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INSIDE



Nine killed as Russia, Ukraine intensify attacks

KYIV
Russia fired a wave of drones and missiles at Ukraine overnight, killing four people, while Ukrainian strikes on Russia and Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine killed five, officials said on Sunday. This comes a day before Ukraine's allies were set to meet for talks to end the war. » **PAGE 14**



Twisha's skin tissue found on gymnastics belt

NEW DELHI
The final forensic report by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi, in the Twisha Sharma death case has concluded a gymnastics belt could have been used in the alleged murder as it found the presence of victim's skin tissue on it, sources said. » **PAGE 4**

ISRO tests crew module systems for Gaganyaan

NEW DELHI
The Indian Space Research Organisation on Sunday said it had successfully carried out three major tests of the Gaganyaan crew module systems. The first test was to ensure an upright position of crew module after splashdown in the sea, considered one of the most important safety requirements. » **PAGE 6**

Minister slams HC 'interference' in temple affairs

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Kerala Devaswom Minister K. Muraliedharan on Sunday slammed the High Court for "excessive interference" in the affairs of the Sabarimala Ayyappa temple and other temples in the State. He said the court interfering in such matters limits the role of the Devaswom Boards and devotees. » **PAGE 3**

Flash floods wreak havoc in Pahalgam

SRINAGAR
Flash floods due to cloudbursts in the past 24 hours damaged several hotels in Pahalgam, a hill station in south Kashmir. On Saturday, four hotels and multiple houses were damaged in gushing waters from the Awoora stream. Officials said scores of tourists were shifted to safer locations. » **PAGE 6**

Iranian regional reprisals follow U.S. attacks

U.S. says its attacks will weaken Tehran's ability to threaten shipping, insists the Strait is open
Tehran launches attacks on West Asian countries hosting U.S. forces, says the Strait remains closed
Iran's Revolutionary Guard said multiple vessels ignored orders; one 'was hit by a warning shot'

Associated Press
DUBAI

The U.S. attacked Iran early on Sunday over an Iranian strike on a container ship in the Strait of Hormuz that left one Indian sailor missing. Iran responded with attacks on several countries in West Asia, including Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan, and Oman.

The U.S. struck again later on Sunday. Iran's state-run IRNA news agency cited the Governor of Qeshm island near the strait as saying projectiles had been fired at military targets, with no casualties. It said explosions were heard in the coastal city of Bandar Abbas and Hajjiabad city to the north.

The U.S. military's Central Command (CENTCOM) said it hit 140 targets, including missile and drone launch sites, ammunition dumps, communi-



Tensions boil over: The U.S. says it hit 140 targets, including missile and drone launch sites and communication equipment, in Iran. REUTERS

cation equipment, and other sites. It said the attacks, heavier than in recent days, would weaken Iran's ability to threaten shipping. "We bombed the hell out of them last night," President Donald Trump said.

Iranian state media later reported U.S. strikes across the country, including military sites in a province near Tehran. Semi-official

news agencies said that a Navy officer was killed.

Iran retaliated by attacking nations in the region hosting U.S. military forces, while insisting it alone must control the Strait.

New questions

The U.S. military and Mr. Trump asserted that the Strait remained open on Sunday. Iran said the Strait was closed until calm is

restored. The fighting raised new questions about the interim deal Iran and the U.S. reached on June 17, beginning a 60-day period aimed at reaching a permanent end to the war.

"The era of one-sided deals is OVER," Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Speaker of Iran's Parliament and a key negotiator, wrote. "We told you: keep your word or pay the

Govt. slams ship attack off Oman; seafarer missing

CHENNAI

The government has condemned the attack on a Cyprus-flagged commercial vessel off the coast of Oman that left one of its 11 Indian crew members missing. "We condemn the attack on the commercial vessel *GFS Galaxy...*," it said. » **PAGE 4**

price. Reality is knocking."

Tehran added that it would consider targeting "additional enemy bases in the region" if it faced more attacks.

Qatar's military said it intercepted incoming Iranian fire. Three people, including a child, were wounded as a result of shrapnel from the interception of Iranian attacks, Qatar's Interior Ministry

said. Missile alerts sounded in Bahrain which houses the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet. Kuwait's military also said it was intercepting incoming fire.

The Omani state news agency said drones struck sites in an area that sits on the Strait of Hormuz and issued a shelter-in-place warning for residents in the region. The attack came a day after Oman and Iran held talks on the strait. Oman summoned the Iranian Ambassador to protest the strikes, the first such move since the war began, calling Iran's acts "irresponsible."

Three Iranian missiles struck areas across Jordan, causing minor damage but no injuries, Jordan's state news agency reported. Sirens also sounded in the UAE, but the government said missiles did not cross into its territory.

A Cyprus-flagged container ship was hit by Iran

and suffered "significant engine room damage," CENTCOM said.

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard said multiple vessels "disregarded our warnings" and ignored instructions to follow what it called an approved route. One "was struck by a warning shot and brought to a stop".

The Strait, a key route for the global supply of oil and natural gas, has become the key sticking point in negotiations, and fighting over the past week has left negotiations in danger of collapse.

Oman on Saturday said it and Iran agreed to continue discussing the Strait "at the technical and political levels." Iran offered no statement about the Strait being open to all, something sought by the Trump administration.

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Star gazing



An Argentina fan sitting on a traditional fishing boat looks at a massive cutout of the football icon Lionel Messi at the Vizhinjam International Sea Port in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday. NIRMAL HARINDRAN

Taliban delegation on mission to 'boost agricultural ties with India'

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

The Taliban administration of Afghanistan has expressed desire to enhance agricultural cooperation with India, covering areas such as agricultural trade, infrastructure development, and irrigation, the External Affairs Ministry said on Sunday.

In a statement, the Ministry said the discussions took place during the six-day visit of Attaullah Omari, the Minister for Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock of the Taliban administration. The visit ended on Sunday.

Among the issues discussed were cooperation in food processing through value addition, capacity building and the promotion of bilateral trade in



Afghan Agriculture Minister Mawlawi Attaullah Omari at the meet at PHD House, in Delhi, on Friday. ANI

agricultural and food products.

During the visit, Mr. Omari met Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and Minister of Rural Development Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Minister of Food Processing Industries Chirag Paswan. Mr. Omari also met Mi-

nister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita.

The Afghan delegation, led by Mr. Omari, also held meetings with the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), the Indian Agricultural Research Institute

(IARI), the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Recognition and aid

India has not yet formally recognised the Taliban administration in Kabul, but has upgraded the 'technical team' in the Indian Embassy in Kabul to the level of *chargé d'affaires*.

India has been sending food, medicines and other essential items to Afghanistan as the country continues to battle a shortage of essential commodities and life-saving medicines.

Much of the assistance was routed through Iran's Chabahar port before the United States-Israel war against Iran disrupted the route.

PM must restore Statehood to J&K, says CM Abdullah

Peerzada Ashiq
JAMMU

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's repeated promise to restore Statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Sunday said a commitment made by the country's highest elected leader should carry weight.

"In [Jammu's] Katra, the Prime Minister talked about the restoration of J&K Statehood, with these words that 'it isn't an ordinary promise but Modi's promise'. If the Prime Minister makes a promise, it should carry some weight, and there should be some action on it," Mr. Abdullah said at a public meeting after a rally here.

This was the second major public rally by the ruling National Conference (NC) ahead of its proposed July 20 protest at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi to demand restoration of Statehood and constitutional guarantees.

"Whenever the people of J&K seek fulfilment of the promise, we are told it will happen 'at the appropriate time'," he said.

"The restoration of Statehood is not the cause of any one party; it is the cause of every citizen of Jammu and Kashmir. That is why we have invited every political party and leader to join us on July 20. With elections still years away, this is the time to rise above politics and stand united for our shared future," Mr. Abdullah added.

Referring to the Centre's outreach to Ladakh with Article 371 safeguards, Mr. Abdullah said, "If dialogue and constitutional safeguards can be offered to those who choose to prot-



NC workers listen to CM Omar Abdullah speak at a rally demanding the restoration of Statehood to J&K in Jammu on Sunday. AP

Police arrest 3 publishers for 'pro-separatist' books in J&K

The Hindu Bureau
JAMMU

The counter-intelligence unit of the Jammu and Kashmir Police on Sunday arrested three publishers for allegedly bringing out "pro-separatist" books

under Samagra Shiksha scheme. The police have lodged a case under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

CONTINUED ON
» **PAGE 4**

est, why are the democratic aspirations of the people of J&K denied? We seek nothing more than the restoration of our rightful Statehood and the authority to govern through the mandate given to us by the people."

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary said restoration of Statehood is a must to ensure good days for J&K, adding, "Give us back Statehood so that we can address employment issues. This is the voice of the people of J&K."

Meanwhile, BJP leader and Leader of the Opposition Sunil Sharma said: "Statehood is a process. The Army, intelligence agencies, and all constitutional institutions are stakeholders. It does not come overnight. It is our

commitment, and it will be restored at the appropriate time."

CPI(M) backs sit-in

Meanwhile, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) extended support to the July 20 protest. "The decision of the August 5, 2019 – when Article 370 and Article 35-A were abrogated – was taken without any consultation with stakeholders of J&K, and it remains as an unprecedented assault on the rights of the people. It was not an attack on one party or one region alone, but one that touched every community, caste and creed in the entire region," said CPI(M) State Secretary Abass Rafter.

He appealed to political parties, organisations and citizens to set aside differences and join hands for this cause on July 20.

INBRIEF



Bihar CM unveils development projects worth ₹1,047 crore

Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for 982 development projects worth ₹1,047.09 crore in Muzaffarpur district on Sunday. They included 669 projects worth ₹375.04 crore were unveiled under the Mukhyamantri Samagra Shahri Vikas Yojana, 3 projects worth ₹233.77 crore under the Storm Water Drainage Scheme, and the Muzaffarpur Smart City project worth ₹213.25 crore. The CM also inaugurated the Sikandarpur Lake Front, developed at a cost of ₹213.25 crore under the Muzaffarpur Smart City project.

Abhishek booked after woman loses leg, blames health camp

Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee has been booked after a woman complained that she lost a leg following treatment for knee pain at a Sebaashray camp, a healthcare outreach initiative launched by the Opposition leader in West Bengal a few months ago, officials said on Sunday. Intervening in the controversy, State Health Minister Sharadwat Mukhopadhyay spoke to the complainant and asked her family members to visit Swasthya Bhawan, the Health Department headquarters in Salt Lake, on Monday for a review of the case, sources said.

Rise in maternal deaths reflects deepening crisis in Rajasthan's public health system, says Gehlot

Press Trust of India
JAIPUR

Amid mounting concerns over maternal deaths in Rajasthan, former Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Sunday said the rising number of fatalities were “frightening and shocking” and reflect a “deepening crisis” in the State’s public health system.

Mr. Gehlot’s remarks came after eight women and a minor, who underwent surgery in the obstetrics and gynaecology department at two government hospitals of Bhilwara and Banswara districts of Rajasthan, died over the past week. “Now, after four deaths in Banswara, reports of 18 deaths in two months have

emerged. The lack of accountability from the government is making the situation even more serious,” the Congress leader said. ‘Administrative failure’ Alleging administrative failure, he said the government has been unable to handle the crisis. “Handling this crisis, saving the lives of pregnant women

and restoring trust in the health system is beyond the capacity of this government. Its insensitivity and lack of accountability are worsening the situation.” Mr. Gehlot said urgent steps are needed to prevent further deaths. “The Centre must take this seriously and take corrective measures, otherwise more lives may be lost,” he said.

Tripura CM opens new hospital in Agartala, says govt. mulling medical colleges in interior areas

Syed Saijad Ali
AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha, inaugurated the fourth major public hospital in Agartala on Sunday (July 12, 2026) to ease patient pressure and meet demand for a super speciality hospital in Tripura. The new facility has been named Dr. Syama Prasad

Mookerjee Agartala Civil Hospital. The Chief Minister said multidisciplinary health services have been provided through the development of infrastructure, installation of advanced technology, and specialist services. “It is a matter of great pride that our specialists have successfully performed kidney trans-

plants,” he said. The Chief Minister announced that the State government has considerably increased the number of beds in hospitals. He announced that the Government has received proposals to set up new medical colleges even in interior areas. The proposals are being examined, but Bandhan Bank’s proposal to es-

tablish a medical college at Ambassa – headquarters of the tribal-dominated Dhalai district – has been cleared by the Cabinet. Tripura presently has one government-run medical college and one dental college. The Chief Minister said critical patients are being referred to hospitals within the State because of the advanced facilities.

SPOTLIGHT

Senjuti Sengupta
Shiv Sahay Singh

A blue and white metal pole, about 2.5 metres tall, with a freshly painted green coloured signboard stands at the edge of the street leading eastward from Park Circus 7 Point Crossing in Kolkata. Not more than a dozen houses stand on the left side of the street. On the right side is the Park Circus Maidan, which was the epicentre of the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act, protests a few years ago. A lush growth of the green grass now covers the protest site while the hurriedly erected signboard reads ‘Gopal Mukherjee Road’, in Bengali and English. Before June 20, this road was called Suhrawardy Avenue. However, within six weeks of coming to power, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in West Bengal named it after Gopal Mukherjee, who ran a goat meat shop in north Kolkata and is considered to have “saved Hindus during the Great Calcutta Killings in 1946”. This is not the first instance where a government of the day has renamed a street. Then why is renaming of Suhrawardy Avenue a crucial moment in West Bengal politics? That’s because even 78 years after the country’s Independence and the Partition of Bengal, the role of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy and Gopal Mukherjee, intertwined with each other, continue to dominate the political discourse

of the State. In the years leading to the 2026 West Bengal Assembly poll, the State witnessed a massive campaign mounted by the BJP and its allies glorifying Gopal Mukherjee. At the same time, they also invoked the legacy of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy – a prominent Bengali politician who served as the last Prime Minister of undivided Bengal and later as the Prime Minister of Pakistan – and blamed him for the “massacre of innocent citizens”. However, the road in question was not named after Huseyn Suhrawardy. Instead, it was named after his uncle Sir Hassan Suhrawardy.

Mistaken identity? “Kolkata Municipal Corporation has decided that the road known as Suhrawardy Avenue in KMC area will be named and henceforth be known as Gopal Mukherjee Road,” read a single-line notification published by the civic body on June 20. Calling the decision historic, Chief Minister Suven- du Minister said, “Finally restoration of historical justice will be achieved by honouring a true guardian and saviour.” Adhikari, the first BJP Chief Minister of West Bengal, also added in a social media message that “for decades a major artery of our city bore the name of someone who willfully misused state power as a weapon, orchestrating the massacre of innocent citizens for sheer political gain”. The Chief Minister was referring to Huseyn Suhrawardy whom the BJP and

Road rage in Bengal

Soon after the BJP govt. renamed Kolkata's Suhrawardy Avenue as Gopal Mukherjee Road, public outcry and historical evidence started pouring out that the street was not named after the man whom it blames for killings, but the first Muslim V-C of Calcutta University. Here's why the renaming of the street marks a crucial moment in Bengal politics



An elderly resident near a signboard pointing towards the Gopal Mukherjee Road. SENJUTI SENGUPTA

its allies blame for the communal riots of 1946. But then the road wasn’t named after him. P.T. Nair, known as the ‘Barefoot Historian of Calcutta’, in his book, *A History of Calcutta's Streets*, explains how the street got its name. According to the book, “The new road constructed by the Calcutta Improvement Trust from Park Circus Junction of Kasai Para Lane on which stands the house of Sir Hassan Suhrawardy, Vice-

Chancellor of the University of Calcutta, will be known as Suhrawardy Avenue.” The name was notified on April 20, 1933. The real account Nair gave a detailed account of the accomplishments of Hassan Suhrawardy, describing him as two-time Vice-Chancellor of University of Calcutta, distinguished Muslim medico from the point of academic attainments, a prominent member of the

Bengal Legislative Council and its first Muslim to be elected Deputy President. The historian also gave a description as to how Hassan got his knighthood: “It was during the days of his vice-chancellorship that Sir Stanley Jackson, the Chancellor of the Calcutta University and the Governor of Bengal, was attacked by a girl student during the convocation and it was Dr. Hassan Suhrawardy’s courageous and timely action that saved

the Governor’s life. His Knighthood was a reward for this and was granted by a special communique by the King and not during the usual New Year and Birthday Honours’ Lists”. The student referred to here was freedom fighter Bina Das, who made an assassination attempt at the Bengal Governor on February 6, 1932. When it became clear in the political circles that the BJP leadership had renamed the street linking it to the wrong Suhrawardy, leaders from the Opposition parties criticised the name change. The Congress’s media and publicity department chairman Pawan Khera cited Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s message in the book, *Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee: The Great Educationist*, to argue that the Hindutva ideologue and Jana Sangh founder had been a supporter of Hassan Suhrawardy, after whom the road was named. “Typical of the BJP’s abysmal ignorance to remove the name of Dr. Hassan Suhrawardy, first Muslim Vice-chancellor of Calcutta [University] when they targeted his nephew Huseyn Suhrawardy. Why don’t they read history sometime?” retired bureaucrat and former Rajya Sabha MP Jawhar Sircar said in a post on X. After the criticism, BJP’s IT Cell in-charge Amit Malviya said West Bengal will have nothing to do with the Suhrawardys. Malviya criticised both the Suhrawardys, calling the uncle closely associated with the British and his nephew as one of the most controver-

sial political figures of the pre-Partition era. Almost 11 years ago, the West Bengal government declassified secret Cabinet papers relating to Subhas Chandra Bose. In the papers that were declassified, the role of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy also became more pronounced. The papers revealed that Huseyn Suhrawardy claimed it was the withdrawal of the police during the riots that led the situation to acquire such grim proportions. However, he also claimed that there was no delay in calling the military. The house of Gopal Mukherjee is located less than 5 km away in Kolkata’s Bowbazar area, where his descendants live. The family members said the film *Bengal Files* released in 2025 has added to his popularity but they are not very happy that he was shown as a butcher or meat shop owner. Despite the opposition from the then Trinamool Congress government, film director Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri and a few BJP leaders, including current Finance Minister Swapan Dasgupta, held a private screening of the film in Kolkata. The family members said while the film focussed on the role of Mukherjee, neither the director nor anyone from his team spoke to them. They said they were not invited for the private screening. However, they are now happy that now a road is named after their forefather. “Despite his contribution to save the Hindu community during the Great Calcutta Killings in 1946, the previous governments

were silent about Gopal Mukherjee. We are happy that they took the initiative to name the road after him instead of Hassan Suhrawardy,” his grandson Shantanu Mukherjee said. While there is much enthusiasm among the family members about the renaming of the road, the people who have lived on the avenue for almost nine decades do not think much of the development. “Will this change of name make our lives any better? I have been living here for over 55 years,” said Sheikh Ismail, who runs a street laundry shop on the avenue. In their defence Defending the decision to rename the avenue to Gopal Mukherjee Road, Adhikari said, “In Kolkata the names of Mughal, Pathans and oppressive foreign rulers will not remain.” He said Sister Nivedita, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, remains the only exception in this regard. Adhikari on June 23 announced setting up of a panel that will evaluate renaming proposals related to roads and streets. Former Vice-Chancellor of North Bengal University Professor Om Prakash Mishra said politics of name or nomenclature change has been practised everywhere and by varieties of political regimes. The re-christening of Suhrawardy Avenue, he added, may just be the beginning of a renaming exercise in Bengal.

