura Kumara Dissanayake came to power in September 2024, promising to wipe out corruption and bring perpetrators of high-profile crimes to justice, the victims' families sought to revive the case. In March 2025, the United Kingdom sanctioned Mr. Karannagoda, citing allegations of serious human rights violations.

Israel's military says it struck several Hezbollah positions in south Lebanon

Agence France-Presse
JERUSALEM

Israel's military said on Friday it had struck several Hezbollah sites in southern Lebanon a day earlier in response to attacks on its troops in the area.

Israel and Lebanon signed a U.S.-sponsored framework agreement last week to pave the way for peace between the two countries and disarm Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah.

Israeli officials have repeatedly ruled out withdrawing troops from southern Lebanon, maintaining that any withdrawal would happen only after Hezbollah has been disarmed across Lebanon. "The IDF struck approx-



Residents gather at the site of destroyed buildings that were hit in an Israeli air strike in Qannarit village in southern Lebanon. AP

imately 10 Hezbollah infrastructure sites and a truck used to transfer weapons in southern Lebanon," the military said in a statement.

The sites were in the areas of the south Lebanon towns of Bint Jbeil, Beit Yehoun, Kounine, and Baraachit, and "were used by

Hezbollah to advance attacks against IDF soldiers operating in the Security Zone," the army said.

The military said the strikes on the infrastructure sites were carried out following attacks on its soldiers inside the Israeli-declared "security zone", which stretches about 10

km deep inside Lebanese territory along the border.

The military said the strike on the truck carrying weapons near the area was carried out to remove a threat to the soldiers.

The Lebanese state-run news agency reported three Israeli strikes on Thursday night, near the town of Baraachit in the Bint Jbeil area, and in Nabatiyeh Al-Fawqa. The agency also reported two injuries in a strike on the town of Seddiqine near Tyre.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited troops in southern Lebanon on Tuesday, vowing that his country's forces would stay in the area as long as Hezbollah remained a threat.

SPECIAL MOMENT

Coincidence of life: Ronaldo after Jota tribute a year from his death



REUTERS

Cristiano Ronaldo said it was a "coincidence of life" that Portugal's World Cup last-16 win over Croatia on Thursday came almost a year after the death of his late teammate Diogo Jota. "We knew it before the game. It was a special moment. We speak today, our group, about that, the coincidence of life. It is unbelievable".

LEGEND

'Inspired millions': Modric praised as his WC career appears to end



REUTERS

Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic and Portugal's Roberto Martinez paid tribute to Luka Modric. "This was probably his last World Cup, and I am sorry that it ended this way. He was leading Croatia until the very end," said Dalic. "His example is going to stay in the folklore of football forever," Portugal chief coach Martinez said.

POSSIBLE REPLACEMENT

Klopp in talks for Germany job after Nagelsmann exit: federation



AFP

Jurgen Klopp has told the German FA (DFB) that he is "fundamentally willing" to take over as the Germany head coach after Julian Nagelsmann handed in his resignation, the DFB confirmed on Friday. Nagelsmann stepped down just four days after Germany's disappointing last-32 exit from the World Cup.

SIGNING OFF

Mahrez retires from international football after World Cup ouster



REUTERS

Riyad Mahrez announced his retirement from international football after Algeria's World Cup exit. "It has been an immense honour and a great source of pride," said Mahrez, a member of the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations winning squad. He retired with the second-most appearances (119) and the second-most goals (40) for Algeria.

Portugal edges Croatia amid VAR controversy

Gvardiol's strike deep in stoppage time is disallowed leaving Ramos' header as the winner; Ronaldo levels from the spot after Perisic's opener

FIFA WORLD CUP

Agence France-Presse
TORONTO

Substitute Goncalo Ramos' headed goal edged Portugal into the last 16 of the World Cup on Thursday after Croatia on Thursday denied an equaliser by VAR.

Ramos settled a classic World Cup game when he connected with a superb pass from Rafael Leao in the fourth minute of stoppage time to snuff out a Croatia team which had created the lion's share of the chances in sapping heat.

Croatia thought it had snatched a goal in the dying seconds of extra time, but Josko Gvardiol's goal was chalked off for offside.

The Croatians were left stunned by the decision, and their fans began hurling rubbish on the pitch.

In the seconds before Gvardiol's disallowed goal, the Portuguese bench and coach Roberto Martinez were growing increasingly livid, begging match officials for the final whistle.

Cristiano Ronaldo played his role in the victory, stroking home a penalty that cancelled out Ivan



Rising high: Ramos towers over the Croatian defence to nod home Portugal's second. REUTERS

RESULTS

Round of 32: Spain 3 (Oyarzabal 36, 89, Porro 66) bt Austria 0. Portugal 2 (Cristiano Ronaldo 68-pen, Goncalo Ramos 90+4) bt Croatia 1 (Perisic 53). Switzerland 2 (Embolo 10, Ndoye 46) bt Algeria 0.

