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BALANCING EXPANSION
BJP weighs structural changes in organisation
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SC seeks Centre, States' reply to Aadhaar plea
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NEXT ASSIGNMENT
Women in Blue eye second straight win
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INSIDE



‘Instead of Israel, Syria can deal with Hezbollah’

EVIAN
U.S. President Donald Trump on Tuesday said he had suggested to Israel that Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa should deal with Lebanon's Hezbollah militia as the Israeli campaign was causing too many casualties. » **PAGE 14**

Savarkar filed 10 mercy pleas, his kin tells court

MUMBAI
Satyaki Savarkar, the grandnephew of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, told a special MP/MLA court in Pune that the right-wing ideologue had submitted 10 clemency petitions to the British government seeking reduction of his sentence. » **PAGE 4**

RSS must answer Karnataka govt.'s queries: Priyank

BENGALURU
After RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat dismissed Karnataka Home Minister Priyank Kharge's questions on transparency, the Minister on Tuesday said, "The RSS cannot say that it will not reply because they are being asked by the Karnataka government." » **PAGE 3**

Probe the theft of Ram Temple donations: Cong.

LUCKNOW
Uttar Pradesh Congress leaders on Tuesday demanded a time-bound investigation by a sitting judge of a High Court into donations missing from the Ram Mandir Trust, alleging "organised plunder" of hundreds of crores of rupees by the BJP and RSS. » **PAGE 5**

Govt. orders blocking of Telegram app till NEET re-examination

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

At the National Testing Agency (NTA)'s request, the Centre is blocking the messaging app Telegram in India until Monday, in what the NTA described as a "response to the organised use of the platform by cheating rackets to defraud candidates appearing for the NEET (UG) 2026 re-examination scheduled on 21 June 2026."

On Tuesday evening, a few hours after the government's order, at least one telecom operator had already blocked access to the service, and the app's listing was taken down from Google Play and Apple's App Store. This is the first time that a messaging app operating at such a scale is being blocked in India by

the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, even for a limited period.

The NTA emphasised that this blocking was "calibrated and bounded in time," and that it would be lifted later.

The agency said that several Telegram groups were advertising fake test papers for the upcoming NEET and defrauding candidates willing to pay for them.

Telegram founder Pavel Durov criticised the blocking, saying it "punishes" over 15 crore "ordinary Telegram users in India". "Banning the app even temporarily," he said, "is a mistake".

"The leaks just moved to other apps", Mr. Durov added. While it is unclear what he was referring to,



The NTA has emphasised that the blocking is 'calibrated and bounded in time,' and that it would be lifted later. REUTERS

the NTA on the day kept dismissing the legitimacy of certain screenshots purported to be that of the upcoming NEET exam's question paper.

"Over the past few weeks, we removed hundreds of channels sharing leaked exam materials and related scams in India. We are also making the "edited" label more visible to

prevent backdating scams," he said.

"Acting on inputs received continuously from NTA, from State law-enforcement agencies including the police forces of Bihar, Gujarat and Rajasthan, and from its own continuous monitoring of public channels and platforms, the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), under

the Ministry of Home Affairs, has secured the prompt take-down of a substantial number of Telegram channels, groups and bots whose names and content openly advertised their fraudulent and misleading purpose," the agency said.

There are several Telegram groups circulating everything from pirated links to real-time news updates from established organisations; the platform has attracted many users as it offers features such as integrating bots into the platform, not typically found on other popular platforms such as WhatsApp and Signal.

In a video message, NTA Director-General Abhishek Singh said, "To all parents, I say, please protect your child from financial fraud

and from the panic these rackets are designed to create. NTA is committed to a fair, secure and credible examination, and to act against every person involved in spreading these scams."

Additionally, many groups, the NTA said, were editing past messages with recent exam paper questions, to fake their capabilities in obtaining question papers in advance.

In separate directions, the IT Ministry said that it had ordered Telegram to disable message editing as well until June 30, to shut off "this avenue of fabrication for the post-examination window in which such artefacts have historically been deployed."

IAF FERRYING NEET PAPERS
» **PAGE 6**



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with leaders of G7 members and other countries in Evian, eastern France, on Tuesday. AFP

World suffers from a shortage of trust, PM Modi tells G7 leaders

Sriram Lakshman
LONDON

With a message that trust was in short supply globally, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday participated in a session with the Group of Seven (G7) countries and others on "Forging New Partnerships and Rebuilding International Solidarity".

In addition to the G7 and India, other partner countries - Brazil, Egypt, Kenya, and South Korea - participated in these discussions along with the World Bank and African Development Bank. Mr. Modi met U.S. President Donald Trump for the first time since February 2025 at the meeting.

The host country France's intention for the session was to build a fairer and more effective system of international partnerships. Some of the sessions have reportedly been branded in a way that would hold Mr. Trump's interest.

Mr. Modi summarised his messages to the gathering on social media. "Mutual trust is the most important strategic asset today. But, sadly, today, the world does not suffer from a shortage of resources...it suffers from a shortage of trust," he wrote on X.

Mr. Modi said the future of partnerships was based on re-building trust and urged countries to move beyond the donor-recipient paradigm and work as equals in the development context. India has, in recent years, sought to play a leadership role for middle income and poorer countries.

"Emphasised that the Global South has immense expectations from the world. More than support, it seeks partnership," Mr. Modi wrote, adding that he had highlighted India's efforts in Africa during the G7 session, including its focus on training, water, agriculture, energy, and capacity building.

India, however, did not sign its name to a communique on restructuring the development finance ecosystem which the G7 and Kenya and South Korea supported, while putting its name to a call for coordinated response to the Bundibugyo ebola outbreak and a roadmap to fight cancer.

Videos showed Mr. Modi and Mr. Trump shaking hands before the meeting, during which they sat next to each other.

TALKS WITH CANADA, U.K.
» **PAGE 4**

INBRIEF



Gehlot questions Birla over ‘curbs’ before Rahul’s visit

Former Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot in Jaipur on Tuesday alleged that a message was being sent to coaching institutes in Kota, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla’s constituency, that no one should attend Congress leader Rahul Gandhi’s proposed programme on June 17 on the alleged NEET paper leak. “Om Birlaji should clarify his position on why such a situation has arisen,” he said. Mr. Gehlot said the administration was removing the hoardings of the programme and described it a “political conspiracy by a jittery BJP”. “First threats, and now removing hoardings. Why is the BJP so terrified?” he asked.

CJP rules out electoral entry, demands Pradhan’s ouster

Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder and activist Abhijeet Dipke in Nagpur on Tuesday ruled out entering electoral politics, saying citizens should not be forced to contest elections simply to demand their basic rights. He targeted the Centre for failing to reach out to the youth following the widespread NEET UG paper leak controversy. The party organised a massive demonstration at Samvidhan Square where hundreds of youths and students, many wearing cockroach masks and holding placards, gathered to demand the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, just days ahead of the scheduled medical entrance re-examination. PTI

T.N. announces ₹75,000 crop loan waiver amid Oppn., farmer dissent

The scheme will benefit 14.43 lakh farmers, with an estimated govt. expenditure of ₹5,932.23 cr.; scheme is ‘inadequate’, ‘discriminatory’ and amounts to a ‘breach of trust’: farmer organisations

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI/TIRUCHI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay on Tuesday announced a revised crop loan waiver scheme under which loans of up to ₹75,000 taken by farmers from cooperative banks, irrespective of landholding size, between May 1, 2025, and February 28, 2026, will be fully waived. Loans above ₹75,000 will be eligible for a waiver of ₹35,000. All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami criticised the move, terming it “unprecedented”.

According to an official release, the revised scheme will benefit 14.43 lakh farmers, and the government will incur an expenditure of ₹5,932.23 crore. On May 25, the government had announced a waiver of crop loans up to ₹50,000 taken by small and marginal farmers from cooperative banks. The announcement received a



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay during an event in Chennai on Tuesday. ANI

mixed response from farmers, who demanded that the scheme be restructured. Mr. Vijay chaired a review meeting on June 15 with Ministers and officials to restructure the scheme.

‘No difference’

Mr. Palaniswami said that there was “no major economic difference” as small and marginal farmers belong to the same social and economic category. He urged the government to provide a full waiver for small and marginal farmers, in line with the ruling

party’s electoral assurance, and a 50% waiver for large farmers.

Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam founder T. T. V. Dhinakaran also accused the government of “cheating farmers on the issue”.

Farmers’ response

Farmers’ organisations in the Cauvery delta region expressed dissatisfaction with the latest government announcement, terming it “inadequate” and “discriminatory”.

Citing the loss of the *kuruvai* (short-duration sum-

mer paddy) crop in the delta due to poor water storage in the Mettur reservoir, the organisations demanded a full waiver of cooperative farm loans, as promised by the Tamilaga Vetti Kazhagam in its election manifesto.

“The announcement that farmers who have availed crop loans of up to ₹75,000 will get a full waiver, and those with loans exceeding ₹75,000 will receive a waiver of ₹35,000, is totally inadequate. Election promises on farm loan waivers were among the first to be implemented by governments in the past. The successive and varied announcements by the government amount to a breach of trust,” said P. R. Pandian, president of the Coordination Committee of All Farmers Associations of Tamil Nadu. Farmers in the Cauvery delta have faced a major setback due to the loss of the *kuruvai* crop this year and the uncertainty over water availability for the August-January season.

Mamata visited hills as a tourist, ignored north Bengal: CM

Senjuti Sengupta
KOLKATA

Promising accelerated development for the Darjeeling hills, West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari on Tuesday accused former Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of neglecting north Bengal and unveiled a slew of welfare and infrastructure initiatives for the region.

Addressing a rally in Kurseong, Mr. Adhikari said, “The former CM used to visit the hills only as a tourist. But I am not here as a tourist. I have come here to deliver what we have promised. We will work here and fulfil the aspirations of the people in the hills.”

He said a comprehensive road map for the development of north Bengal had already been prepared.

“The Central government allocated over ₹180 crore to the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) for the development of the hills. But it was not utilised properly under the previous government. Our double-engine government is committed to the development of the hills. All welfare and development schemes of the



West Bengal CM Suwendu Adhikari being felicitated in Kurseong on Tuesday. PTI

Centre will reach the people here,” he said.

Mr. Adhikari said transparency would be maintained in government appointments and recruitment.

“There will be no corruption in recruitment anymore,” he said. He unveiled a ₹330-crore package to revive 25 tea gardens in north Bengal.

The CM announced an ex gratia payment of ₹5 lakh for the families of those who allegedly lost their lives due to police firing or political violence during the previous regime.

He said a medical college would be established in Kalimpong and promised to strengthen healthcare facilities.

Our doors are open to all, says Shinde-led Sena leader amid buzz over ‘poaching’ attempts

Press Trust of India
MUMBAI

Amid indications of nervousness in the Shiv Sena (UBT) camp about possible attempts to “poach” its MPs, Shiv Sena leader Pratap Sarnaik on Tuesday said his party’s doors were open to anyone who believed in the leadership of Deputy CM Eknath Shinde.

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Deshmukh had on Monday met Union Minister Prataprao Jadhav, who belongs to the Shinde-led Shiv Sena. A day earlier, only four of the Sena (UBT)’s nine Lok Sabha MPs physically attended a meeting called by party chief Uddhav Thackeray.

Mr. Sarnaik said anyone who believed in the ideals of Sena founder Bal Thack-



Transport Minister Pratap Sarnaik (centre) said those who believed in the leadership of Eknath Shinde were welcome. FILE PHOTO

eray and the leadership of Mr. Shinde was welcome. “If public representatives do not trust their leadership, and if they are willing to trust Eknath Shinde, then the doors of the Shiv Sena are open to them,” he said.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leaders have, however, asserted that the party’s Lok Sabha

MPs are with Uddhav Thackeray.

Amid reports of attempts to engineer a fresh split in Shiv Sena (UBT), party leader Sanjay Raut said, “*Hamara din jab aayega, hum dikhayenge party kaise todi jati hai* (We will show how parties are split when our day comes).”

Reconstitute Aravallis panel, environmental group writes to CJI

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Aravalli Virasat Jan Abhiyaan (AVJA), a coalition of environmentalists and activists, wrote to Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant on Tuesday and expressed “grave concerns” over a committee constituted by the Supreme Court to examine the definition of the mountain range and related issues.

The AVJA demanded that the Supreme Court modify the committee so that neither its Chairperson nor Member Secretary is a serving officer of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) or any of its autonomous councils, bodies or authorities.

“An independent expert with domain knowledge of

The group also demanded that the ‘regressive’ uniform definition of the Aravalis be scrapped

the Aravalli region who does not report to the MoEF&CC must be appointed as the chairperson of the new committee. The Member Secretary also must not be part of the MoEF&CC or under its control,” the letter read. The representation was submitted on the eve of the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought.

The group also demanded that the “regressive” uniform definition of the Aravalis accepted by the Supreme Court order on November 20, 2025 must be scrapped.

‘Over 1,000 mistakes in Odisha school textbooks’: teachers and parents seek corrective action

The Hindu Bureau
BHUBANESWAR

Teachers’ associations and parents’ outfits in Odisha on Tuesday expressed concern over “widespread errors” and “glaring inaccuracies” in the newly introduced textbooks for Classes 1 to 8.

Acknowledging the lapses, School and Mass Education Minister Nityananda Gond said teachers have been instructed to rectify the errors and teach students from the corrected material.

Brahmananda Maharana, president of a teachers’ association, alleged that the textbooks, based on the recommendations of the National Education Policy 2020, were riddled with 1,678 errors. “Instead



Teachers have been instructed to rectify the errors and teach students from the corrected material

NITYANANDA GOND
School and Mass Education Minister

of the Odisha Legislative Assembly, a photograph of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly has been used. In another case, Berhampur has been incorrectly identified as a district, though it is actually a city in Ganjam district. There is no district named Berhampur,” he said.

Several other errors relating to information on tribal communities have also

been identified, Mr. Maharana added. For instance, he said Niyamgiri, the abode of the Dongria Kondh, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group, has been wrongly shown as being located in Jharkhand.

Basudev Bhat of the parents’ federation, Odisha Abhibhabak Mahasangh, told *The Hindu*, “These are not mistakes, but crimes. The government must take responsibility. It cannot play with the future of students.” “Even if they decide to reprint books. It will take three months to complete the process and an additional three months to supply the books,” added Mr. Bhat. The organisations demanded that accountability be fixed for the errors in the school textbooks.

Post-fire sealing drive in Delhi shrinks affordable lodging for patients

Suruchi Kumari
NEW DELHI

The sealing of illegal bed-and-breakfast (B&B) facilities across Delhi following the June 3 Hauz Rani fire that claimed 23 lives has left many patients and their families struggling to find affordable accommodation near major private hospitals in the national capital.

While there has been support for stricter enforcement following the fire, many feel the incident has also highlighted a shortage of safe and affordable lodging options near hospitals for those who come to Delhi for months-long treatment.

Long road to recovery “We had already booked a room in a B&B in Hauz Rani. The fire happened on the day we reached. We had to look elsewhere immediately,” said Thomas



A sealed hotel in the Hauz Rani area of Malviya Nagar; a notice posted on the wall of a building after being sealed by authorities following the massive fire on June 3 in south Delhi. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Berhana, 41, who arrived from Ethiopia on a medical visa with a family member for treatment at a south Delhi private hospital. The family eventually found a hotel in Jangpura.

“We are paying almost double now. The distance is also greater, which makes things difficult because we have hospital visits every day. Our budget is much tighter now,” Mr. Berhana said.

According to govern-

ment data, 705 properties in 13 revenue districts of Delhi have been inspected since June 5. Most of those examined were found to be violating fire safety norms, lacked mandatory no-objection certificates from the fire department, or were operating more rooms than permitted under their licences.

As of June 12, authorities had carried out 212 sealing and demolition actions against 198 illegal proper-

ties following the fire incident.

Support system

For years, however, these neighbourhood accommodations had become an informal support system for medical travellers. A local pharmacist in Hauz Rani, who requested anonymity, said many of his regular customers were patients and attendants from countries such as Congo, Liberia, Nigeria, Mozambique

and Bangladesh. “We sold medicines at reasonable prices, and over time a bond developed. Some still call to ask about medicines, but most of the people who used to stay here have gone,” he said.

Patients often chose these areas because of their proximity to hospitals and lower costs. In Pocket 10 of Jasola Vihar, behind a major private hospital in south-east Delhi, accommodation options ranging from serviced apartments to guest houses typically cost between ₹900 and ₹2,000 a day. Patients from across India and countries such as Oman, Russia, Kazakhstan and Kenya frequently stay in the area. Families staying there said the Hauz Rani fire has made them more conscious of safety risks.

Affordability supreme

Mohammed, who arrived from Sudan with his family

and booked accommodation for nearly two months to complete pre-surgery formalities and support post-operative recovery, said they plan to move into a rented room next week. “The rent will be higher, but we don’t see many options,” he said.