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Farewell moment: Mortal remains of S. Janaki kept at Maharaja's college grounds in Mysuru for public viewing, M.A. SRIRAM

Music legend Janaki cremated with state honours in Mysuru

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

Legendary singer S. Janaki was cremated with state honours at a farmhouse in Kaniyanahundi near Mysuru on Sunday evening. Janaki's granddaughter Apsara Vidyula performed the last rites as per Telugu Brahmin traditions in the presence of her close relatives, people's representatives, friends, and a large number of admirers and the general public. Earlier, Janaki's mortal remains were brought in a vehicle with police escort to the farmhouse in H.D. Kote taluk of Mysuru district from Maharaja's College grounds, where it was kept for the public to pay homage. The last rites were held at the farmhouse belonging to Janaki's admirer and caretaker Naveen as per the singer's wishes. Janaki's late husband Ramprasad was from Mysuru and the singer had chosen to make Mysuru her home in the past few

years. Janaki's husband and their only son Murali Krishna had predeceased her. **'Unique soul'** Ms. Apsara thanked the government for the state honours and public homage. On Janaki, Ms. Apsara said her grandmother was one of a kind with remarkable talent. "I will remember her more as a grandmother. She was full of love and laughter with a child-like spirit. She was a unique soul," Ms. Apsara said. Several personalities from the Kannada film industry, including chairperson of the Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce S. Jaimala, veteran actor Bharathi Vishnuvardhan, and noted music composer Hamsalekha, attended the cremation. Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled the passing of the veteran singer and said her songs gave voice to every emotion with unparalleled grace as well as versatility.

Minister slams 'interference' by Kerala HC in temple affairs

No freedom for Devaswom Board to take decisions on Sabarimala as HC is giving instructions even on ritual matters, says K. Muraleedharan; he expresses concern over SIT probe into gold theft case

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Devaswom Minister K. Muraleedharan on Sunday slammed the Kerala High Court for "excessive interference" in the affairs of the Sabarimala Ayyappa temple and other temples in the State. Speaking at a public event, he said the time had come to rethink whether the court should interfere in all such matters, thus limiting the role of the Devaswom Boards and devotees. Many of the interventions undermined the autonomy of the temples and



K. Muraleedharan expressed concern that the SIT report on the Sabarimala gold theft is yet to be made public. FILE PHOTO

the rights of the believers, he said. "There is no freedom for the Devaswom Board or the government to take decisions on Sabarimala. The High Court is directly

giving instructions even on ritual matters like which flower to use in temples. It is time for a serious discussion on the extent of the court's intervention in the ritual and administrative

matters of temples," the Minister said. Mr. Muraleedharan said he had raised the issue in the Assembly. When such opinions were expressed outside the Assembly, he said there was a possibility of contempt of court instead of democratic discussions. Even then, the boards and devotees should stand together, considering the seriousness of the issue. He expressed concern that the report of the Special Investigation Team into the Sabarimala gold theft is yet to see the light of the day. At this rate, the investigation would not be completed anytime soon, he said.

Govt. to fly bodies of capsized victims to India

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

The bodies of the 15 tourists, who were killed in the accident off Vietnam's Phu Quoc Island, were taken to Ho Chi Minh City on Sunday, from where they will be flown to India soon, the Indian Embassy in Hanoi said. The Indian mission also said that 16 of the 17 rescued Indian tourists are on their way back home. The Union government is continuing its efforts to assist the victims' kin, with steps under way to repatriate the remains.

The condition of Gelli Kishore, the survivor from Andhra Pradesh who sustained critical injuries in the accident, remains serious, said officials, forcing doctors to postpone his evacuation. Ten of the deceased are from Tamil Nadu, three from Andhra Pradesh, and two from Kerala. The bodies of A.C. Thomas and his wife, Loveni Thomas, the two victims from Kerala, will be brought to the Mumbai airport on Monday around 10 p.m, the Kerala Chief Minister's Office informed. Officials at the Andhra

Condition of one survivor from Andhra Pradesh is serious, forcing doctors to put off his evacuation

Collectors on the designated recipients, a request was submitted through the e-Care portal for transporting the mortal remains of Nallapeta Adisheshaiah Ravi Teja to Bengaluru, Gelli Jaya Lakshmi to Vijayawada, and Mudium Sreedhar to Chennai. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu reviewed the assistance being extended to the accident victims. Meanwhile, on Sunday, the Vietnamese police arrested the captain of the speedboat that capsized, authorities said. (With inputs from agencies)

Leopard seen near Tirumala walking path; surveillance stepped up

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Environment and Forests K. Pawan Kalyan has asked officials to take steps for the safety of devotees using the Tirumala footpath, after a leopard was found roaming near Dorasani Mandapam. A press release said Mr. Pawan Kalyan had directed that H.A.N.U.M.A.N (Healing and Nurturing Units for Monitoring, Aid and Nursing of Wildlife) teams be deployed to ensure the wild cat caused no harm to the devotees.

'Move in groups' He asked the Forest Department and the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams's (TTD) forest and vigilance wings to coordinate properly so that the devotees would be safe, and advised that they move in groups. The Deputy Chief Minister advised officials to take appropriate measures to ensure that pilgrims were not disturbed. Officials explained to the Deputy Chief Minister the measures being taken, in coordination with the Forest Department, the TTD Forest Wing and the TTD Vigilance Wing, to ensure pilgrim safety.

Mr. Kalyan asked officials to alert the pilgrims and clear dense thickets in sensitive areas. He stressed the need for adequate security measures to allay fears of pilgrims. The big cat was spotted near the Lord Narasimha Swamy temple, about half-way along the Alipiri footpath.

Karnataka urges Kerala to donate elephant to Mookambika temple

K.S. Sudhi
KOCHI

The Kerala Forest Department is facing increased pressure to donate or facilitate the transfer of captive elephants to neighbouring States. Karnataka Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar has written to his Kerala counterpart, V.D. Satheesan, to facilitate "the donation of a female elephant from any willing temple in Kerala" to the Kollur Mookambika Temple in Karnataka, to "participate in religious ceremonies and temple rituals". Mr. Shivakumar has sought the help of Mr. Satheesan in facilitating the do-



Kerala has around 30 captive elephants in government-run camps across the State. R.K. NITHIN

nation in "compliance with all applicable statutory provisions, rules" as he felt that the "noble gesture would further strengthen the centuries-old spiritual

and cultural relationship" between the two States. Earlier, a request from the Telangana Chief Minister seeking camp elephants - pachyderms res-

cued and maintained in the State's camp facilities - was turned down by the Kerala government, according to forest officials. Kerala has around 30 captive elephants in camps, including at Kottor, Dhoni, Malayattoor, and Konni. The captive elephant population of Kerala is estimated at 368. Inter-State transfers can be permitted only in cases of elephants with ownership certificates issued before February 24, 2024, and their genetic profile entered in the electronic monitoring application of the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Death toll reaches 8 in Wayanad debris slip; all missing traced

The Hindu Bureau
KOZHIKODE

Emergency workers on Sunday recovered the body of one more person following the devastating debris slip at a tunnel construction site at Kalladi in Wayanad's Meppadi in Kerala on July 7, taking the death toll in the disaster to eight. The deceased was identified as Bikram Singh Rana, a project manager from Himachal Pradesh. Rana's body was recovered on the sixth day of the search from Zone II. It was found in an area where iron debris had accumulated following the

Emergency workers recovered the body of one more person from Himachal Pradesh

disaster. Officials said that with the recovery of his body, all missing people had now been accounted for. After his relatives identified the body, it was shifted to the Vythiri Taluk Hospital for post-mortem examination. Following the procedure, it will be shifted to the Kozhikode Government Medical College Hospital for embalming.

SI booked for letting six-year-old drive a car

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

A Hyderabad Police Sub-Inspector has been booked after allowing his six-year-old granddaughter to drive a car on a busy road in Narsingi, with the officer claiming he was preparing her for a Guinness World Records attempt as the world's youngest driver. The incident, which was reported on Saturday, came to light after a video showing the child behind the wheel while the officer occupied the front passenger seat went viral on social media platforms. A case has been registered against the officer.

After Minister's incognito bus ride, Bengaluru rolls out passenger-friendly reforms

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTc) has issued a fresh set of directives to its staff to improve passenger service and safety, following a surprise late-night bus inspection by Transport Minister Byrathi Suresh on Saturday. The Minister travelled incognito, wearing a face mask, on over 10 BMTc buses across Bengaluru to assess the service. **Orders suspension** During the inspection, he found a conductor and a driver allegedly derelict in

Conductor asks Minister to get down after the latter did not give exact change for two tickets

their duties and recommended their suspension. A BMTc source told *The Hindu* that an inquiry had been ordered against the said staff members and immediate action initiated. The Minister had boarded a bus travelling from Hebbal towards Nagashettilahalli on Saturday night and asked the conductor to issue two tickets after handing over a ₹100 note. The conductor showed his

bag, saying he did not have change, and asked the Minister to get off the bus if he could not give exact change. The Minister also found that a bus driver did not halt at a stop, despite a waiting passenger signalling the driver. Following the inspection, the BMTc directed its drivers to halt buses at designated stops. Drivers and conductors should treat passengers with respect. Conductors should encourage commuters to use the QR code-based UPI payment facility. No passenger should be forced to alight for lack of change, it said.

Drones move TB samples, cut diagnosis costs from ₹9,451 to ₹91 in new ICMR trial

Siddharth Kumar Singh
HYDERABAD

A drone flight costing patients almost nothing could replace journeys that once left suspected tuberculosis (TB) patients spending an average of ₹9,451 out of their own pockets. A study by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Bibinagar, in Telangana has found that transporting sputum samples by drone reduced patients' average expenditure to just ₹91 while cutting diagnosis time from 15 days to five days. The study, published in the *International Journal of Tuberculosis and Lung Disease* evaluated the impact of using drones to transport sputum samples



The drone programme aims to streamline the transport of sputum samples from PHCs in remote areas to testing facilities. FILE PHOTO

from remote villages to TB testing centres in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district under the Indian Council of Medical Research's (ICMR) i-DRONE initiative. The study analysed data from 840 participants. Before the intervention,

suspected TB patients from remote villages, often located 10 km to 30 km from the nearest diagnostic centre, had to travel over poor roads with limited public transport to access testing facilities. During the drone phase, patients

only needed to visit their nearest PHC or subcentre, where trained healthcare workers collected and securely packaged sputum samples before drones transported them to the designated TB facilities. The average out-of-pocket expenditure for patients, including medical expenses, travel, food and wage loss for both patients and attendants, dropped from ₹9,451 to ₹90.9. The intervention also improved reporting times. Before drones were introduced, over 92% of patients waited more than two days to receive their test results. During the drone phase, 76.3% received results the next day, while only 16.3% experienced delays beyond two days.

Real culprits are being protected: Congress MP

“The eight individuals arrested are very small fish in this organised corruption nexus, which looted our holy temple,” he said.

RSS expresses concern over Ram Temple embezzlement

"The deliberations were in detail. Most speakers expressed confidence in the Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Uttar Pradesh Police. They felt that it would lead to clear results soon. The investigation was taken up after a request by the Shri Ram Jan-

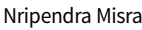
“RSS Sara Sanghachalak Mohan Bhagwat and Sara Karyavaha Dattatreya Hosabale, and other senior leaders attended and addressed some sessions. As many as 226 Pracharakas from across the country, 83 Sangh Shiksha Varga members and 12 Karyakarta Vikas Varga members partici-

He said the leadership held a review on the prepa-

Some senior leaders addressed the issue of drug abuse. “They emphasised the need for a strong de-addiction movement in the country.” Mr. Ambekar added, “Some others spoke of the RSS’s role in the programme to commemorate the 650th birth anniversary of Sant Shriamani Ravidas Maharaj.”

‘Temple Trust to decide powers of CEO, there will be no govt. interference’

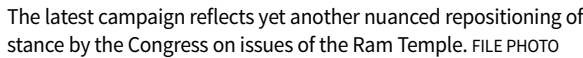
Ultimately, it was up to



Regarding what might be discussed in the July 22 meeting, Mr. Misra suggested that this question should be directed to the general secretary of the temple Trust.

Cong. seeks to turn the tables on BJP using fund row

The Congress has mounted an unusually sustained campaign demanding action against the of-



Though neither Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge nor Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sab-

The Congress government led by Rajiv Gandhi was accused of facilitating the early stages of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement when, in 1986, the locks of the disputed structure

Three years later, in November 1989, the Narayan Dutt Tiwari-led Congress government in Uttar Pradesh permitted *shilanyas* (foundation-laying ceremony) adjacent to the disputed structure. The government maintained that the proposed site for the *shilanyas* lay outside the disputed area and that permitting the ceremony would therefore not violate the *status quo* ordered by

“We appeal to all the parties concerned and to

Now, as the spotlight falls on the Trust's office-bearers, the party, by seeking accountability and transparency and asserting that the temple belongs to devotees rather than the Sangh Parivar, is attempting to recast the narrative on Ayodhya and reclaim some political ground.

Amid talks of switch to BJP, NCP (SP) leader says he is with Pawar

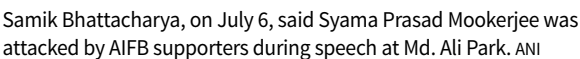
Mr. Khadse said it was only a courtesy call. "He

During the 2024 Lok Sabha election campaign, reports of Mr. Khadse's possible return to the BJP had gained traction after photographs of his meetings with senior party leaders in New Delhi surfaced. However, the move did not materialise.

Bengal BJP chief calls Forward Bloc members goons; party seeks apology

Mr. Bhattacharya, a Rajya Sabha member, said that when Mookerjee urged Bose and his brother Sarat Chandra to raise their voice against torture of Hindus in Bangladesh, they did not listen. These remarks drew sharp criticism from the followers of Netaji and AIFB leaders.

AIFB general secretary G. Devarajan on July 11



wrote to BJP national president Nitin Nabin demanding that he immediately direct Mr. Bhattacharya "to withdraw his derogatory statement unconditionally and issue a public apology to the Forward Bloc and to the people of the country". "We further urge you to

instruct all BJP leaders in West Bengal to desist from making irresponsible statements against Netaji, to refrain from any attempt to erase or diminish his legacy through symbolic or administrative actions, and to respect the established history of India's freedom

"It is equally well documented that Netaji repeatedly cautioned Mookerjee against delivering speeches that could inflame communal passions and disturb public peace," Mr. Devarajan had written in the letter.

AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal and party leader Manish Sisodia at the launch of the drive at the Japanese Park in Delhi on Sunday. ANI

AAP starts signature campaign against 'theft of donation'

As part of the campaign, Mr. Kejriwal urged devotees across the country to organise Hanuman Chalisa recitations in their localities and collect signatures on letters addressed to Mr. Modi.

The former Delhi CM alleged that those who carried out this theft do not believe "Ram is *Bhagwan* (God)". "They only want votes in Ram's name. They loot the country in Ram's name," he said.

The BJP criticised AAP's move, with Delhi party chief Harsh Malhotra alleging that organising 'Sundarkand' recitations was a "political gimmick" aimed at reviving Mr. Kejriwal's political fortunes. "Whenever Kejriwal finds himself politically cornered, he attempts to improve his political standing by organising Sundarkand recitations in Delhi. The gimmick is an effort to influence Hindu voters of Punjab and other States where elections are due."

INBRIEF



Pune building collapse: last body found, toll rises to nine

Rescue teams recovered the body of the last missing person in the Moshi waste processing unit collapse near Pune in the early hours of Sunday, taking the death toll in the tragedy to nine, officials said. Meanwhile, a senior official at the waste-processing plant described the July 8 incident as an “act of God”. The three-storey administrative building of a Waste-to-Energy (WTE) plant run by the Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation at Moshi in Pune district collapsed after the adjacent mound of garbage fell onto the structure like a landslide. The body of Waman Kasbe, the last missing person, was recovered from the rubble, while 14 persons have been rescued earlier, officials said. PTI

India, Canada conclude third round of talks on trade pact

India and Canada concluded the third round of negotiations for the proposed Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement in Ottawa on Friday as the two sides look to wind up the talks this year. The issues that figured in the five-day talks include trade in goods, services, intellectual property, rules of origin, sanitary measures, and technical barriers to trade, among others. The negotiations are important as the two sides seek to increase bilateral trade to \$50 billion by 2030. In 2025-26, the two-way trade dipped 8.22% to \$7.95 billion (\$4.67 billion exports, \$3.28 billion imports) from \$8.66 billion in 2024-25 (\$4.22 billion exports, \$4.44 billion imports). PTI

ISRO successfully carries out tests of Gaganyaan systems

One of the tests involved separation of the ‘umbilical mechanism’ that serves as a link between the crew module, where astronauts live, and the service module that provides propulsion, agency says

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Indian Space Research Organisation on Sunday said it had successfully carried out three major tests of the Gaganyaan crew module systems.

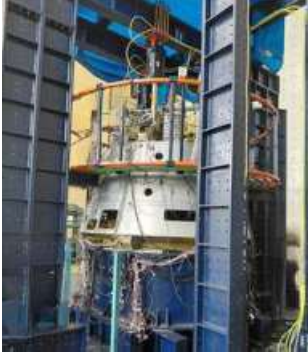
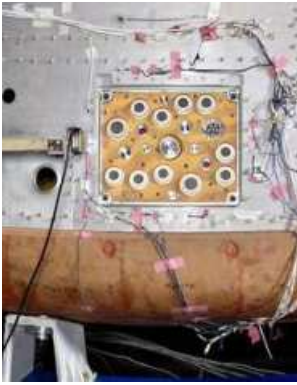
The first test pertained to ensuring an upright position of the crew module after splashdown in the sea, considered one of the most important crew safety requirements. To do this, a stored cold-gas-based uprighting system was developed and tested.