Perisic's opener.

It was Ronaldo's first ever goal in the knockout phase of the World Cup, and it made him the oldest scorer in that phase in the tournament's history.

Portugal now faces Spain in Dallas on Monday.

Oyarzabal's brace helps Spain sweep past Austria

Agencies
LOS ANGELES

Spain cruised past Austria and into the World Cup last 16 on Thursday, thoroughly outclassing its opponent in a 3-0 win after a brace from Mikel Oyarzabal and a Pedro Porro header.

The reigning European champion controlled possession and sliced through the Austrian defence as it set up a tantalising round-of-16 clash with Portugal.

Spain ratcheted up the pressure gradually through the opening period, creating a string of chances after the first hydration break.

Marc Cucurella thought he had scored from a Lamine Yamal corner, but Pau Cubarsi was judged to have encroached on the Austria goalkeeper.

Alexander Schlager then made a superb diving save, pushing Oyarzabal's low shot around the post.

But Austria's defence finally buckled in the 36th minute as Pedri delivered a pass on the left to Cucurella, whose cross to Oyarzabal was calmly side-footed past the keeper.

After the break, Spain continued knocking on the door without quite putting the game to rest.

But it struck again in the 66th minute when Baena lifted a cross onto the head of Porro, who nodded in his first goal for the national side.

Some dogged defending, including a goaline clearance by David Alaba from Yamal, kept the scoreline respectable.

Stat attack

1 Portugal recorded its first comeback win in the knockouts since 1966 (against North Korea)

1 Ronaldo scored his first knockout stage goal in his sixth World Cup

1 Ronaldo is the first player in history to figure in a knockout game at the age of 41 or older

1 Simon (519 minutes) overtook Zenga to become the goalkeeper with the longest period without letting in a goal in the marquee event

1 Oyarzabal became the first Spaniard to score two or more goals in two matches of the same edition

2 Cubarsi and Yamal were the first pair of teenagers to start a knockout match in 68 years after Pele and Altafini (Brazil vs. Wales, quarterfinals, 1958)

3 Three players who have played in more than 20 World Cup games featured in the same match for the first time (Ronaldo 26, Modric 23, Perisic 21)

5 Manzambi became the only Swiss player to be

involved in five strikes (3 goals, 2 assists) in a single edition in the last 60 years

6 Perisic became the sixth to score in four different editions (after Cristiano Ronaldo, Messi, Klöse, Seeler, and Pele)

37y 150d
Perisic surpassed Olic (34y 277d) to become the oldest Croatian to score at the football carnival

88 Switzerland registered its first knockout stage win since 1938 (4-2 vs. West Germany, Round of 16 replay)

Compiled by ANIRUDH VELAMURI



SIMON

But in the 89th minute, a pin-point Cucurella cross found a completely unmarked Oyarzabal in the penalty area and the striker slotted the ball home.

Switzerland through in Vancouver, Brael Embolo and Dan Ndoye scored a goal each as Switzerland moved into the last 16 with a controlled 2-0 win over Algeria.

The effervescent Johan Manzambi created the first goal, surging down the left wing before crossing for Embolo (10th minute) to tap the ball in.

Ndoye slotted in the second less than a minute into the second half, controlling Rafik Belghali's weak clearance and shooting through a crowd of players. Algeria could not find a way back.

Samson in focus as India takes guard for second T20I

INDIA IN ENGLAND

Press Trust of India
MANCHESTER

With Vaibhav Sooryavanshi breathing down his neck, Sanju Samson will be under pressure to turn the busts in his performance graph into consistent booms as India takes on England in the second T20I here on Saturday.

The first game was abandoned after India posted a healthy 189 for seven in Chester-le-Street. The focus of attention during the next few games will be Samson and it remains to be seen whether he can weather the Sooryavanshi storm that is building up on the sidelines.

In an alternate universe, three back-to-back match-winning knocks in India's T20 World Cup triumph would have given the opener a cushion for a year.

But with Indian cricket discovering a generational talent like Sooryavanshi, Samson's margin for error



Samson. AFP

has become minimal.

With Abhishek Sharma smashing his way to 49 and 59 in two of the last three games, the pressure is on Samson to get some runs under his belt.

While the team management is firm on not pushing the 15-year-old Sooryavanshi, he possibly can't be kept cooling his heels forever. However, it is not just Samson who is struggling in this batting order.

Tilak Varma's approach in the middle overs is also an issue.