Christian, 52, a Nigerian national, said he has also become more aware of potential hazards. “The lanes are congested, and sometimes you wonder what would happen if there was an emergency. But treatment itself is expensive. People choose places they can afford,” he said. Shirish, 31, who came from Madhya Pradesh for his mother’s treatment, said affordability outweighed convenience. After the B&B his family had booked was sealed, they shifted to Saket. “For a family seeking medical treatment, affordability is the most important thing,” he said.



INBRIEF



Central agencies join drive against narcotics in Kerala

In a major boost to Kerala’s intensified anti-drug campaign, Central enforcement and intelligence agencies have joined forces with the State government to strengthen Operation Toofan, the flagship narcotics crackdown launched by Kerala Police. Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala convened a high-level coordination meeting in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday involving representatives from various central agencies to enhance intelligence sharing.

Kerala ‘Kafir screenshot’ row: SIT arrests DYFI local leader

The special investigation team (SIT) probing the ‘kafir screenshot’ case has arrested a local leader of the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI), the youth organisation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). Jithin Bhaskaran, the arrested activist, is a member of the DYFI’s Vadakara block committee. The case is related to a screenshot with communal content that had surfaced on the eve of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in Vadakara, Kerala.

Three-year-old girl attacked by stray dogs in Bengaluru

A three-and-a-half-year-old girl was attacked by a pack of eight to 10 stray dogs in north Bengaluru’s Sahakarnagar on Sunday, resulting in severe bite injuries. The victim, daughter of a migrant worker, was playing on a street around 4 p.m. when the incident occurred. A woman standing at a distance noticed the commotion and rushed to her rescue, chasing the dogs away. A source from the North Corporation said the girl was taken to a hospital and is in stable condition.

MSC Elsa 3 sinking: HC concerned over impact

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

Expressing serious concern over the absence of an environmental impact assessment (EIA) on the sinking of the ship *MSC Elsa 3* off the Alappuzha coast in May 2025, the Kerala High Court on Tuesday sought the response of the Centre and other agencies.

The court sought the response of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change and the Director-General of Shipping on the marine and coastal ecological impacts caused by the wreckage.

They have been asked to detail the manner in which the EIA would be carried out, the institutions or agencies considered competent to undertake the exercise, and the scope of the study. In addition, the court must be informed whether any interim measures have been contemplated to address the environmental and navigational concerns due to the sinking of the vessel along with the containers aboard, said a Division Bench of Justice Raja Vijayaraghavan V. and Justice K.V. Jayakumar, while considering public interest litigation petitions filed by T.N. Pratapan and others.

Many of the containers were carrying hazardous cargo, including 339.20 tonnes of calcium carbide. An estimated 475 containers remain sunk with the ship. The court sought details of whether steps had been taken to engage an independent expert agency, scientific institution, or technical consultant to verify the findings contained in the reports relied upon by the ship’s owners.

RSS must answer questions of Karnataka govt.: Priyank

The State Home Minister had written to the Sangh chief seeking details of donations, taxes, and other issues connected to the organisation: Bhagwat had said that there was no need to respond

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Asserting that Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat’s stand that there is no need to respond to questions on registration of the Sangh as “unacceptable”, Karnataka Home Minister Priyank Kharge on Tuesday said the government will wait for sometime and decide on the next course of action if there is no reply.

“The RSS cannot say that it will not reply (to the eight questions posed by him in a letter to Mr. Bhagwat) because they are be-



Priyank Kharge

ing asked by the Karnataka government and not by Mr. [Priyank] Kharge as an individual,” he told media in New Delhi.

Pointing out that Mr. Bhagwat’s remarks that there was no need to respond to questions on the

legal status of RSS had been made at a Sangh convention, Mr. Kharge said: “Whatever you say in front of *swayamsevak*s may be acceptable for them, but not for the government.”

20 lakh people

Mr. Kharge, in his capacity as Karnataka’s Home Minister, had written to the RSS chief asking him to provide details on the legal grounds on which a massive organisation that could mobilise 20 lakh people has been functioning. He had asked for details on its donations, taxes, and other related issues.

“The Akhila Bharatiya

Pratinidhi Sabha, which is the highest decision-making body of the RSS, itself has stated in its report that the organisation had mobilised nearly 20 lakh people in Karnataka through its *samajotsava* programmes. In a country where a even sanitation worker needs to register himself, how can an organisation with such a magnitude operate without registering itself,” he wondered.

Stating that Mr. Bhagwat’s security expenses were being borne out of taxpayers’ money, he wanted to know if taxpayers do not have a right to ask for RSS’ legal status.

Kerala plans disease ‘outbreak calendar’

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government will create a calendar to map seasonal and regional patterns of disease outbreaks in the State in a bid to give the public health system’s response an added edge in the future.

Health Minister K. Muralleedharan noted at a press conference on Tuesday that, for one, Nipah cases are repeatedly reported in the Perambra region of Kozhikode between May and September. Curiously,

some districts, notably Palakkad, have not reported any shigellosis cases so far, he said. “Disease patterns might vary from time to time, but several viruses seem to follow seasonal patterns,” he said.

He said the reasons for pathogens following seasonal and regional patterns remained unclear and were a major area of research. An “outbreak calendar” would give the public health system greater predictive accuracy and help it calibrate disease prevention and response.

Ex-Health Minister Vijayabaskar quits as Tamil Nadu MLA, leaves AIADMK

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI/PUDUKOTTAI

In yet another blow to the AIADMK, Viralmalai MLA and former Health Minister C. Vijayabaskar resigned from the Assembly and quit the party on Tuesday.

He submitted his resignation to Speaker J.C.D. Prabhakar at the Secretariat. The Speaker said in a statement that he had accepted the resignation.

Dr. Vijayabaskar, who has been associated with the AIADMK since his col-



C. Vijayabaskar

lege days, served as the Health Minister between 2013 and 2021 in the Cabinets of Chief Ministers Jayalalithaa, O. Panneerselvam, and Edappadi K. Palaniswami.

Gowda takes charge after Congress nudge

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Minister Krishna Byre Gowda took charge of the Bengaluru Development portfolio on Tuesday, nearly two weeks after being sworn in, stating that his decision followed directions from the Congress high command and Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar.

Mr. Gowda, who was sworn in on June 3, had delayed taking charge, unhappy with the Chief Minister retaining the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) and the Bangalore Metropolitan Region Development Authority, two key planning bodies for the city.

“I have told the Chief Minister and the leadership my opinion that the lack of

clarity in who is in charge will come in the way of accountability and result-oriented administration,” he said. He added, however, that it was finally the discretion of the Chief Minister.

“I have appealed to the Chief Minister to reconsider his decision. I was of the opinion that it was better to take charge after I got this clarity, but the high command and the Chief Minister told me to take charge and begin work, and that the issue would be resolved eventually. So, I have begun my work,” he said.

Mr. Gowda said improving the quality of everyday life of Bengalureans was his top priority. He held his first meeting with top officials under the GBA limits.

Nourishing futures



Students eating mid-day meal provided at a school in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday. K.V.S. GIRI

In Singapore, Naidu pitches Amaravati as a future-ready, global city

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday pitched Amaravati as a future-ready global city and invited international investors, technology leaders and semiconductor manufacturers in Singapore to partner with the State government in its ambitious development plans.

Addressing the Leadership Plenary Session-II of the World Cities Summit on the theme, ‘Can Smart Cities Love Humans?’, Mr. Naidu outlined his vision for Amaravati as a people-centric, technology-driven and environmentally sus-



N. Chandrababu Naidu at a summit in Singapore on Tuesday.

tainable capital city. It will be knowledge-based city with world-class universities, a quantum computing hub, advanced digital infrastructure and green energy initiatives and sustainability, he said.

Highlighting the uniqueness of the project, Mr. Nai-

du said farmers had voluntarily parted with nearly 35,000 acres of land, making it one of the world’s largest participatory urban development initiatives. The State had developed the land and returned a part of it to the farmers, ensuring inclusive growth.

Courts must weigh civil disputes before criminal prosecution: HC

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court has said that trial courts cannot ignore the pendency of civil proceedings while assessing whether criminal prosecution is being used as a weapon of harassment, and are duty-bound to scrutinise, even at the stage of framing of charges, whether the evidence genuinely discloses a strong suspicion and a reasonable prospect of conviction.

“The criminal law cannot be permitted to degenerate into a weapon of oppression in aid of a civil contest,” it said, citing Su-

preme Court observations that criminal law cannot be invoked against citizens, in the absence of legally tenable material, merely because a civil dispute subsists between the parties.

Justice M. Nagaprasanna made these observations while quashing the criminal cases against several persons and their advocate by the Bengaluru city police in connection with a complaint lodged against them in relation to a dispute over transactions of certain properties, the sale deeds of which were registered two decades ago.

A simmering land dispute between the parties has been artfully clothed in

the robes of criminal prosecution in the complete absence of even an iota of criminality, the court said while pointing out that the criminal law cannot be permitted to degenerate into a weapon of oppression in aid of a civil contest.

The criminal justice system, it said, must operate through two filters – first, at the stage of investigation and filing of a chargesheet, and next, at the stage of framing of charge by the trial court. At both stages, the law vests ample power in trial courts to terminate proceedings that amount to abuse of process, subject always to the peculiar facts of each case.

As war clouds recede, Kerala expecting influx of Arab tourists in monsoon season

Dhinesh Kallungal
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

With the signing of a new agreement between Iran and the U.S. aimed at ending hostilities between the two countries, Kerala, a favoured destination among Arab travellers, is gearing up for an influx of visitors as the summer vacation season begins across West Asia and the monsoon sets in over the State.

Arab tourists comprise a significant proportion of international visitors to Kerala’s tourism sector, particularly in the wellness and leisure segments in the months of June, July, and August. However, the West

Asian conflict, subsequent airspace restrictions, and soaring airfares had affected tourist movement for several months.

The sector is now buoyed by the end of the conflict and the onset of the monsoon season, widely regarded as the best time to experience the State’s enchanting landscapes and rejuvenating wellness therapies, including Ayurveda. Tourism stakeholders expect the ongoing season to attract large numbers of visitors seeking holistic healing and relaxation.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Rasheed Kakkad, president of the Association of

Arab Tour Operators, said there has been an uptick in enquiries from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries over the past couple of weeks.

“Unlike tourists from Europe or the Far East, Arab tourists arrive in large numbers and spend nearly four times more than an average European visitor, significantly benefiting the local economy,” he said.

Summer in GCC nations

This is also the period when temperatures in GCC countries often exceed 50 degrees Celsius, making Kerala’s cool climate and monsoon charm particularly attractive to travell-

ers. According to Sajeey Kurup, general secretary and president of the Ayurveda Promotion Society, Arab travellers fall into different categories, including leisure, wellness and medical tourists.

However, Kerala benefits most from visitors in the leisure and wellness segments.

“Wellness tourists are drawn to the traditional holistic Ayurveda treatments offered across Malabar and Central Kerala apart from medical tourists to big hospital chains, while leisure travellers prefer destinations such as Munnar and the backwaters of Alappuzha,” he said.

A IN-X

Not binary: India can save its forests by winning the war on poverty

Forests with more poor households and communities that depended more on fuelwood were also found to have less diverse tree species, a new study has found. On the other hand, forests where communities had access to alternative livelihoods, such as farming, had more diverse trees species

Ipsita Herlekar

Traditionally, many conservationists and policymakers have seen biodiversity conservation as a choice between protecting nature and meeting human needs. Forests were often seen as places that had to be protected from people, while alleviating poverty and economic development were treated as separate concerns.

A new international study has concluded that this is a harmful view.

In a paper in the journal *Nature Sustainability*, researchers from the University of Notre Dame, the University of Michigan, Yale University, the University of Colorado Boulder (U.S.), the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, the University of Manchester (U.K.), the University of Victoria (Canada), and the Indian School of Business analysed data from community-managed forests in the tropics.

The data came from the International Forestry Resources and Institutions network, and spanned 322 community-managed tropical forests in 15 countries from 1993 to 2017.

The dataset's size allowed the researchers to understand both current patterns in forest biodiversity and how they had changed over time. Principally, they found a significant link between people's livelihoods and forest biodiversity.

Forests, people, livelihoods

Forests with more poor households and communities that depended more on fuelwood were also found to have less diverse tree species. The team also found similar patterns in forests in densely populated areas with higher levels of poverty.

On the other hand, forests where communities had access to alternative livelihoods, such as farming, had more diverse trees.

Tree species diversity refers to the number of tree species in a forest; it is an important measure of biodiversity. Forests with more species tend to support more wildlife, are ecologically more stable, and are often more resilient to environmental change.

Overall, the analysis found that a greater dependence on forest resources was associated with lower tree species diversity.

However, the researchers emphasised that poverty is not responsible for biodiversity loss. They pointed out that when people have fewer livelihood options and depend heavily on forests to survive, the pressure on forest resources automatically increases. The way out is to improve economic opportunities.

The fortress model

The study also focused on human-dominated landscapes, which are common in India. Most forests in the country are owned and managed by State



Garos tribal women carrying firewood in the West Garo Hills district of Meghalaya in 2024. Representative image. RITU RAJ KONWAR

Forest Departments. And for decades, this apparatus has followed the fortress model – where protected areas are managed by minimising human activities and restricting access to resources. While this model has allowed the Departments to recover several iconic species and strengthen protection, it has some severe limitations.

Today, many protected areas are increasingly becoming isolated islands surrounded by human-dominated landscapes.

“The forests in these landscapes are smaller in size and bear a heavy burden of extraction,” Ashwini Chhatre, associate professor of Public Policy at the Indian School of Business and one of the study’s authors, said.

Around 275 million people depend on these forests to varying degrees for their livelihoods and daily needs.

“But these forests are ecologically important and provide significant ecosystem services,” Dr. Chhatre said.

According to him, the new findings can be used to support conservation by prioritising wildlife corridors – patches of forests that form a loose link between protected areas.

“These corridors are used by large mammals to move between protected areas. The improvement of species richness in these corridors will increase forest resilience and support conservation directly,” he said.

Helping conservation

To reduce pressure on forests, State Forest Departments across India have introduced initiatives like distributing subsidised LPG connections and efficient cooking stoves and heaters around many tiger reserves and national parks. The measures reduce people’s need for fuelwood and to enter forests.

Today, many protected areas are increasingly becoming isolated islands surrounded by human-dominated landscapes. They bear a heavy burden of extraction from communities who depend on them for their livelihood

Extending similar support to private landholdings and community forests along wildlife corridors could help conservation.

However, Imran Siddiqui, senior field conservationist at the Centre for Wildlife Studies, who has worked extensively in protected areas and with forest communities in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, said that while such initiatives are well-intentioned and that communities often welcome them, they face implementation challenges.

“Funding can be inconsistent, participation from local communities may vary, and long-term support is not always guaranteed,” he said.

Conservation partners

Today, there is growing recognition among wildlife conservationists and forest managers that conservation can’t succeed without the support of local communities.

In addition to fuel alternatives and subsidies, many State Forest Departments also give local community members jobs in tourism, forest protection, and seasonal conservation work.

The late ecologist Madhav Gadgil was a strong advocate of an inclusive approach, believing conservation efforts would be more effective if local communities had rights, incentives, and a meaningful role in managing natural resources. He also emphasised the value of traditional

ecological knowledge, and argued people who had lived alongside forests for generations possessed insights that could complement scientific approaches to conservation.

In Ladakh, the Snow Leopard Conservancy has mitigated economic losses of human-wildlife conflict with community-run homestays and livestock insurance programmes. In Maharashtra’s Sindhudurg district, village-based Mangrove Co-Management Committees help protect mangrove ecosystems while supporting fisheries, ecotourism, and sustainable aquaculture.

In Arunachal Pradesh, hornbill nest adoption programmes run by the Nature Conservation Foundation have encouraged local communities to protect nesting sites, with former Nyishi tribe hunters now serving as nest protectors and forest patrollers.

There is also tremendous scope to expand these initiatives and to further support community welfare.

As Mr. Siddiqui said, wildlife tourism is a growing multi-million-dollar industry, yet only a small fraction of its revenue reaches the communities living alongside forests and protected areas. He added that a greater share of these benefits should be directed to local communities, creating stronger incentives for conservation.

The findings of the new study highlight the close links between alleviating poverty and conserving biodiversity, and show how socio-economic conditions and conservation goals need not be in conflict with each other. By recognising these connections, both conservationists and policymakers can design more inclusive frameworks to benefit both people and nature.