“A system-level qualification test set-up consisting of all the elements of CMUS (crew module uprighting system) was realised,” the ISRO said, adding it successfully conducted inflation tests “for the primary inflation module wherein stored gas in the high-pressure gas bottle was made to inflate the floatation by operating the control valves.”

The second test involved examining the separation of the umbilical mechanism that serves as a link between the crew module, where astronauts live, and the service module, which provides pow-



Step-by-step: (Clockwise from left) The crew module uprighting system, the service module connect-disconnect system, and the apex cover that underwent testing. ISRO



er and propulsion. The mechanism consists of two parts, each located at the crew module side, called CSU-1, and the service module side, called CSU-2.

Clean separation

During the crew module’s earth re-entry stage, the service module first separates from the crew mo-

dule after the CSU-1 disconnects. Subsequently, just before re-entry, the CSU-2 is also separated.

“Separation test of CSU-2 from simulated crew module was carried out. The test demonstrated the clean separation of CSU-2 as well as structural stability of the crew module panel and their interfaces,”

the space agency said. The third test validated the structural integrity of the crew module during the apex cover separation event. The apex cover protects the parachutes and associated subsystems during the mission. It is separated before parachutes are deployed to decelerate the crew module.

Flash floods wreak havoc in Pahalgam; buildings affected

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

As flash floods due to cloudbursts in the past 24 hours caused damage to several hotels in Pahalgam, a hill station in south Kashmir, the Opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and activists on Sunday flagged the “rampant construction in violation of environmental norms”.

On Saturday, four hotels and multiple houses were damaged when gushing waters in the Awoora stream swept away vehicles and entered hotel premises. Officials said scores of tourists were shifted to safer locations. A major road connecting Bijbehara and Pahalgam was cut off.

“I interacted with affected families, and directed the departments concerned to ensure immediate rescue, relief, and restoration measures. Ev-



Shock disaster: A damaged house after a cloudburst triggered flash floods in Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday. PTI

ery possible assistance would be provided to help them recover from this difficult situation,” Pahalgam legislator Altaf Ahmad Kaloo said.

PDP leader Iltija Mufti said a mafia was operating in ecologically fragile Pahalgam, “allowing wanton illegal construction”. “Hotels are encroaching upon flood channels or forest land. It is ill-thought and detrimental to Kashmir’s environment already reel-

ing from global warming. I haven’t seen Pahalgam in such a mess before,” Ms. Mufti said.

Sahil Parray, an activist, said the administration was hiding the data related to hotel construction in Pahalgam.

Mr. Parray said Pahalgam faced unchecked commercialisation, rampant construction, shrinking green cover and apparent disregard for environmental safeguards.

CJI stresses need for women-centric infrastructure in judicial buildings

The Hindu Bureau
GURUGRAM

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Sunday said judicial infrastructure was no longer a luxury but a “very big necessity”, and called for mandatory facilities for women advocates, including separate Bar rooms and adjoining childcare facilities, in all new court complexes.

Speaking at the inauguration of the new Tower of Justice, a seven-acre judicial complex for the Gurugram District and Sessions Court near Rajiv Chowk, the Chief Justice said providing an atmosphere that instils confidence in socially and financially backward litigants was the duty of all three organs of the Constitution.

“Just as a patient reaching a hospital is given first-aid, a consumer of justice



Chief Justice of India Surya Kant speaking at the inauguration of a judicial complex in Gurugram on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

coming to court must be given first-aid in the form of basic amenities – seating, drinking water, and wash-rooms,” Chief Justice Kant said. He noted that Gurugram’s transformation from an agricultural town to an industrial hub had led to a sharp rise in legal disputes of all kinds.

Flagging the lack of facilities for women lawyers,

the CJI cited a recent Supreme Court Bar Association survey, which found that many judicial complexes across States lacked basic amenities for women members of the Bar. “Women advocates are not being provided the facilities that should be given to them in many States. It is our all-out effort that wherever new judicial infras-

ESIC to add 7 more healthcare facilities to its infra network

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Employees’ State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) will add seven more healthcare facilities to its infrastructure network in six States. Union Minister for Labour Mansukh Mandaviya will inaugurate the projects at Sanathnagar in Telangana on Tuesday.

Apart from the new Out-patient Department Block of ESIC Hospital in Sanathnagar, upgraded 200-bed ESIC Hospital, Beltola, Assam; 100-bed ESIC hospital in Sripurumbudur, Tamil Nadu; hospital in Rajamahendravaram, Andhra Pradesh; dispensary and branch offices in Surendranagar, Gujarat, and Kota, Rajasthan; and ESI Dispensary at Bhawani Mandi, Rajasthan are the new facilities.

“These medical facilities, worth approximately ₹668 crore, will cater to the healthcare needs of around 53 lakh beneficiaries across the country,” the Union Labour Ministry said in a release on Sunday.

The new facility in Sanathnagar, the government said, is a landmark healthcare facility that will provide modern, comprehensive outpatient services to over 12.3 lakh insured

persons and beneficiaries across Telangana. The ESIC Hospital in Beltola, Assam, caters to 47 districts of Assam and Meghalaya, as well as 41 districts across Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. “The facility is expected to cover 3.42 lakh insured persons, and a total of about 13.27 lakh beneficiaries,” the government said.

The ESIC Hospital located at Sripurumbudur will cater to 5.5 lakh insured persons from Kancheepuram and Tiruvallur districts. The hospital at Rajamahendravaram, Andhra Pradesh will serve over 1.3 lakh insured persons, while 9,192 insured persons are covered under the ESIC scheme in Surendranagar district.

The Kota facility will cater to 1,500 employers, and about 75,000 insured persons. The Bhawani Mandi facility will provide healthcare services to about 800 employers and 27,715 insured persons.

Centre brings new scheme to regularise PF Trusts

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

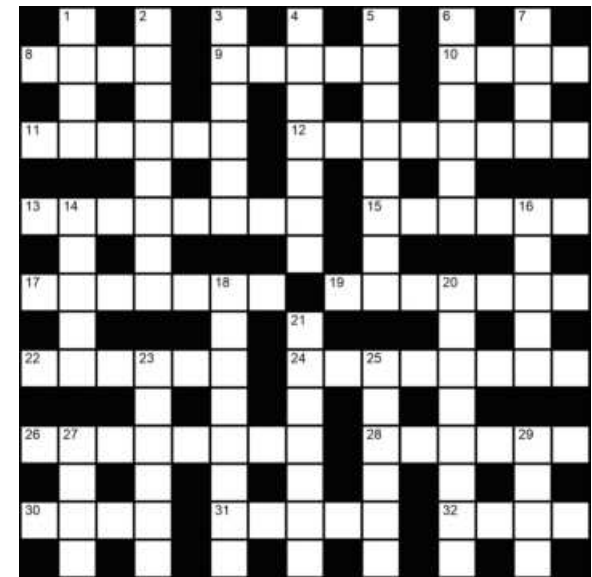
The EPFO has invited applications from exempted Provident Fund Trusts to regularise their status under provisions of the Finance Act, 2026, the Income Tax Act, 2026, and the Code on Social Security. The Amnesty Scheme, 2026, provides a one-time opportunity for the Trusts recognised under the Income Tax Act, 1961 to regularise their status.

Recognition under the Income Tax Act, 2025 shall be available only to Provident Funds that have obtained exemption under Section 17 of the Employees’ Provident Fund and Misc. Provisions Act, 1952. The scheme applies to establishments that do not possess formal exemption from the government.

THE CROSSWORD+ 14844
(set by Incognito)

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

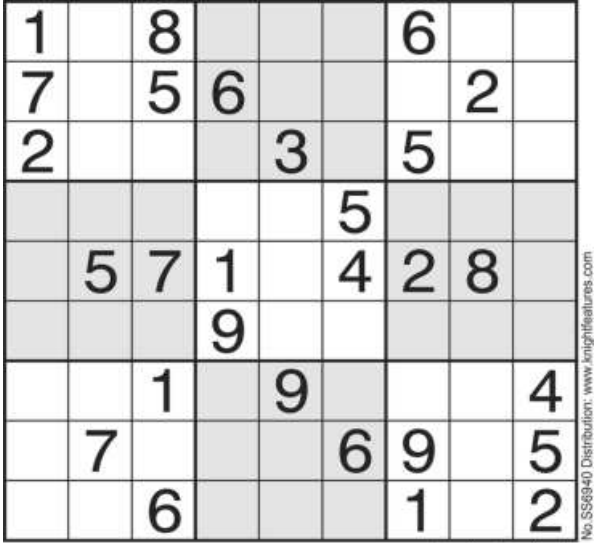
SCAN TO PLAY



- 15 Uncannily Easter lily breaks into pieces in absence of salt (6)
- 17 Gives air conditioning cables (7)
- 19 Set down reason: "Rib case is broken" (7)
- 22 Peril from violent gander (6)
- 24 Tell, "Rosy damaged vehicles" (8)
- 26 Forged notes with Scotsman and European (8)
- 28 Sit back, with a north European beverage (6)
- 30 Challenge from Kakinada region (4)
- 31 Trendy to be in vessel and sea-craft (5)
- 32 Cupid shreds rose (4)
- Down
- 1 Caledonian manages cost! (4)
- 2 After a second, silly Romeo accepts British hat (8)
- 3 In absence of in-charge, officers produce tenders (6)
- 4 Female deity and Greek leader on strange English ship (7)
- 5 Thick soups that cowherds produce (8)
- 6 Landlord's communication (6)
- 7 Something to split found in Muscat, Oman (4)
- 14 Excitedly came across head of caliphate in holy city (5)
- 16 Campaign in the foyer (5)
- 18 Most unclean red tits fly around island (8)
- 20 At end of dinner, she lied cunningly, "Enjoyed" (8)
- 21 Silent characters going around college, producing means of reproduction (7)
- 23 What a crazy lover might do when after girl? (6)
- 25 Dull-witted subordinate moving around after dropping dinar (6)
- 27 Cover for wound from barricades raider leaves in disarray (4)
- 29 Gas none may produce (4)

- Across
- 8 Repeat, "E for ____" (4)
- 9 Lather bubbling forth (5)
- 10 Pours tea on top of saucer and consumes (4)
- 11 Place to keep horses from second list (6)
- 12 Owed mint production for unproductive period (8)
- 13 Simmers esculents to some extent and dips (8)

SUDOKU



Solution to previous puzzle

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

FAITH

God is within you

A few people may be caught in earthly pursuits (of material wealth) but when one fails to identify the presence of Perumal within, it is indeed the end of everything. This is what happened to Hiranyakasipu. Angered at the death of his brother Hiranyaksha at the hands of Varaha (Vishnu's avatar) for abducting Bhu Devi, Hiranyakasipu vowed to wage war on Vishnu. To this end, he first harassed cows and bhagavatas (devotees) as he knew they were dear to Vishnu. However, the Supreme Being did not take the bait, which frustrated Hiranyakasipu and he stormed into Vaikunta, but Perumal left from there forthwith, said Damal S. Ramakrishnan.

The moment Hiranyakasipu entered Vaikunta, Perumal entered his heart, but the demon did not realise the god within. Instead, he left Vaikunta and undertook severe penance and sought a boon from Brahma which he thought was armour enough against Perumal. On the other hand, Hiranyakasipu's unborn son Prahlada was a symbol of devotion even when he was in the womb of his mother Kayadhu. She was under the protection of Narada and the sage discoursed on puranas and the many characteristics of Perumal. This grounding in spiritual knowledge helped Prahlada remain steadfast in the face of severe test of his devotion, from none other than his own father. Vishnu manifested as Nrisimha, a half-man, half-lion form, and sank his nails into Hiranyakasipu's heart. Scholars say Nrisimha plucked and searched the demon's heart for the presence of any godliness or devotion in him: even a modicum of awareness of the Supreme Being within would have saved the demon.

Fading research hubs are stalling Kerala’s leap into the bio-economy

Kerala’s approach to science has changed, with basic research losing its place among public policy priorities; the State is attracted to projects that deliver visible and immediate outcomes, but that does not mean abdicating fundamental scientific research is okay; only such research can lead to long-term value creation

Biju Dharmapalan

Kerala has long taken pride in its literacy, scientific temper, and environmental consciousness. Home to the biodiverse Western Ghats and centuries of traditional knowledge, it should have emerged as India’s leading hub for biological research and the bioeconomy. But instead, many of its premier biological research institutions are today on the decline.

The reasons are clear: policy support for basic scientific research has eroded and institutions that were once internationally respected centres of excellence have become increasingly politicised.

The prime example is the Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute (JNTBGRI) in Palode, in Thiruvananthapuram district. Established following the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, JNTBGRI transformed nearly 300 acres of forest into one of Asia’s finest centres for tropical plant research and conservation. It has housed more than 50,000 plant accessions representing over 5,000 species, and was for most of its life a living repository of India’s botanical wealth. Its achievements ranged from documenting biodiversity and conserving endangered plants to pioneering research on medicinal plants and sustainable utilisation of biological resources.

The institute also demonstrated how scientific research could benefit society. Its researchers’ development of ‘Jeevani’, an anti-fatigue herbal formulation, based on the traditional knowledge of the Kani tribe became an internationally acclaimed model of access and benefit-sharing. In 2024, JNTBGRI also received the Botanic Gardens Conservation International’s Global Genome Initiative for Gardens Award.

These accomplishments were only possible because successive generations of scientists enjoyed the freedom, leadership, and institutional stability that long-term research demands. Today, however, a large fraction of experienced scientists have retired and JNTBGRI has not adequately recruited their successors. The number of research scholars has also dwindled. Together, the technical expertise the institute built over decades is at risk of disappearing.

This crisis at JNTBGRI is actually symptomatic of a larger change in Kerala’s approach to science. Basic research has slowly but surely lost its place among the State’s public policy priorities. State and local governments are understandably



The Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute in Palode, Kerala, has demonstrated how scientific research can benefit society. JNTBGRI

attracted to projects that deliver visible and immediate outcomes – but that does not mean abdicating fundamental scientific research is okay. Only such research can lead to long-term innovation and value creation.

For example, discoveries in taxonomy, ecology, genetics, and plant biology usually take decades to turn into medicines, climate-resilient crops, and commercial technologies – but once they do, their effects become transformative. Short-term investments cannot achieve this.

Sadly, this retreat from basic research also comes at a time when the global bioeconomy is expanding at an unprecedented scale. Countries are investing heavily in biotechnology, natural products, synthetic biology, nutraceuticals, and biodiversity-based industries.

Kerala has the raw material to participate in this revolution, including biodiversity and trained scientists and institutions with decades of expertise; what it crucially lacks at this time is a coherent long-term vision.

Conditions for success

Equally concerning is the gradual politicisation of scientific institutions. Research organisations thrive when scientific excellence determines leadership, recruitment, and institutional priorities. But when political considerations influence these decisions, the scientific culture inevitably suffers. Administrators replace academic leaders and long-term research planning gives way to a fondness for routine

management. Thus scientific autonomy gradually erodes and institutions become less attractive to talented young researchers.

Many of Kerala’s leading scientific institutions were built by visionary scientists who enjoyed considerable administrative autonomy, including because their credibility stemmed from academic excellence rather than political affiliation. That culture now appears to be declining, with the consequences going beyond laboratories. Scientific institutions are repositories of specialised knowledge that cannot be recreated overnight.

The State’s scientific ecosystem also suffers from a tendency to create new institutions while existing ones struggle with vacancies, ageing infrastructure, and declining manpower.

New centres certainly have their place but scientific excellence cannot be built merely by inaugurating new buildings or announcing ambitious missions. Institutions mature through sustained investment in people, infrastructure, and the research culture.

So instead, the State should focus on revitalising its established centres of excellence. Institutions such as JNTBGRI, the Kerala Forest Research Institute, and the Malabar Botanical Garden already possess internationally recognised collections, infrastructure, and scientific credibility. Strengthening these institutions will yield greater dividends than continuously expanding the institutional landscape without adequately supporting existing facilities.

Kerala also needs to rethink how it views biodiversity. Its forests, medicinal

plants, endemic species, and traditional knowledge systems are ecological assets, yes, but they also present significant economic opportunities. With appropriate safeguards for conservation and equitable benefit-sharing, biological research can support biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, natural cosmetics, and climate-resilient agriculture. Around the world, scientists and policymakers are increasingly recognising biodiversity as the foundation of future bioeconomies. Kerala should be leading this transformation.

Reversing the decline will also require a renewed commitment to basic science, transparent and merit-based institutional leadership, timely recruitment of young scientists, greater research autonomy, and stronger partnerships with universities and responsible industries.

The trajectory of JNTBGRI reflects Kerala’s changing relationship with science. The State once demonstrated that patient investment in scientific institutions could produce global recognition, conservation success and innovations that benefited society.

The forests of the Western Ghats continue to hold countless scientific discoveries waiting to be made. Whether Kerala remains at the forefront of that exploration or becomes a spectator to opportunities seized elsewhere will depend on the choices policymakers make today.

(Biju Dharmapalan is dean, Academic Affairs, Garden City University, Bengaluru and an adjunct faculty member at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru. bijudharmapalan@gmail.com)

THE GIST

Policy support for basic scientific research has eroded and institutions that were once internationally respected centres of excellence have become increasingly politicised

The State’s scientific ecosystem suffers from a tendency to create new institutions while existing ones struggle with vacancies, ageing infrastructure, and declining manpower

Reversing the decline will require a renewed commitment to basic science, transparent and merit-based institutional leadership, timely recruitment of young scientists, greater research autonomy, and stronger partnerships with universities and responsible industries

BIG SHOT



A red blanket: An aircraft drops fire retardant above wildfires in the Almeria province of Spain. After strong winds eased on Saturday, firefighters continued to beat back the flames that have forced 1,400 people to evacuate their homes as they spread through the mountains in the southeast. REUTERS

WHAT IS IT?

Eärendil-1: bright or blight?

Vasudevan Mukunth

On July 9, the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) authorised a company named Reflect Orbital to launch and operate a test satellite designed to deploy a large mirror in orbit around the earth, despite the controversy and debate surrounding its aims. Eärendil-1 — named for a character in the Tolkien fantasy epic *The Silmarillion* — will be a single satellite in a non-geostationary orbit fit with a “deployable, highly specular thin-film reflector”.