He is struggling to push the scoring rate once the slow bowlers come into operation or the seamers take pace off their deliveries.

The bowling unit is unlikely to change as the Old Trafford track offers some grip and the wrist spinners have had a profitable time at the venue.

For England, the power-packed batting line-up, led by skipper Harry Brook, Phil Salt and Tom Banton, is capable of taking the attack to the Indian bowlers.

The teams (from): England (XI): Harry Brook (Capt.), Phil Salt, Jos Buttler (wk), Jacob Bethell, Tom Banton, Sam Curran, Will Jacks, Liam Dawson, Adil Rashid, Jofra Archer, and Josh Tongue. **India:** Shreyas Iyer (Capt.), Tilak Varma (Vice-capt.), Sanju Samson (wk), Abhishek Sharma, Ishan Kishan (wk), Shivam Dube, Axar Patel, Ravi Bishnoi, Prasad Krishna, Harshit Rana, Prince Yadav, Suryansh Shedge, Arshdeep Singh, Washington Sundar, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, and Varun Chakaravathy. Match starts at 7 p.m. IST.

Djokovic equals Federer's record

WIMBLEDON

Agencies
LONDON

Novak Djokovic equalled Roger Federer's record for most match wins at Wimbledon as the seven-time champion battled past 25th seed Arthur Rinderknech to reach the fourth round here on Friday.

The 39-year-old notched up his 105th victory at the All England Club by winning 7-5, 6-4, 1-6, 7-6 (4) despite a spirited fight-back from Rinderknech on Centre Court.

"To be able to make history in this sport is a huge honour and privilege, especially here," said Djokovic. "It has always been a dream tournament for me. I am just trying to win a match on a given day. Today, I was quite stressed out, more tension than usual. I propose a match-up between Roger and me for 106, let us stop it here and ask Roger to come."

Djokovic also tied Federer for most appearances in the last 16 at Wimbledon in the Open era, making the fourth round for the 18th



Floored! Djokovic survived a spirited fight from Rinderknech to script history. AFP

time. He will next face qualifier Roman Safiullin on Sunday for a place in his 66th Slam quarterfinal and 17th at Wimbledon. Safiullin, ranked 132nd in the world, beat 24th seed Joao Fonseca 6-3, 6-3, 6-3.

Medvedev bows out Eighth seed Daniil Medvedev, a Wimbledon semifinalist in 2024, suffered a third-round exit when Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff, ranked 74th, defeated him 7-6 (4), 7-6 (5), 7-5.

Meanwhile, Jannik Sinner's title defence gathered pace as the World No. 1 swept aside Jensen Brooks-

by 6-4, 6-3, 6-4.

Having been dragged into a five-set battle in his opener and forced to negotiate two tie-breaks in the next, the Italian looked increasingly at home on the grass of Court One.

Long wait ends On the women's side, Japan's Naomi Osaka ended her long wait to reach the Wimbledon fourth round for the first time with a 6-1, 6-3 win over Australian Daria Kasatkina. Osaka has caused a stir with her eye-catching outfits, but the 28-year-old is finally stealing the spotlight with her per-

IMPORTANT RESULTS

Men: Third round: Safiullin bt 24-Fonseca (Bra) 6-3, 6-3, 6-3; 7-Djokovic (Srb) bt 25-Rinderknech (Fra) 7-5, 6-4, 1-6, 7-6 (4); 1-Sinner bt Brooksby 6-4, 6-3, 6-4; Struff (Ger) bt 8-Medvedev 7-6 (4), 7-6 (5), 7-5; Mochizuki (Jpn) bt 23-Jodar (Esp) 1-6, 7-6 (5), 6-4, 6-4; Hurkacz (Pol) bt 21-Paul (USA) 4-6, 7-6 (5), 7-5, 6-2; 22-Folkina (Esp) bt Fucsovics (Hun) 7-6 (3), 6-2, 6-3. **Second round:** 17-Tiafoe (USA) bt Choinski (GBR) 4-6, 6-2, 7-5, 6-2; Dimitrov (Bul) bt 15-Mensik (Cze) 7-6 (5), 4-6, 7-5, 6-3.

Women: Third round: 11-Bencic (Sui) bt 19-Kalinskaya 6-4, 4-6, 7-6 (6); 14-Osaka (Jpn) bt Kasatkina 6-1, 6-3, 4-Pegula (USA) bt 18-Alexandrova 6-3, 3-6, 6-4; 1-Sabalenska bt Ostapenko (Lat) 6-4, 6-4; 10-Muchova (Cze) bt Sawangkaew (Tha) 6-2, 7-6 (1). **Second round:** 25-Mertens (Bel) bt Timofeeva (Uzb) 2-6, 6-3, 6-0; 2-Rybakina (Kaz) bt McNally (USA) 6-1, 6-2; 13-Paolini (Ita) bt Golubic (Sui) 7-6 (0), 6-4; 9-Noskova (Cze) by Osorio (Col) 6-3, 4-6, 6-2. **Fallen seeds: Men:** 8-Medvedev, 15-Mensik, 21-Paul, 23-Jodar, 24-Fonseca, 25-Rinderknech. **Women:** 18-Alexandrova, 19-Kalinskaya.

formances as well. World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka powered past Jelena Ostapenko 6-4, 6-4.