(Ipsita Herlekar is an independent science writer. ipsitaherlekar@gmail.com)

THE GIST

Researchers pointed out that when people have fewer livelihood options and depend heavily on forests to survive, the pressure on forest resources automatically increases

The new findings can be used to support conservation by prioritising wildlife corridors – patches of forests that form a loose link between protected areas

The findings show how socio-economic conditions and conservation goals need not be in conflict with each other

BIG SHOT



An employee of the Terratis company releases sterile male tiger mosquitoes in Montpellier, southern France, on June 5, 2026. With global warming, 80% of the world’s population now runs the risk of being exposed to one or more infectious diseases long considered tropical, which cause more than a million deaths a year, according to the WHO. AFP

WHAT IS IT?

GRAPES-3: A cosmic-ray tracker

Vasudevan Mukunth

Researchers from Mumbai, Kochi, and Japan used the GRAPES-3 telescope to track how the earth’s upper atmosphere temperature and the sun’s magnetic field affect muons — subatomic particles from space. By analysing 22 years of data, they developed a way to use these measurements to monitor changes in the upper atmosphere in real-time with high accuracy. The findings are to be published in the August issue of *Astroparticle Physics*.

The GRAPES-3 telescope in Ooty, Tamil Nadu does not look at light like a traditional telescope. Instead, it is a muon detector. Muons are created when high-energy cosmic rays from deep space collide with the earth’s upper atmosphere. The facility consists of 16 independent modules spread over a large area. Each module contains 232 proportional counters, which are long steel tubes filled with a special mixture of argon and methane, with a thin tungsten wire running through the centre. When a muon passes through a tube, it knocks electrons out of the gas molecules. These electrons are pulled towards the wire, creating an electrical pulse that the telescope records as a hit.



The detector array of GRAPES-3 in Ooty. HIDEKI TANAKA (CC BY-SA)

The tubes are arranged in four layers, with each layer positioned at a right angle to the one below. This grid layout allows scientists to track the exact path and angle of the incoming muons. Thick layers of reinforced concrete are placed between the tubes to ensure the telescope only counts high-energy muons that are strong enough to penetrate the concrete. This is how GRAPES-3 is able to produce a high-resolution map of the invisible cosmic forces affecting the earth.

For feedback and suggestions for ‘Science’, please write to science@thehindu.co.in with the subject ‘Daily page’



Primed to treat

The Kerala story in containing Nipah
has lessons for pandemic preparedness

It is clear that human activity on the fringes of forest zones, encroaching into traditional habitats of the fruit bats, has a central role to play in the transmission of the virus; in time, this originally zoonotic infection jumped to humans. Repeatedly, the source of infection has been traced to consuming contaminated fruits, or contact with water sources contaminated by bats. This also indicates that the overall approach should be from a One Health perspective, considering environmental and animal interplays with humans, and not a mere health-care angle. The State's history of Nipah outbreaks and its learnings have enabled it to prime its health system to meet such health emergencies, at the primary and secondary hospitals itself. This is the other lesson from Kerala for pandemic preparedness. Its system has become adept at maintaining a high index of suspicion for cases of acute encephalitis; watching out for clusters, and with clinical efficiency, deploying protocols to control further spread and reach all those who need medical assistance.

Even as the ceasefire between the United States and Iran was being repeatedly breached, the Iran war showed something that the world appears to have forgotten: military force, by itself, cannot be a solution unless it is followed by a political settlement – whether in Ukraine, Gaza, Lebanon, Sudan or Iran. The last four years of relentless bombardment, bloodshed, and the killing of innocent civilians and children with impunity have exposed the reality that none of the major powers seriously pursued the option of negotiations. In fact, many have been either directly involved in acts of aggression or have actively supported them through the supply of arms and financial assistance. However, the growing stalemate in almost all major conflicts underscores a fundamental truth: a political resolution is the only way forward if the major powers are to preserve what remains of their dignity.

An uneasy path to fragile peace

Restarting a full-scale war with Iran had become untenable for the U.S. after setbacks on both the strategic and political fronts, and equally untenable for Iran after reverses on the military, economic and leadership fronts. Both sides were ultimately compelled to negotiate. However, for Israel, which had initially encouraged the U.S. to start this war, any deal with Iran that fell short of regime change was unacceptable – and remains so – because of Iran's continued support for a much-weakened Hezbollah in Lebanon, which Israel still regards as a direct threat. With Israeli elections due in October 2026, a ceasefire on the Lebanon front is politically unpalatable for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his coalition. Iran, meanwhile, has become more assertive, by directly targeting Israeli interests and U.S. assets in the Gulf even when Hezbollah was attacked. Until recently, the pattern had been the reverse, with Iran's proxies retaliating whenever Iran was targeted.

The much-awaited digitally signed U.S.-Iran deal reflects the reality that Iran has had a strategic win. Reports indicate that it opens up Hormuz Strait unconditionally, halts the war on all fronts including Lebanon, lifts Iranian oil sanctions, unfreezes Iranian assets and commits Iran not to produce nuclear weapons.

Negotiations to commit Iran to suspend nuclear enrichment and give up enriched nuclear material without being dubbed a repackaged Obama-era 2016 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), will take place over 60 days. In some ways the deal is not yet a political settlement, but the beginning of one.

Let anyone romanticise Iran's strategic gains, they do not alter the fundamental reality that Iran will continue to be viewed as a major disruptor in



A fragile Iran deal masks deeper regional rivalries and uncertainties

West Asia. There is little indication that its reliance on non-state actors such as Hezbollah, the Houthis and Iraqi militias will diminish. The Iranian government is now more hardline, its missile arsenal will be replenished, and it retains the capability to threaten the Strait of Hormuz and strike Gulf countries at will. The region is unlikely to be any safer after a deal than it was before.

This is precisely why U.S. President Donald Trump's 'Make America Great Again' (MAGA) base was pushing him to get a better deal. Mr. Trump's push to get the Saudis, Qataris and others to join the Abraham Accords to normalise relations with Israel made no headway since Israeli attacks were unrelenting in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon.

Even now, after the deal, Israel has sworn to keep the territories it has captured in Lebanon and expand Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank. Iran is apprehensive, for good reason, that the U.S. or Israel will derail the deal at the first sign of stalled negotiations or a Hezbollah attack. Israel, meanwhile, has accused the U.S. of selling it out because none of its key objectives have been achieved, conveniently overlooking its own role in urging the U.S. into the conflict.

Gulf fault lines exposed

The Gulf countries have also come out the worse off. They bet on a U.S. security umbrella, signed bilateral Abraham Accords with Israel, sidelining historical regional conflicts, shed the conservative tag (like Saudi Arabia), invested in a hi-tech future and joined important global groupings such as BRICS, signalling their increasing ambitions as middle powers. Those ambitions have been rudely shaken and their fragilities exposed.

The Gulf states need to return to the drawing board. They overestimated their collective economic and security strength while underestimating their internal divisions and long-standing rivalries.

The post-war landscape has exposed these fault lines: Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have worked at cross-purposes in Yemen, Sudan and Somalia, the Emiratis have left the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries – a clear signal that Saudi writing on energy policy is over. Their supply chains have to be reworked to overcome a future Hormuz blockade. They will face a growth slowdown after the war impacting their ambitions. While the UAE has moved closer to Israel and the U.S., others have adopted a more cautious approach.

Ironically, the Iran war has divided the Gulf rather than united it against a common adversary, making a recalibration of relations



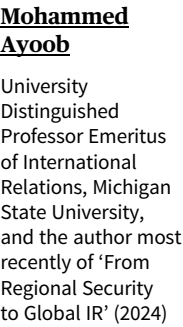
The signing of a United States-Iran peace memorandum offers a rare opportunity to reduce tensions in one of the world's most volatile regions. After decades marked by sanctions, proxy wars, covert operations, and periodic military confrontations, even a tentative framework for reconciliation between Washington and Tehran represents a significant diplomatic achievement. Yet, the prospects for transforming this memorandum into a permanent agreement depend not only on the willingness of the U.S. and Iran to compromise. They depend equally on whether Israel is prepared to accept a regional order in which Iran is no longer treated as a permanent enemy.

Israel's long opposition

No country has done more over the past three decades to oppose U.S.-Iran rapprochement than Israel. Successive Israeli governments have portrayed Iran as an existential threat and have consistently sought to prevent any normalisation of relations between Tehran and Washington. While Israeli leaders justify this position in terms of national security, the persistence of their opposition suggests broader political and strategic motivations.

The historical record is revealing. The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) placed stringent restrictions on Iran's nuclear programme and subjected it to one of the most intrusive inspection regimes ever implemented. International nuclear experts broadly agreed that the agreement significantly reduced the risk of Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon. Yet, Israel remained vehemently opposed to it.

What made Israel's position particularly striking was that it opposed an agreement designed precisely to address the threat it claimed to fear most. The episode demonstrated that Israeli objections extended beyond the nuclear issue itself. What Israel appeared unwilling to accept was the broader implication of the agreement: the gradual reintegration of



Lasting U.S.-Iran
 peace may
 depend on
 Tel Aviv's
 willingness
 to adapt

Iran into a regional order that Israel sought to dominate but would find it impossible to do if Iran was a part of it.

For decades, Israel has benefited strategically from the perception of Iran as the principal source of instability in West Asia. The Iranian threat has long served as a justification for deeper military cooperation with the U.S., expanding security ties with Arab states, and the diversion of international attention from the Palestinian issue. As long as Iran remained centre stage, scrutiny of Israeli policies in the occupied Palestinian territories remained secondary.

From Iran to Palestine

A successful U.S.-Iran rapprochement would fundamentally alter this equation. If Iran ceased to be seen as the region's primary threat, international attention would inevitably shift back to the Palestinian issue – including the occupation, settlement expansion in the West Bank and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. This concern has become more acute since the Gaza war, which has severely damaged Israel's international standing and intensified global scrutiny of its policies towards Palestinians.

At the same time, the regional mood has shifted. Arab governments that once viewed confrontation with Iran as a strategic necessity have increasingly embraced de-escalation. Saudi Arabia's restoration of diplomatic relations with Iran in 2023 signalled a growing recognition that endless rivalry has imposed enormous political and economic costs on the region. Many Arab states, especially in the Gulf, now see stability and economic development as more urgent priorities than perpetual confrontation with Tehran – a point driven home strongly by the recent conflict.

Israel finds itself increasingly at odds with this emerging regional consensus. While it continues to advocate a strategy centred on containing and



Cautious hope
The agreement between the United States and Iran merits a cautious welcome, given the fragility and complexity of the U.S.–Iran relationship, which has often been disrupted by Israel's actions. It is time for the U.S. to signal clearly that further crossings of red

who long for peace. Nations and their citizens must work to strengthen and sustain democracy, the most effective system of governance devised so far. Only then can international institutions such as the United Nations be reinforced, creating the conditions for a more	peaceful world. Peace may seem distant today, but it remains an aspiration worth pursuing for all humanity. Unnikrishnan Mangalasseril, Manjeri, Malappuram, Kerala
The prolonged conflict had raised concerns about global energy security, maritime trade, and	

regional stability. The reported commitment of both countries to pursue dialogue and reduce tensions demonstrates the importance of diplomacy in resolving international disputes. However, the success of the agreement will depend on sincere implementation and	continued engagement between the parties. The international community must support efforts aimed at long-term stability in West Asia. Shivansh Pratap Yadav Ambekar Nagar, Uttar Pradesh Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.
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A nation determined to endure and overcome

The history of Iran is replete with paradoxes and exceptions. It is a land of great contrasts both in climate and geography and is inhabited by, in the words of an ancient historian, “a poor people with a proud spirit.” Given its location, the Iranian people and its rulers have interacted with its neighbouring states throughout history both as their oppressors and as victims. Over the past two centuries, Iran has oscillated between extremes as the country searched for a viable response to the multiple challenges of Western style modernity. Under the Qajar and Pahlavi dynasties, it sought for an emulation of all things Western until the Islamic Revolution of 1979 reversed the trend and brought forth a new prototype.

The decline of the Shah
The discovery of oil in the country in 1901 had led to the formation of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) with the British government holding almost half its shares. However, post World War II, its nationalisation in 1953 resulted in tensions with Western powers, which led to the active involvement of the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) in overthrowing the then Mosaddeq government. The U.S. then became the deciding factor in resolving the Anglo-Iranian nationalisation dispute. Developments in the global oil market saw Iranian oil revenues increase from \$2 billion to \$20 billion in 1974. This resulted in poorly conceived and badly implemented programmes of socio-economic and military modernisation by the Shah; his so-called White Revolution (a series of reforms to modernise Iran) and ‘Great Civilisation’ projects (highlighted by the 2,500th anniversary of the Iranian monarchy) were not successful and were widely resented within Iran. The major sources of opposition were political organisations from both the left and the right; pro-democracy reformists; merchants and bazaaris; and the *ulema* (recognised scholars of Islam). In addition, and despite “parallelism of interests” between the two countries, the presence of Americans everywhere was resented by the Iranian public. As James Bill put it in his book *The Eagle*



Hamid Ansari
Former Vice-President of India

and the Lion, “the very best and very worst of America were on display in the cities of Iran.” In the 1970s, according to a contemporary observer, “the political culture of the Shah’s regime both became more repressive and hardened on the one hand, and more remote and attenuated on the other.” The subsequent ‘progress’ in U.S.-Iran relations emanated from wrong policies, misunderstandings and cultural misperceptions. These together contributed to the U.S. becoming in the eyes of Iran, the ‘Great Satan’.

Also in the 1970s, the U.S. encouraged Iran to develop nuclear power arguing that the country would eventually run out of oil. The Shah also periodically hinted that he wanted Iran to build nuclear weapons and, in response to official denials, said Iran “has no intention of acquiring [them] but if small states began building them, then Iran might to reconsider its policy.” U.S. documents of that period suggest that it was in the U.S.’s national interest, both with respect to the economy and security, to have Iran acquire nuclear power.

However, by the end of 1977, the Shah had alienated the *ulema*, estranged the merchants, and created a poor and deracinated working class in Tehran. He had also alienated many of the educated middle-class through his oppressive policies and human rights abuses. As

alternatives, radical intellectuals such as Ali Shariati propagated the ideology of ‘Red Shiism’ (a reinterpretation of Shi’a Islam as an active, classless movement for social justice). The Marxists were also active as the Tudeh party before being suppressed. But separately, and with greater impact and influence, Ayatollah Khomeini was advocating for the *Vilayat-e-Faqih* (Regency of the Islamic Jurist).

The revolution of 1979 was not primarily a religious event though it drew strength from its Shia form. It was sustained by middle-class disillusionment with corruption and economic stagnation. The process of Islamisation of the state and society commenced with a national referendum in March 1979 and gradually enveloped the institutions and practices of the state.

Post the revolution
In November 1979, prompted by news that the former Shah was being given asylum in the U.S., students broke into the U.S. embassy in Tehran and took the diplomats hostage. A laudatory account of that episode, which had far-reaching consequences, was written by one of its women student leaders Massoumeh Ebtekar. In an interview to a U.S. scholar about the hostages, Ms. Ebtekar said “it is very difficult to compare the suffering that the Iranian nation felt

during fifty years of foreign domination and comparing that to the suffering or pain that may have faced during these 444 days.”

This sudden and sharp decline in U.S.-Iran relations changed the global picture as seen from Washington. Regional tranquillity was further shattered when Iraq disowned the 1975 Algiers Treaty and invaded Iran in 1980 at different points of their common border. The seven-year war, from 1980 to 1987, unleashed by Iraq became for Iran a defence of its national territory. It transformed from a border war on Iran’s western borders in the first two years to becoming a full-fledged war extending into the interior cities. It became an inescapable fact of life in Iran and merged into the consciousness of the public.

Iraq was assisted in the war by most Arab countries as well as by the U.S. Each had its own reasons to be apprehensive of Iran’s revolutionary agenda emphasised in Khomeini’s pronouncement that “there is only one way to save this revolution and that is to rapidly export the revolution, mobilise the world’s Muslims and, later on all oppressed masses against the oppressors and governments related to them”.



data for its weapons.

Israeli policymakers believed that a strong and well-supplied Iran would successfully bog down Saddam Hussein’s military, preventing Iraq from posing a threat to its neighbours or Israel itself. By ensuring that the two most hostile regional powers spent eight years depleting each other’s military, economic, and human resources, the conflict provided Israel with a highly valuable “strategic breather”. It also, at times, helped facilitate the safe and unhindered emigration of the Persian Jewish community out of Iran.

The war gave the revolutionary authorities of Iran an opportunity to weaken the Iranian national army of the Shah’s period and to create instead the ‘Sepahe-e-Pasdaran’ or the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. It went from strength to strength during the war, numbering around 1 million while the regular armed forces numbered around 3,55,000.

Iran’s determination
Iran showed considerable ingenuity in meeting the challenge of Iraq-Iran war. It reduced the import of non-essentials and managed to keep its oil flowing despite periodic air attacks. It diversified sources of arms supply and capitalised on the support of the masses for the war while squeezing the well to do and the bazaaris. The war to all intents and purposes became the sole criterion for judging the Islamic Republic.

