



LOWER COURT RULING

Kerala man gets death for Pothundy murders

STATES » PAGE 3

SC ON POLICY LANGUAGE

'Insurance companies exploiting ambiguity'

BUSINESS » PAGE 12



RAM TEMPLE CASE

SC proposes probe by SIT of senior officers

NEWS » PAGE 6

TOWNSHIP PLAN

Bidadi becomes Karnataka's new battleground

Project sets off farmers' stir and a political duel

OPINION » PAGE 9



MYSTERIOUS DEATH

Tripura Police chief found dead in office

NEWS » PAGE 6

INSIDE



No decision on ethanol blending beyond 20%: MoS

NEW DELHI

Notwithstanding a series of measures taken in the recent past to popularise bio-fuel blending, the government on Monday informed that no decision had been taken to increase the blending quantum with petrol beyond the present 20%. » PAGE 12



Home delivery of SIR papers starts in Karnataka

BENGALURU

Amid the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, Karnataka Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Monday launched an initiative to issue Permanent Residence Certificates (PRCs), one of the 11 documents accepted by the Election Commission (EC) for voter verification under the exercise, on the doorstep of people. » PAGE 3

India clears first dengue vaccine for ages 4 to 60

NEW DELHI

The Drug Controller General of India has granted market authorisation to Takeda Biopharmaceuticals India's QDENG (TAK-003), making it the first dengue vaccine to be approved in the country, according to a press release from the company. The vaccine has been approved for the prevention of dengue in people aged four to 60. » PAGE 6

Several hurt in crackdown on CJP stir

Scores hospitalised; CJP leaders meet Nadda, demand removal of Pradhan

Wangchuk cites 'brutality', says will fast till MPs meet the 'youth leaders' or him

70 protesters detained, say police; protest at Jantar Mantar will continue, says CJP

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

Several people were injured here on Monday when the police cracked down on a Parliament march called by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) seeking the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan even as the government reached out to the CJP.

At least 38 of the injured were taken to the Lady Hardinge Medical College and around 65 to the Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, with fractures, swellings, and head and eye injuries, sources said.

The protests brought to the fore the growing discontent over the NEET paper leak and irregularities in the CBSE school examination process as slogans of "Dharmendra Pradhan, isteeffa do (resign)" boomed. The police

action on one of the largest protests in the national capital in recent years came amid an Internet shutdown in the New Delhi district.

Police resorted to baton-charge and lobbed tear-gas shells on multiple occasions in Jantar Mantar, Patel Chowk, India Gate, Connaught Place, and other parts of the area where large groups protested. Police, however, denied using disproportionate force.

The Delhi Police said in a statement that 70 protesters were detained. "Appropriate legal action is being initiated, and an FIR is being registered... for rioting, assault on public servants, damage to public property, and other offences," a press release said.

Representatives of the CJP, Saurav Das and Ashutosh Ranka, later met with Union Minister J.P. Nadda to formally seek resignation of the Union Educa-



Security forces use tear gas to disperse CJP protesters during their march in New Delhi on Monday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

tion Minister. They said Mr. Nadda had agreed to discuss the demands with the government. However, the CJP was still waiting for a response, Mr. Das said in the evening, adding: "The protest is continuing at Jantar Mantar."

Waves of protest
Seeing the "brutality with which peacefully protesting youth are being dealt

with", activist Sonam Wangchuk said he will continue fasting "until the youth leaders are allowed to meet the parliamentarians at the Sansad Bhawan, or I am allowed to meet them here at the hospital".

Mr. Wangchuk had earlier indicated that he was on the verge of calling off his fast if MPs met and assured him that they would raise the issue of education

Modi is the most anti-youth PM ever, says Rahul

NEW DELHI

The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Monday accused PM Narendra Modi of being "the most anti-youth PM India has ever had" while backing the students' demands related to recurring examination paper leaks as "legitimate". » PAGE 4

in the Monsoon Session. Earlier, CJP leaders did not begin the march to the Parliament in the morning, having established contact with the government through New Delhi's deputy commissioner of police. Delhi Police said in a statement that over 118 police personnel sustained injuries, and that 60 protesters were injured in the melee. "During today's protest by

CJP in the New Delhi area, the protesters displayed unruly, aggressive and violent behaviour," the police statement said, accusing the "violent mob [of causing] extensive damage to public property".