The reflector will be motorised and can be steered to different orientations. Its purpose is to reflect sunlight towards specific spots on the earth at nighttime. Reflect Orbital has said it intends to use this technology to extend the usable hours for solar panels and provide light during “critical operations” like emergency or humanitarian missions. The satellite will operate at an altitude of around 625 km with a high inclination of 88°. The FCC has granted a limited two-year license for the test. The approval itself followed significant debate.

Organisations like the American Astronomical Society (AAS) raised concerns regarding background skyglow and the mission’s potential to disrupt optical astronomy. In its order (DA 26-706), the FCC ruled while it regulates radiofrequency interference and orbital debris, the visual impact of reflected sunlight is



Eärendil-1 won’t be the first mirror in orbit. Shown here is Znamya-2, which Russia deployed as part of a series of orbital space mirror experiments in the 1990s. RSC ENERGIA

outside its statutory authority. Nonetheless, the FCC has also imposed some conditions. Reflect Orbital has to coordinate with NASA, the U.S. National Science Foundation, and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to protect astronomy, and Eärendil-1 has to abide by specific duty cycles and conjunction angles to avoid interfering with other missions.

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

Oil conundrum

India's energy imports from Russia seem driven by confusion, not strategy

Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MCI) data on India's May crude imports show that receipts from Russia had reached the pre-sanction levels of more than 40%, which is also the highest in two years. Though India has defended this as commercially prudent, its yuan-based payments give China an edge to internationalise its currency at India's expense, even if it has no bearing on the domestic strength of the Indian rupee due to strict capital controls. Oil import concentration from a single source, and paying a premium, is risky for India, which has long pursued a diversified energy strategy. Moreover, sourcing fuel from the Gulf spot market amid evolving sanctions has its own risks. Secondary sanctions could hit trade channels, exposing Indian refiners to severe supply shocks. India's crude imports from Russia surged in June, while UAE shipments were at record levels as refiners sought to secure supplies after the Strait of Hormuz reopened. However, renewed Iran-U.S. hostilities have put those flows at risk. And even as Venezuela has emerged as a key supplier, increasing and unsustainably high one-country concentration could weaken India's bargaining power, reduce flexibility, and erode its credibility as an independent balancing power.

MCI data highlight the price impact: Russian imports carried a \$46-per-ton premium. Import value surged 83% amid a 2% fall in volume, likely diminishing Indian refiners' margins on refined products using Russian crude. While spot purchases have enabled refiners to capture discounts of up to \$10 per barrel on Russian Urals crude relative to Brent during some periods, after February this year, narrowing discounts, weaker product cracks, and geopolitical risks have moderated gross refining margins. India must strike a balance between having long-term stable contracts with multiple producers, and selectively using the spot-market to mitigate the procurement risks. Until the Russia-Ukraine conflict, nearly 70% of India's crude imports came through long-term contracts, particularly from West Asia. True, India cannot overlook the diplomatic costs as Russian energy dependence risks sanctions. When Russian crude was cheap because of discounts on account of the Ukraine war, India reduced imports under U.S. pressure; now when it is being sold at a premium because of the Iran war, India is moving back to Russian crude. India must expand its strategic petroleum reserves to cushion temporary disruptions. Whether it increases or cuts down Russian oil imports, India seems to make decisions that are far removed from any sense of strategic autonomy.

Insular incentive

Ethanol-blended fuel should not be forced on consumers irrationally

The Indian government's policy to continue producing E20 petrol at a cost higher than that of pure petrol when oil prices dip under \$70 a barrel to "compensate farmers adequately" is a deceptively well-formulated proposition. Most feedstock for the fuel-blending programme is from sugarcane, one of India's most water- and fertilizer-intensive crops, mainly grown in water-stressed Maharashtra and Karnataka. Whether the policy's net economic benefit remains positive will depend on the gains from lower crude imports, environmental improvements, and higher rural incomes outweighing these additional costs. Efficiency also remains a concern. Consumers – including people who are poorer than sugarcane farmers – pay more at the pump, oil marketing companies procure ethanol at the administered price, distilleries buy feedstock, and only then do farmers receive higher prices. Higher feedstock prices also do not address most reasons farmers have lower incomes, such as post-harvest losses and limited market access. Crucially, if the government rewards every unit of ethanol irrespective of feedstock, the policy will favour whichever feedstock has the largest installed base: sugarcane. Instead, the objectives should include resource efficiency and food security. The state could invest in irrigation and logistics and institute revenue-sharing arrangements with ethanol producers and cooperatives.

India has encouraged maize and grain-based distillation capacity has expanded rapidly, periodically allowed ethanol to be produced from the Food Corporation's surplus or damaged rice holdings, and has supported commercial plants using agricultural residues such as rice straw under Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas schemes. Maize and millets are less thirsty but maize still demands significant fertilizer inputs while millets produce less fermentable starch per hectare. Sweet sorghum is less water-intensive and has a shorter growing season than sugarcane. Lignocellulosic biomass such as rice and wheat straw, maize stover and groundnut shells can also support second-generation (2G) ethanol. 2G ethanol from agricultural residues can avoid using cropland for fuel, reducing competition with food crops and addressing stubble burning. It is more expensive and technologically demanding but that is a better problem to solve, with proactive policymaking. The government could pay a premium for ethanol produced from residues, subsidise equipment and infrastructure to collect and store crop residue, facilitate contracts between aggregators and distilleries, and provide viability-gap funding and offtake agreements. Ultimately, ethanol policy should not be independent of agricultural policy. And import substitution is no excuse for consumers being forced to pay more for lower-mileage fuel than pure petrol.

Five crore Indians wait when the courts take a break

The Supreme Court of India and the major High Courts are on a summer holiday break, i.e., shut down with some vacation Benches functioning to hear urgent matters. However, shops, markets, eating places, government and private offices, hospitals and police stations do not cease to work even though their staff enjoy personal leave. On the other hand, somewhere in an Indian jail tonight, a man who has been convicted of nothing is finishing another year behind bars, his trial still ongoing and perhaps years away from ending. He is one of the roughly three in four prisoners in this country who are undertrials: unconvicted, presumed innocent, yet serving time anyway – often longer than the sentence they would have received had they pleaded guilty. And as you read this, the courts, the public institutions that hold the fate of the poor in their hands, are functioning at only a fraction of their strength.

A three-century backlog
From June 1 to July 12, the Supreme Court is on its summer break, sitting with three or four Benches a week instead of a full court and resuming in earnest on July 13. The doors are not bolted; urgent pleas are still heard. But for six weeks, the most powerful court in the world's most populous democracy idles.

Now hold that against the number it is meant to be fighting. As of the last day of 2025, more than 5.39 crore cases were pending in Indian courts: over 4.76 crore in the district courts, 63.6 lakh in the High Courts, and more than 92,000 in the Supreme Court itself, its heaviest load in over 30 years. A government study once calculated that, at the present pace, clearing the pile could take three centuries.

Three centuries. And the Court takes the summer and winter vacations off.
To be fair, the judges deserve it. The recess is when reserved judgments finally get written, when the brutal daily cause-list eases enough to think.



Vijay L. Kelkar
Vice-Chairman of the Pune International Centre



Pradeep S. Mehta
Secretary-General of CUTS International (Consumer Unity and Trust Society)

When courts rest together for vacations, crores of litigants across the country wait longer for justice

Last year the Chief Justice of India and his four senior-most colleagues worked clean through the first week of the break. Indian judges are among the most overworked in the world. This is not an accusation of laziness; no one who has seen a judge's docket could make one.

Because that is precisely the point. When the people doing the work are exhausted and the backlog is biblical, what conceivable logic shuts the whole shop at once? Not that judges rest – which they should – but that almost all of them rest together, so the institution goes quiet for six-plus weeks every year. And the habit is a colonial hand-me-down: the calendar was built for English judges who could not stand the Indian heat and retreated to cooler climes each summer, then enjoyed long Christmas holidays in the winter.

In 2024, the Court announced a fix: it renamed the “summer vacation” as “partial court working days”. That was it. The number of days it actually sits – about 190 days in a year – did not change. You cannot rebrand your way out of a backlog; a litigant whose case is stuck does not care what the recess is called, only whether his matter is heard and disposed of.

Justice needs court continuity
So what would actually help? The first answer is one the judiciary's own watchdogs have urged for years: do not abolish judicial rest; stagger it. A parliamentary standing committee in 2023 objected to “the entire court going on vacation en masse”, and proposed the obvious: rotate the leave, keep the Benches full, and never let the court run thin. A hospital does not empty its wards because its doctors are owed time off; it builds a roster. The Law Commission and the Justice Malimath Committee said the same, long ago. They were not enemies of the courts; they were trying to save them from themselves.

The standard objection is that all this is a sideshow: the real disease is vacancies, not vacations. It is true that courts are starved of judges, with up to a third of High Court seats

lying empty. But the objection boomerangs. If the Bench is already running at half strength, thinning it further for six weeks every summer is not a defence of the recess; it is the strongest case against it. And while filling those seats depends on the government and the collegium and will drag on for years, the calendar is the judiciary's to fix. One reform needs permission; the other needs only will.

Beyond courts, towards solutions
Staggering the leave, though, only treats the symptom. The deeper fix is to keep disputes out of the courtroom in the first place; it was never meant to be the first stop for every quarrel, but the last. India already has the tools. Lok Adalats settled more than 2.59 crore cases in a single national sitting last December, and over 23.5 crore in three years. The Mediation Act of 2023 now nudges parties to attempt settlement before going to court, and arbitration can take commercial disputes entirely out of judges' hands; yet these routes remain badly underused. But none of this happens on its own.

The country has a reservoir of experience it scarcely draws on: its retired judges, who spent their careers mastering this very machinery and step down, still in full command of it, at 62 or 65. Their expertise need not retire with them. Albeit many of them do function as heads of quasi-judicial bodies and tribunals. Freed from any daily docket, a dedicated corps of former judges could be invited to take up a single targeted charge: identify where cases pile up, set public targets for their disposal, and account for progress openly. Reform that belongs to everyone belongs to no one.

The judges will keep working through the heat, as they always do. The honest demand is not that they stop resting, but that the courts stop closing ranks and falling silent at the same moment, because justice, for five crore Indians, is not on vacation. It is overdue.

With contributions from Anushka Kewlani of CUTS

The making of Israel's retreat into isolation

The primary justification for the creation of Israel was that Europeans of Jewish origin persecuted and ghettoised, deserve their own state where they can live like other “normal” nations. For much of its history, Israel sought to escape the isolation that marked Jewish existence in Europe before the creation of the Jewish state. One of its goals was to transform Israel from a besieged regional outlier into an increasingly accepted member of the West Asian political order, a goal made very difficult if not impossible because of the expulsion of almost two-thirds of the Palestinian population from the territory that became Israel. However, through peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, quiet understandings with Gulf monarchies, and ultimately the Abraham Accords, Israel appeared to have broken out of its strategic ghetto.

A war's global fallout
Now, Israel seems determined to reverse that achievement. Through the unrestrained exercise of military power in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and Iran, and through its relentless expansion of settlements in the West Bank, it is steadily recreating the very isolation from which it once sought to escape. The result is a country that is militarily stronger than ever but politically more isolated than at any time in recent decades.

The principal cause of this growing isolation is the belief among Israel's current leadership that military superiority can substitute for political strategy. The devastation of Gaza has become the defining symbol of this approach. What began as a response to the Hamas attacks of October 7, 2023, evolved into a campaign that much of the world views as collective punishment on a massive scale. Images of destroyed neighbourhoods, displaced populations, and mounting civilian casualties have profoundly altered global perceptions of Israel.

Israel's actions in Iran and Lebanon have reinforced this trend. The repeated resort to military force beyond its borders reflects a



Mohammed Ayoob

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Israel's isolation is no longer imposed; it is increasingly self-inflicted

doctrine that prioritises immediate tactical gains over long-term strategic consequences. While Israel has demonstrated impressive military capabilities, its attacks have also intensified regional instability and generated resentment among states that are forced to absorb the political and economic consequences of escalating conflict.

This is particularly evident in the Gulf. The Abraham Accords were founded on a convergence of interests among Israel and several Arab states. Economic cooperation, technological exchange and a shared security concern about Iran created a basis for normalisation. But the success of the Accords depended on an implicit assumption that Israel would act with sufficient restraint to make continued cooperation politically sustainable for Arab governments.

That assumption has been severely undermined. The destruction of Gaza and the ethnic cleansing of much of its population has generated enormous anger across Arab societies. Israel's attacks on Iran have further complicated matters by exposing Gulf states to risks that they never sought. These states may share concerns about Iranian influence, but they do not wish to become collateral victims of Israeli military adventures. The result is a growing gap between the strategic calculations of Gulf rulers and Israeli priorities.

An alliance under strain
The deterioration of Israel's relationship with the United States is even more significant. Washington increasingly finds itself paying the diplomatic and economic costs of Israeli actions while exercising limited influence over Israeli decision-making.

Recent tensions surrounding the U.S.-Iran memorandum illustrate this dynamic. Reports of sharp exchanges between Washington and Jerusalem over the agreement culminated in United States Vice-President J.D. Vance's unusually blunt rebuke of Israeli criticism.

“Donald J. Trump is the only head of state in the entire world who is sympathetic to the nation of Israel at this moment in time,” Mr. Vance declared, adding that if he were a member of the Israeli cabinet, he might not be attacking “the only powerful ally that I have anywhere left in the entire world”.

The significance of the remark lay not merely in its criticism of the Benjamin Netanyahu government but in its clear acknowledgment of Israel's international isolation. The dispute is not merely about Iran. It reflects a deeper concern within the U.S. administration that Israeli policies are complicating broader American strategic objectives in West Asia. The widening daylight between the two allies does not mean that the partnership is ending, but it does indicate that unconditional American support can no longer be taken for granted.

The return of isolation
Perhaps the most self-defeating aspect of Israel's current trajectory is its policy in the West Bank. Settlement expansion has accelerated to the point where the territorial basis for a viable Palestinian state has disappeared. Simultaneously, attacks by Jewish settlers against Palestinian communities have become increasingly frequent. Reports that such actions often occur with the protection or acquiescence of elements within the Israeli security forces have further eroded Israel's international legitimacy.

By making a two-state solution impossible, Israel is replacing a political problem with a permanent system of domination that much of the world finds morally and politically reprehensible.

History offers a striking irony. Zionism sought to ensure that the Jewish people would never again live isolated behind walls of fear and hostility as they did in Europe. But contemporary Israeli policies risk producing a modern version of that condition. The difference is that this isolation is no longer imposed; it is self-inflicted.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Strengthening ties

The strategic partnership between India and New Zealand can prove beneficial for both countries, especially as global uncertainty rises due to the West Asia conflict. Strengthening ties with major economies is vital for India, particularly as the U.S.'s reliability as an ally has come under question. However, the government must ensure that exports outpace imports to maintain a strong and stable balance of payments.
Aanya Singhal,
Noida, Uttar Pradesh

S. Janaki

The passing of S. Janaki marks the poignant end of a golden era in Indian cinema. For over six decades, her versatile voice was the raw, emotional pulse of our everyday lives,

dominating South Indian cinema with an unmatched range. Whether delivering complex classical masterpieces such as “*Singaravelane Deva*” (*Konjum Salangai*), playful comic numbers, or shifting her vocal modulation to effortlessly sing in a child's voice, she was the undisputed queen of expression. What truly elevated Janaki Amma to an icon was her ability to dissolve linguistic boundaries. She never needed a government title; her listeners had already crowned her. The nightingale has fallen silent, but her staggering treasury of songs will comfort us for centuries to come.
S. Padmanabhan,
Kochi, Kerala

Janaki Amma's mastery of the nuances of singing

made her one of the most sought-after playback singers, and she dominated the Indian music world for several decades by rendering memorable songs not only in many Indian languages but also in foreign languages. Janaki Amma, who rightly earned the sobriquet “Nightingale of the South”, leaves behind a priceless legacy for us to cherish, enjoy, and remember her by forever.
Tharcius S. Fernando,
Chennai

As someone who grew up listening to her innumerable songs, I will always savour and cherish her timeless gems, especially “*Chinna Chinna Vanna Kuyil*” (*Mouna Ragam*), “*Machaanai Paatheengala*” (*Annakili*), and “*Senthoora Poove*” (*16 Vayathinile*). The legendary singer

demonstrated that music is a divine unifier that transcends all man-made barriers and divisions.
B. Suresh Kumar,
Coimbatore

The loss of Janaki Amma stirs profound grief in hearts across India. For generations of listeners, there is a Janaki Amma song in the playlist, for every mood and occasion. Reducing her legacy to the ‘Nightingale of South India’ seems a disservice, especially in a country as vast and culturally diverse as India.
Lakshmi K.S.,
Kochi

Her voice lent emotional depth to thousands of songs across Indian cinema while remaining remarkable for its simplicity and expressive power. Her

legacy will endure not only through her vast body of work but also through the timeless emotions her songs continue to evoke.
Maliha Fatima,
Hyderabad

Though S. Janaki sang innumerable songs and won plenty of awards, “*Singaravelane Deva*” remains a watermark in her outstanding career. The song, set in raga *Abheri*, is the eternal favourite, tugging at the heartstrings of young and old, transcending time and age boundaries. At a time when song tracks are recorded separately and later synthesised, this immortal composition was a pioneer of the technique. S. Janaki's vocals and the nadaswaram performance of Karukurichi Arunachalam were recorded separately and blended

together later. The breathtaking exchange, in which her voice matched the complex, rapid notes of the nadaswaram note by note, catapulted her to overnight fame.
R. Sivakumar,
Chennai

The passing of South India's Nightingale, feels like the quiet fading of a voice that cradled our childhoods, gave language to our heartbreaks, and brought a gentle, divine warmth into our homes for over six decades. While we mourn the loss of an icon whose humility was as immense as her talent, we take comfort in knowing that her songs are immortal.
Kshirasagara Balaji Rao,
Hyderabad

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

Judging graduates, not entrance scores

Few institutions in India carry the popularity of the IITs. Getting into them requires intense preparation and intellectual discipline. JEE ranks and GATE scores used for admissions to India’s premier institutions are, therefore, important. Recruiters, too, have often treated them as an indication of a student’s ability. Recently, however, the All IITs Placement Committee has decided to exclude JEE ranks, GATE scores, percentiles, and other such credentials from standard placement resumes. Even if some consider it unnecessary, this decision deserves wide support.