There was some public opposition to the conduct of the war such as from the Islamic Liberation Movement, co-founded by former Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan, which labelled the continuation of the war as ‘un-Islamic’. Separately, reports indicative of ‘chronic disorder of governance’ have appeared in publications close to the establishment, suggesting ‘prolonged ambiguity’ in decision-making.

The Iranian tenacity during the Iraq war, and in the ongoing U.S.-Israel conflict, is evidence enough of its capacity and determination to endure and overcome adversity. Iran has asserted its place in the region and is not oblivious of it in the world of tomorrow.

In the 1970s, the U.S. actually encouraged Iran to develop nuclear power arguing that the country would eventually run out of oil



Final resolution: An Iranian man rides a scooter past anti-U.S. banners placed outside the former U.S. embassy in Tehran, Iran on June 15. AFP

The long-term implications of the U.S.-Iran deal

The world is holding its breath with respect to the June 14 adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Iran and the United States for a cessation of hostilities and a 60-day period of negotiation to iron out their thorny differences. The scepticism stems from at least two scores of premature claims by U.S. President Donald Trump. Moreover, this is only the beginning of a meandering journey pebbled with numerous obstacles. Vicious bloodletting in two wars during the past year has exacerbated instinctual mutual distrust. Hence, even this vaguely worded framework is no mean feat.

Can the world now hope for a durable resolution to this multifaceted crisis, or does the MoU merely kick the can down the road? Some contextual developments create a space for cautious optimism. The respective announcements by both Tehran and Washington are factual and measured, eschewing trenchant triumphalism and demonisation. They have emphasised the complexity of negotiations; both realise that their asymmetric wars were militarily unwinnable, and a sustainable solution would require political negotiations with the recalcitrant enemy. The twin Hormuz blockades morphed into economic attrition, and Iran’s threat of expanding the next war beyond the region, with the Houthis choking the Bab el-Mandeb strait again, was foreboding. Both sides were also facing growing domestic discontent, with their respective erratic conduct alienating supporters and neighbours. In front of the international community, both nations have lost their moral high ground, each appearing as irresponsible and vindictive.

A long road
The scope and complexity of the current issues are daunting. These include the question of U.S. sanctions, a release of over \$100 billion of frozen Iranian assets, regional issues such as the crisis in Lebanon and the problem of U.S. military bases, and the demand for reparations. However, Iran’s nuclear enrichment and its assertion of sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz are deal breakers. Since President Trump tore down the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)



Mahesh Sachdev
A former Indian Ambassador with an interest in West Asia and oil matters

in 2018, he now insists on a “better” deal, requiring Iran to export enriched uranium. However, Iranian hardliners are steadfastly opposed to this diktat. Moreover, Iran’s closure of the Hormuz chokepoint has caused the “biggest energy disruption in human history”, creating havoc for the global economy. A resolution of these two contentious issues would require protracted negotiations and creativity, allowing both sides to claim victories. A \$300 billion fund to reconstruct Iran with U.S. companies, a typically bizarre Trumpian transactional diplomacy, is also reportedly on the table. Here, one must also mention the various other influences in the negotiation chamber – Israel and the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) significantly influence the thinking at the White House, while China and Russia each have an inside track in Tehran. Pakistan, the official mediator, also has its own multiple axes to grind.

Discernible undercurrents
Irrespective of largely unaltered borders and an endgame that has barely commenced, the past three years of hostilities have triggered seismic geopolitical changes in West Asia and beyond, irretrievably unhinging its longstanding strategic paradigms. While the situation is still evolving, some basic medium-to-long-term undercurrents are discernible.

Irrespective of largely unaltered borders and an endgame that has barely commenced, the past three years of hostilities have triggered seismic geopolitical changes in West Asia and beyond

First, the two Iran wars have dramatically overturned numerous basic global assumptions. It has shown the limits of American hyperpower with its penchant for military solutions, high-tech battlefield dominance, air superiority doctrine, social media-provoked mass uprising etc. Iran was able to counter this with incipient strategies; careful planning for asymmetric warfare; smart and cost-effective tactics; a resilient and coherent command structure; leveraging of geostrategic assets; resolute supply chains and defence production among others. American MAGA (Make America Great Again) hotheads and Chinese wolf-warriors may need to pull in their claws, hopefully, making the world a safer place.

Moreover, the failure of ad-hoc coercive diplomacy may bring back multilateralism. Nations are now going to fret more about choke points, preventive diplomacy, robust supply lines, and adequate strategic reserves for essential inputs. Physical security and the succession of command of the political leadership would be prioritised and ruggedised.

Second, the hobbled return to regional peace may be catastrophic for global hydrocarbon supplies as depleting strategic reserves compete with demand destruction. In the long-term, high prices and volatility

would destroy demand and hasten us towards the ‘peak oil’ scenario (a hypothetical point where global crude oil demand reaches its maximum rate and begins to decline). The disruptions have underscored the indispensability of higher strategic oil reserves and clean energy.

Third, there are two regional shifts which are currently underway. While U.S.-Israel relations remain strategic, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s mesmerisation of Mr. Trump has waned. The GCC states were traumatised by the U.S.-Israel coalition’s “wars of choice”. Apart from the collateral damage from Iranian attacks on their vital infrastructure, their exports via Hormuz also suffered. To add insult to injury, Washington neither consulted the GCC nor adequately protected them from Iranian retaliation. Moreover, the Pentagon’s failure to anticipate the Iranian regime’s staying power, Hormuz closure, or a plausible exit strategy has raised doubts about its war planning. This unsavoury experience has seriously undermined America’s credibility as a security provider for the GCC. They are likely to reassess their geostrategic alignments as they contend with a weakened but defiant Iran. Their sub-optimal past experiences with external defence tie-ups may leave them with a Hobson’s choice to shore up their defences, either individually or collectively. Given the GCC disunity, especially the Saudi-Emirati rivalry, burying their hatchets may not be easy, forcing them to accommodate and appease Iran individually. Alternatively, the Iranian grip on the Arab world’s Shia militias, particularly in Iraq, may loosen, allowing a reassertion of their Arab and tribal identities.

A more defiant Iran
Fourth, while the Iranian state has defied existential threats, it has now convulsed and radicalised. Regionally friendless, the theocratic regime is in suspended apprehension amidst escalating foreign pressure and a brewing domestic blowback. Left to themselves, the Iranian leadership would insist on a strategic deterrence based on both nuclear latency and control of the Strait of Hormuz. But they

also realise that this maximalism may scupper the forthcoming negotiations. A small but significant minority of Iran’s leadership now believes that the Iranian capacity to block the Strait of Hormuz is the new and more potent deterrence than nuclear ambiguity. Instead of ensuring the Islamic Republic’s survival, Iran’s nuclear fixation has attained the opposite: entrenching Israel-U.S. enmity against it. Its direct cumulative costs are estimated at \$100 billion, and if Western sanctions are factored in, costs will rise manifold. They argue that the nuclear strategy can be replaced by Iran’s real or presumptive control over Hormuz, already proven to be an effective ‘weapon of mass disruption’.

Tellingly, while Iran’s Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei’s statements have frequently asserted national sovereignty over Hormuz, he has not specifically referred to the indispensability of the nuclear programme. If this incipient shift in deterrence gets traction in Tehran, it could upend Iranian and regional geopolitics.

Tehran’s control over Hormuz would be legally questionable and problematic for the global economy, especially for other littoral states. However, an innovative architecture can improve the optics, say, by creating a littoral inter-governmental Hormuz management framework, with Iran as *primus inter pares*.

And finally, in West Asia, those defeated on the battlefield often resort to terrorism to redeem their “lost honour”. Israel’s single-minded drive for a military solution against the ‘axis of resistance’ and the simultaneous weakening of Iran create such ‘opportunities’. The pro-Iranian militias, particularly in Iraq and Lebanon, may go deeper underground to wage their mini-wars against perceived enemies. The decline of Iran and its proxies may give a second wind to the region’s Sunni non-state actors such as the Islamic State, al-Qaeda, the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, Kurds, IS-Khorasan, and Jaish al-Adl.

Even if only a few of these forebodings are realised, one could ask if the botched surgery to decapitate Iran has not plunged the entire world into intensive care.



Debris and destruction: People and rescue forces search through the rubble following a strike on a school in Minab, Iran, on February 28. REUTERS

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Percentage increase in MCD revenue in 2025-26

17 in per cent. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi recorded its highest-ever annual revenue of ₹14,549.06 crore in 2025-26, a 17.27% increase over the previous financial year, officials said on Tuesday. The revenue figures were shared by MCD standing committee chairperson Satya Sharma, who said the total revenue increased from ₹12,406.75 crore in 2024-25. PTI

Number of beneficiaries under PM-VBRY

60 lakh. About 60 lakh first-time employees, including over 18 lakh women have benefitted under Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (PM-VBRY), official sources said. PM-VBRY is the Centre’s Employment-Linked Incentive (ELI) scheme operational from August 1, 2025. The benefits of the scheme would be applicable till July 31, 2027. PTI

Identified area of coral reef capable of surviving climate crisis

64,000 sq. miles. Nearly 1,66,000 sq km (64,000 sq miles) of coral reefs capable of surviving and recovering from climate change, three times more than previously estimated, have been identified by scientists in a study revealed on Tuesday. The coral reefs have come under severe stress in recent years. PTI

Energy storage capacity added by India in first quarter

4.6 GWh. India added 4.6 gigawatt-hours (GWh) of battery energy storage capacity in the first three months of this year, registering a 941% increase from 442.7 megawatt-hours added in the preceding October-December 2025 period, a report said. As per the latest research, India’s cumulative installed battery energy storage capacity reached 5.9 GWh. PTI

Vacancies in Delhi Pollution Control Committee as of 2026

62 The Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) has improved its staffing position over the past four years, reducing vacancies from 187 in 2022 to 62 in 2026, according to a Right to Information reply. The RTI reply, obtained by environmental activist Amit Gupta, showed that the DPCC has 282 employees against a sanctioned strength of 344 posts. PTI

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Why was Trump’s H-1B fee struck down?

What is the H-1B visa programme and who uses it? Why did the Trump administration impose the \$100,000 fee? What impact was the policy expected to have on States and employers? Did the President have the authority to impose the fee? Why did the court classify the charge as a tax rather than a penalty?

EXPLAINER

Kartikey Singh

The story so far:

In June 8, in a 42-page ruling with nationwide effect, U.S. District Judge Leo T. Sorokin struck down President Donald Trump’s policy imposing a \$100,000 fee on H-1B visas for highly skilled foreign workers. Upholding a challenge brought by California and 19 other States (plaintiffs), the court held that the fee amounted to an unlawful tax that the President could not impose without Congressional delegation.

What is an H-1B Visa?

The H-1B visa, created by the Immigration Act of 1990, is the backbone of the United States’ high-skilled immigration architecture. Building on the broader framework of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (INA), which established the “H” category of temporary worker visas, the 1990 law carved out a distinct H-1B classification for highly educated professionals. It permits U.S. employers to hire foreign nationals in “specialty occupations”, which require (i) theoretical and practical application of a body of specialised knowledge and (ii) at least a bachelor’s degree in a relevant field, typically in sectors such as technology, engineering, healthcare, research, finance, and higher education. Notably, H-1B workers can generally remain in the U.S. for up to six years and often use the visa as a pathway to permanent residency.

To balance employers’ demand for skilled talent with protection of the domestic workforce, Congress capped H-1B approvals for most private employers at 65,000 visas annually, with an additional 20,000 visas reserved for holders of advanced degrees. However, universities, affiliated non-profit entities, and governmental or non-profit research organisations are exempt from these



Policy change: On September 19, 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump signed Proclamation 10973, requiring a \$100,000 supplemental payment for all H-1B visa petitions. GETTY IMAGES

numerical limits.

Why did Trump impose a \$100,000 fee?

On September 19, 2025, Mr. Trump signed Proclamation 10973, requiring a \$100,000 supplemental payment for all H-1B visa petitions – a substantial increase over the pre-existing filing costs of roughly \$960 to \$7,595. The proclamation reasoned that the H-1B programme had been “deliberately exploited to replace, rather than supplement, American workers” with lower-paid foreign labour, harming U.S. economic and national security interests, particularly in critical STEM sectors. Mr. Trump’s proclamation relied on Sections 212(f) and 215(a) of the INA. Section 212(f) empowers the President to restrict or suspend the entry of any class of aliens (non-citizens) when he finds their entry “would be detrimental to the interests of the United States.” Additionally, Section 215(a), which also concerns the President’s authority to regulate entry into the U.S., allows him to subject alien entry to “such reasonable rules, regulations, and orders, and such limitations and exceptions as the President may prescribe.”

While alleging that the proclamation violated the ‘separation-of-powers’

principle as it “usurps Congress’s exclusive constitutional authority to set immigration policy and to levy taxes”, the plaintiff States argued before the U.S. District Court that the \$100,000 H-1B fee would undermine their ability to recruit and retain essential skilled workers. They argued it would worsen teacher shortages, hamper hiring in higher education, disrupt research, and deepen healthcare staffing gaps – raising costs and straining public systems.

Simultaneously, the measure also carried significant implications for India. Indians account for roughly 70% of H-1B visa approvals, followed by Chinese nationals at about 12%, and are heavily represented in the STEM professions targeted by the proclamation. By raising the cost of an H-1B petition, the policy effectively created a prohibitive barrier for thousands of Indian software engineers, doctors, researchers, and other skilled professionals, many of whom already face years-long green card backlogs.

Did the President have the power to impose the fee?

The threshold issue before the court was whether the \$100,000 charge was a ‘tax’ or a ‘penalty’, because only Congress

possesses the constitutional power to “lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts, and Excises” under Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution, unless it clearly delegates that authority to the executive.

To answer this question, the judge, an appointee of President Barack Obama, relied on two landmark Supreme Court precedents. In *Bailey v. Drexel Furniture Co.* (1922), the court invalidated the Child Labour Tax Law, holding that its “heavy exaction” was a ‘penalty’ rather than a ‘tax’ because it was designed to prohibit the employment of child labour. By contrast, in *National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius* (2012), the court found that the Affordable Care Act’s requirement that individuals pay an additional fee to the Internal Revenue Service for not obtaining health insurance amounted to a ‘tax’, not a ‘penalty’, explaining that a penalty ordinarily constitutes “punishment for an unlawful act or omission.” Applying this framework, Judge Sorokin concluded that the \$100,000 H-1B charge was a ‘tax’, as hiring workers under the H-1B programme is plainly lawful, and the payment did not operate as punishment for any unlawful conduct.

Further, the court examined whether Congress had delegated taxing authority to the President through Sections 212(f) and 215(a) of the INA. It found no such delegation.

While those provisions empower the President to impose “restrictions”, “rules”, “regulations”, “orders”, “limitations”, and “exceptions” governing the entry of non-citizens, Judge Sorokin held that their ordinary meaning does not encompass the power over the public purse. The court also found multiple violations of the Administrative Procedure Act. Accordingly, Judge Sorokin ruled that “the Policy implementing the Proclamation is declared unlawful and is vacated in its entirety”.

Kartikey Singh, lawyer, and currently working as a Law Clerk-cum-Research Associate at the Supreme Court of India. Views expressed are personal.

THE GIST

▼ To balance employers’ demand for skilled talent with protection of the domestic workforce, Congress capped H-1B approvals for most private employers at 65,000 visas annually, with an additional 20,000 visas reserved for holders of advanced degrees.

▼ However, universities, affiliated non-profit entities, and governmental or non-profit research organisations are exempt from these numerical limits.

▼ The issue before the court was whether the \$100,000 charge was a ‘tax’ or a ‘penalty’, because only Congress possesses the constitutional power to “lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts, and Excises” under Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution, unless it clearly delegates that authority to the executive.

What does Tenth Schedule provide on party mergers?

Why has the misuse of the merger provision increased after the deletion of paragraph 3?

LETTER AND SPIRIT

Rangarajan R.

The story so far:

As many as 20 rebel Trinamool Congress MPs met the Lok Sabha Speaker and announced their decision to merge with Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI). This has raised issues about the interpretation of Tenth Schedule with respect to merger of political parties.

What is the origin of Tenth Schedule?

The defections of legislators during 1960s and 70s from their parent parties created political instability in many States bringing down elected governments. This prompted the 52nd constitutional amendment to introduce the ‘anti-defection’ law through the Tenth Schedule in 1985. This Schedule provides

that a member of a House of Parliament or State legislature who voluntarily gives up the membership of their ‘political party’ or votes against the instructions of their party in a House are liable for disqualification from such House. The ‘political party’ is the entire organisation of a party, while the ‘legislature party’ is all the members of a political party in a House of Parliament or State legislature.