By early afternoon, hundreds of protesters slipped through barricades onto Sansad Marg, heading southwest to the new Parliament building. When they were a few hundred metres away from the Parliament house, security forces lathi-charged a gathering, around which time mobile Internet too was cut at 150 spots.

During the lathi charge, the crowd ran towards the Janata Dal (United) office causing a wall to collapse. (With inputs from Shrimansi Kaushik, Sreeparna Chakraborty, Ashna Butani, and Sobhana K.)

ANGER BEYOND PAPER LEAK
» PAGE 4

Modi calls for constructive talks amid LS, RS disruptions

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha proceedings were disrupted on the first day of the Monsoon Session of Parliament on Monday as Opposition parties raised various issues. The Lower House was adjourned six times since it met in the morning before being adjourned for the day. The Rajya Sabha also saw proceedings disrupted with six adjournments.

Meanwhile, calling for cooperation across party lines, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged MPs to address the aspirations of the country by engaging in informed and respectful debate. As India gathers pace in its development journey, Parliament has a vital role in providing fresh impetus through constructive debates, Mr. Modi said.

REPORTS ON
» PAGE 5

Spanish delight



Hero's welcome: The Spanish team with the trophy on arrival in Madrid on Monday, after being crowned FIFA World Cup champion with a 1-0 victory over Argentina in the final on Sunday. It was the *La Roja's* second triumph after the success in 2010. AP (REPORT: PAGE 16)

New U.K. PM Burnham vows to bring social reform

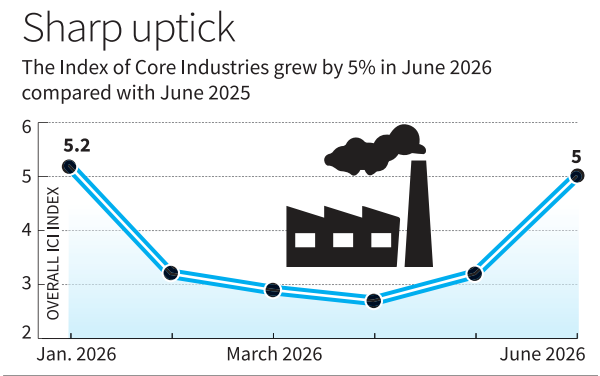
Sriram Lakshman
LONDON

Former Manchester Mayor, Andrew Burnham, was appointed Prime Minister of the U.K. on Monday, its seventh in a decade. Mr. Burnham described the moment as a "circuit breaker", as he promised to usher in a new political and social model for the country, taking power out of London and spreading it across the U.K.

The outgoing Prime Minister Keir Starmer made history on Monday for becoming the U.K.'s shortest serving Labour PM.

FULL REPORT ON
» PAGE 14

Core sectors grow at five-month high of 5%



T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

India's core industrial sectors grew at 5% in June 2026, the fastest in five months, as per the inaugural release of the new and updated series of the Index of Core Industries (ICI).

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Monday released the new series of the ICI, with an updated base year of 2022-23 from the earlier 2011-12. Further, the updated index has an additional sector of iron ore added to it, taking the total number of sectors it covers to nine. The sectoral weights and methods of estimation have also been updated.

Within the index, the fastest growth was recorded by iron ore, which grew 43.9% in June 2026 against 19% in May.

Statistical base effect
This growth, however, was likely due to a statistical base effect, since the sector contracted 16.4% in June last year.

Electricity, cement, steel, and coal grew 9.8%, 9.8%, 4.6% and 1.4% respectively.

"The Index of Core Industries grew by 5% in June 2026 (provisional estimate) on a year-on-year basis, compared with June 2025," the Office of Economic Adviser in the De-

partment for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) said.

"This marks an improvement over the growth rate of 3.2% recorded in May 2026 [final estimate]."

The Index of Core Industries last grew faster in January 2026 when it hit a growth of 5.2%, as per the new series. "Owing to intensive use of iron ore in the production process, and its contribution to industrial development, it has been included in the list of core industries as a new item in the revised series of ICI (base year 2022-23)," the Ministry said in a statement.

Nearly all the sectors relating to hydrocarbon energy and its products, such as crude oil (-4.2%), natural gas (-7.4%), refinery products (-4.7%), and fertilisers (-3.3%) contracted in June 2026.

"The entire crude oil related sectors – crude oil, gas, refinery products and fertilizers – witnessed negative growth in June which can be attributed to higher imports with global crude prices cooling off," Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at the Bank of Baroda said.

"The export of refinery products had slowed down this month. In case of fertilizers, imports tended to increase."