Beyond entrance ranks
An entrance examination captures a snapshot of a student’s performance on a single day. A degree reflects years of learning. Between the two lie classrooms, laboratories, projects, internships, peer learning, teamwork, participation in various extended curricular activities, failures, recoveries and personal growth. If campus recruitment continues to privilege entrance rank, it quietly reduces the IIT experience as a whole to an interlude between JEE and employment. That is unfair to the student and to the institution.

To treat a student’s entrance rank as permanent proof of ability is a constricted view. A more serious view examines whether a student has solved problems, completed meaningful projects, worked in teams, built prototypes, written code, contributed to research, communicated clearly and shown the maturity required in the workplace. Preparing oneself for work requires competence and a willingness to be a lifelong learner. It does not rely on the entrance test score alone.

The Committee’s decision is also consistent with the National Education Policy (NEP 2020), which emphasises the need to move beyond an examination-dominated system. The policy asks us to focus on



Mamidala Jagadesh Kumar
Chairman, Review Committee for NEP 2020, Ministry of Education, GoI and former Vice-Chancellor, JNU and former Chairman, UGC. Views are personal

Removing entrance ranks from standard resumes prevents a potentially prejudicial and often irrelevant data point from becoming a default filter

creating an ecosystem that enables students to develop critical thinking, creativity, ethical judgment, problem-solving, and holistic development. If our higher education institutions are expected to provide these capabilities to our students, why shouldn’t placement systems recognise them?

There could be another, more sensitive reason for the decision. It could be possible to infer social category or admission route from entrance ranks by comparing programme-level opening and closing ranks. Such inference may not always be explicit, but it can influence perception. What recruiters should be looking for is not how the student entered IIT, but what the student can do now.

Both public institutions and recruiters play important roles in designing hiring processes that reduce avoidable bias. Removing entrance ranks from standard resumes prevents a potentially prejudicial and often irrelevant data point from becoming a default filter. Some may say that recruiters need filters. Nobody is contesting that need. But employers already have better instruments. They use CGPA or CPI thresholds, technical interviews, coding tests, case discussions, design tasks, project reviews, research work, communication abilities and behavioural assessments. It has long been recognised that JEE or GATE scores do not reliably capture these.

A student’s entrance rank may say something about past preparation. It cannot say enough about future contributions. With enhanced access, our higher education institutions attract many first-generation learners, rural students, non-English-medium students, and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Some may take time to adjust to the new environment. Many grow substantially during their IIT years. A fair placement process should, therefore, allow them to

present what they have achieved years after obtaining their entrance scores.

Student well-being should be our top priority. If recruiting methods make ranks part of students’ identities, they become a burden for many students. When the recruitment process turns ranks into hierarchies, students can experience anxiety and comparison. IITs are places where students grow beyond the circumstances of entry. Then why can’t our placement system let students know that the work they do after admission matters, not their ranks?

This does not mean that entrance examinations are unimportant. But the selection process for admission and the selection process for recruitment are different altogether. The first decides entry into an academic programme. The second should judge current professional readiness. Confusing the two weakens both.

The decision to move away from publicising only the highest salary packages also deserves attention. Highest packages create headlines. They may lead students and parents to believe that high packages are normal, when in reality they are often outliers. Median salary is a better representative measure to get an overall sense of how the larger graduating cohort has fared. It is important to encourage a more mature public conversation on employment by emphasising median salaries.

A better signal
Together, these decisions show welcome institutional seriousness. They recognise that campus recruitment must assess students for what they have learnt and become during their time at the institution. A fair placement system should not allow an old rank to overshadow evidence of a student’s present competence and readiness for work. Other higher education institutions would do well to draw from this example.

A.P. and the next El Niño challenge

Heatwaves and rainfall deficits could put the State’s preparedness to the test

STATE OF PLAY

Nellore Sravani

Much before El Niño formed over the Pacific Ocean, Andhra Pradesh got a bitter taste of what was to come. In May, the State experienced oppressive heat, unending warm nights, and intense heatwaves. Cities and towns wore a deserted look as daytime temperatures remained above 44 degrees Celsius for nine consecutive days, with the season’s highest touching 48.3 degrees Celsius.

In addition to bringing back unpleasant memories of the previous El Niño events in the State, the record-breaking temperatures heralded a disturbing weather pattern, marked by scanty rainfall and more heatwaves. Even on July 12, the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Amaravati, issued heatwave alerts for the State.

This is the third time in 10 years that the State’s preparedness is being put to the test, the first two being 2015 and 2023. In 2015, which witnessed a strong El Niño event, heatwaves killed at least 2,300 people in the country, with Andhra Pradesh alone accounting for 1,369 deaths, forcing the government to form the Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority (APSDMA).

Weather experts say that whenever sea surface temperatures in the Pacific Ocean rise beyond 2 degrees Celsius, meteorologists declare it a “very strong” El Niño event. Between 1951 and 2025, this threshold was crossed four times – 1972,1982, 2015 and 2023 – according to IMD experts.

Meteorologists believe there is a high likelihood of



another strong El Niño event this year.

A testing monsoon
For Andhra Pradesh, an overall below-normal monsoon has been forecast, with isolated areas showing the probability of receiving normal or above-normal rainfall, which indicates the likelihood of the formation of low-pressure systems in the Bay of Bengal. But this is only a possibility.

The State receives most of its rainfall during the Southwest monsoon, particularly in August and September, when El Niño is expected to gain strength. While the State received about normal rainfall in June, as predicted, July has begun on a slightly dry note.

According to the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, the State received 86.2 mm of rainfall against the normal 149.1 mm between June 1 and July 11, recording a deficit of 42.2%. Except for two districts that reported normal rainfall, 26 of the 28 districts have reported either deficient or largely deficient rainfall, presenting a bleak picture.

The State’s long-period average annual rainfall is 858 mm, but this year’s total is projected at 690 mm, which means a deviation of around 20%, which, again, is double the deviations recorded in the State in recent El Niño years. According to the APSDMA, negative deviations in recent El Niño years ranged between

4% and 11%.

The immediate impact of deficit rainfall is on the farming community and agricultural activities. In 2023, 54 mandals were declared drought-hit, while at least 6.96 lakh farmers suffered losses in 103 of the State’s 688 mandals.

The government has begun preparations.

At a review meeting, Andhra Pradesh Home and Disaster Management Minister V. Anitha stressed the need to disseminate weather information down to the village level to minimise crop losses. But, there is a challenge: the agricultural department issues alerts and advisories to farmers based on the agroclimatic zones. Academicians have flagged the haphazard clubbing of areas with zones of different characteristics. This can lead to a mismatch in the advisory being given and the ground reality of farmers. The government’s objective cannot be achieved unless the structural issues are addressed.

The agricultural department has begun alerting farmers about shifting to drought-hardy crops in rain-fed areas of Rayalaseema to tide over the crisis. But questions have also been raised about the willingness of farmers to shift to these crops.

The State appears to have learnt from the lessons of 2015 by significantly reducing heat-stroke deaths. In 2023, the number of deaths recorded had drastically come down to three. But ensuring that timely weather advisories reach farmers remains a weak link.

It is to be seen whether the government’s preparedness remains only on paper or aids in mitigating the impact of the global event.

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Disproportionate SIR deletions in Manipur’s tribal constituencies

Despite accounting for only 37.8% of the electorate, the ST constituencies accounted for 64.2% of deletions during the enumeration phase of the SIR

DATA POINT

Pon Vasanth B.A. Nitika Francis

An analysis of deletions during the enumeration phase of the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of Manipur’s electoral rolls showed that the 19 constituencies reserved for Scheduled Tribes (ST) saw disproportionately high deletions compared with the remaining 41 Assembly constituencies (ACs) (**Chart 1**).

The draft SIR rolls, released on July 5, showed that these 19 ACs in the hill areas – which have a predominant presence of the Kuki-Zo and Naga communities – accounted for 64.2% of the 1.59 lakh deletions, despite accounting for only 37.8% of the 20.93 lakh voters present on the State’s rolls before SIR.

As **Table 2** shows, the share of voters from ST constituencies in Manipur’s electorate dropped by 2.1 percentage points due to disproportionately high deletions in those ACs.

Manipur has been in turmoil ever since ethnic violence erupted in May 2023. Among the ST ACs, deletions were more concentrated in and around Churachandpur – a district with a significant presence of the Kuki-Zo community, which was the epicentre of the conflict (**Map 1**).

In the ST constituencies, 76.1% of deletions were recorded as “Permanently Shifted”, compared with 53.9% in the General ACs. Meanwhile, “Death” accounted for 41.9% of deletions in the General ACs, in contrast to just 18.9% in the ST ACs.

More women got deleted than men. More than 8% of female voters were deleted compared with 6% of male voters. For every 1,000 male voters deleted, 1,271 female voters were deleted, bringing the gender ratio in the rolls down from 1,071 before SIR to 1,057 in the draft rolls. In 18 ACs, 60% to 69% of the deletions were women.



Vote in question: Voters at polling station in Kangpokpi in Manipur during 2022 Assembly polls

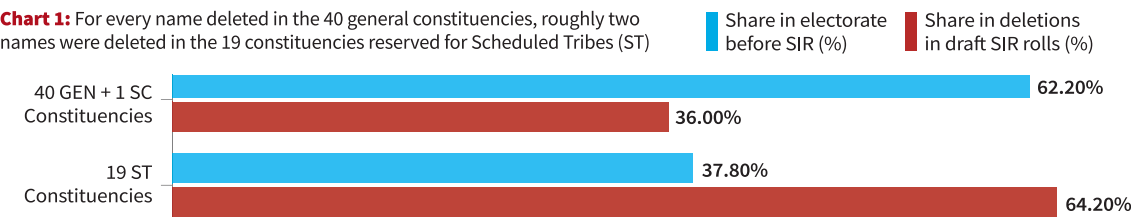
Table 1: The share of voters from ST constituencies in Manipur’s electorate dropped by 2.1 percentage points

	GEN - ACs (40)	ST - ACs (19)	SC - ACs (1)	Total (60)
Electorates before SIR	12,69,503	7,91,859	31,714	20,93,076
Share in electorate before SIR - (A)	60.7%	37.8%	1.5%	100%
Deletions	55,460	1,01,827	1,390	1,58,677
% Deleted	4.4%	12.9%	4.4%	7.6%
Share in total deletions	35%	64.2%	0.9%	100%
Electorates in draft SIR rolls	12,14,043	6,90,032	30,324	19,34,399
Share in draft SIR rolls - (B)	62.8%	35.7%	1.6%	100%
Change between A and B (% points)	(+) 2.1	(-) 2.1	(+) 0.1	

Disenfranchisement risk

The data were sourced from the lists of deletions published by the *Chief Electoral Officer, Manipur*

Chart 1: For every name deleted in the 40 general constituencies, roughly two names were deleted in the 19 constituencies reserved for Scheduled Tribes (ST)



1 Three of the four ACs with the highest deletions (%) were in Churachandpur district

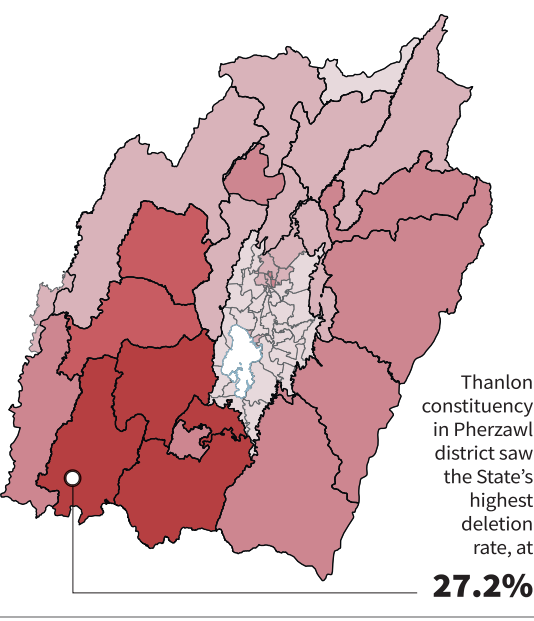
2 More than half of total deletions came from just 12 ST seats

Scan for the full article with insights from academic Khom Khan Suan Hausing and Gautam Mukhopadhyay, a former Ambassador of India

Map: Deletions were more concentrated in and around Churachandpur district, which has a significant presence of the Kuki-Zo community and was the epicentre of the conflict

The unshaded region in the centre of the map is the Loktak lake

Under 5% 5–10% 10–15% 15–20% 20% & above



Thanlon constituency in Pherzawl district saw the State’s highest deletion rate, at **27.2%**

Chart 2: The chart shows shares of different reasons for which names were deleted in different types of constituencies

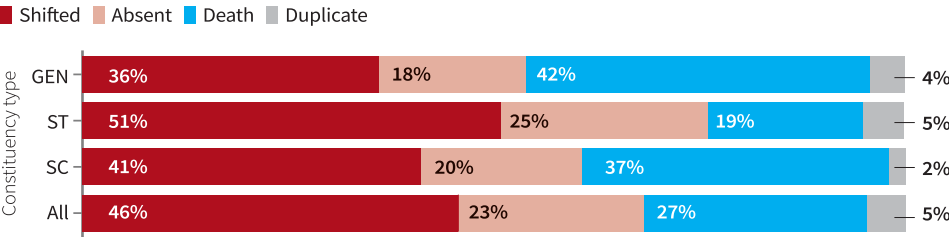


Table 2: The table below shows the reason-wise deletions in different types of constituencies

Constituency type	Shifted	Absent	Death	Duplicate	Total Deletions
GEN (40)	20,032	9,861	23,227	2,340	55,460
ST (19)	51,869	25,677	19,255	5,026	1,01,827
SC (1)	572	272	518	28	1,390
Total (60)	72,473	35,810	43,000	7,394	1,58,677

The Hindu analysed the numbers using the booth-wise lists of deletions published by the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Manipur. The Statewide aggregate numbers provided by the CEO did not include the breakdown of deletions marked as “Shifted” and as “Absent”. They were clubbed under a single category

Table 3: For every 1,000 male voters deleted, 1,271 female voters got deleted

*(Number of female voters per 1,000 male voters)

Gender	In rolls before SIR	in deletions	in draft SIR rolls
Male	1,010,337	69,871	9,40,466
Female	1,082,459	88,799	9,93,660
Third Gender	300	7	293
Total	2,093,096	158,677	1,934,419
Gender Ratio*	1,071	1,271	1,057

FROM THE ARCHIVES



FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 13, 1976

Building Code that has been given the go-by

Madras, July 12: When there was a National Building Code why not make use of it to have cheaper buildings? Posing this question the Union Industry Minister, Mr. T. A. Pai, had a dig at financial institutions for putting forth their own codes “which were totally irrelevant” and which only added to costs.

Speaking at the Indian Standards Institution here today, Mr. Pai said that if one had to borrow from the LIC it would insist on earthquake proof foundation. If it was so keen why not have an earthquake premium instead of insisting on conditions which would only raise costs, he asked jocularly. The Minister also deprecated the tendency of industries to fritter away their resources on posh buildings.

Mr. Pai said that the National Building Code evolved a long time ago had been given the go-by and the PWD and the municipal corporations refused to change. People refused to do anything sensibly. It would appear that enforcement of discipline either by law or force was the only way to “discipline ourselves”, he felt.

The Minister was glad that the National Building Code was beginning to be accepted and the Planning Commission was making the State Governments to accept the code.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 13, 1926

The Lenglen episode

A correspondent of “The Star” wrote under date June 24. –

The biggest sensation of the present Wimbledon meeting occurred to-day, when Mlle. Suzanne Lenglen, the famous French tennis player, failed to put in an appearance for her two o’clock match on Court No. 1 against Mrs. G. J. Deyhurst. The meeting of these two had attracted the usual enormous crowd to Court No. 1 there being almost empty benches in the Centre Court, where J. Kozeluh and J. Pennycuik were appearing and at other attractive matches in other courts.

The court was packed, and thousands tried in vain to get in. But as time went on there was no Suzanne and the frequent applause testified to the impatience of the spectators. It was the first time in the history of Wimbledon that she was not up to time or that she has kept her faithful army of admirers waiting.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Number of persons who drowned in Germany last month

99 Ninety-nine people drowned in Germany last month, the most since a record heatwave swept Europe in 2003, as per the official figures. Germany was among the nations hit by the June heatwave in western Europe, which set temperature records in several places. AFP

Fund sought by Delhi CM for accelerating ownership scheme

100 ₹ crore Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta has sought ₹100 crore from the Centre to accelerate the implementation of the PM-UDAY scheme, providing property rights to residents of 1,511 unauthorised colonies in the national capital, according to a statement. PTI

Traditional water sources cleaned in Hamirpur district

236 A campaign to clean the traditional water sources in Himachal Pradesh's Hamirpur district has restored 236 facilities so far, officials said. The campaign was launched to safeguard people from waterborne diseases during monsoon. PTI

Number of SIR forms submitted in two days in Punjab

30 lakh More than 30 lakh Punjab electors have submitted their enumeration forms during special camps organised Statewide over two days as part of special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Anindita Mitra said on Sunday. PTI

Deaths due to floods reported in Bangladesh

44 At least 44 people have died in floods and landslides over the past week in Bangladesh, officials said Sunday, as rivers remained above danger levels and 2.5 lakh families were displaced. Overnight torrential rains inundated several areas in Dhaka. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Why has China banned helium exports?

Why is helium emerging as a strategic resource? How vulnerable is the world to a helium supply shock? Why is it considered a critical input for future technologies? Why is storing and transporting helium so expensive? What makes it so hard to replace?

EXPLAINER

Vasudevan Mukunth

The story so far: On July 10, the Ministry of Commerce and General Administration of Customs, China, has temporarily but immediately banned helium exports from the country. As of 4.30 pm IST on July 10, Beijing had not published any other information as to why it took this step now or its scope.

Is China a major helium producer? China imports more than 80% of its helium needs but produces only around 1.6% of the world's helium. The export ban follows an extended period of supply strained by Russia's export restrictions – where the Prime Minister needs to sign off on shipments through 2027 – and supply risks tied to heightened tensions in West Asia.

The world's major helium producers are the U.S. (meeting 43% of total supply), followed by Qatar, Russia, Canada, and Algeria. In 2024, the U.S. privatised its Federal Helium Reserve and, selling its assets to the Messer Group and no longer buffering shocks such as those due to the U.S.-Iran conflict.

The next year, the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform launched an investigation into Messer's Chinese interests, stoking the risk of tit-for-tat measures. Which China's latest export ban could be.