The Tenth Schedule originally had two exceptions that would not render the members liable for disqualification viz., one-third of members of the ‘legislature party’ splitting to form a separate group (paragraph 3), or a merger of their ‘political party’ with another party that is approved by two-thirds of the members of its ‘legislature party’ (paragraph 4). However, considering the need to strengthen the ‘anti-defection’ law, paragraph 3 was omitted in 2003.

With the deletion of paragraph 3, there have been instances of two-third

members of a legislature party ‘practically’ defecting but claiming to be the original political party in order to escape disqualification. This happened in the case of Shiv Sena and Nationalist Congress Party in June 2022 and July 2023 respectively.

There have also been instances where more than two-third members of a ‘legislature party’ in a house have merged themselves with another political party to escape disqualification. This happened in September 2019 (in Rajasthan) when all 6 Bahujan Samajwadi Party MLAs merged themselves with the Congress and in September 2022 (in Goa) when 8 out of the 11 Congress MLAs merged themselves with the BJP. The Bombay High Court upheld the merger of Goa’s Congress Legislature Party with the BJP, though an appeal is pending in the apex court. A similar move occurred in April 2026 when 7 of 10 AAP Rajya Sabha MPs merged with the BJP.

What is the present case in Bengal?

After the recent West Bengal polls, around 60 of the 80 MLAs elected from Trinamool Congress formed a separate faction led by Ritabrata Banerjee, who was recognised as the Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly even after the party expelled him. Meanwhile, 20 of the 28 Lok Sabha MPs have submitted their decision to the Lok Sabha Speaker to merge themselves with the NCPI. Their claim is that they constitute two-thirds of the legislature party and are hence authorised to take this step under the provisions of the Tenth Schedule without attracting disqualification.

What may be way forward?

A plain reading of the Tenth Schedule allows only for merger of a political party with another party that is approved by two-thirds of its legislature party. It does not authorise two-thirds of the legislature party in a house to merge itself with another political party to claim immunity from defection. However, in the recent instance with respect to proposed merger of Trinamool Lok Sabha MPs with NCPI as well as the merger of Rajya Sabha MPs of AAP with the BJP, this is what has happened. It is also subject to interpretation whether a merger of an ‘original political party’ can happen only with another political party that already has members in the legislative house. Moreover, the authority to decide on the

disqualification of members is vested in the Speaker or Chairman. While they are expected to perform this constitutional role impartially, the presiding officers have often favoured the ruling dispensation. The Supreme Court in K. M. Singh case in 2020, recommended that the Parliament amend the Constitution to vest these powers in an independent tribunal headed by judges.

An authoritative Supreme Court judgement in the matters of merger and setting up of an independent tribunal to decide on disqualification may reduce the ambiguities surrounding the Tenth Schedule. However, it may not prevent the ingenious methods adopted by political parties to circumvent the Tenth Schedule. Any such manoeuvres may be viewed as a betrayal of the electorate by the elected representatives. A stricter measure, as recommended by the Law commission in 1999, could be to amend the Tenth Schedule and delete paragraph 4 that provides exemption from disqualification for merger of political parties. Any action by elected members of a legislature party against their political party should lead to disqualification that results in seeking fresh mandate from the people.

Rangarajan R. is a former IAS officer and author of ‘Courseware on Polity Simplified’. He currently trains at ‘Officers IAS Academy’. Views expressed are personal.

EXPLAINER



Scarcity woes: This summer, residents in parts of New Delhi faced days without piped water supply and large families have had to make do with just one 20-litre water can for a day. ANI

Five solutions Indian cities need, to stop fighting for water week after week

Water-secure cities require a combination of clear and transparent emergency planning, systematic reduction of water losses through leak repairs, collective efforts to curb demand, strong safeguards to ensure water quality during shortages, and better management and reuse of wastewater

Manish Dubey
K.V. Santhosh Ragavan

Urban India’s water emergency is no longer a future risk. It has become the normal of our summers. From high-rises anxiously tracking tanker schedules to informal settlements queuing at a single standpost, every year brings the same mix of dry taps, frayed tempers, and quiet resignation.

This summer, residents in parts of New Delhi have already faced days without piped water supply and large families have had to make do with just one 20-litre water can for a day. The Delhi Jal Board has reportedly planned to deploy more than 1,000 tankers to manage the crisis. Similar scenes have played out in other major cities, including Chennai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad, over the last few summers.

Unfortunately, India still treats this as a seasonal inconvenience to endure until the clouds arrive.

Most cities source their water from reservoirs, groundwater or a combination of both. The annual summer water shortage however is the result of choices made over years. Cities have grown faster than their systems. Lakes and tanks have been built over. People are consuming groundwater faster than it can be replenished.

Cities often focus on finding new water sources instead of fixing and maintaining existing networks. Choices around

development planning and control, enforcement of groundwater regulations, water use and wastewater management, made by all – from every individual to service providers to policymakers – shape the experience each summer.

Many cities have moved from nearby rivers and lakes to distant sources and rapidly depleting groundwater, sinking more borewells and laying longer pipelines. What looks like a sudden shortage is often the result of this slow erosion of local buffers. At the same time, lakes, tanks, ponds and stormwater channels that once softened both floods and droughts have been encroached upon or converted, so a few hours of intense rain can flood streets and, a few weeks later, the same city is again queuing for tankers.

Beyond short-term coping

For many residents, especially in poorer settlements and smaller towns, the crisis is also about quality. Intermittent supply, leaky pipes, and unsafe storage mean that even when water arrives, it may not be safe to drink. The familiar scenes of tankers, angry protests, and frantic borewell drilling are therefore not one-offs. They are symptoms of a chronic condition that shows up in illness, lost workdays and mounting bills.

If we accept this, we will also realise that coping from week to week is no longer enough.

First, every city needs an honest and public emergency water plan. Residents

should not have to rely on rumours to know what is happening. A basic plan would identify the most vulnerable wards and critical facilities, set simple rules for how water will be prioritised when supplies are tight such as duration and frequency of supply to enable better tail end distribution, and commit to regular public updates on storage levels and expected supply. Where such information is shared clearly, it manages expectations and reduces grievances; this is less about technology than about treating information as part of the service.

Second, a concerted effort must be made to recover water that is already in the system but never reaches the taps. Instead of announcing distant, expensive new sources, cities can launch a time-bound ‘leak hunt’ in the worst-affected zones: walk key stretches of the network, fix visible leaks quickly, use simple tools to detect hidden ones, and set a short-term target for cutting losses. In systems where a large share – nearly 30% – of water is lost before it reaches users, even modest reductions in a few high-loss areas is equivalent to creating a new local source without building a new pipeline.

Third, government buildings, big campuses and commercial complexes are among the steadiest consumers of water. And a quick internal audit, basic leak repairs, and simple efficiency measures over the next month can free up meaningful volumes and set an example. Neighbourhoods and resident groups can

agree on clear norms for peak months, limiting non-essential uses, tracking weekly consumption and asking tanker suppliers where they draw their water from – while local leaders in low-income areas help authorities see how supply actually reaches their lanes.

Fourth, any emergency response must include water quality: rapid testing in high-risk neighbourhoods and tanker water supply, temporary support for basic treatment where problems are found, and simple communication about safe storage.

Finally, water security cannot be achieved without improving how we manage used-water. Measures to reduce leaks in water pipelines should also be used on sewer networks to identify and stop major sewage exfiltration and prevent contamination.

Not a single solution

Quick, low-cost upgrades to used-water treatment plants such as, optimising aeration, de-weeding, and desludging, can further reduce pollution and help augment available surface- and ground-water resources.

No single measure will pull Indian cities out of their water emergency. Together, however, they can directly address the summer’s pain points: unpredictability, waste, inequity, and illness.

Manish Dubey is Dean & Rahul Bajaj Chair, School of Governance, Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS). K.V. Santhosh Ragavan is Adjunct Faculty, IIHS.

THE DAILY QUIZ

Iceland observes June 17 as the National Day. A quiz on the island country

V.V. Ramanan

- QUESTION 1**
What do the colours on the Icelandic National flag (Blue, White and Red) represent?
- QUESTION 2**
Who is Jón Sigurdson in the modern history of the Nordic island country?
- QUESTION 3**
Name the volcano whose eruption in 2010 created a massive ash cloud that grounded thousands of flights across Europe.
- QUESTION 4**
Name the 13th-century book by Icelandic author

- Snorri Sturluson that serves as a primary source for Norse mythology.
- QUESTION 5**
What is the name given to the popular traditional Icelandic knitted sweater known for its bold, circular yoke pattern around the neck and shoulders?
- QUESTION 6**
Often mistaken as yogurt due to its creamy texture, what dairy product is technically classified as a soft cheese?
- QUESTION 7**
Which natural phenomenon inspired the first Norse settlers to give the National capital Reykjavik (smoky bay) its name?



Visual question: Who is this famous Icelandic singer? AP

- Answers to the previous day’s daily quiz:**
- This U.S. AI firm temporarily disabled top-tier model access after a government order on foreign use. **Ans: Anthropic**
 - This country announced plans for a social media ban for under-16s last week. **Ans: Britain**
 - This initiative was launched by Narendra Modi and Emmanuel Macron in France? **Ans: Bharat Innovates 2026**
 - Elon Musk achieved this milestone following SpaceX’s IPO on June 12? **Ans: He became world’s first trillionaire**
 - This external AI ecosystem powers Apple’s rebuilt Siri. **Ans: Google Gemini**
 - This Indian fintech firm confidentially filed papers for a \$600 million IPO. **Ans: Razorpay**
 - This Indian edtech founder got some relief from a Singapore court in a contempt case. **Ans:Byju Raveendran**
 - Visual: At Nintendo’s June Direct, the long-rumoured remake of this beloved N64-era video game was announced. **Ans: The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time**

Early Birds
Sudhir Thapa | Sunil Madhavan | Pulkit Sathe | Dodo Jayaditya | Sadhan Panda



Know your English

S. Upendran

“How do you pronounce r..e..n..d..e..z..v..o..u..s?”

“The ‘e’ in the first syllable is like the ‘o’ in ‘hot’, and ‘pot’. The ‘e’ in the second syllable sounds like the ‘i’ in ‘hit’, ‘pit’, and ‘kit’. Some people, however, pronounce it like the ‘ay’ in ‘day’, and ‘hay’. The final ‘ous’ is pronounced like the ‘oo’ in ‘cool’, and ‘fool’.”

“The Y is silent, is it?”

“That’s right.”

“What about the stress? Is it on the first syllable?”

“Yes. By the way, the ‘z’ in the second syllable remains silent as well.”

“Then why have it all?”

“Don’t ask me. Do you know what the word ‘rendezvous’ means?”

“Well, I can guess the meaning from the context. This article that I am reading right now says that the gym was the rendezvous for the well-known film star and his bookmaker.”

“So, what do you think the word means?”

“A rendezvous is probably a place where you meet someone secretly.”

“Excellent. When you have a rendezvous with someone, you decide where you are going to meet the person and when.”

“In other words, the meeting is prearranged.”

“Yes. If you bump into someone accidentally, you cannot call it a rendezvous.”

“I see. Give me some examples.”

“Okay. Ramesh promised to meet Sujatha in the Rose Garden at 4:00 o’clock. But as usual, he was late for the rendezvous.”

“Can I say the two Ministers had an early morning rendezvous in Chennai?”

“Sounds good. The word is also used to mean a popular meeting place. For example, the gym is a rendezvous for health nuts.”

“Prof. Shyamraj’s house is a rendezvous for budding writers.”

“That’s an excellent example. Anyway, what is it that you are reading?”

“Oh some article about how Bollywood is slowly being taken over by the mafia. Tell me, do you believe in everything you read?”

“I don’t believe everything I read.”

“But many people believe in everything they read.”

“Believe everything they read. Not ‘believe in’.”

“Really? What’s the difference between ‘believe’ and ‘believe in’?”

“When you ‘believe in’ something, you take it for granted that it really exists. For example, many people believe in ghosts.”

“I don’t believe in angels. Can I say that?”

“That’s right. But that’s not the only meaning of ‘believe in’. For example, when you say ‘I believe in democracy’, you mean to say is that, in your opinion democracy is good.”

“Now tell me, what does ‘believe’ mean? I mean....”

“...when you believe something, you accept everything that someone says as being true or real. That’s one of the meanings. For example, like an idiot I believed everything he said.”

“Good grief! Look at the time. I have a rendezvous with Sachi at 4:00 p.m. Do you think I’ll make it.”

“I believe you will.”

Word of the day

Salvo:
an outburst resembling the discharge of firearms or the release of bombs a sudden outburst of cheers

Synonyms: Volley, Burst

Usage: *The jets dropped a salvo of bombs over the target area. There was a sudden salvo of approval.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/salvo

International Phonetic Alphabet: /sæl.vəʊ/

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

INBRIEF



Essar Group, Dubai's IRH sign \$500 mn crude-sourcing deal

Essar Group and Dubai-based International Resources Holding (IRH) have executed a \$500 million crude sourcing and product supply facility between Essar Energy Transition Fuels and IRH Global Trading. This comes a day after American President Dolald Trump announced the U.S.-Iran peace deal, indicating a gradual normalisation of the situation in West Asia. While IRH Global Trading is a key global energy trading and liquidity provider, Essar Group through Essar Energy Transition Fuels, owns and operates the Stanlow Refinery U.K. This would enable Essar Energy Transition Fuels to diversify crude sourcing and marketing options for its products while optimising working capital arrangements. It would boost feedstock security in an increasingly volatile global energy market, enhancing its ability to respond to changing market conditions.

Unilever scales digital twins partnering with Accenture

Unilever said it partnered with Accenture to scale the use of AI-enabled digital twins across its global manufacturing network. Digital twins are virtual models of factory gear and production lines. They use live data from physical systems on shop floor to predict how machines and processes perform. The technology would help factories boost quality, efficiency and respond quickly to consumer demand. The multi-year programme marked a further step in Unilever's journey to apply the pioneering technology across its value chain. According to the official communique, by integrating digital twins with AI-enabled insights and agentic capabilities, Unilever would be equipping manufacturing teams with advanced tools to identify issues sooner, simulate scenarios faster and make smarter decisions across the production cycle.

'Rupee slide aided textile exporters in 2025-2026'

The industry is hoping for a revival of the market in the coming weeks with the Free Trade Ageements and end of the U.S.-Iran war; AEPC to organise buyer-seller meets to boost offtake

M. Soundariya Preetha
COIMBATORE

Textiles and appa-rels, which are among India's top merchandise exports, saw a 2% y-o-y decline in ship-ments in FY2025-2026.

Exports in FY26 were worth \$35.80 billion against \$36.61 billion in FY25.

The Union Commerce Ministry data points to a 1.78% CAGR of textile and apparel exports from 2014-2015 (\$29.47 billion) to FY 26. It peaked to \$37.54 bil-lion in 2021-2022. And then, growth declined by 2% last financial year.

According to data com-piled by the Southern India Mills Association (SIMA) based on government sta-tistics, exports were \$37 billion in FY15, This crossed \$40 billion in FY22, but fell to \$36.44 bil-lion in FY25 and closed FY26 at \$35.78 billion.

There are multiple fac-tors affecting exports in the last 12 years and mainly in the last two years, say in-dustry sources.

Exchange rate

"We need to take into con-sideration the exchange rate in 2024-2025 and 2025-2026. The rupee was at 86.60 on April 2, 2025 and ended 2025-2026 at 94.83 on March 31 this year," said an export pro-motion council official, who did not want to be identified.



Glimmer of hope: Suppliers to the United States are expecting to get tariff refunds at least to some extent. AFP

"When the U.S. orders fell in 2025-2026, demand from China, Bangladesh and Sri Lank improved. There was a regional bal-ance to some extent.

"In terms of volume, ex-ports may have grown mar-ginally between 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 though there were severe supply chain disruptions," said Siddhartha Rajagopal, executive director of the Cot-ton Textiles Export Promo-tion Council.

"Though exports to Afri-ca shot up for a few months last fiscal, it was one of the most uncertain periods for the textile and garment exporters," said K. Sakthivel, chairman of the Powerloom Develop-ment Export Promotion Council. "We are in Japan now and talking to buyers.

We will get a better picture in the coming days," he said.

Exports to the U.S.

Chairman of the Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) A. Sakthivel said that though orders from the U.S., which are among the top three markets for Indian exporters, saw sev-eral challenges in 2025-2026, because of the tariff threat. Buyers did not van-ish totally. Some of them reduced the prices, some of them shifted a part of the orders, and some wait-ed. So, there were still or-ders going to the U.S. last year. Now, the suppliers are expecting to get tariff refunds at least to some ex-tent," he said.

AEPC plans to organise buyer-seller meets from

September in the EU coun-tries to tap the opportuni-ties that will come with the implementation of the Free Trade Agreement, A. Sakthivel added.