Four Indians killed near Ukrainian port of Odessa

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Four Indian citizens were killed and one was critically injured in an attack on a merchant vessel near the Ukrainian port of Odessa on Sunday.

India condemned the incident and called such attacks impeding freedom of navigation "deplorable". The Ministry of External Affairs on Monday reiterated India's opposition to attacks on merchant vessels as such incidents violate the freedom of navigation.

The Acting Foreign Minister of Ukraine, Andrii Sybiha, has blamed Russia for the attack and said five crew members of the ship remain missing.

"On the evening of 19 July 2026, vessel *MV Golden Leo* was attacked while de-



Caught in a war: Smoke rising from civilian cargo ship *Golden Leo* in the Black Sea, following an alleged Russian missile strike on Sunday. AFP

parting the port of Odessa. At the time of the incident, there were 17 crew members on board, including five Indians. As per information available, four Indian nationals have tragically lost their lives, while one is hospitalised in a critical condition," said the Ministry in its statement.

"India condemns such attacks and reiterates that targeting commercial shipping and endangering innocent civilian crew members, or otherwise impeding freedom of navigation and commerce is deplorable and should be avoided," said the MEA in its statement.

The incident comes amid the death of several Indian seafarers in the continuing attacks by the U.S. and Iran on commercial vessels in the Gulf.

The Ukraine's Acting Foreign Minister said the attack was not an isolated incident. "Russia has now struck a civilian vessel na-

vigating Ukraine's maritime corridor. The crew included citizens of Syria and India. A Ukrainian maritime pilot was killed," said Mr. Sybiha. He said Russia attacked another merchant vessel with the flag of Antigua and Barbuda in the Black Sea on Saturday. Mr. Sybiha said Ukraine had informed the International Maritime Organization and Ukraine's international partners "about Russia's latest attacks on civilian shipping, as well as the states whose citizens were killed or injured."

Maritime Trade News has reported that *Golden Leo* was carrying a crew of 17 Syrian and Indian nationals and that at least 10 sailors were killed in the attack. The Russian authorities are yet to comment on the incident.

Iran fighting a 'full-scale war', says President Pezeshkian

Agence France-Presse
TEHRAN

Iran is fighting a "full-scale war" with the U.S., President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Monday, as Washington expanded its strikes across the Islamic republic including a city hosting a nuclear power plant.

Iran kept up its own attacks across the region in response, with its Revolutionary Guards announcing they had hit targets in Bahrain, Jordan, and Syria, while Bahrain said its air navigation systems were targeted.

FULL REPORT ON
» PAGE 14

INBRIEF



UCC Bill in M.P. House; uproar over ‘land deals’ linked to CM

The Madhya Pradesh government on Monday introduced the draft Uniform Civil Code Bill, prohibiting polygamy and mandating the registration of marriages and divorces for all faiths, in the Assembly, even as the Congress created uproar over alleged land purchases linked to CM Mohan Yadav. Speaker Narendra Singh Tomar said the House would take up the Bill for discussion on Tuesday. The purported land purchase was raised in a newspaper report, which claimed that Mr. Yadav and his family members bought land parcels after he became the Chief Minister, a charge the BJP denied as baseless.

MP Manoj Jha urges PM to stop demolitions at Jauhar varsity

The Uttar Pradesh government continues to face opposition over the proposed demolition of 38 out of 40 buildings at Mohammad Ali Jauhar University in Rampur, with Rajya Sabha member Manoj Kumar Jha on Monday writing to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking his immediate intervention to halt any such move. Mr. Jha said such an action would, for all practical purposes, amount to demolishing a functioning university created under State legislation and currently serving 3,000 students. “Should this action be allowed to proceed, it will be remembered as a blot in the history of 21st century India,” he said.

Sukhbir Badal appears before SIT in 2015 Punjab firing case

Press Trust of India
CHANDIGARH

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) chief Sukhbir Singh Badal on Monday was questioned for around two hours by the Punjab police's Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the 2015 Behlal Kalan police firing incident.

Mr. Badal, who was summoned by the SIT led by Deputy Inspector General (Bathinda range) Harjit Singh to appear before it at the Punjab Police Officers Institute (PPOI) in Sector 32, Chandigarh, alleged the SIT was formed by the Bhagwant Mann government to fight a political battle.

Heavy police deployment was made around the PPOI with Chandigarh police erecting barricades on roads leading to the venue,



AKALI DAL CHIEF SUKHBIR BADAL

where Akali Dal leaders, including former MLA N.K. Sharma, and party supporters gathered ahead of Mr. Badal's arrival.