FIDE bans Kramnik for two years

Sports Bureau

The FIDE has imposed a two-year worldwide ban on Vladimir Kramnik from participating in its chess competitions or acting in official chess functions for alleged violations of the Ethics Code and Disciplinary Code.

The FIDE Ethics & Disciplinary Commission (EDC) issued its decision in disciplinary proceedings involving the former World champion. The proceedings arose from complaints submitted by the Management Board and the Fair Play Commission concerning a series of public statements and posts made by Kramnik about GM David Navara and the late GM Daniel Naroditsky.



Kramnik. FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

Spin cycle: assessing India's portfolio of Test tweakers

With a tricky tour of Sri Lanka in August and a blockbuster home series against Australia early next year, India needs its spinners to deliver if it wants to contend for a spot in the World Test Championship final. Just how healthy and varied are the team's stocks?



MANAV SUTHAR



RAVINDRA JADEJA



KULDEEP YADAV



WASHINGTON SUNDAR

Vivek Krishnan

Promising debuts of keenly tracked young cricketers at the highest level tend to linger in the memory for long. They act as a tantalising prelude to the career ahead, and invite lofty expectations from an entourage of admirers.

It need not always be a three-figure score or five-wicket haul that instigates this rush of excitement; sometimes a sumptuous cover-drive racing across the turf, an in-swinging yorker detonating the stumps or a big-spinning delivery breaching bat and pad is enough.

A debut to savour

Last month, Manav Suthar's Test debut against Afghanistan in New Chandigarh contained many ingredients worthy of such enthusiasm.

Statistically, the 23-year-old left-arm spinner from Rajasthan became the seventh Indian to take a five-wicket haul in his maiden innings. Of equal essence was the nuanced exhibition of his skillset. It transcended the benign nature of the black-soil pitch, and managed to hold the spectators, though scattered in the 38,000-capacity Maharaja Yadavindra Singh Stadium amid scorching heat, in rapt attention.

Manav Suthar's modus operandi is largely reminiscent of an older vintage of spinners whose style was adorned by generous flight, deadly drift and sharp turn

As soon as the youngster was given the ball at the start of the sixth over in Afghanistan's first innings, he got down to business. With two slips and a short-leg around opener Abdul Malik, Manav started with a dream delivery for his tribe of left-arm spinners: the ball pitched on a good length, drew the batter forward, spun and kicked up, like a serpent taunted, to beat the outside edge.

Having played and missed twice more, Malik, with just three balls left for the tea interval, responded with a daft sweep. He skied the cross-batted stroke to Mohammed Siraj at short fine-leg, and became the first victim of Manav's Test career. The tweaker finished with figures of six for 33 and one for 29 as India clinched victory by an innings and 300 runs.

Though the unvarnished truth is that Afghanistan isn't yet up to Test standard, Manav's illuminating debut was significant for two reasons. One, this was the first time since 2010 that India was playing a home Test without either the now-retired R. Ashwin or the rested Ravindra Jadeja. Two, neither Washington Sundar nor Kuldeep Yadav looked as threatening as the debutant.

From the ease of his graceful action to the revolutions imparted on the ball as it fizzed out of

his left hand, Manav's modus operandi was largely reminiscent of an older vintage of spinners whose style was adorned by generous flight, deadly drift and sharp turn. Particularly at a time of perpetual lament about the erosion of the traditional tenets of finger-spin, Manav's arrival appears as refreshing as the first spell of monsoon showers.

Sure, stiffer challenges will follow. But in circumstances where Jadeja was given a break just for the think-tank to take a closer look at the next cab off the rank, Manav, who was picked in the XI ahead of Harsh Dubey, couldn't have done more to impress.

The southpaw's rousing entry bolsters the competition in India's spin department ahead of a two-Test tour of Sri Lanka where the slow bowlers have historically dominated. For their assignment across the Palk Strait in August, Shubman Gill & Co. are expected to travel with four spinners in Jadeja, Washington, Kuldeep and Manav.