Regarding long-term ex-port performance, indus-try officials said when the rupee was about 65 per dollar in FY15, annual tex-tile and garment exports were almost \$30 billion, going by Commerce Minis-try statistics. With the In-dian rupee at almost 95 in 2025-2026, exports are at \$35 billion. Basically, ex-ports are not growing and apparel shipments have witnessed a major impact, especially in the last cou-ple of years. This is felt more by the MSME expor-ters, they said.

Likely drop

There are some in the in-dustry who feel that in terms of volume of exports between 2014-2015 and 2025-2026, there could have been a one-third drop. Indian Chamber of Commerce, National Exp-ert Committee on Textiles head Sanjay K. Jain said that apparel exports con-traction in May (12.98%) is partly due to West Asia slowing down and also be-cause of the higher base of 2024-2025 because of the rush in orders to meet the tariff deadline.

The industry is hoping for a revival of the market in the coming weeks with the FTAs and end of the U.S.-Iran war.

LNG ships may headline Strait of Hormuz exits

M. Kalyanaraman
CHENNAI

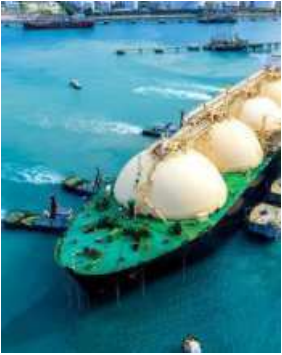
The U.S. Vice President told a news channel that though Iran's nuclear pro-gramme would need sub-stantial talks, there was an understanding between the two countries the Strait of Hormuz would reopen "in a toll-free way for the long term, and that's the sort of thing that we're go-ing to figure out in these technical talks." Earlier, President Donald Trump said the area was being de-mined and traffic would re-turn to pre-war levels over the next two weeks.

While details of the pact would aid global shippers decide on transits, a focus areas is Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) shipping.

On Tuesday, Qatari of-ficials reportedly told inves-tors output can rise to 83% of original capacity within weeks. 17% was damaged in war attacks. Shipping observers report those that try to exit first in numbers may well be LNG ships, which is good news for In-dia as they are critical for local fertilizer making needed for kharif season.

On Monday, the Centre said 16 fertilizer-laden ves-sels were awaiting passage via the Strait.

Through May, LNG ship transit began happening on the sly with many switching off the Automatic Identification System and taking the Oman route, indicating they were not explicitly permitted by Iran. LNG carrier Umm Al Ashtan, which left Dahej,



A focus area of transit is liquified natural gas.

Gujarat after unloading cargo there, headed to the Strait beginning of May.

India's Disha crossed on Monday. Junlin Wang, gas and LNG researcher, Rys-tad Energy says as of Tues-day, about 13 LNG vessels had crossed the Strait.

"Since last week, the main new confirmed movements were Al Daayen, Lebrethah, Rash-eeda and Marigold. Al Daayen, Lebrethah and Rasheeda were Qatar-relat-ed/Ras Laffan-loaded car-goes, while Marigold was UAE/ADNOC-related, load-ed from Das Island. Their destinations are mainly Asia, including China, Pa-kistan, Southeast Asia and India," she said, and ad-ded, "We expect the recov-ery to be gradual."

Qatar and the UAE LNG exports are a key part of global LNG supply, togeth-er reaching about 86.5 MT in 2025, equivalent to about 7.2 MT per month, representing about 19.5% of global LNG exports.

"The destination expo-sure is heavily Asia-orient-ed," said Ms. Wang.

GIC Re stake sale over subscribed 3.72 times

N. Ravikumar
HYDERABAD

The Centre's decision to shed stake in General In-surance Corporation of India was oversubscribed 3.72 times on day one of the two-day offer for sale (OFS) on Tuesday.

The OFS received "en-thusiastic response from the investors on day one and was oversubscribed 3.72 times. The govern-ment has decided to exer-cise the entire green shoe option (5%)" Secretary, Department of Investment and Public Asset Manage-ment (DIPAM) Arunish Chawla posted on X.

'Australian pension funds look for even-playing field'

Mini Tejaswi
BENGALURU

Australian pension funds are interested in India's growth, evaluating pro-jects against global allo-cations and demanding a level playing field, said Philip Green, High Commissioner of Australia to India in a conversation with *The Hindu*.

However, according to the High Commissioner, future investment hinges on India addressing higher taxation on Australian funds compared with com-petitors like Singapore. Providing competitive, world-class tax treatment would significantly raise India's attractiveness for



Philip Green

these massive institutional investments, he stated.

India opportunity

Mr. Green said Australian pension funds are big or-ganisations with massive staff. "When I go to see them in Australia, they all understand the India op-portunity and they're all

interested in it. And when particular projects/pros-pects come up, they will see how they fit in terms of their global asset allo-cations," he added.

Mr. Green said, the go-vernment was not directly involved in these decisions as these are big institutions that can make their own judgments. "We do identi-fy that India has a lot of growth prospects. Look, there is a lot of reasons, pro and con, why Austra-lian pension funds would think about India and need to make qualified judg-ments. But the one thing I would say to you is that what we are seeking is an even playing field for Aus-tralian pension funds."

HDFC Bank said to hit dollar bond market under new scheme

Reuters
MUMBAI

India's largest private lender, HDFC Bank, is looking to raise at least \$500 mil-lion via dollar bonds this week, tapping the central bank's subsidised hedging window for overseas bor-rows, three sources di-said on Tuesday.

The bank's issue comes after *Reuters* reported that state-run lenders State Bank of India and Bank of Baroda were also in talks to raise dollars this way.

HDFC Bank's plans in-clude a five-year bond is-sue, with an initial price guidance of 5-year U.S. Treasury yield plus 120 ba-sis points, the sources said. "The final cutoff should come below 100 bps over U.S. Treasury yields, as strong demand is expected in the book-building pro-cess," said a source, adding the bank could decide to raise over \$500 million de-pending on demand.

The sources requested anonymity, as they are not authorised to speak to the media while HDFC Bank did not reply to a *Reuters* query seeking comment.

Earlier this month, the Reserve Bank of India said external commercial bor-rows with an average maturity of at least three years by State-run firms and banks would qualify for a swap facility at a fixed rate of 1.5%/annum, com-pounded semi-annually. The facility lowers hedg-ing costs and helps cushion a fall in the rupee.

Merchant bankers expect inflows of around \$15 billion to \$20 billion through this route over the next six months.



Up, up away: Urea index climbed 63.2%, TSP became expensive by 33% while DAP became dearer by 23%. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

India's commodity costs to stay higher even as war ends

Ashokamithran T.
MUMBAI

Commodity prices would stay elevated for a few more months even as the U.S.-Iran war comes to an end, due to second order effects on supply chain, ac-cording to a study by Sonal Badhan, economist at Bank of Baroda.

Crude surge

Global crude oil prices in-creased 47.7% in February to May 2026, as against a deflation of 15% in the cor-responding period last year, Ms. Badhan said cit-ing World Bank data.

Natural gas and coal prices inflated 33.2% and 10.9% in the three month-period of the current ca-lendar year compared with a deflation in the previous calendar year. Prices of es-sential industrial goods al-so inflated significantly.

The fertilizer index in-creased 37.8%. Within fer-tilizers, urea index in-creased 63.2%, TSP became expensive by as much as 33%, and DAP be-came dearer by 23%.

All metals under the me-tals index also increased, aluminium increasing the most (19.9%) in the three month period on a month-

on-month basis. Alumi-nium price rise has led to supply concerns, Ms.Bad-han wrote.

Global foodgrain prices too were up although the degree varied by food grain. The study observed that this could spill over to the Indian commodity prices as well. Some of this has already spilled over to domestic inflation.

Inflation quickens

Wholesale price inflation (WPI) hastened to 9.7% in May. It had quickened to 8.26% in April and 4% in March 2026. Fuel and power sector prices increased 30% in May 2026 and 25% in April 2026. Manufactur-ing prices climbed at the fastest pace of 7.5%.

"Even after the war has ended, it will still take some time for supply chains to normalise and freight cost (including cost of insurance) to come down. In addition, El Nino this year is expected to be the strongest since 1950. This will lead to adverse weather conditions across the globe and have an im-pact on agricultural prod-ucts," Ms. Badhan wrote, forecasting India WPI infla-tion to average at 7% to 8% in fiscal 2027.

Wipro opens Applied AI Centre of Excellence for Claude

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Wipro, announced the launch of its Applied AI Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Claude models pow-ered by Anthropic, rein-forcing its commitment to accelerating enterprise AI impact, the firm said.

The CoE was inaugurat-ed at its Bengaluru innova-tion hub, and is a key initia-tive under the newly formed AI-Native Business & Platforms Unit, it said in a media statement.

"Wipro is strengthening its enterprise AI leadership with the Applied AI Centre of Excellence for Claude models, powered by Anthropic", said Sridhi Pallia, CEO and managing director, Wipro Ltd. "This marks a fundamental shift in how we deliver and advance our strategy of being consulting-led and AI-powered."

The CoE would streng-then Wipro's ability to scale enterprise AI adoption using Claude models.

These capabilities are integrated across the Wi-pro Intelligence stack - in-cluding delivery, function-al, and industry platform, to embed AI into core busi-ness workflows across industries.

A key differentiator in Wipro's enterprise AI strategy will be the certifica-tion of 10,000 Front-Line Delivery Experts on their use of Claude over the next 18 months. This pro-gramme was designed to build a strong base of prac-titioners capable of design-ing, deploying, and operat-ing AI-enabled systems in complex enterprise envi-ronments.

Central banks to raise gold reserves over one year: WGC

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

World Gold Council's (WGC) 2026 Central Bank Gold Reserves (CBGR) survey indicate that the central banks around the world would accumulate more gold in the future.

This means the price of the yellow metal will re-main high in the future im-pacting retail customers. Indian gold prices had ri-sen by about 40% in 12 months primarily on cen-tral banks' buying and ru-pee's depreciation against U.S. dollar, the determin-ing currency of gold price.

As per the survey cen-tral banks "remain very positive on gold, highlight-ing its significance amid a volatile geopolitical and economic environment."



Central banks accumulated 1,000 tonne gold over 4 years.

The survey shows a con-tinuation of the trend un-covered in previous years: central banks see gold making up a growing share of reserve portfolios.

Doubling purchases

Central banks have accum-ulated an average of 1,000 tonne of gold over the past four years, which is signifi-

cantly higher from the 500 tonne average over the pre-ceding decade.

"This marked accelera-tion in the pace of accum-ulation occurred against a backdrop of geopolitical and economic uncertainty, which clouded the outlook for reserve managers," WGC said in the foreword of the Survey.

In India the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) was seen aggressively expand-ing its gold reserves be-tween FY24 and FY25. Total reserves grew from 822.1 tonne in FY24 to 879.58 tonnes by end FY25 and rose marginally to 880.52 tonne in FY26. The survey was conducted between February 5 and May 19 with the majority of re-sponses coming in after the West Asia conflict began.

U.P., Gujarat, Jharkhand log FY25 revenue surplus: CAG

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Manipur and 9 other States recorded sur-plus revenue in 2024-25, while the remaining 15 States had a deficit.

Eighteen States targeted revenue surplus, three States targeted revenue deficit and seven targeted zero revenue deficit in FY 2024-25, according to a re-port on 'State Finances 2024-25' released by Comptroller and Auditor General of India K. Sanjay Murthy on Tuesday.

"In FY 2024-25, 15 States were revenue-deficient while the rest 13 States were revenue surplus," the report said.

Business

Iran deal could expand market gains on consumer, small caps



Stock boost: To help the markets broaden, analysts say it is necessary for clarity on interst rate outlook. REUTERS

Reuters
NEW YORK

A deal to end the Middle East war could strengthen a broad swath of stocks as lower oil prices stand to bolster consumer spending and relieve pressure on inflation and Treasury yields. Economically sensitive cyclical shares including consumer stocks, shares of smaller companies and equities in more energy-sensitive regions than the U.S. could benefit after the announcement over the weekend to end the war between the U.S.and Iran, investors said. That could turn the market's attention from the dominant technology sector which has been driving gains on optimism over AI-related profits. The announcement could calm concerns about energy-led inflation hurting economic growth. U.S. crude prices hit a three-month low on Monday after the deal, which included reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, a critical oil supply route, while the S&P 500 shot 1.7% higher, putting it less than 1% below its all time peak from early this month. “Easing in geopolitical tensions could alleviate some of the inflation pressures and reduce bond yields,” said Angelo Kourkafas, senior global investment strategist at Edward Jones.”That can be the catalyst driving that rotation into cyclical sectors and areas that have lagged.”As lower oil prices reduce gas costs for consumers, retail stocks such as Home Depot, Target and Macy’s could benefit, said Robert Pavlik, senior portfolio manager at Dakota Wealth Management. The S&P 500 consumer discretionary sector closed up 1.9% while the small-cap Russell 2000 gained 0.7%.

Up discretionary spend “The end of the war could help fuel the belief that consumers will have discretionary money to spend somewhere else,” Pavlik said. Strategists at BCA Research said on Monday they were initiating a “tactical long” position in the consumer discretionary sector “on easing geopolitical tensions and oil-price relief.”Investors may be looking for relative bargains in a market that has been dominated by tech. Since the war began in late February, the S&P 500 tech sector is up 28% against a10% rise for the broader index. Still, Pavlik and others said investors may be reluctant to move from tech stocks, while they are performing well. Indeed,on Monday, tech was the best-performing sector, rising more than3%. “A sustained ceasefire between the U.S. and Iran, combined with easing oil prices, could help the rally broaden beyond AI and tech,” said Anthony Saglimbene, chief market strategist at Ameriprise, adding that on Monday, “investors appear most interested in bidding up established winners.”

Broadening in 2nd half? For now, a number of market strategists are expecting an expansion of equity strength. JPMorgan equity strategists said on Monday they were looking for broadening in the second half of the year. “If our positive macro view plays out - underpinned by strong earnings, stable inflation expectations, and an easing of geopolitical risks in the second half - cyclicals should remain well positioned to outperform through year-end,” the JPMorgan strategists said in a research note. Morgan Stanley equity strategists see “relative strength”ahead for consumer discretionary goods, transport and regional bank stocks, where earnings trends are improving. “A broadening to under-owned cyclical groups is underway,”Morgan Stanley said in a note on Monday. The end to the Iran conflict could be relatively better for other regional markets whose countries have been seen as more vulnerable than the U.S. to the spike in oil prices. “While recent shocks have reinforced U.S. resilience, the de-escalation in energy, with oil near about \$80, could act as a catalyst for catch-up flows into ex-U.S. markets,” Manish Kabra, equity strategist at Societe Generale, said in a note on Monday.

Rate cuts Some investors say other factors may be needed to help the market broaden. That includes the outlook for interest rates; markets have flipped from pricing in rate cuts at the start of the year, to factoring in a potential hike, as inflation climbed following the energy price spikes.

KPMG scandal deepens Big Four accounting firms’ woes in Australia

PwC scandal triggered slump in Big Four’s government work; latest controversy will likely accelerate sector decline,analysts say; KPMG holds A\$650 million in current federal contracts; In recent years,the Big Four have each been sanctioned over audit misconduct in the United Kingdom

NEWS ANALYSIS

Reuters
SYDNEY

KPMG’s audit-leak scandal is set to further dampen the prospects in Australia of the Big Four accounting firms, with data showing their new business revenue from the federal government already fell by almost half after a similar leak at PwC three years ago. A Reuters analysis of government tenders showed that new contracts the Big Four firms KPMG, PwC, Deloitte and EY signed with the federal Australian government slumped to A\$348 million (\$245.51 million) in 2025 from A\$637 million in the prior year. **Potential impact** That underscores the scale and speed at which the government is prepared to distance itself from the big-wigs of the A\$1.8billion industry and gives a sense of the potential impact that KPMG, its biggest professional services contractor, may face. KPMG is embroiled in a scandal after allegedly sharing confidential company information with prospective private-sector clients to bid for auditing work. Its CEO and top auditor have quit after the firm admitted it mishandled a whistleblower complaint about the alleged misconduct, and it hired its own third-party governance consultant to review its practices as it races to contain a client exodus. The Australian government said on Tuesday KPMG will not bid for new federal work until September 30. And the Reserve Bank of Australia has said it would likely not reappoint KPMG to run its whistleblower hotline. KPMG has about A\$650 million of active federal contracts, from anti-slavery supply chain audits to cybersecurity services, according to a Reuters review of published information that was verified by lawmakers. PwC was rocked in 2023 by revelations it shared



Under shadow: Logo of KPMG seen at the Porte de Versailles exhibition center in Paris, France. REUTE RS

portion of the Big Four’s revenue and losing hundreds of millions annually could threaten the firms’ financial health. “It’s undoubtedly going to have impact and that’s been discussed by government politicians and various government departments,” Lyon said. KPMG, PwC, Deloitte and EY declined to comment. PwC’s revenue fell 26% in the 2024 financial year following the fire sale of its government advisory business. If the claims against KPMG are proven, the firm could likely face a similar fate, said Stephen Bartos, a former deputy secretary at the Department of Finance. “It gives rise to apprehensions by government

KPMG has about A\$650 million of active federal contracts, from anti-slavery supply chain audits to cybersecurity services, according to a Reuters review

confidential tax policy details to win clients, forcing it to forgo new government contracts for more than a year and sell its government advisory business, which had accounted for a fifth of its revenue, for a paltry A\$1.