SAD chief was accompanied by party leaders Bikram Singh Majithia and Balwinder Singh Bhundar as he left for the PPOI from his Sector 9 residence.

Speaking to reporters after questioning, Mr. Badal said it was the fourth time that he was summoned.

“Whenever I was called, I came because as the pre-

sident of the Akali Dal, I want the real culprits to be apprehended,” he said.

“However, the SIT has not been formed to catch culprits but to fight a political battle,” the SAD chief alleged.

He said it has been nearly 11 years but the SIT has not been able to complete its investigation.

AAP govt. criticised

Criticising the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government, Mr. Badal said, “They want to show in the media that Badal has been summoned. It does not matter to me.” Attacking the Chief Minister, he claimed that the entire Punjab was against Mr. Mann and alleged that AAP has “looted” the State.

“It is a drama. Akali Dal is neither scared nor it will bow down,” Mr. Badal said.

30,000 students, 1,100 seats: DU’s 1-year PG rollout hits a roadblock

Ira Wasan
NEW DELHI

With more than 30,000 students graduating from Delhi University's (DU) inaugural four-year undergraduate programme and only a little over 1,100 seats on offer across 46 one-year postgraduate courses, several students contend that the promised progression from the undergraduate degree to a one-year master's has not been matched by adequate capacity despite having invested an additional year in pursuit of the pathway.

Introduced for the 2026-27 academic session under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, it allows students who have completed DU's Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP) to pursue a master's degree in one year instead of the conventional two-year programme.

The programme has been introduced in addition to DU's existing two-



MEMBERS OF THE ABVP STAGING A PROTEST ON THE DELHI UNIVERSITY CAMPUS ON JULY 17. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

year postgraduate programmes, which offer around 13,500 seats across 74 disciplines.

According to the university's information bulletin, the one-year postgraduate programmes together offer just over 1,100 seats across 46 disciplines, taking the total postgraduate intake to around 14,600 seats. Students, however, argue that the intake for the one-year programme remains disproportionately small.

The issue prompted stu-

dent organisations to stage protests on campus, demanding an increase in the number of seats.

The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) on July 17 staged a protest at the university campus.

ABVP Delhi secretary Sarthak Sharma said, “The university administration must immediately enhance the number of seats to ensure that no deserving student is denied access to higher education because of seat constraints.”

HC orders CID probe into ashram school sexual assault case

Chinmay Gaiikwad
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court's Kolhapur Circuit Bench has transferred the investigation into the 2025 sexual assault of a minor girl at an ashram school in Ratnagiri district to the State Criminal Investigation Department (CID). The court also expressed concerns over the shoddy investigation and the handling of the case.

The Division Bench of Justices Vrushali Joshi and Sandesh Patil passed the order on July 13, with a copy made available on Monday. The parents of the victim had approached the court seeking transfer of the probe to an independent agency, alleging that the police probe was improper.



KCBC SPOKESPERSON FR. THOMAS THARAYIL. FILE PHOTO

Those receiving the funds need to file utilisation details. Also, income tax returns need to be submitted every year. The government can easily verify the utilisation and details of the total money received through IT returns' verification,” said Fr. Tharayil.

‘Unmet promise’

The KCBC spokesperson said when the Bill was announced during the Assembly election period, Bharatiya Janata Party

leaders in Kerala had promised that they would intervene to address the concerns raised by the Church. “But after the Assembly election, no BJP leader in Kerala contacted the Church leadership on the issue. During a recent meeting the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India representatives had with Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the Minister only gave an assurance that the FCRA Bill would not have a retroactive effect. We don't know how that assurance will work, and we will get the details only after the original content of the Bill is out,” said Fr. Tharayil.

‘Alarming clauses’

The KCBC has already submitted letters to all Opposition MPs from Kerala, demanding that they oppose the Bill when it is presented in Parliament. “We hope the MPs from Kerala will raise their voice against the Bill,” he said.

The KCBC further noted

that some clauses in the Bill are alarming. “If an organisation fails to submit details of a foreign donation or decides to stop receiving foreign donations, the Bill states that the building constructed using those funds will go to the government. But the reality is that for the construction of hospitals or schools, 80% of the funding comes from local resources, with only the remaining 20% supported by foreign funds. Yet, the Bill recommends taking over of such properties. Such provisions are raising serious concerns,” said Fr. Tharayil.