What Jadeja offers

As tempting as it may now seem to make a case for Manav over Jadeja, the latter's importance to the Test team remains unaltered in the view of the men who matter. Even if he hasn't procured

a bundle of wickets of late, his batting has aged like fine wine. In 2025, the 37-year-old tallied 764 runs in 10 Tests at an average of 63.66 — higher than any previous calendar year. Conversely, he scalped just 25 wickets at 38.2 with his left-arm spin.

Some of this was down to the conditions across five Tests in England. But even in more conducive surroundings at home recently, Jadeja hasn't quite looked like the bowler with 348 Test victims to his name. If his runs, rather than his returns with the ball, continue to drive Jadeja's presence in the team, the bowling unit will be saddled with consequences in the longer run in its efforts to keep picking up 20 wickets.

Having been repeatedly overlooked in England last year, Kuldeep hasn't since had the impact expected of a wicket-taking spinner against South Africa and Afghanistan

But with India touring New Zealand for two Tests in November, it is prudent to repose trust in the veteran all-rounder for now. At scenic venues where it can be difficult to distinguish the playing surface from the lush green outfield, Jadeja's run-making ability at No. 6 or 7, alongside a few overs of left-arm spin, will offer balance and depth. That Australia will subsequently visit India for a high-profile five-Test series points to Jadeja, with all his experience, staying a vital cog for the remainder of this World Test Championship (WTC) cycle.

Washington's forte, too, is his all-round repertoire. Ever since his comeback in late 2024, the 26-year-old from Chennai has invariably chipped in with bat or ball. That said, the jury in his case is still out on whether he can conjure up definitive performances as an off-spinner.

In fairness, Washington has had his moments. On his return to the Test fold against New Zealand in Pune, he claimed a match haul of 11 for 115. While that was admittedly on a dust-bowl, his four for 22 in the second innings against England at Lord's last year was an example of his wily use of drift on a track inimical to spin. Neither performance earned plaudits since India lost.

When he complemented Manav with five wickets against Afghanistan, Sunil Gavaskar noticed encouraging signs. "Earlier on in Tests, you saw that Washington was more of a flat bowler. But against Afghanistan, he was prepared to experiment. Give the ball a little tweak. Use the crease quite smartly. So, I think he is beginning to grow as a bowler," Gavaskar said during a media interaction on Monday.

Washington's chance to silence the naysayers is in Sri Lanka. If the reticent all-rounder can rise as a match-winner with the ball as India scrambles to climb the WTC table from its fifth position, there is bound to be greater appreciation of his multifaceted value.

The Kuldeep situation

Going through a bit of a rut across formats at this point is Kuldeep. The left-arm wrist-spinner may not have always had the rub of the green, but the 31-year-old also ought to concede his shortcomings. Having been repeatedly overlooked during the five-Test tour of England last year, he hasn't since had the impact expected of a wicket-taking spinner against South Africa and Afghanistan in the longer version.

Beyond these faces, there are efforts underway to groom a wider pool. In the tune-up to the Test against Afghanistan, leggie Zeeshan Ansari, left-arm wrist-spinner Shivang Kumar and off-spinner Saransh Jain were called up to the India nets.

Pertinent as that is, promising debuts can wait. In the race to reach next year's WTC final, India needs its incumbent spinners to take prominence.

STACKING UP



ATP Men's Top 15

#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Jannik Sinner	24	13,450	18
2	Carlos Alcaraz	23	9,460	17
3	Alexander Zverev	29	7,190	20
4	Felix Auger-Aliassime	25	4,390	23
5	Ben Shelton	23	4,160	22
6	Alex de Minaur	27	4,110	24
7	Taylor Fritz	28	3,765	22
8	Novak Djokovic	39	3,760	16
9	Daniil Medvedev	30	3,580	24
10	Flavio Cobolli	24	3,460	26
11	Alexander Bublik	29	2,620	26
12	Casper Ruud	27	2,425	22
13	Andrey Rublev	28	2,420	23
14	Jiri Lehecka	24	2,360	21
15	Lorenzo Musetti	24	2,325	22

Top Indians

Sumit Nagal Rank 219 ▲ 66 spots	Manas Dhame Rank 386 ▼ 4 spots

WTA Women's Top 15

#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Aryna Sabalenka	28	9,090	18
2	Elena Rybakina	27	8,143	22
3	Iga Swiatek	25	6,409	19
4	Jessica Pegula	32	5,881	19
5	Mirra Andreeva	19	5,653	20
6	Amanda Anisimova	24	5,523	15
7	Coco Gauff	22	4,879	18
8	Elina Svitolina	31	4,471	16
9	Karolina Muchova	29	3,878	20
10	Victoria Mboko	19	3,670	22
11	Belinda Bencic	29	3,385	18
12	Linda Noskova	21	3,359	22
13	Marta Kostyuk	24	3,156	17
14	Naomi Osaka	28	2,846	18
15	Diana Shnaider	22	2,458	24