Huge loss Brendan Lyon, a former KPMG partner, said government work is a big

Beyond the 270 GW peak power demand there is a need for prioritising quality and reliability

Debajit Palit
Mandar Joshi

The recent achievement of record-breaking peak demand exceeding 270 GW marks a historic moment for the Indian power sector. The national grid demonstrated a level of resilience by efficiently managing this massive load without a shortage, which would have been inconceivable a decade ago. This milestone effectively shatters all previous records and is more than 10% as compared to last year’s peak. The ability to synchronise a diverse generation portfolio comprising thermal, hydro, nuclear, and a rapidly expanding variable renewable base under such intense pressure highlights the technical maturity of India’s national grid. From the pre-independence era of privately owned decentralised electricity systems to post-independence focus on ‘pumpset energisation’ and basic lighting through ‘kutir Jyoti’ scheme, the sector has evolved significantly, particularly after the passage of the Electricity Act in 2003. Through massive infrastructure initiatives like the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gram Jyoti Scheme (DDUGJY) and the SAUBHAGYA scheme, the physical framework for last-mile connectivity has covered nearly 100% households. However, as the nation moves toward its 2047 target of approximately 4,000 kWh of per capita electricity consumption, a significant leap from the current level of 1,600 kWh, the definition of success must be rewritten beyond access and availability to include



Crucial metric: Reliable electricity is a fundamental enabler of economic and social development.

the reliability and quality of every kilowatt-hour delivered. **Power quality vital** Power quality is becoming the new frontier for a modern, digital-first economy. For a consumer base that now includes lighting load to advanced semiconductor manufacturing to cold storage facilities and productive use of electricity to public infrastructure like smart classrooms and medical clinics, the supply of electricity is no longer sufficient. Power quality, characterised by precise voltage stability, frequency control and the absence of waveform distortion, is a necessity. Even a short fluctuation in power supply can stop machines, damage electronic equipment, and disrupt industrial operations. Furthermore, despite the overarching national success in generation and transmission, a persistent disparity remains in the distribution sector, particularly between urban centres and rural landscapes. While urban supply has become increasingly stable, rural areas, which house approximate-

ly two-thirds of the population, still account for about one-third of total electricity consumption. The challenge here is not just one of connectivity but of economic empowerment. While the average supply hours in rural areas have reached an impressive 22 hours in most states, the lack of predictability is a significant hurdle. For a small-scale productive enterprise or a rural startup, an unexpected outage during a critical production cycle can be financially devastating, often forcing them to rely on costly and polluting diesel generators as a backup. Bridging this rural-urban divide is therefore not just a technical need but a developmental necessity. **Ageing infrastructure** While the generation and transmission segments have progressively moved toward greater market-driven efficiency, several state-owned DISCOMs continue to struggle with ageing network infrastructure, inadequate transformer capacity, and persistently high Aggregate Technical and Commercial (AT&C) losses,

which still exceed 20% in many states. These constraints restrict ability to invest in critical system upgrades such as automated monitoring, predictive maintenance and timely transformer replacement, thereby perpetuating poor service delivery and weak financial performance. Better electron delivery and customer service itself can enhance consumer trust, increase demand, improve revenue and ultimately strengthen the financial health of DISCOMs. To address the above issues, the Government of India launched the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS) in 2021 for a period of five years. Under the scheme, around 54% of the total sanctioned amount has been allocated for loss reduction infrastructure works, and 46% earmarked for smart metering. However, the gains in terms of billing and collection efficiency remain modest at around 4% in 4 years considering the scale of investment for metering. The core challenge continues to be operational inefficiencies at the DISCOMs and ageing electricity distribution

infrastructure. A larger percentage of funds in rural areas should have been for improving distribution infra including transformer replacement and devices to monitor health of the network than merely installing smart meters in homes. Once the infrastructure is strengthened, DISCOMs could invest in smart meters to derive the full benefit of revenue augmentation by delivering electrons reliably and customer services effectively. **Customer-centric vision** The power sector must adopt a customer-centric approach that values the quality and reliability of electricity supply as much as achievements in accessibility and availability of clean energy. The Draft National Electricity Policy 2026 emphasises setting benchmarks for supply quality through reliability indices such as SAIDI, SAIFI, and CAIDI, along with regular reporting and public disclosure to ensure transparency and accountability. However, these indices are currently monitored only at the sub-transmission level. They should be extended to the transformer and low-tension network level for more accurate assessment of consumer experience. Accordingly, investments must prioritise equipment and reliability monitoring systems, reflecting a broader shift from mere accounting to measuring actual service quality outcomes. At the same time, moving from an administrative to a mode of ‘enterprisation’ in decision making and management, customer-focused decentralised distribution management

model, better asset and inventory practices and introduction of MIS and SCADA systems at distribution level are essential to improve service quality and customer experiences. Concerns over private participation focusing only on profitable urban areas can be addressed through well-designed public-private or private models that ensure balanced rural-urban coverage and enforcement of strict regulatory performance standards. Experience from developed countries demonstrates that reliable electricity is a fundamental enabler of economic and social development. Electricity supports industrial growth, modern agriculture, digital services, healthcare, education, and employment generation, making it central to improving productivity and quality of life. The growth of rural India is dependent on strengthened electricity infrastructure and power supply reliability will be critical to achieving inclusive and sustainable development. By addressing the underlying issues of distribution sector, power quality, and rural-urban parity, India can ensure its power sector does more than just meet peak demand. The path to Viksit Bharat needs a shift in perspective where electricity is viewed not merely as a commodity but as a productive input and transformative force for innovation and equity. (Dr. Debajit Palit is the Centre Head at the Centre for Climate Change & Energy Transition and Mandar Joshi is a Research Consultant at Chintan Research Foundation. Views expressed are personal.)

U.S. military to build war-ready stockpile in Australia: documents



'Israel should withdraw from Lebanon before deal'

A U.S. official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss outlines of the agreement, has said the deal did not call for an Israeli withdrawal.

At G7, Trump signals swift return of sanctions on Russian oil shipments



Russian warship fires 'warning shots' at British yacht in Channel



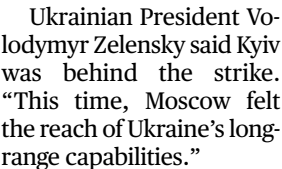
Former Sri Lankan President moves court to prevent arrest



'Syria will do the job with Hezbollah if Israel is unable'

Ukrainian drone sets oil refinery on fire in Moscow

Sergey Sobyenin said on



Xi backs Myanmar's Min, seeks advancing strategic projects

Eight died in B-52 bomber crash at air base in U.S.

Skeletal remains



India at the receiving end of American unilateralism as ties turn taxing

The case against autonomy has been progressively weakened by the evidence. America First has completed the argument – not by turning U.S. foreign policy on its head, but by removing the filter through which it was previously communicated. India should open its eyes to this reality. Strategic autonomy is not ideology, but a matter of elementary realism.



The UNICEF says the most common combination of risks are drought, extreme heat, and heat waves. ANI

‘1.1 billion children exposed to three or more climate risks’

Agence France-Presse
UNITED NATIONS

More than one billion children face at least three overlapping climate hazards, UNICEF warned on Monday, while highlighting the disproportionate impact in some regions of the world.

For the report, the UN agency cross-referenced data showing where the roughly 2.4 billion children on the planet live with the geographic distribution of the eight most common climate impacts. They are coastal flooding, river flooding, drought, tropical storms, heat waves, extreme heat, wildfires, and sandstorms.

The report primarily focuses on the 1.1 billion children who are exposed to at least three risks, with the most common combination being drought, extreme heat, (above 35 degrees Celsius) and heat waves.

That combination affects some 296 million children, including 74 million in Nigeria, 34 million in Pakistan, and 32 million in India.

The number of children in this three-or-more category has increased sharply over the past 20 years.

Almost all children - some 2.3 billion - are exposed to at least one risk. Two billion are exposed to at least two, while 364 million face at least four.

Of the 1,23,000 children exposed to seven or more hazards, some 46,000 are in Myanmar.

“Children are at the forefront of the impact of climate change,” said UNICEF chief Catherine Russell.

As for the worst place for a child, “there isn’t a super short answer,” one of the report authors, Tom Slaymaker, told AFP.

“But they’re not all equal,” Mr. Slaymaker said. “We do see some hot spots... it’s really concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of South Asia.”

Countries with large populations of children, including Bangladesh, India, Nigeria, and Pakistan, are at the top of the list for the number of children exposed to at least three hazards.

How Herat defied the Taliban regime, chanting ‘women, work and freedom’

The protests in the Afghan city in the first week of June were triggered by the enforcement of a dress code, which requires women to wear burqa in public; many women, including those wearing traditional Afghan wear of manto, were arrested, but released later as entire communities protested

NEWS ANALYSIS

Smriti Sudesh

The chants were familiar. But this time, they echoed not in Tehran, but in Herat.

In mid-June, Afghanistan’s western city of Herat witnessed a rare display of public defiance against the Taliban. Women, and this time, men too, marched through the streets chanting “Women, Work and Freedom”, a slogan probably inspired by Iran’s 2022 “Woman, Life and Freedom” movement that emerged after the death of the 22-year-old Mahsa Amini.

The protests did not unfold overnight.

The spark in Herat

According to Zan Times, an exiled media organisation run by Afghan women journalists, the latest crackdown appears to have been planned days in advance. On June 4, Herat’s governor Noor Ahmad Islamjar reportedly met with a group of morality enforcers.

On the afternoon of June 5, Taliban officials used the end of Friday prayers to announce that women who failed to comply with the Islamic dress code would be arrested. The following morning, the arrests began.

On June 6, dozens of women were detained across several neighbourhoods, including Darb-e-Malik, Shahr-e-Naw, Ab Burda, Jibrayil, and Haji

Abbas. By June 7, the United Nations had confirmed that at least 30 women were in custody for alleged dress code violations. “Dozens more women reportedly received verbal warnings,” United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said.

Then came the backlash.

On June 9, men and women took to the streets together in a rare act of collective defiance. The Taliban’s response was swift; within minutes, they reportedly opened fire at demonstrators, killing at least two people, including a child, according to some reports, and injuring more than 20 others.

Four days later, on June 13, demonstrators returned to the streets.

Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Taliban Deputy Prime Minister for administrative affairs, praised the performance of Herat’s local administration amid widespread protests over the detention of women in the province, according to Afghanistan International.

The immediate trigger for the unrest was a series of arrests carried out by the Taliban’s morality police. Women and girls were detained for allegedly violating the regime’s dress code in a city that has historically been regarded as one of the country’s more progressive and culturally vibrant centres.

Under Taliban regulations, women should cover their entire bodies, usually with a burqa, and are prohibited from wearing perfume or anything capable



Avoiding attention: Under Taliban regulations, women should cover their entire bodies, usually with a burqa. AFP

of ‘attracting’ public attention.

Witnesses described women being pulled into police vans, including some who were already fully covered. Among those detained were reportedly pregnant women. The Taliban initially dismissed reports of the arrests as rumours before later defending the operation as the enforcement of Islamic law.

The Sharia law

To understand about these arrests, one has to understand the role Sharia plays in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.

The Taliban returned to power in 2021. Since then, it has governed through its interpretation of Sharia, or better known as Islamic law. While Afghanistan has historically followed the Hanafi school of Sunni jurisprudence (fiqh), often regarded as one of the more flexible traditions within Sunni Islam, the Taliban has adopted a far stricter, Deobandi-influenced interpretation.

Under this system, women face extensive restrictions on education, employment, and public life. Girls are barred from secondary and higher education. Women face severe limitations on work opportunities and are often required to travel with a male guardian. Even ordinary social interactions and movement outside the home are heavily scrutinised.

The morality police enforce these rules through patrols, arrests, and detentions.

Since 2021, when the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan, women across the country have lived under a system of surveillance and punishment over both their dress and their presence in public.

What began as verbal guidance evolved into a decree by the Taliban’s Supreme Leader in 2022, Mawlawi Hibatullah Akhundzada, declaring burqa the preferred form of hijab. In 2024, it was codified through the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and

Prevention of Vice, giving morality police sweeping powers to detain, intimidate, and punish women whose appearance failed to meet Taliban standards.

Earlier this year, as Zan Times reported, morality police established checkpoints across the city, pulling women from taxis and detaining those wearing a manto (a traditional long coat worn by generations of Afghan women) instead of the Taliban-approved black chador or burqa.

Supporters of the Taliban argue that these measures represent a return to authentic Islamic governance after decades of war, corruption, and foreign intervention. But critics, including many Muslim scholars, argue that the Taliban’s interpretation represents an extreme and selective reading of Islamic law.

Human rights organisations estimate that millions of Afghan girls remain locked out of secondary education. Large numbers of women have lost employment opportunities. Restrictions on movement, healthcare, and public participation have deepened both economic hardship and social isolation across the country.

But in the latest Herat demonstrations, perhaps the most striking element was not the slogan but the people. Since the Taliban takeover, public protests have been rare and led by women. One of the examples being the nationwide protests against the closure of women’s beauty salons. This time, however, many

Afghan men appeared willing to publicly challenge the authorities as well.

A rare act

As one Zan Times newsletter observed, that they (men) did so this time says something important. What is being done to Afghan women is no longer viewed as a women’s issue alone. It has become unbearable for entire families and entire communities.

The June 5 story, however, does not end with the arrests. While some of the women detained in Herat have since been released, little is known about what they experienced inside Taliban detention facilities. Activists and rights groups are now seeking answers.

International organisations were quick to condemn the crackdown. The United Nations, along with UN Women and the UNAMA, expressed concern over detentions, restrictions on freedom of expression, and the use of ‘excessive force’ against demonstrators. They also called for the release of detainees and urged the Taliban to respect basic rights.

Yet, there is little indication that the Taliban intends to alter course.

The Herat protests were relatively small, with estimates ranging from 70 to 150 participants. On the face of it, the protests were triggered by the arrest of dozens of women accused of violating the Taliban’s dress code. But it is one of the clearest signs yet that frustration with Taliban rule is no longer confined to private conversations.

Burmese relic



Standing shrine: A man walks past Sule Pagoda, a Burmese Buddhist stupa in the heart of Yangon, Myanmar, on June 16. It is believed that the structure was built to keep a strand of Buddha’s hair about 2,000 years ago. AFP

The left in Colombia pins hopes on philosopher candidate Ivan Cepeda

Agence France-Presse
BOGOTÁ

Philosopher-turned-politician Ivan Cepeda, who made his first public appearance following his father’s assassination by paramilitaries, is decades later running for president of Colombia - one of two candidates in this weekend’s run-off election.

Losing his parent, a communist senator, proved life-changing politically as well as personally for Mr. Cepeda, who was in his thirties at the time of the killing.

Standing in front of a bullet-riddled truck in 1994, his call for justice was televised.

“Let this crime not go unpunished,” Mr. Cepeda



Ivan Cepeda speaks at press conference in Barranquilla on June 15. The run-off presidential election will be held on June 21. AFP

told reporters in a measured tone, during a period of persecution that saw more than 5,700 leftist leaders killed.

His political mentor and then-presidential candidate Bernardo Jaramillo Ossa was also assassinated. Mr. Cepeda went on to

become a human rights defender and was elected to the Colombian Senate for the first time in 2014.

The 63-year-old’s opponents label him a communist - a description he refuses, preferring to be called a “progressive” who advocates a “diverse” form

of capitalism which would provide equal opportunities to Colombia’s rural and Indigenous communities.

Mr. Cepeda garnered 41% of the vote against hard-right candidate Abelardo de la Espriella’s more than 43% in the first round presidential election in May. Now they face each other in Sunday’s run-off.

He played a key role in the historic 2016 peace accord, which led to the disarmament of the rebel army FARC - formerly the country’s largest armed group.

The senator’s adversaries accuse him of having ties to FARC and reproach him for having devised outgoing President Gustavo Petro’s ‘total peace’ plan.

Vast stretches of coral reefs could resist climate change, finds a new study

Agence France-Presse
MOMBASA

In the crystalline waters off Kenya’s coast, coral reefs are thriving - evidence of a rare good news story in the battle to protect oceans from the ravages of climate change.

A new study presented at the Our Ocean Conference in Mombasa on Tuesday finds that 1,66,000 square kilometres of the world’s coral reefs - around a third of the total - are particularly “climate-resilient”, meaning they have the potential to survive through major ocean warming events.