He noted that this is not an issue affecting only the Christian community. “It will negatively affect all communities. The Church always welcomes action under existing laws if any issues are found regarding funds utilisation; there is no need to introduce another FCRA Bill,” he said.

DMK MLA arrested for remarks against Tamil Nadu CM

The Hindu Bureau
THOOTHUKUDI/CHENNAI

The Thoothukudi District Crime Branch Police on Monday arrested Vilathikulam MLA G.V. Markandayan of the DMK on the charge of making remarks “derogatory” to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay at a public meeting organised by the party in Kovilpatti.

The meeting was held on Saturday to thank the voters following the Assembly election. Several DMK leaders, including DMK organisation secretary R.S. Bharathi and former Minister P. Geetha Jeevan, were present. In his speech, Mr. Markandayan had allegedly made certain remarks against Mr. Vijay. Following this, Tamilaga Vetti Kazhagam (TVK) north district secretary Balasubramanian lodged a complaint with the police on Sunday.

On Monday morning, the police arrived at Mr. Markandayan's residence at Vilathikulam and arrested him. He was taken to the office of Superintendent of Police in Thoothukudi for further inquiry. The police have booked him under three Sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita: 351(3) (criminal intimidation), 352



G.V. MARKANDAYAN

(intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace), and 353(2) (statements conducing to public mischief).

Ms. Geetha Jeevan and over 100 DMK workers were detained after they staged a sit-in in front of the Thoothukudi Collectorate. They started the protest after the police denied them permission to meet Mr. Markandayan.

‘No case filed’

Ms. Geetha Jeevan alleged that no case was filed against the Srivaikuntam MLA of the TVK even after a woman made charges of sexual assault. “If a matter involves TVK members, no action is taken. If it involves the DMK, an immediate arrest is made. This is suppression and authoritarianism,” she added.

Panchayat, local elections to be over by Nov. 15: Rajasthan govt.

Mohammed Iqbal
JAIPUR

The long-awaited elections to panchayati raj and urban local bodies in Rajasthan will be completed by November 15 this year, following the submission of a report by the Other Backward Classes (OBC) Political Representation Commission in August. The reservation of seats in the polls will be determined on the basis of the commission's report.

The Bharatiya Janata Party government submitted the schedule for panchayat and local body elections in the Rajasthan High Court during the hearing on a batch of public interest petitions on Monday. The High Court had on November 14, 2025, directed the State government to complete the delimitation process by December 31 and

Reservation of seats will be determined on the basis of the OBC panel's report to be submitted in August

hold the polls by April 15, 2026.

After the court's strict observations, the Local Self-Government Department and Panchayati Raj Department filed an affidavit stating that the classification of wards for reservation would be completed within 10 days after the submission of the OBC commission's report.

The reservation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and women will be completed through the lottery process by August 15, after which the State Election Commission will initiate the process for

conducting the polls, according to the affidavit.

When the Division Bench led by Acting Chief Justice S.P. Sharma asked for specific dates, the Advocate-General stated that the local body elections would be notified on August 17 and held by September 20, followed by panchayat election notification on September 23 and completion of polls by November 15.

Petitions over delay

The petitions over the delay in conducting elections were filed by a citizen, Giriraj Singh Devanda, and former MLA Sanyam Lodha. The High Court had on April 2 this year issued contempt notices to the State Election Commission Rajeshwar Singh, taking exception to the delay despite its previous order.

Suvendu tables police firing report, blames Mamata for ‘inaction’

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Monday made public the report of Justice Susanta Chatterjee Commission which probed the police firing on July 21, 1993, which claimed the lives of 13 Youth Congress supporters.

The commission was set up by former Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee after she came to power in 2011 and Mr. Adhikari said that Ms. Banerjee neither implemented several key recommendations of the panel nor made its report public despite receiving it in 2014.

Ms. Banerjee, a youth Congress leader then was also injured in the police action. The report was made public on the eve of Martyrs Day rally, when the rival factions of Trinamool Con-



CM SUVENDU ADHIKARI

gress will hold separate rallies in Kolkata.

‘Advice not followed’

“The commission recommended ₹25 lakh as compensation for the family of each person killed and ₹5 lakh for every injured person. But the previous Trinamool Congress government neither implemented these recommendations nor paid the compensation,” Mr. Adhikari said. The families of those killed received only ₹2 lakh and the injured ₹15,000, the Chief Minister alleged.