Top Indians

Sahaja Yamalappalli Rank 339 ▼ 11 spots	Vaishnavi Adkar Rank 395 ▲ 4 spots

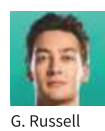


F1 Drivers' standings

#	Driver	Team	Points	Wins
1	A.K. Antonelli	Mercedes	171	5
2	G. Russell	Mercedes	131	2
3	L. Hamilton	Ferrari	125	1
4	O. Piastri	McLaren	80	0
5	L. Norris	McLaren	79	0
6	C. Leclerc	Ferrari	79	0
7	M. Verstappen	Red Bull	73	0
8	I. Hadjar	Red Bull	42	0
9	P. Gasly	Alpine	41	0
10	L. Lawson	RB	30	0
11	O. Bearman	Haas	18	0
12	F. Colapinto	Alpine	16	0
13	A. Lindblad	RB	14	0
14	C. Sainz	Williams	6	0
15	A. Albon	Williams	5	0
16	E. Ocon	Haas	3	0
17	G. Bortoletto	Audi	2	0
18	F. Alonso	Aston Martin	1	0
19	N. Hulkenberg	Audi	0	0
20	V. Bottas	Cadillac	0	0
21	S. Perez	Cadillac	0	0
22	L. Stroll	Aston Martin	0	0



A.K. Antonelli



G. Russell

F1 Constructors' standings

Pos	Team	Points	Wins
1	Mercedes	302	7
2	Ferrari	204	1
3	McLaren	159	0
4	Red Bull	115	0
5	Alpine	57	0
6	RB	44	0
7	Haas	21	0
8	Williams	11	0
9	Audi	2	0
10	Aston Martin	1	0
11	Cadillac	0	0



Badminton Men's ranking

#	Player	Points	Events
1	Shi Yu Qi	1,05,305	12
2	Kunlavut Vitidsarn	92,565	16
3	Anders Antonsen	91,155	17
4	Jonatan Christie	88,431	17
5	Christo Popov	84,682	20
6	Chou Tien Chen	80,280	27
7	Alex Lanier	74,525	17
8	Li Shi Feng	73,083	16
9	Victor Lai	72,915	20
10	Alwi Farhan	68,409	19
11	Kodai Naraoka	68,020	21
12	Lin Chun-Yi	66,594	18
13	Loh Kean Yew	65,700	18
14	Lakshya Sen	65,213	21
15	Weng Hong Yang	59,341	17

Top Indians

Lakshya Sen Rank 14	Ayush Shetty Rank 23

Badminton Women's ranking

#	Player	Points	Events
1	An Se Young	1,17,787	16
2	Wang Zhi Yi	1,06,839	16
3	Akane Yamaguchi	1,00,426	18
4	Chen Yu Fei	87,651	15
5	Han Yue	82,288	14
6	Putri Kusuma Wardani	73,473	18
7	Ratchanok Intanon	72,246	20
8	Pornpawee Chochuwong	67,977	16
9	Tomoka Miyazaki	63,646	22
10	P.V. Sindhu	61,401	14
11	Nozomi Okuhara	59,060	18
12	Chiu Pin-Chian	57,498	24
13	Michelle Li	55,227	20
14	Kim Ga Eun	54,921	16
15	Mia Blichfeldt	53,503	15

Top Indians

P.V. Sindhu Rank 10	Unnati Hooda Rank 24



Test Batting

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Travis Head	853	884
2	Harry Brook	852	898
3	Joe Root	840	932
4	Steve Smith	831	947
5	Temba Bavuma	775	806
6	Shubman Gill	743	807
7	Rachin Ravindra	740	740
8	Kamindu Mendis	737	784
9	Yashasvi Jaiswal	733	858
10	Dinesh Chandimal	725	755

ODI Batting

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Daryl Mitchell	815	840
2	Shubman Gill	791	841
3	Virat Kohli	768	908
4	Rohit Sharma	754	879
5	Ibrahim Zadran	712	756
6	Babar Azam	689	894
7	Shai Hope	683	782
8	Harry Tector	679	730
9	Charith Asalanka	659	705
10	Harry Brook	656	656

T20I Batting

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Ishan Kishan	876	876
2	Abhishek Sharma	869	931
3	Sahibzada Farhan	848	848
4	Phil Salt	792	881
5	Pathum Nissanka	751	796
6	Tilak Varma	747	845
7	Jos Buttler	716	794
8	Suryakumar Yadav	708	912
9	Mitchell Marsh	706	706
10	Dewald Brevis	702	738