After the U.S., Qatar has been meeting 33% of the demand, especially in Asia. After the conflict with Iran escalated, as medical chemist and *Science* columnist Derek Lowe put it, “one-third of global helium production is now literally bottled up behind the Strait of Hormuz, a much higher percentage than world oil production [where the situation is bad enough already].”

In this light, China's new export restriction could preserve the country's helium supply for its domestic chip



Helium can only be transported in vacuum-jacketed stainless steel vessels that are manufactured only by a few companies worldwide. GETTY IMAGES

manufacturers and its medical sector.

How is helium obtained? Helium is the second-lightest element, after hydrogen, and is not manufactured. It is a non-renewable resource generated deep in the earth's crust, where the radioactive decay of uranium and thorium atoms emits alpha particles, which capture electrons to form helium atoms.

Over millions of years, this helium migrates into the same reservoirs of natural gas, and they are extracted together. This said, natural gas is not processed to isolate the helium from it until the latter makes up at least 0.3% by volume.

But once it does, the gas is isolated using the fact that it has a different boiling point.

Some operators also recover helium from LNG plants and from the air but these quantities are too low to matter to the global demand. Helium for commercial use is usually at least 99.997% pure.

What is helium used for? Helium has an extremely low boiling point – negative 269°C – and does not participate easily in chemical reactions. These are good properties for a coolant that needs to cool the magnets in MRI machines, the silicon wafers in the semiconductor fabricating industry, and, increasingly, some of the devices used in quantum computers. Its small atoms mean the gas escapes easily through gaps that might be too small for oxygen or nitrogen atoms – so engineers use helium as a leak-detector.

Helium is also used in the process of drawing optical fibres to rapidly and uniformly cool molten glass and to displace oxygen or nitrogen from forming bubbles inside the material. Spaceflight organisations like ISRO, NASA, and SpaceX use helium to pressurise fuel tanks in rockets. Research and the tourism sector in many parts of the world also use helium to inflate balloons and airships.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, laboratory use-cases account for

22% of the demand for helium, followed by controlled atmospheres and semiconductors (17%), lifting gas (17%), MRI scanners (15%), aerospace (9%), and detecting leaks (5%).

How much does helium cost? In June 2026, the spot price for highly pure helium in Northeast Asia had reportedly spiked to \$150-205 per thousand cubic feet, almost double what it was in late 2025. At least one major supplier, the U.S.-based industrial supplier Airgas, has invoked force majeure and tacked on surcharges of \$13.50 per hundred cubic feet to existing contracts. Liquid helium is by default expensive to store and transport because helium only liquefies at -269°C.

In fact, the helium supply chain as a whole is cost-intensive because purification, storage, and transport are each expensive and technically sophisticated. A mid- to large-scale purification and liquefaction facility will require more than \$100 million while smaller ones can cost around \$10 million, thanks to the need for corrosion-resistant alloys that can withstand ultra-low temperatures.

The gas can be stored in underground salt caverns, which reduce leaks significantly – but these formations are rare and developing a new one can cost more than \$200 million. It can also be stored as compressed gas or cryogenic liquid. The former typically costs up to \$10 million to build while bulk cryogenic liquid storage systems generally need between \$0.5 million and \$20 million depending on capacity. Then there are the operational expenses.

Finally, helium can only be transported in vacuum-jacketed stainless steel vessels – which are manufactured by relatively few companies worldwide, including several Chinese ones.

Finally, the contractor transporting the containers must also ensure they are delivered before the holding time expires, after which the helium will start boiling off into the atmosphere.

THE GIST

The export ban follows an extended period of supply strained by Russia's export restrictions – where the Prime Minister needs to sign off on shipments through 2027 – and supply risks tied to heightened tensions in West Asia.

Helium is an important coolant in the semiconductor fabricating industry, where it removes heat from silicon wafers.

The helium supply chain as a whole is cost-intensive because purification, storage, and transport are each expensive and technically sophisticated.

How DDCs changed local governance in J&K?

What is at stake in the debate over local democracy in Jammu and Kashmir?

Tikender Singh Panwar

The story so far: The restructuring of Jammu and Kashmir's political and administrative framework through the constitution of District Development Councils (DDCs) has remained the subject of legal and constitutional debate. Formed in 2021, the DDCs completed their five-year term on February 24, 2026. With no fresh elections held and local government institutions remaining largely inactive in recent years, questions have resurfaced about the relevance of the DDC model. Introduced as a mechanism for direct local democracy, the DDCs are viewed by supporters as a step towards grassroots governance, while critics argue they have impeded rather than strengthened democratic decentralisation in the region.

What do the 73rd and 74th Amendments provide for? One of the core arguments presented for

the abrogation of Article 370 was the need to fully integrate J&K with the constitutional framework applicable to the rest of India.

A central element of this argument was the introduction of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, which provide for elected rural and urban bodies. This integration was intended to ensure regular, mandatory elections and empower grassroots democracy.

How is local governance structured? The standard constitutional framework operates on a clearly defined multi-tier electoral system where citizens directly elect their local representatives:

Urban areas: Municipal Corporations, Municipal Councils, and Nagar Panchayats.

Rural areas: A three-tier structure comprising Gram Panchayats (Village Pradhans), Block Development Councils (BDCs), and District-level bodies (Zila Parishads).

Mandated under Article 243ZD of the

Constitution, the District Planning Committee (DPC) is envisaged as a coordinating body that brings together development plans prepared by panchayats and municipalities and integrates them into a comprehensive district-level plan.

Unlike an independent executive authority, the DPC is intended to function as an institutional mechanism that reflects priorities generated by elected local bodies and facilitates bottom-up planning. In this sense, it is designed to strengthen democratic decentralisation by aggregating local mandates rather than exercising authority over them.

However, while the constitutional framework assigns a key role to DPCs in district-level planning, their functioning has been uneven across the country, with many remaining largely inactive, barring a few exceptions such as Kerala.

How do DDCs differ from DPCs? The DDCs were established in J&K through an executive order rather than a

legislative process. While the government presents DDCs as directly elected bodies that strengthen grassroots democracy, it is contended that the model contains major contradictions within the governance framework.

Critics argue that the DDC structure bypasses existing institutions such as Zila Panchayats and urban local bodies. Unlike the DPC, which is intended to aggregate development priorities emerging from lower tiers of government, the DDC functions as a parallel administrative authority with executive and developmental powers. This blurs the relationship between the electorate and the actual exercise of power.

The key distinction is that the DPC seeks to strengthen local democracy by consolidating mandates generated from the ground up, whereas the DDC operates from above, competing with lower tiers of governance and functioning as an instrument of centralised bureaucratic control rather than democratic decentralisation.

The DDC structure raises concerns about unequal representation. The allocation of seats across districts does not adequately reflect variations in population, thereby diluting the principle of uniform political weight.

For instance, Srinagar, with a population of roughly 12 lakh, and Kishtwar, with around 2.5 lakh residents, are allocated the same number of DDC members. This creates an imbalance where the political voice per capita is drastically skewed.

The DDCs are being compared to the “special purpose vehicles” used in Smart City projects. They create an illusion of decentralisation, but act as capital-driven, bureaucratically managed structures. Since DDCs can easily jettison legislatively approved local initiatives, they function as a governance substitute rather than a governance supplement.

The creation of 280 DDC members across J&K has established a form of parallel ‘parliament’ in disguise. Historically, in politically fragile regions, central authorities have often sought to weaken provincial or State-level assemblies by backing district-level entities.

With the J&K State Assembly absent or weakened for years, the DDC framework has allowed key functions and financial powers that would ordinarily rest with elected legislators and local panchayats to remain concentrated under Union administration control.

What is the way forward for local democracy in J&K? Genuine local democracy cannot be reduced to an administrative or legal exercise; it is fundamentally a political question. True decentralisation requires the restoration of the DPC model envisaged under the 73th and 74th Constitutional Amendments, ensuring financially empowered and grounded local governments accountable to the State's electorate, rather than an administrative architecture serving centralised union control.

CACHE



ChatGPT Work is a direct competitor to Claude Cowork, which can similarly complete multi-step, tool-using tasks for users, though the two differ in their plugin ecosystems and how deeply each is woven into its maker's coding tools — Codex for OpenAI, Claude Code for Anthropic. REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

Has OpenAI's GPT-5.6 class beaten Anthropic's Fable-class models?

Just over a week after Fable 5 came back online for all users, OpenAI unveiled its own next-generation family: GPT-5.6 Sol, Terra, and Luna; rather than a single flagship, OpenAI split the release into three capability tiers priced separately with Sol at the top and Luna at the bottom

John Xavier

Anthropic and OpenAI are locked in an increasingly tight race for frontier AI supremacy, and the gap between their flagship models are narrowing to a benchmark-by-benchmark contest. Claude has led on real-world software-engineering tasks with Fable 5 scoring 80.3% on SWE-Bench Pro – a benchmark that evaluates an AI model's software engineering capabilities through complex, realistic programming challenges – at its June launch, well ahead of GPT-5.5's 58.6%. But OpenAI's newly released GPT-5.6 Sol claims the state-of-the-art spot on the Artificial Analysis Coding Agent Index at 80, narrowly ahead of Fable 5, while using less than half the tokens and time. Since launching Mythos and giving a select group of companies in its Glasswing Alliance early access, Anthropic has positioned itself at the front of the frontier race. It followed up by releasing Fable 5, a version of Mythos with extra safeguards around biology, cybersecurity, and AI research, to a much broader set of users, cementing that lead. That momentum hit a snag when a dispute with the U.S. government over export controls led Anthropic to be treated as a supply-chain risk, forcing it to suspend access to Fable 5 and Mythos 5 for 19 days – from June 12 to July 1, 2026 – before the Commerce Department lifted the relevant controls and access was restored. Just over a week after Fable 5 came back online for all users, OpenAI unveiled its own next-generation family: GPT-5.6 Sol, Terra, and Luna. Rather than a single flagship, OpenAI split the release into three capability tiers priced separately

with Sol at the top and Luna at the bottom, arguing this lets each tier advance on its own tempo. OpenAI has been vocal that Sol edges out Anthropic's flagship on several fronts. On Agents' Last Exam, an evaluation of long-running professional workflows across 55 fields, Sol scored 53.6, which OpenAI says is 13.1 points ahead of Fable 5. On the Artificial Analysis Coding Agent Index, Sol posted a new high of 80, about 2.8 points above Fable 5. It also claims new state-of-the-art marks on BrowseComp (92.2%) and OSWorld 2.0 (62.6%).

Picture isn't one-directional But the picture isn't one-directional. Anthropic still holds a wide lead on SWE-Bench Pro, where Fable 5's 80.3% sits far above the 64.6% OpenAI reports for Sol – a roughly 15-point gap on one of the most closely watched agentic-coding benchmarks. Independent observers have pointed out that Terminal-Bench and SWE-Bench Pro reward different kinds of work: terminal automation favours Sol's Codex-style harness, while whole-codebase issue resolution still favours Claude. To understand why the two companies can each claim a win, it helps to think of the two tests as different kinds of job interviews for the same candidate. SWE-Bench Pro is like handing someone a half-finished house that a previous contractor left behind, and asking them to find exactly what's wrong and fix only that, without touching anything else or causing a different room to leak. It rewards a model that can read carefully, navigate something large and unfamiliar, and make a precise, contained

repair – the way a software engineer fixes a specific bug in a codebase they didn't build. Terminal-Bench 2.1, on the other hand, is less about fixing one specific thing and more about general skilfulness around the whole house. One has to evaluate whether this person can set up the electricity, get the plumbing running, and recover if a step goes wrong midway. It's a broader test of operating a computer's control panel that includes installing software, configuring servers, running multi-step jobs, and troubleshooting failures along the way. A model can be a meticulous bug-fixer without being a great all-around operator, and vice versa. This is roughly why Fable 5 leads on the "fix this one thing precisely" test while GPT-5.6 Sol leads on the "handle this whole messy workflow" test. There's a second wrinkle worth knowing as these scores aren't just testing the AI model itself but they're also testing the toolkit it's given to work with. OpenAI has evaluated its models using its own in-house "Codex" toolkit, tuned to work well with how its models like to operate, a bit like letting the operator using their own tools versus renting them a standard set of equipment. A contractor will be adept at executing well with the tools he is used to, but may find it difficult to use a different toolkit. In a normal scenario, this contractor will require some additional time to get used to the new tools before they start working. And even when they work with the new tools, it will take some time to gain tacit knowledge. If one were to factor this into GPT 5.6 Sol's capability, then its lead with Fable 5 will be narrower. Apart from the GPT-5.6 family of models, the company also announced

ChatGPT Work, an agentic mode built on GPT-5.6 that can read emails, summarise texts, create presentations, and organise inchoate ideas into charts and dashboards through a new "Sites" feature, as well as run scheduled or recurring tasks

Competing strengths, different trade-offs This product is a direct competitor to Claude Cowork, which can similarly complete multi-step, tool-using tasks for users, though the two differ in their plugin ecosystems and how deeply each is woven into its maker's coding tools – Codex for OpenAI, Claude Code for Anthropic. So how do the two flagship frontier labs' models compare and contrast? Based on what the benchmark and eval scores show, both are capable and land close to each other overall. Each comes with a different specialty rather than one model being categorically ahead. The place where OpenAI clearly shows distinction is in token efficiency. On the Artificial Analysis Coding Agent Index, Sol matches or exceeds Fable 5's score while using less than half the output tokens, taking less than half the time, and costing about one-third less. On the broader Artificial Analysis Intelligence Index, Sol comes within a single point of Fable 5 while finishing tasks in 61% less time at roughly half the cost. For teams weighing cost per completed task rather than raw benchmark scores this efficiency gap may be a deciding factor than which model tops any individual leaderboard. Though, as with the Codex-versus-neutral-harness comparison above, it's worth checking whether that efficiency holds up outside OpenAI's own tuned environment before betting a production workflow on it.

THE DAILY QUIZ

A quiz on ICC Hall of Famers to mark the induction of Sourav Ganguly and Anjum Chopra

V.V. Ramanan

- QUESTION 1**
Of the 13 Indians inducted into the Hall of Fame, only one has not led the country. Who?
- QUESTION 2**
As per the ICC website, apart from Kapil Dev, who is the only other 'all-rounder' inductee to have led his country to limited-overs World Cup glory?
- QUESTION 3**
Who was the third inductee along with Anjum and Sourav this year?
- QUESTION 4**
The Sri Lankan legends

- Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara were both inducted in the same year. Which year?
- QUESTION 5**
Name the only Indian inductee not to have played One Day Internationals?
- QUESTION 6**
In 1999, Anil Kumble, who was inducted in 2015, emulated a 2009 Hall of Famer in achieving a rare Test feat. Who and what feat?
- QUESTION 7**
Name the Pakistani cricketer who was honoured posthumously in 2022 for his feats.



Visual question: Name this only woman wicketkeeper to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. REUTERS

- Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:**
1. An easy one. A translation of the Odyssey by this scholar has been subject to controversy ever since Mr. Nolan mentioned it in an interview. Name the scholar. **Ans: Emily Wilson**
 2. Ancient Greek plays were categorised into two forms: comedies and tragedies. Aristotle considered this the important element of a play. Name it. **Ans: Mythos (Plot)**
 3. This Greek tragic character gouges his eyes out after learning a terrible truth. Name the character, the play, and the tragedian who wrote the play. **Ans: Oedipus; Oedipus Rex, Sophocles**
 4. The Odyssey is an epic poem written by Homer, considered to be a foundational work of classical literature. However, this ancient Greek philosopher was of the opinion that poetry and theatre were morally corrupt, and that poets should be banished. Name him. **Ans: Plato**
 5. The Iliad is also an epic poem by Homer. What is its famous opening line? **Ans: "Sing, O goddess, the anger of Achilles...."**
 6. Visual: This rap artist stars in Nolan's Odyssey. Name him and the role he plays in the film. **Ans: Travis Scott; The Bard**
- Early Birds**
Tamal Biswas | Sitaram Saharay | Pulkit Sathe | Kamal Pandey | Pankaj Gharde



KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

He works for a prestigious law firm

She takes after her grandmother, especially in her love for music

S. Upendran

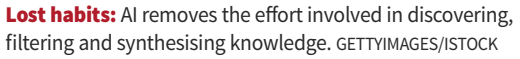
"I know! I'm late again. I didn't expect the traffic to be so bad at this time of the day."
"It's a pity that you haven't taken after your father."
"What should I have taken from my father? What are you talking about?"
"The expression 'take after' is used in everyday contexts. When someone says that you've taken after your father, it means you resemble him."
"In other words, I look like him. If I resemble my father, why did you say it's a pity that I haven't taken after him?"
"You can take after someone in terms of looks and in terms of character."
"In other words, I may be like him in terms of looks, but not in terms my likes, dislikes, temperament, etc."
"Exactly! And you're nothing like your father when it comes to those things. You haven't taken after him when it comes to punctuality."
"My sister has taken after him in that respect. Tell me, how is pronounced?"
"For native speakers of English, the word consists of three syllables. The first is pronounced like the word 'press', while the following vowel is like the 'i' in 'sit' and 'bit'. The 'g' sounds like the 'j' in 'jam' and 'juice, and the final..."
"The final 'ous' sounds like the 'ous' in 'famous'."
"Very good! The word is pronounced 'pres-TIJ-es' with the stress on the second syllable. You know what the word means, right?"
"Yes. It means respected and admired. My friend Venkatesh graduated from a very prestigious institution in India."
"Now tell me, many Indians pronounce the word 'pres-TEA-ji-es'. They pronounce it as a four syllabled word. Is it wrong to pronounce it that way?"
"A native speaker of English would probably think so. But in India, it won't be a problem. People will understand you. By the way, congratulations. Your favourite actor's new release is a big hit."
"People in the film industry are saying that it's a blockbuster. Many critics have paid the actor handsome compliments."
"Handsome compliments! What are you talking about? Isn't the word handsome always used with people? Especially men!"
"Not really! The word can be used with things as well. For example, when you say that someone paid you a handsome compliment, what you're suggesting is that the individual paid you a generous compliment."
"I see. How about this example? The company gave Sindu a handsome raise to make sure that she stays."
"To retain someone like her, they would have had to double her salary. Whenever Sunitha goes to a restaurant, she always tips the waiter handsomely."
"That's easy to do when you get a handsome cheque every month."
upendrankye@gmail.com

Word of the day

- Tacit:**
implied by or inferred from actions or statements
- Synonyms:** implied, hinted
- Usage:** There was a tacit agreement that he would pay off the loan.
- Pronunciation:** newsth.live/tacit
- International Phonetic Alphabet:** /ˈtæ.s.ɪt/

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

*Has your
brand become
an everyday
habit?*



(Karan Taurani is EVP, Elara Capital)

Space crunch: Draft limitations remain a major challenge for ICTT in attracting larger container vessels as shipping lines increasingly deploy bigger ships to achieve economies of scale. THULASI KAKKAT

Mixed bag: Awards celebrate traditional communication, while the beaches celebrate platforms and technology, at Cannes. AP

(Shubho Sengupta writes on marketing, technology and culture from an inter-generational perspective)

Nine-year-old girl among five killed in Israeli fire and air strikes in Gaza



Detained leader Suu Kyi will be looked after, Myanmar tells ASEAN



South Korea asks North Korea for help in finding missing Navy man



Chinese geologists question safety of Brahmaputra dam near India



EU and 14 countries reaffirm ruling on South China Sea

Nine people killed as Russia, Ukraine intensify attacks against each other

Record 128 migrants reach England in single boat

Syria's new Parliament holds first post-Assad era session

Hamad bin Khalifa, former leader and key architect of modern Qatar, dies aged 74

Lindsey Graham, pivotal U.S. Republican Senator and a close Trump ally, dies at 71

CMYK A IN-X



Palestinian handlers with competing Arabian horses at a beauty pageant in Rawabi. AFP

Against all odds, Palestinians keep horse culture alive

Agence France Presse
RAWABI

As Arabic rap thundered from loudspeakers and hundreds of spectators packed the stands in the occupied West Bank city of Rawabi, handlers put the finishing touches on gleaming Arabian stallions before leading them into the show ring.