The study by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and Macquarie University in Australia challenges the findings of the IPCC, the global authority on climate change, which has stated 70% to 90% of coral reefs could die with global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and 99% at 2 degrees Celsius.

“Our models are showing a much more hopeful future for coral reefs. We predict that there are many climate resilient reefs around the world that will persist over time,” Stacy Jupiter, executive director for marine conservation at

WCS, told AFP.

Action is still needed since only 28% of those resilient reefs are being actively protected.

Down the coast from Mombasa, on Kenya’s paradisaical Wasini-Mkwiro island, villagers are showing the way.

As local fishermen bring in their catch from the beach, it is weighed, measured, and logged by local data collectors in the village.

Other members of the “beach management unit” patrol the waters to make sure no one is over-fishing or using destructive equipment. Others plant sea-



The study finds that 1,66,000 sq. km of the world’s coral reefs - around a third of the total - are particularly ‘climate-resilient’. AFP

weed and mangroves, and scoop out rubbish.

“We want to keep this ecosystem as pristine as possible because we know the benefits,” said Edward

Karanja, Kenya Wildlife Service warden for the nearby Kisite marine park, citing the importance of tourism and fishing to locals.

Thanks to their efforts, the park became the first in Kenya to earn a Gold-Level Blue Park Award from the U.S.-based Marine Conservation Institute in 2021.

‘Living seed-banks’

Coral “bleaching” occurs when water temperatures rise by a degree or two, stressing the coral’s animal tissues and making them expel algae, turning them white.

But the new study finds many reefs are resilient, either because they exist in cool spots, or because they have evolved to withstand heat, or recover more quickly than most.

“The way we see coral responding to heat events is more nuanced than we previously thought,” said Ms. Jupiter.

Kenya is fortunate to have a significant stretch of naturally resilient coral. Divers off traditional wooden dhows at Wasini-Mkwiro find coral species like the boulder-like Porites and staghorn-shaped Acropora supporting a dazzling ecosystem that includes moray eels, angel-fish, crabs, turtles, dolphins, and much more.

The last major bleaching event in 2024 led to coral cover in the zone falling from 44% to 27%, accord-

ing to WCS data. But within a year, it had recovered to 40%.

The new research, funded by Bloomberg Ocean Initiative and currently under peer review, builds on a pioneering study from 2018 that identified 50 resilient reefs around the world.

New technology makes its map 10,000 times more detailed than any previous version, enabling the discovery of three times more resilient coral than previously known.

More than half are concentrated in Australia, the Bahamas, Cuba, Indonesia, and the Philippines. A

INBRIEF



Smriti Mandhana named in *TIME* magazine's list

Cricketer Smriti Mandhana has been named by *TIME* magazine among this year's 100 most influential people in sports, the only Indian to be featured on the list. *TIME*'s list of the 100 Most Influential People in Sports 2026 features athletes, coaches, advocates and investors who are "people shaping sports today". The list, headlined by American basketball legend LeBron James, includes superstars such as Lionel Messi, Carlos Alcaraz, and Victor Wembanyama among others.

Fast bowler Ashok replaces Yudhvir in India-A squad

Pacer Ashok Sharma was on Tuesday added to the India-A squad for the ongoing tri-series in Sri Lanka as a replacement for the injured Yudhvir Singh.

China-B edges out India in World team snooker c'ships

India suffered a 2-3 defeat against China-B in its opener of World team snooker championships in Guangdong (China) on Tuesday. The loss to the host in the three-team Group B leaves India with a must-win game against Turkiye on Wednesday.

The results: **Group B: China-B bt India 3-2** [Ma Hailong lost to Aditya Mehta 18-94(54); Zhou Jinhao bt Pankaj Advani 76(53)-29; Jinhao & Xu Jianhao bt Advani & Mehta 96(81)-7; Hailong lost to Advani 12-73(62); Jinhao bt Mehta (60-22)].

Bhavani in Indian squad for senior Asian fencing

Olympian C.A. Bhavani Devi was on Tuesday named in India's 24-member squad for the senior Asian fencing championships in New Delhi, from June 19 to 24. The squad comprises 12 men and 12 women. Competitions will be held in foil, epee and sabre.

The squad: **Men: Foil:** Sachin Haryana, Sanasam Hemash Singh, Aditya Haryana, Tejas Manoj Patil; **Epee:** Shrejin Rajendran Shanthim, Joseph Bennet, Shaurya Ashwini, Aloshious Koovakkal Joshy; **Sabre:** Karan Singh, Gisho Nidhi Kumaresh Padma, Vishal Thapar, and Lakshay Badser. **Women: Foil:** Joys Ashitha Stalinraj, Naorem Mina Devi, Sonia Devi Walkhom; **Epee:** Tanishka Khatri, Prachi Lohan, Mitva Jesangbhai Chaudhari; **Sabre:** C.A. Bhavani Devi, Shreya Gupta, Jefarlin Jani Rextlin Simla, Shruthi Joshi.



Serena to play doubles with Venus at Wimbledon

Serena Williams will play at Wimbledon for the first time since 2022 after she was given a wild card to play the doubles with sister Venus on Tuesday. Serena made a sensational returned to tennis last week when she won her first-round doubles match at the Queen's Club with partner Victoria Mboko. The 44-year-old had not played professional tennis for four years.

Astha breaks 17-year-old 200m butterfly record

NATIONAL AQUATICS

Sports Bureau

Railways swimmer Astha Choudhury clocked 2:18.37s to break the 17-year-old women's 200m butterfly record on the opening day of the National aquatics championships in Ahmedabad on Tuesday. Vinayak Vijay (men's 200m medley, 2:04.13) and Aditi Hegde (women's 1500m freestyle, 17:20.82) rewrote two new individual records, while Karnataka women registered

3:53.45 to shatter the two-year-old 4x100m relay. **The results (winners only): Men: 100m freestyle:** Akash Mani (Kar) 50.40; **100m backstroke:** Rishabh Das (Mah) 55.44. **200m medley:** Vinayak Vijay (SSCB) 2:04.13 (NMR, Old 2:04.34, Shoa Ganguly, 2025). **Women: 1500m freestyle:** Aditi Hegde (Mah) 17:20.82 (NMR, Old 17:35.07, Bhavya Sachdeva, 2025). **50m breaststroke:** Lineysa A.K. (Kar) 33.51; **200m butterfly:** Astha Choudhury (RSPB) 2:18.37 (NMR, Old 2:19.59, Arhatha Maghavi, 2009). **4x100m freestyle relay:** Karnataka 3:53.45 (NMR, Old 4:01.83, RSPB, 2024).

Afghans need a collective effort to surprise Indians

The visitors will be eager to set the record straight at Ekana which has been their 'home' ground; onus on Rohit and Shreyas for the Men in Blue look to seal the series; heat could be a factor

AFGHANISTAN IN INDIA

N. Sudarshan
LUCKNOW

For Afghanistan, the Ekana Cricket Stadium is a bittersweet venue.

The ground has been one of its homes away from home, and of 16 international fixtures the arena has hosted in its short history, Afghanistan has featured in eight, three more than India.

But results haven't been fully commensurate, with the country losing all three ODIs and the one-off Test to the West Indies in an all-format series in November 2019.

It won the T20I series 2-1, and the lone 50-over victory came in the 2023 World Cup over the Netherlands. These will be the memories Afghanistan will hold on to when it meets India in the second ODI on Wednesday.

In a rain-curtailed 25-over encounter at Dharamshala, Rahmanullah Gurbaz smashed a 51-ball 102 as the visitors set a 195-run target. Shubman Gill & Co. may have chased it down for the loss of just three wickets, but it was far from a stroll in the park.

However, for Afghanistan to notch up its first-ever win over India, it needs more than just Gurbaz. Seven of its batters were dismissed for single-digit



Training hard: Rohit will be eyeing a big knock after getting run out for 16 in the opener. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

scores, something that captain Hashmatullah Shahidi pinned on "rushed" shot-making owing to the shortened nature of the game.

Positives

For India, pacer Gurnoor Brar and all-rounder Harsh Dubey are coming off impressive debut perfor-

mances (three wickets each). Skipper Gill (84 n.o. from 66 balls) and K.L. Rahul (39 n.o. from 19) would love to extend their purple patch that has stretched across formats.

Rohit Sharma, though, is in search of better returns following a middling IPL. Shreyas Iyer, recently crowned India's new T20I

captain, will be looking for some international runs too, having scored eight, three and 12 in his previous three ODI innings. It remains to be seen if India rings in the changes after just one contest and gives the Yadavs – Prince and Kuldeep – an opportunity.

Speedster Prince excelled for Lucknow Super Giants in the IPL even as his team finished rock bottom. Kuldeep is from neighbouring Kanpur. But does it count at a place where home-away boundaries are fluid?

Heat is expected to be a factor, with day-time temperatures set to touch 40 degrees. Shahidi, though, opined that international cricketers shouldn't use weather as an excuse. However, the fact is that Ekana has never organised an international fixture in the April-September window. It will be baptism by fire!

The teams (from): India: Shubman Gill (Capt.), Rohit Sharma, Shreyas Iyer (Vice-capt.), Yashasvi Jaiswal, K.L. Rahul (wk), Ishan Kishan (wk), Nitish Kumar, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Arshdeep Singh, Prasidh Krishna, Prince Yadav, Gurnoor Brar and Harsh Dubey.

Afghanistan: Hashmatullah Shahidi (Capt.), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Ibrahim Zadran, Sediqullah Atal, Rahmat Shah, Ikram Alikhil (wk), Mohammad Nabi, Azmatullah Omarzai, Rashid Khan, Nangyal Kharotai, AM Ghazanfar, Zia Ur Rahman Sharifi, Fareed Malik, Bilal Sami and Darwish Rasooli.

Match starts at 1.30 p.m.

Harsh is one for the future: Bahutule

N. Sudarshan
LUCKNOW

India's newly appointed spin-bowling coach Sairaj Bahutule gave Harsh Dubey the thumbs up after the left-arm twaker's three-wicket haul on debut (three for 47) in the seven-wicket victory over Afghanistan in Dharamshala on Saturday.

"Harsh definitely has a good future," Bahutule said here on Tuesday, ahead of the second ODI. "Last game, he was under pressure after that first over (16 runs), but the way he came back [was impressive].

"Shubman [Gill] also used him very well, made the right changes at the right time, and gave him the ends which were suitable. He [Harsh] is one player for the future. He has the skills and a good temperament, and the more he plays, the more experience he'll get and enhance his skill."

With Ravindra Jadeja 37 and Axar Patel 32, India appears keen on setting in motion the process to locate the next set of left-arm spinners. Bahutule expressed confidence that Harsh would eventually look the part.

"For me, every spinner is unique. Jadeja is very experienced, and the way he's performed and contributed to Indian cricket is phenomenal.

"This is transition time for spin. Harsh and other youngsters will realise that these are big shoes to fill.

"But they have the capability and the potential. The more they will play, the more they will settle down, learn from every



Harsh claimed three for 47 on his ODI debut at Dharamshala. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP



This is transition time for spin. Harsh and other youngsters will realise that these are big shoes to fill. But they have the capability and the potential

BAHUTULE

game and grow."

Afghanistan skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi said that the key to success on Wednesday will be in not losing wickets in a heap. In the first ODI, his side fell to 26 for three, recovered to 142 for three before being bowled out for 194.

"We should not make the same mistakes," Shahidi said. "Hopefully, we (will) have some good partnerships and no back-to-back wickets.

"The conditions will be a little bit slower, better for spin, and the weather is also hot. We will try to do our basics right and just play positive cricket".

India-A faces tough task against an upbeat Afghanistan-A side

TRI-SERIES

Shavan Acharya
DAMBULLA

The India-A team took a break from cricket on Tuesday, staying at the team hotel in the quiet surroundings of Sigiriya after Monday's dramatic and controversial Super Over defeat to Sri Lanka-A.

With the road to the final now steeper, India-A must not only beat Afghanistan-A on Wednesday but also hope other results go its way.

While Afghanistan-A had an extended training session at the Rangiri International Stadium, India-A stayed away from the ground. Sources indicated that the team management used the day to review the defeat, discussing mistakes and the need to remain composed in tense situations.

Amid speculation that the BCCI could warn Vaibhav Sooryavanshi for his involvement in a heated exchange with Sri Lankan players, BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia denied any such move. "We will let our players concentrate on the tournament and they should not be distracted by any collateral issues," Saikia told *The Hindu*.

Neither the players nor the team management were pleased with how the match ended, particularly after the umpires reversed their decision and went ahead with the Super Over despite fading light. However, no complaint was made to the match referee.

By the time Sooryavanshi and Suryansh Shedge walked out to chase 17, visibility had become a serious concern. It was difficult to pick up the ball and the players appeared to be struggling.

Tempers eventually

spilled over, with Sooryavanshi involved in a heated exchange with Vishen Halambage and a few Sri Lankan players, bringing an ugly end to an otherwise gripping contest.

Sources claimed that a few Sri Lankan players had been sledging Sooryavanshi and team-mates since the start of the tournament, often taunting them about IPL performances.

With little time to dwell on the controversy, the Indian team management has turned its attention to the must-win clash against Afghanistan-A. The focus has been on improving discipline and tightening up a bowling attack that has struggled for consistency.

In a bid to bolster the pace department, Ashok Sharma, who impressed for Gujarat Titans in the IPL, joined the squad as a replacement for Yudhvir Singh.

Match starts at 10 a.m.

Afghanistan stalwart Nabi's son keen to chart his own path

Shavan Acharya
DAMBULLA

Long before Hassan Eisakhil began making his way in cricket, people already knew his surname. As the son of Afghanistan stalwart Mohammad Nabi, that was always going to be the case.

The comparisons are inevitable, but Hassan is determined to focus on his own journey.

"When I'm playing, I don't think about being Mohammad Nabi's son," he told *The Hindu*. "I just focus on my game."

His rise has followed a familiar route for many young Afghan cricketers, through domestic and age-group cricket before earning opportunities at higher levels.

"Whenever I wear the Afghanistan jersey, it is a proud feeling," he said. "I started from domestic cricket, moved through different levels and worked



Hassan. SHAVAN ACHARYA

my way up. The performances helped me get opportunities."

Growing up in Dubai, Hassan spent much of his childhood playing tennis-ball cricket with friends. "I started when I was around 10 years old. At that stage, I wasn't thinking about playing international cricket. I was just playing because I loved the game."

Interestingly, Nabi did not coach him during

those early years. "Initially, he didn't teach me much," Hassan recalled. "He wanted me to understand my own game. Later, he started helping me with batting, fitness and training."

A naturally aggressive batter, Hassan likes to take the initiative.

"My intent has always been positive," he said.

"If the ball is in my area, I want to play my shots."

The advice he hears most from his father is about understanding situations and putting the team first.

"He always talks about the situation," Hassan said. "What does the team need at that moment?"

For now, Hassan remains focused on improving and creating his own identity in the game.

The Nabi surname may attract attention, but he knows it is performances that will ultimately define his career.

India beats Japan, enters semifinals

FIH NATIONS CUP

Press Trust of India
AUCKLAND

The Indian women's hockey team booked its place in the semifinals of the FIH Nations Cup with a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Japan, courtesy goals from captain Salima Tete and Lalremsiami, here on Tuesday.

The win was India's second in Pool A of the tournament, which serves as a qualifier for next year's FIH Pro League. With six points from two matches, India secured a spot in the last four.



Joy unbound: India notched up its second successive win.

India broke the deadlock in the third quarter, with skipper Salima Tete scoring in the 33rd minute

after sustained pressure from the forwards.

Japan responded quickly, equalising just two mi-

nutes later through Ai Hiramitsu.

However, Lalremsiami struck the decisive goal in the 49th minute as India held firm against a late Japanese challenge to seal the victory.

The match was also a memorable occasion for midfielder Jyoti, who celebrated her 100th senior international appearance.

India will next face Uruguay in its final Pool A fixture on Thursday, while Japan and the USA will battle for the remaining semifinal berth from the group.

The result: India 2 (Salima Tete 33, Lalremsiami 49) bt Japan 1 (Ai Hiramitsu 35).

Woman athletes without SRY gene test ineligible to compete in 2027

Sports Bureau
KOLKATA

The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) has said that no woman athlete shall be eligible to compete in any of its events from next year without undergoing the Sex-Determining Region Y (SRY) gene test.

In order to ensure fairness, World Athletics (WA) introduced the once-in-a-lifetime test for athletes wishing to compete in the women's category at the Tokyo World Championships last year.

Starting with the Federation meet in Ranchi last month, the AFI also began testing woman athletes in domestic competitions.

The cost is borne by the AFI and the test is done by a recognised lab.

The AFI alerted the athletes about the consequences of skipping the test this year.

"With effect from next year, no athlete shall be eligible to participate in any competition organised by the AFI without undergoing the SRY gene test," said the circular.