Test Bowling

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Jasprit Bumrah	870	908
2	Matt Henry	861	870
3	Mitchell Starc	838	852
4	Pat Cummins	832	914
5	Marco Jansen	825	825
6	Scott Boland	820	820
7	Noman Ali	817	853
8	Kagiso Rabada	807	902
9	Josh Hazlewood	775	864
10	Nathan Lyon	753	812

ODI Bowling

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Rashid Khan	682	775
2	Abrar Ahmed	675	675
3	Jofra Archer	649	682
4	Keshav Maharaj	645	737
5	Maheesh Theekshana	641	680
6	Adil Rashid	629	671
7	Kuldeep Yadav	614	757
8	Mehidy Hasan	604	722
8	Shahene Afridi	604	691
10	Mitchell Santner	599	656

T20I Bowling

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Rashid Khan	753	828
2	Abrahm Ahmed	736	757
3	Varun Chakaravarthi	725	818
4	Adil Rashid	721	747
5	Adam Zampa	700	746
6	Jasprit Bumrah	688	783
7	Nathan Ellis	675	678
8	Corbin Bosch	669	745
9	Wanindu Hasaranga	668	809
10	Mujeeb Ur Rahman	663	757

Lord's was a third full – that was frightening because we weren't used to people

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

During the course of an extraordinary career in sport, England's Clare Taylor won the cricket World Cup in 1993 and played in the 1995 football World Cup. A pace bowler when she wasn't sweeping up in central defence, she speaks about her experiences in this freewheeling conversation

INTERVIEW

Clare Taylor

P.K. Ajith Kumar

Clare Taylor played at the World Cup for England in football and cricket. She had a longer career in cricket, in which she claimed more than 100 international wickets with her pace bowling. The 61-year-old is now a part of the ICC's Anti-Corruption Unit. Excerpts from an interview Taylor gave *The Hindu* at Old Trafford, during the T20 Women's World Cup:

Your earliest memories of sport? Are they from football or cricket?

Definitely football. Just where I lived, Huddersfield, we had a grass area. And I have to admit to being a Liverpool fan; we had players like Kevin Keegan, Terry McDermott...

And later on, along came Ian Rush...

Yes, Liverpool has had some great players. Where I lived, it was mainly boys that played. I joined them.

What position did you start at?

Centre-forward. Everyone wants to score goals. And then later on, just kept moving back and ended up as sweeper or centre-half, which I really liked. I think my one skill was reading the game.

Who discovered your talent in football?

Well, I got into the boys' team at school. The Physical Education teacher, Ian Mackay, was the one who encouraged me. And then that was a big thing in the local paper, which had said, 'Future Pele can't play. She is a girl.' Well, the local FA also said, 'You can't play. You are a girl. Because there is no insurance if you get injured.' So my parents took out private insurance just so I could go and then I played for a team in Bradford. And then you just get selected for representative things.

I moved from Bradford, where I played for Bronte Ladies. Then I moved from there to a team called Knowsley, which is near Liverpool. And with the start of the National League, Liverpool men's team took over the running of Knowsley. So I ended up playing for Liverpool, which was like a highlight for me. So once that got, you know, a little bit more professional without being professional, that's when I realised there was probably more opportunities.

How do you look back at that football World Cup in 1995?

It was in Sweden. And we ended up on over-



Ellyse Perry is brilliant because she just flatlines all the way through. There's no show of emotion. Smriti Mandhana is class. You have got players with brute strength, but she is such a touch player



We got through to the quarter-finals. And then we did what England do: we lost to Germany

night trains to get between destinations. So it wasn't, you know, first class travel and things like that. And going to the stadium and nobody was in the ground. We played Canada in our first game. And I would say there were about 200 people in the ground. And then you look at the grounds now and, you know, the Lionesses play in front of 40,000 or 50,000.

Them winning Euro 2022 was a catalyst, wasn't it?

Absolutely. England is quite a fickle place and the media tend to sway a lot of things.

To go back to your own football World Cup...

We had four group games and then we got through to the quarter-finals. And then we did what England do: we lost to Germany in the quarter-finals.

Gender no bar, then, when it comes to football and Germany?

No, no. We just don't do well, male or female.

You must have more pleasant memories from the cricket World Cup, which was played here in England in 1993.

We had lost to New Zealand in the round-robin phase. They just put a ring field and we played 60 overs and just didn't have the power; we had a lot of technically good players, though. They just stacked the offside; so it was covers: dot ball, dot ball. So we lost to New Zealand. We went back and I said, look, we have got to start,

the term I used was hoiking, which means cow shot. Get your bottom hand in.

So, I remember all the girls went into the nets and practised it. Even girls like Janette Brittin, who was class. Carole Hodges... you know, they practised it. And then we played Australia and we had never really beaten Australia. And we absolutely hammered them.