“Palestinians have a huge passion for Arabian horses,” said Abdelnasser Musleh, a 30-year-old breeder at the horse beauty pageant.

Even as open land becomes increasingly scarce and contested amid expanding Israeli settlement construction in the West Bank, horse culture has emerged in unlikely nooks as a rare form of recreation that still draws Palestinians together, from urban neighbourhoods to rural villages.

Mr. Musleh himself has built something few would expect: an Arabian horse farm in the crowded Palestinian town of Kufr Aqab, north of Jerusalem on the West Bank side of the barrier built by Israel.

In a striking surge, there are now about 25,000 purebreds registered across Israel and the Palestinian territories through the Israel Arab Horse Society, compared to around 20 in the 1970s, according to Ashraf Rabee, a breeder who oversees registrations in the West Bank.

Despite living in densely populated areas, Palestinian breeders continue to raise horses in remarkably urban settings.

For many Palestinians, horse breeding is more than a hobby. It is entwined with identity, heritage and a sense of belonging to the land. Poems, songs and graffiti celebrate horses and horsemen alike.

“The horse is a huge part of our Arab culture,” breeder Rashad al-Sah, from Arraba, told *AFP*.

China’s new ethnic unity law deepens push for Mandarin, ‘Sinicised’ religion

Even as the Chinese government says the law aims to create a ‘shared’ national identity among the country’s ethnic groups, rights groups, including the UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, express concerns that it could threaten minority freedoms and lead to forced assimilation

NEWS ANALYSIS

Rizmi Lia M.
CHENNAI

A new ethnic unity law, the Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress, came into effect in China on July 1. The Chinese government said the law aims to create a “shared” national identity among China’s ethnic groups by strengthening what is called the “community of the Chinese nation”. The law also gives legal backing to policies promoting Mandarin, ideological education and the ‘Sinicisation’ of religion, or aligning religious practices to Chinese laws.

The UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) expressed concerns that the law could threaten freedoms, especially for minorities and lead to forced assimilation.

‘Shared’ identity

China passed the Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress on March 12 to create a “shared” national identity among ethnic groups.

The country officially recognises 56 ethnic groups. The majority Han Chinese make up more than 90% of the population. According to the 2020 census, the ethnic minority popula-

tion crossed 125 million, or 8.89% of the national total. This includes around 11 million Uyghurs and 7 million Tibetans.

The legislation is the culmination of a policy trajectory that has been building for over a decade, beginning with the 2014 Central Ethnic Work Conference under President Xi Jinping. Since then, provinces and municipalities, including Xinjiang (2015) and Inner Mongolia (2021), have enacted local “ethnic unity and progress” regulations.

The new law elevates that approach into a nationwide legal framework. According to Article 1, the law was enacted to “promote national unity and progress”, strengthen “the sense of community of the Chinese nation”, and advance the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.” The law, approved by the National People’s Congress, the country’s ceremonial legislature, is designed to foster “a stronger sense of community among all ethnic groups in the Chinese nation,” said Lou Qinjian, a delegate to the NPC who introduced the proposal.

Several provisions have drawn particular attention. According to Article 15 in the new law, Mandarin Chinese is mandated to be taught to all children before kindergarten and throughout the rest of



A big chunk: According to the 2020 census, population of ethnic minorities in China crossed 125 million, or 8.89% of the national total. REUTERS

compulsory education up to the end of high school. Article 46 requires religious organisations, schools and places of worship to promote the “Sinicisation” of religion and strengthen the sense of a shared Chinese national identity.

“Sinicisation” of religion refers to aligning all religious practices within China to local laws and regulations. The law’s ambit even extends beyond China’s orders. Article 63 states that any organisation or individual outside the territory of China that engages in

acts that undermine national unity or create national division shall be held legally responsible, leading critics of the law to see it as enabling “transnational repression”.

Impact on religion

Human rights groups have expressed concerns about the law’s impact on religious freedoms. According to the law, it is formulated in accordance with China’s Constitution in order to promote national unity and progress.

However, the Chinese Constitution states that

“each ethnicity has the right to use and develop their own language” and “the right to self-rule”, while the Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy promises limited autonomy to those groups, including allowing them to create flexible measures to develop their economies.

Rights groups have pointed to provisions prohibiting acts that “undermine national unity” or “create national division”, warning that because these terms are broad and undefined, the law could be used to suppress peaceful

expression, activism or cultural practices.

Sarah Brooks, Amnesty International’s Deputy Regional Director, said the law “does the opposite” of protecting minority communities. “Rather than celebrating difference, it is about pushing ethnic groups such as Uyghurs, Tibetans and Mongolians to adopt a single, state-defined national identity dominated by Han Chinese culture,” she said.

“Unity” in this context is not harmony between different communities – it is political and ideological alignment with the Chinese Communist Party.”

Critics see the law as a final step in a years-long evolution of Chinese policy to emphasise national identity over ethnic autonomy.

They have viewed that policy shift as being aimed at assimilation.

That shift has accelerated over the past decade under President Xi Jinping. Authorities have expanded Mandarin-medium education, increased oversight of religious institutions and promoted the “Sinicisation” of religion.

Rights groups have also cited widespread arbitrary detention and restrictions on religious and cultural practices in the Muslim-majority Xinjiang, allegations that the Chinese authorities have denied.

Bhutan fights ‘existential’ population crisis with cash incentives for births

Agence France Presse
THIMPHU

Bhutan is offering families cash incentives to have more children as the tiny Himalayan kingdom grapples with a nosediving birthrate and a growing exodus of young people seeking opportunities abroad.

Annual births have dropped by more than a quarter over the past decade, compounding the country’s loss of youngsters to migration.

Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay has repeatedly rung the alarm over the population slump, calling it an “existential” crisis, according to the state’s Bhutan Broadcasting Service.

“The evidence is unam-



Annual births have dropped by more than a quarter over the past decade, compounding Bhutan’s loss of youngsters to migration. AFP

biguous – Bhutan’s fertility has declined to near or below replacement level,” Mr. Tobgay wrote in the introduction to the government’s “Third Child Plus” programme, launched in June.

The scheme provides monthly payments of \$105 for each third or subse-

quent child until they turn three.

Khandu Wangmo, a 35-year-old civil servant, welcomed the incentive but questioned whether cash payments alone would persuade families to have more children.

“It is a good initiative because it encourages fami-

lies to have three or more children,” she said. “However, its impact may be limited if the cost of raising children, housing, and childcare remains high.”

For the landlocked kingdom of fewer than 8,00,000 people, wedged between India and China, the issue carries particular weight.

Births of third or more children, the focus of the new scheme, have fallen 27% since 2020, according to the report.

Bhutan’s fertility rate has fallen to about 1.8 children per woman, below the replacement level, while the share of people aged 65 and over is projected to rise from around six percent to 17% by 2050, according to UN estimates.

Fires of memory



A bonfire burns on Roden Street in Belfast on Sunday as part of Twelfth of July celebrations commemorating Protestant King William’s victory over Catholic King James at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. AP

Trump suggests standing order to attack Iran if it ‘actually’ assassinates him

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump is suggesting he has left standing orders for the U.S. military to destroy Iran “at levels they’ve never seen before” if Tehran follows through on its long-standing threats to kill him.

But the U.S. government has no way to create an automatic, pre-authorised “dead man’s switch” that would prompt immediate retaliation.

Instead, if Mr. Trump were killed, the transfer of power to his successor is governed by the 25th Amendment and the Presidential Succession Act of 1947. Vice President J.D. Vance instantaneously would become commander in chief and have authority for any retaliation.

Under such a scenario,

Mr. Vance could do exactly what Mr. Trump called for, though there also is a chance he could decide not to follow his predecessor’s orders – or offer a direct response in a different way.

“The U.S. has, for a whole variety of reasons, never utilised a technical ‘dead man’s switch,’” said Garrett M. Graff, author of “Raven Rock: The Story of the U.S. Government’s Secret Plan to Save Itself – While the Rest of Us Die.”

Attacks and revenge

The United States does have extensive contingency plans for continuity of government in the event of a nuclear attack or other major catastrophe that wipes out most or all of Washington. But those plans also do not allow for immediately launching re-

taliatory strikes upon the death of a President, even if that President had demanded that the military be ready to do so.

Mr. Trump nonetheless posted on his social media website Saturday that Iran had made threats “to assassinate, or attempt to assassinate” him and he said 1,000 “missiles are Locked and Loaded and aimed at the Islamic Republic of Iran, with thousands more to immediately follow, should the Iranian Government act on its threat.”

Iran’s Supreme Leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, said hours later that Iranians would continue to avenge the killing of his father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The elder Khamenei died in the initial U.S. and Israeli strikes that started the war in late February, and he was mourned in funeral



An anti-Trump placard during a gathering commemorating the late Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Tehran. AP

events throughout Iran this week. His son said retaliation “is the will of our nation and must certainly be carried out.”

“We pledge to take revenge for the pure blood of you and all the martyrs of these two wars from the criminal and disgraceful killers,” he said on remarks aired on state television. “This revenge is the will of

our nation and must certainly be carried out.”

The White House on Saturday did not immediately answer questions about what would become of Mr. Trump’s military orders should he be killed.

During those recent funeral events, mourners repeatedly held posters or banners calling for Mr. Trump to be killed along

with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Wall Street Journal reported this week that Israel alerted U.S. officials to fresh Iranian plots to kill Mr. Trump. The White House has refused to comment, but Mr. Trump appeared to reference to such threats in comments during this week’s NATO summit in Turkey, saying, “They want to take out the U.S. leader – me.”

Sabrina Singh, former Biden administration deputy Pentagon press secretary, said “Iran wanting to target senior American leaders is something that we know is happening.” “You have to take these as credible threats,” she said.

Mr. Trump was targeted in two domestic assassination attempts during the 2024 presidential campaign and saw a gunman

storm the White House Correspondents’ Association dinner he was attending in April.

The President flew part of the way back to Washington from Turkey this week aboard an older Air Force One jet rather than a new Qatari-gifted aircraft, raising fresh security questions about the newer plane. Images of the jet, which was retrofitted at an estimated cost of \$400 million, show it is not equipped with some of the same missile detection and countermeasure systems as earlier versions.

Nuclear plans

The swap occurred as the U.S. and Iran once again began trading strikes, jeopardising last month’s initial deal to end the war. Asked about Iranian threats, Mr. Trump told re-

porters aboard Air Force One, “I’m No. 1 on their list.” Mr. Graff said the U.S. prepared years of plans for how nuclear launch authority would devolve in the event of a surprise attack.

That included, during 30 years of the Cold War, the country keeping fleets of airborne command posts flying 24 hours a day with a general aboard one of them who could take over nuclear launch orders in the event Washington was lost.

“There’s a lot of reason to doubt the legality of such standing orders, since in the event of a President’s death, the nuclear launch authority would immediately pass to the Vice President or designated successor – and ultimately it would be up to him or her to determine whether to proceed.”

INBRIEF



Carty and Hope steer Windies home against the Kiwis

Keacy Carty, *in pic.*, was dismissed on 95 and Shai Hope made an unbeaten 87 in a 131-run third wicket partnership which steered the West Indies to a seven-wicket win over New Zealand on Saturday in the first of the five One-Day Internationals in Guyana.

The scores: New Zealand 267 in 49.5 overs (Mitchell 65, Young 49, Alzarri 4/41, Lawes 3/54) lost to West Indies 268/3 in 48.5 overs (Carty 95, Hope 87 n.o.). **Toss:** West Indies. **PoM:** Carty.



Argentina football legend Rattin passes away at 89

Former Argentina international Antonio Rattin, regarded as one of the country's finest midfielders and a Boca Juniors legend, passed away on Saturday at the age of 89. Rattin represented Argentina at the 1962 and 1966 FIFA World Cups. Rattin made 382 appearances for Boca Juniors between 1956 and 1970, scoring 28 goals and helping the club win four Argentine league titles.



Marquez wins Germany MotoGP, equals record

Marc Marquez won the Germany MotoGP Grand Prix at Hohenstein-Ernstthal on Sunday, equalling Italian legend Giacomo Agostini's record of 10 premier class wins on a single circuit. The Spanish seven-time World champion started on pole as he glided to a dominant win, 1.996 seconds ahead of Japan's Ai Ogura in second with fellow Spaniard Raul Fernandez completing the podium.

Indian recurve archers lose bronze medal matches

Indian recurve archers missed out on podium finishes after losing the women's individual and mixed team bronze medal matches at the Archery World Cup Stage-4 in Madrid on Sunday.

The results: Recurve: Women: Individual: Kirti lost to Elif Gokkir (Tur) 3-7 (semifinals); lost to Oh Yejin (Kor) 1-7 (bronze medal match). **Mixed team:** India (Kirti, B. Dhiraj) lost to Italy (Roberta Di Francesco, Matteo Borsani) 3-5 (bronze medal match).



Arshi sweeps Mini Max category at National karting

Ten-year-old Arshi Gupta won all four races in the Mini Max category in the second round of the 2026 MECO-FMCSI National Karting Championship (RMC India) in Chennai on Sunday. After qualifying second, Arshi won both heats, the pre-final, and the main final to complete a clean sweep.

Mixed trap shooting teams fail to make final

The Indian mixed trap teams had a disappointing outing, finishing well down the standings as the contingent signed off from the ISSF Shotgun World Cup in Lonato, Italy, with just one gold.

Rohit and Kohli will pose a 'double headache': Swann

The former England offie says the two veterans should be allowed to bow out on their own terms; feels captain Gill's batting prowess and Bumrah's return would serve India well in the ODI series

INDIA IN ENGLAND

S. Shrivathsan

Former England off-spinner Graeme Swann was suffering from the aftereffects of staying up all night for the FIFA World Cup quarter-final matches.

Scheduled to address the media virtually on Sunday evening, Swann – currently on broadcast duty in India for the Men in Blue's tour of England – would not have minded more rest before facing the scribes. But when he was put on the spot, firstly with the most obvious question on Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli's presence in the ODI series, he responded with clarity.

Hails the chase-master Swann opined that the 39-year-old Rohit and Kohli, 37, possess the tools to succeed despite not having age on their side.

"When Rohit and Virat play together, they pose a double headache for the fielding team. When India bats first, Rohit is the best I have seen... batting on a fresh pitch, taking the



Plenty left in the tank: Swann opines that Kohli and Rohit possess the tools to succeed despite not having age on their side. FILE PHOTO: K.R. DEEPAK

game away from the opposition and posting a big total," said the 47-year-old.

"I believe that Kohli is the greatest chaser we have ever witnessed; some of his knocks are stupendous. Having both is a massive bonus for India."

He remarked that the veterans, who are one-format players nowadays, should be allowed to bow out of international cricket on their own terms.

"Because of the standards Rohit and Virat have set and careers they have had, it is up to them when they want to finish. I do not think that they have much to worry about because they are still brilliant players," Swann added.

Fresh impetus Swann felt that the batting might of ODI skipper Shubman Gill and return of ace pacer Jasprit Bumrah, be-

sides the quality of Rohit and Kohli, should provide India hope. "It is amazing to have players of that stature come straight back into the team. After the T20I series (where India was thrashed 0-4), you need fresh impetus."

(Watch the three-match ODI series between England and India live on Sony Sports Ten 1 SD & HD & Sony Sports Ten 5 SD & HD from July 14).

Prince replaces injured Harshit in ODI squad

Press Trust of India BIRMINGHAM

Young pacer Harshit Rana and veteran spinner Varun Chakaravarthi have been ruled out of competitive cricket for indefinite period due to hamstring injuries of various degrees, while Prince Yadav and Ravi Bishnoi named as their replacements for India's upcoming ODI and T20I assignments respectively.

Leg-spinner Bishnoi got a lifeline after replacing Varun for the three-match T20I series in Zimbabwe later this month.

"Rana reported a sudden onset of discomfort in his right hamstring during the third T20I against En-



Prince. FILE PHOTO: R. RAJU

gland at Trent Bridge. Subsequent scans revealed a Grade 1 hamstring injury," BCCI said in a statement.

"He has been ruled out of the forthcoming ODI series against England and will report to the BCCI Centre of Excellence (CoE) for further assessment and management."

McCullum steps down as England Test coach

Agence France-Presse LONDON

Brendon McCullum has left his role as England's Test head coach but will remain in charge of the national white-ball set-up, the England and Wales Cricket Board announced on Sunday.

England has lost seven of its last nine Tests under the former New Zealand captain.

This includes a woeful 4-1 Ashes defeat in Australia in 2025-26 and last month's 2-1 loss at home to New Zealand, with both series overshadowed by allegations of a team drinking culture.

"I've absolutely loved coaching the Test side and I'm incredibly proud of what we've achieved together," said McCullum in an ECB statement, adding: "Of course I'm gutted not to be continuing, but I respect the decision."

Former England captain Ben Stokes announced his international retirement midway through what turned out to a crushing defeat in the third and final Test against New Zealand



McCullum.

at Trent Bridge – the final match of McCullum's red-ball reign.

His time as Test boss started in remarkable fashion with especially aggressive batting in particular as Stokes led England to 3-0 series wins over New Zealand and in Pakistan, where 500 runs were scored in one day, before a thrilling 2-2 home Ashes in 2023.

But a crushing 4-1 loss in India two years ago exposed the limits of England's 'one size fits all approach' when it could not simply smash its way out of trouble.

And the writing was on the wall for McCullum when England lost the Ashes series in Australia in just 11 days' cricket.

van der Poel wins ninth stage; Pogacar still in lead

Reuters USSEL

'The Flying Dutchman' Mathieu van der Poel triumphed in a scramble for the finish line on stage nine of the Tour de France on Sunday, as the Alpecin-Premier Tech rider secured his first Grand Tour stage win of the year.

Tobias Johannessen and Tom Pidcock finished second and third, while Slovenian Tadej Pogacar crossed the line soon after to maintain his overall lead.



van der Poel. REUTERS

Snehit does the star turn for Jaguars

UTT

K. Keerthivasan PANAJI

S.F.R. Snehit put his heart and soul into both his matches as PBG Pune Jaguars edged UP Prometheans 9-6 in an absorbing Ultimate Table Tennis Season 7 clash on Sunday.

Riding on its singles victories, Dempo Goa Challengers scripted an 8-7 win over Ahmedabad APL Pipers in the day's second tie. Alvaro Robles, Syndrela Das and P. B. Abhinandh won their respective singles matches with ease to pocket the tie.

The match that took the cake was the one between 16-year-old Syndrela and three-time Olympian Manika Batra. The teenager produced a scintillating attacking display to outclass Manika in three straight games before Abhinandh provided the finishing touches. There was little doubt that Snehit was the driving force behind Pune's victory, providing the momentum that carried his team to victory.

It was by no means an easy outing for the 26-year-old Indian, ranked World No. 113. After the opening two



Hard time: A dejected Shreyas walks back after getting out in the fifth and final T20I. REUTERS

We didn't adapt quickly, admits skipper Shreyas

Press Trust of India SOUTHAMPTON

India failed to adapt to English conditions and was outplayed in all departments by England, skipper Shreyas Iyer said, adding that the experience would only make him a better leader.

Shreyas endured a disastrous start to his captaincy after taking over from Suryakumar Yadav following India's T20 World Cup triumph, as the team suffered a 0-2 defeat to Ireland before losing the series 0-4 to England after the opening game was washed out.

"It's not hard, honestly," said Shreyas when asked how he dealt with the expectations during the post-match press conference.

"I feel it's a privilege for me to take over the cap-

taincy. Every individual dreams of captaining for the Indian team and taking on from high. Definitely, I love pressure. So, for me to thrive under pressure, to learn from these moments is definitely going to make me better going forward."

India suffered a 56-run loss to England in the fifth and final T20 on Saturday and Shreyas admitted his men just couldn't adapt to the conditions quickly during the tour.

"Just to adapt as quickly as we could have anticipated that didn't happen, that was one challenge and the other one is definitely they outplayed us in all departments".

The scores: England 257/3 in 20 overs bt India 201/8 in 20 overs (Kishan 56, Tilak 53, Curran 3/36, Rashid 2/24); **Toss:** India; **PoM:** Buttler. **Pos:** Brook.



Scintillating display: Syndrela outclassed Manika in three straight games as Challengers beat Pipers. BUTTERFLY UTT

singles were shared, with UP Prometheans' Ricardo Walther overcoming Omar Assar 2-1 and Pune's Diya Chitale defeating Sayali Wani by an identical margin, the mixed doubles assumed significance.

Partnering France's Prithika Pavade, Snehit dug deep to edge past Walther and Swastika Ghosh in three hard-fought games, giving Pune a crucial advantage. In fact, Snehit and Prithika saved four match points to win the third game on golden point. He then returned for the fourth singles and overcame the experienced Sudhanshu Grover 2-1 to stretch Pune's lead to 7-5.

UP successfully challenged Snehit's service angle exceeding 30 degree four times – twice in the

mixed doubles and twice in the singles – but he remained unfazed, quickly adjusting his tactics and maintaining intensity to guide Pune closer to victory.

The results: PBG Pune Jaguars bt UP Prometheans 9-6 (Omar Assar lost to Ricardo Walther 4-11, 10-11, 11-9; Diya Chitale bt Sayali Wani 9-11, 11-8, 11-10; S.F.R. Snehit & Prithika Pavade bt Walther & Swastika Ghosh 8-11, 11-10, 11-10; Snehit bt Sudanshu Grover 11-7, 3-11, 11-9; Prithika bt Yangzi Liu 4-11, 11-7, 11-9).

Dempo Goa Challengers bt Ahmedabad APL Pipers 8-7 (Alvaro Robles bt Adrien Rassenfosse 11-7, 11-8, 11-2; Syndrela Das bt Manika Batra 11-10, 11-9, 11-9; P.B. Abhinandh & Bernadette Szocs lost to Payas Jain & Sofia Polcanova 7-11, 5-11, 10-11; Abhinandh bt Payas 11-8, 11-10, 5-11; Szocs lost to Sofia 8-11, 6-11, 8-11).

Anand claims javelin gold with a personal best; women's 4x400m relay team wins

ATHLETICS

Press Trust of India ORDOS (CHINA)

Javelin thrower Anand Singh and the women's 4x400m relay team clinched a gold medal each as India ended its campaign on a strong note at the inaugural Asian under-23 athletics championships here on Sunday.

Fine show Overall, the Indian team won 16 medals – three gold, four silver and nine bronze – in the championships.

On his way to winning the gold medal, Anand



On top: The quartet of Sandramol, Pravallika, Nofisa and Shravani.

joined the 80m club. His gold winning throw of 80.57m, a personal best, was achieved in his last attempt.

Shivam Lohakare won

the bronze with 77.70m.

The gold winning quartet of Shravani Sachin Sangale, Sandramol Sabu, Pravallika Narimalla and Nofisa Khatun clocked



Anand cleared 80.57m.

3:33.62s in the women's 4x400m relay.

India also won a silver in the women's 4x100m relay in 44.68s, with Sanjana, Akshaya Saravanan, Sudheeksha V. and Shreeya Rajesh being the runners.

The men's 4x400m relay team – Astik Pradhan, Sharan Megavarnam, Setu Mishra and Aman Choudhary – also won silver in 3:04.24 secs.

Once they succumbed unexpectedly to Ireland, **India became diffident, almost second-guessing themselves.**
They didn't play the conditions well enough, they left their smarts behind at home



HARYANA

Boom to bust: Gurugram’s illegal PG business faces crackdown

Hundreds of professionals and families living in unauthorised paying guest accommodations and rented IBHK and IRK units across DLF’s residential colonies in Gurugram were forced to vacate at short notice last month as authorities launched a sealing drive. With more than 5,000 properties under scrutiny, and thousands of tenants caught in limbo, **Ashok Kumar** traces the human cost of the crackdown, the scramble for alternative housing, and the thriving rental economy built on widespread planning violations that had flourished for years



The sealing drive in DLF City Phases 1 to 5 stems from a long-running legal dispute over alleged building bye-law violations, unauthorised constructions and commercial use of residential properties. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

It was a quiet Saturday morning on June 20. Sanghamitra Pati was at her home in Bhubaneswar when her phone rang. “Do ghante mein room khali kar do, building seal ho rahi hai (Vacate the room in two hours. The building is being sealed),” the caretaker of her rented accommodation in Gurugram’s DLF Phase 3 told her. Minutes later, her landlord repeated the message.

The 26-year-old marketing manager initially dismissed it as a prank. She called back to check. The answer was the same. Officials were on their way to seal the building in S Block. She had two hours to empty her one-bedroom apartment.

Hundreds of kilometres away, with keys to the flat in her bag, there was little she could do. She called a friend in Gurugram and asked him to break into the apartment and salvage whatever he could. It was the beginning of a scramble that, in the weeks that followed, upended the lives of hundreds of tenants caught in Gurugram’s crackdown on unauthorised paying guest (PG) accommodations and illegally converted rental units.

“I have completely boycotted all DLF Phases,” Pati says after moving into a IBHK in a group housing society off Golf Course Extension Road.

“This new place is not a builder floor,” she says, referring to a multi-storey residential building constructed by a private developer with each floor sold separately. “I even asked colleagues in real estate to help me find something with the necessary approvals – something less likely to be targeted for sealing or demolition.” The lesson, she says, came the hard way.

High Court-mandated drive

The sealing drive in DLF City Phases 1 to 5 stems from a long-running legal dispute over alleged building by-law violations, unauthorised constructions and commercial use of residential properties, particularly Economically Weaker Section (EWS) plots. The matter originated in petitions filed by the DLF City Residents Welfare Association and other local groups in 2021 seeking enforcement of planning norms.

The Punjab and Haryana High Court on February 13, 2025 had directed the District Town Planner (Enforcement), Gurugram, to act against violations in residential colonies. However, the Supreme Court stayed the order on April 4 that year. The matter returned to the High Court on November 26 and it restrained the DTP (Enforcement) from taking action. On May 29 this year, the court limited the protection to only those who had filed civil miscellaneous applications, allowing enforcement action to proceed against other properties.

More than 5,000 properties are facing action over zoning violations, including the illegal operation of PG accommodations, commercial use of residential plots, and encroachments on the “right of way” – land reserved for public movement and infrastructure. But for hundreds of working professionals such as Pati, it has meant sudden displacement, financial stress, and the fear that a home can be taken away anytime.

A 25-year-old woman from Kolkata, on condition of anonymity, says the sealing drive in DLF Phase 3’s S Block came without warning on June 18, leaving her with just 10 minutes to react. She was at work when a neighbour called.

The damage became apparent later. Half her belongings remained locked inside after the building was sealed. A week later, after tenants approached the District Town Planner’s office,

Families with toddlers and elderly parents were running around. One of my friends, who was staying in another PG, had gone to the office in the morning. When he came back that night, the building had been sealed.

SANGHAMITRA PATI
Displaced tenant

they were given a two-hour window to retrieve what was left.

“By then, everything was spoilt,” the woman says. She spent the next two weeks in a hotel before finding a new IBHK in the first week of July.

“Since the drive, demand for IBHKs and IRKs has shot up. Rents have skyrocketed. It’s not just me – hundreds of professionals and families have been displaced. Choices are limited because so many buildings have already been sealed, and more are on the radar,” she says.

In hindsight, Pati considers herself “fortunate” to have been living alone. Others in her building were not as lucky.

“Families with toddlers and elderly parents were running around. One of my friends, who was staying in another PG accommodation, had gone to office. When he came back at night, the building had been sealed. All his belongings – documents, furniture, groceries, and clothes – were inside. Imagine coming home to nothing. To be left on the road,” she says. What angered her most, she alleges, was the lack of prior notice. Calls to her landlord seeking a refund of the security deposit have since gone unanswered.

Tenants kept in the dark

For tenants, the biggest frustration is not just being displaced; it is the question of who is at fault.

“I had a valid rent agreement. I paid everything on time – ₹30,000 a month for a luxury IBHK. This wasn’t some shady PG. It was a proper residential apartment. It looked completely legal. So, how was I supposed to know? If it was illegal, how was a rent agreement executed? How did the police verification happen?” says Sunaina, a displaced tenant. “But now my question is: how do I know the next place isn’t also on the list [of illegal buildings]? Who do I ask to make sure this doesn’t happen again?”

Amit Pahwa, a German language expert at a private company, claims that owners of several PG accommodations knew about the sealing drive well in advance but did not inform their tenants. Pahwa, who lives with his wife and daughter, says the uncertainty has persisted despite the owner of his rented IBHK in a 54-unit building in DLF Phase 3 obtaining a stay on the sealing drive.

The crackdown has already prompted some tenants to move out. Navam, a 24-year-old software engineer from Punjab, vacated his PG accommodation and shifted to a rented room in a house owned by an elderly couple. “I have rented a room in a double-storey house. It is not a PG. I hope I will not face any trouble here,” he says.

A landlord in the area, who requested anonymity, admits that owners had prior information. “We did not inform the tenants because we did not expect action on such a large scale, targeting more than 5,000 properties.”

He claims that his building had all the required permissions, but shops and gyms operating on the stilt floor, designated for parking, violated the building by-laws.

Blatant violations

The extent of unauthorised construction and commercial activity in DLF Phase 3, uncovered during the enforcement drive by the Department of Town and Country Planning (DTCP), came as a shock to many residents.

The largest of the sealed properties, a 1,000-square-yard PG facility built by amalgamating two plots, had 128 rooms spread across four floors. What made it a glaring violation, officials said, was that a gym was being operated from the basement and the stilt floor housed a kitchen and a restaurant, both of which are prohibited under the building by-laws.

The drive revealed a pattern across the area: sealed properties were not only housing tenants but also operating full-fledged commercial establishments. Among those sealed were a 48-room PG facility, an unauthorised beauty parlour operating from the basement, and a 25-room PG accommodation on the upper floors of the same building, an official says.

One of the sealed buildings had a basement, a stilt floor, and four upper floors with 26 rooms in all. Here too, the basement was being used as a gym, while the stilt floor housed a salon and an

office. Repeated calls and messages to DLF’s corporate communications head Divya Puri went unanswered.

Booming PG business

Gurugram’s PG and co-living market is expanding rapidly, driven by a steady influx of young professionals from across the country seeking jobs in Cyber City, Golf Course Road, Udyog Vihar, and the growing office corridor along Sohna Road. According to conservative estimates, PG accommodations in DLF Phase 3, housing 20 to 100 rooms, generate monthly rental income ranging from ₹10 lakh to ₹30 lakh.

For many, the priority is straightforward: a fully furnished place close to work, without the need to buy furniture or commit to a long lease. That demand has made PG and co-living spaces one of the city’s most lucrative rental businesses.

The market, however, is far from uniform. It varies sharply by location and budget. DLF Phases 3 and 4 remain among the most-sought-after localities. Within walking distance of Cyber City, they attract professionals willing to pay a premium for private rooms and branded co-living spaces. A few kilometres away, Sectors 15, 39, and 46 have emerged as hubs for affordable and mid-range accommodation. Owing to their proximity to Medanta Hospital, the IFFCO Chowk metro station, and major corporate offices along MG Road, these sectors are home to numerous shared accommodations popular among early-career professionals and students. Paying guest accommodation in Sectors 15 and 46 typically costs between ₹4,500 and ₹15,000 a month, depending on the amenities offered.

Farther south, Golf Course Extension Road and Sohna Road have emerged as the new frontiers for organised co-living. Owners are developing premium properties with amenities such as gyms, lounges, and concierge services, targeting senior executives and expatriates moving into new corporate campuses. Monthly rents in these areas generally range from ₹7,000 to ₹30,000, depending on the location and facilities.

What began as informal PG accommodations run by individual landlords has gradually evolved into an organised, service-oriented housing sector. DLF Phase 3’s EWS plots are central to the rental income business in Gurugram. R.P. Yadav, a lawyer who runs a PG accommodation in U Block on Road No. 11, explains the economics. “A 60-square-yard EWS plot here costs around ₹2.5 crore to ₹3 crore,” he says. “Add another ₹1 crore for construction. After an investment of around ₹4 crore, the monthly income is about ₹1 lakh to ₹1.5 lakh.”

According to Yadav, although building norms require 25% of the plot to be left open, “the entire plot is covered after the completion certificate”. “The architect also helps with it,” he adds.

While the older policy permits a stilt floor plus four upper floors, he says, several buildings have been constructed with five floors. A typical 60-square-yard PG facility has two rooms on each floor, with a total of eight to 10 rooms. Monthly rents range from ₹6,000 for an unfurnished room to ₹15,000 for a fully furnished one equipped with air conditioning, a television, an attached bathroom, and a kitchenette.

Yadav estimates that DLF Phase 3 has more than 1,000 EWS plots and that nearly half of the developed ones are being used as PG accommodations, particularly in S, U, and V blocks.

Policy paralysis

Most PG accommodations in the city’s residential colonies are operating in violation of policy norms, says District Town Planner (Enforcement) Amit Madholia. Under the policy regarding setting up guest or boarding houses in residential zones, a building cannot be subdivided into separate IRK or IBHK units for rent. Rooms can only be let out for stays of less than one month. The policy also caps the total land area permitted for guest houses within any residential sector or colony in Gurugram at 1.25 acres.

Haryana’s Affordable Rental Housing Policy, notified in 2021, seeks to provide short-term (minimum one month) and long-term (up to 99 years) rental housing for industrial workers, migrants, and corporate employees. However, it has seen limited uptake among private developers because of undivided ownership provisions, capped rents, and high land and construction costs. Under this policy, all housing units can only be rented and not sold, keeping ownership of the project undivided. The minimum project area is 0.5 acres while the maximum is 4 acres.

“As both policies fell short of meeting the growing demand for IBHK and IRK rental units, property owners capitalised on the gap. Residential buildings were illegally converted into PG accommodations in blatant violation of the building by-laws and, reportedly, with the active connivance of some DTCP officials and architects. Driven by profit, many operators also opened gyms, salons, and restaurants on stilt floors while enforcement agencies looked the other way,” says a retired DTCP official.

With land in sectors around major office hubs already fully utilised, framing a policy that addresses the demand for rental housing while curbing commercial activity in residential areas is no longer feasible, the retired official adds.



A building sealed by the District Town Planner (Enforcement) in DLF Phase 3, Gurugram on July 6. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

A man in a striped shirt and checkered dhoti sits on the ground, looking out over a vast, dry, and cracked landscape. In the distance, a large herd of cattle is grazing on sparse vegetation under a cloudy sky. The foreground shows a dry, cracked earth with sparse green grass and dry, yellowed stalks. The middle ground features a large herd of cattle, including black, brown, and white cows, grazing on the dry vegetation. The background shows a line of trees and a cloudy sky. The overall scene depicts a dry, arid environment, likely due to a poor monsoon season.

All is not well in the famed 'Granary of South India'. Between a poor southwest monsoon and lack of water in the Cauvery, crops and farmers are left high and dry. The kuruvai cultivation area in Thanjavur alone has dipped to around 89,000 acres this season from around 1,94,000 acres in the previous cultivation year. **S. Ganesan** explores the situation on the ground

A land gone dry: A farmer watches over a parched paddy field near Budatur in Thanjavur. As the Mettur dam could not be opened on the customary date of June 12 owing to insufficient storage, a majority of farmers in the delta could not grow paddy this kuruvai season. R. VENGADESH

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