In the final, we played New Zealand again. It was at Lord's. The ground, it was a third full. But for us, that was quite frightening because, you know, you weren't used to people. Then there was a pitch invasion once we had won.

We had a crowd of eight or nine thousand. That was massive [for us]. The media were up at Headingley, as the men were. And they just lost the Ashes up at Headingley. They got bowled out. So the BBC had some cameras down at Lord's. The last half an hour, or 40 minutes, they did it.

So they showed it live on TV?

Yes, and I think it was happening probably for the first time in women's cricket. That made such a big difference because the next day we were in all the newspapers.

You have travelled to India several times for cricket.

The first time we went, I was just blown away with how big it was, how different from city to city, how different from the Western world it was.

I also remember being amazed by watching – it might be at Hyderabad, I think – lots of women on the outfield with sponges and buckets. And literally, it was a human super sopper.

Players you like watching these days?

I love watching Ellyse Perry. Marizanne Kapp, too. Perry is brilliant because she just flatlines all the way through. There's no show of emotion.

Apart from you, Perry is the only double World Cupper – and even scored a stunning goal – besides winning multiple cricket World Cups with Australia. She once told me every girl should try multiple sports before specialising in one.

Absolutely. I totally agree. Football helped my cricket because I was fitter. I had to be fit to play cricket.

And that was not the time when everybody was fit, as is the case today.

No, I remember the first time the England women's team did the beep test, and girls were dropping out at five, which is just like a quick walk. But I was up at 11, 12. And everyone's looking at me going, you know, but I don't think it helped the other girls because they were saying, look, if she can be at this level, then you need to get to this level. It is good to see women's cricket is getting better and the girls can make a living out of it. And it is lovely watching some of them play, like Smriti Mandhana. She is class. You have got players who have brute strength, but she is such a touch player. It's lovely to watch.

Was someone as stylish as her in your time?

Obviously not a left-hander, but Janette Brittin was very elegant.

GAME THEORY



MARK CAVENDISH



EDDY MERCKX



BERNARD HINAULT

The best stage riders of the Tour de France

With the 113th edition of the Tour de France getting underway on Saturday, we list the riders with the most stage wins in the oldest and most prestigious of the three Grand Tours (these wins include half-stages and exclude team time trials). A stage is a single, one-day race that forms a part of the 21-day event; winning one is considered a significant achievement, even if the ultimate aim is to finish the 21 stages with the lowest cumulative time overall. Only three riders – Eddy Merckx (1974), Bernard Hinault (1979) and Wout van Aert (2021) – have won all three speciality stages – mountain, sprint, and individual time trial – in a single Tour

MOST STAGE WINS

Rank	Rider	Country	Stage wins	First win	Last win
1	Mark Cavendish	Great Britain	35	2008	2024
2	Eddy Merckx	Belgium	34	1969	1975
3	Bernard Hinault	France	28	1978	1986
4	Andre Leducq	France	25	1927	1938
5	Andre Darrigade	France	22	1953	1964
6	Tadej Pogacar	Slovenia	21	2020	2025
7	Nicolas Frantz	Luxembourg	20	1924	1929
8	Francois Faber	Luxembourg	19	1908	1914
9	Jean Alavoine	France	17	1909	1923
10	Jacques Anquetil	France	16	1957	1964
10	Rene Le Greves	France	16	1933	1939
10	Charles Pelissier	France	16	1929	1935
13	Freddy Maertens	Belgium	15	1976	1981
14	Marcel Kittel	Germany	14	2013	2017
15	Phillippe Thys	Belgium	13	1913	1924
15	Louis Trousselier	France	13	1905	1910

SOURCE: TOUR DE FRANCE

PICTURE THIS



GETTY IMAGES

Within grasp

Sport climbing demands extreme skill, conditioning and concentration.

Climbing competitions are typically staged on purpose-built walls – such as the one in this photograph from the World Climbing Series in

Innsbruck, Austria.

Competitions are conducted in three categories: lead, speed and bouldering.

In lead, climbers start at the bottom of a long route and try to scale it within a certain time-period in a single attempt.

The climber's performance is determined by the highest hold

reached and whether that hold was 'controlled'. Lead climbers must climb the route 'on sight': they are not allowed to observe others. Bouldering involves climbing short walls without rope. The emphasis is on the number of problems completed; unlike in lead, climbers can make more than one attempt in

the stipulated time.

Speed matters in a speed event, which sees competitors climbing a slightly overhanging vertical wall with a top rope.

Sport climbing featured in the Olympics for the first time in Tokyo 2020. The sport's major events are the World Cup and the World Championships.