The Karnataka government has taken steps to implement Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Skill Education instead of a third language in 1,652 government high schools in the State under the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) from the 2026-27 academic year. The 'Samagra Shikshana-Karnataka' (SSIK) has issued a circular for the appointment of guest teachers to teach AI and for necessary preparations to be made at the school level.

Telangana Transport Minister Ponnampalapati Prabhakar on Monday handed over a cheque of ₹90,85,500 to the family members of K. Shankar – a driver at the corporation who died after an immolation bid during the RTC employees' strike in April. Speaking at a programme in Hyderabad, Mr. Prabhakar assured that Shankar's son would be provided with a job and the family with a house. He also said the government stands by the merger which was demanded during the strike.

Telangana government launched the scheme for construction of Indramma Houses in Hyderabad Core Urban Region (CURE), on Monday. The houses will be built in high-rise buildings. Applications for the houses will be received from July 21 to August 10, through MeeSeva Centres, its portal, or its services on WhatsApp, as per official communication. While the government's subsidy will be ₹5 lakh, the beneficiary's tentative contribution is ₹6 lakh.

CM
YK

AISA activists end fast on 23rd day after MPs’ appeal

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Three All India Students’ Association (AISA) activists ended their indefinite hunger strike on Monday, the 23rd day of the fast, at Jantar Mantar here following appeals by parliamentarians, civil society members, and academics. They said they would opt for “other forms of struggle”.

Neha Bora, Ameen Amij, and Manish Kumar sat on hunger strike on June 28, when climate activist Sonam Wangchuk began his, on the protest called by the Cockroach Janta Party seeking the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

“The amount of joy that we got today seeing crowds of lakhs of students and youth was more than the joy of breaking the hunger strike today,” said Ms. Neha, AISA national president and a Ph.D. scholar.

“I want to appeal to everyone to stand with the movement,” she added.

N. Sai Balaji, former JNUSU president from AISA said that they will take up a month-long campaign parallel to the Parliament Session echoing their demands brought up at Jantar Mantar.

Delhi HC seeks medical reports of Wangchuk

Counsel says Wangchuk has a constitutional right to continue his protest; Solicitor-General says any deterioration in the activist’s health or any unforeseen event can have repercussions

Soibam Rocky Singh
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday posted for hearing on Tuesday an appeal filed by Gitanjali J. Angmo, wife of climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, seeking his transfer from the government-run Safdarjung Hospital in New Delhi to a hospital of his choice.

A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice D.K. Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia said its immediate concern was to “save his life first” and sought clarity on Mr. Wangchuk’s current medical condition. The activist has been on a hunger strike for 23 days.

The Bench directed that all pathological reports based on blood samples analysed by Safdarjung Hospital, AIIMS, and a private laboratory be placed on record.

The High Court also asked the lead doctor treating Mr. Wangchuk at Safdarjung hospital as well as the private physician consulted by the family to remain present at the next hearing.



Activist Sonam Wangchuk was taken to Safdarjung hospital in New Delhi by police from the Jantar Mantar protest site on July 18. ANI

Appearing for Ms. Angmo, senior advocate Akhil Sibal submitted that Mr. Wangchuk was “willing to be discharged against medical advice so that no blame falls on the treating doctors”.

“If he wishes, he will check into another hospital, if that situation is required. Today, he does not want to be restrained from leaving the premises. He is feeling fine, he is cogent, he is clear-headed. He is able to write representations in his own hand. That scenario of a life-threatening situation has not yet emerged. He is not in the

ICU. If such a situation arises, he will take the necessary measures,” Mr. Sibal argued.

Right to protest

He contended that Mr. Wangchuk’s autonomy could not be curtailed without the sanction of law and emphasised that he had a constitutional right to continue his protest. Citing judicial precedents, Mr. Sibal argued that “hunger strikes are a recognised form of constitutionally protected protest” and one’s “bodily autonomy should not be taken away like this without

sanction of law”. Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the authorities, countered that while the right to protest is a fundamental right, it is not absolute when public interest and preservation of life are involved. “The life of everyone, including the petitioner’s husband, is precious and needs to be protected,” Mr. Mehta submitted.

Responding to allegations regarding discrepancies in medical reports, the Solicitor-General said blood samples had been examined by Safdarjung hospital, AIIMS and a private laboratory, and that “substantially, all the three reports came to be the same”.

Mr. Mehta argued that the State’s interest becomes relevant when deterioration in a protester’s health could have wider consequences.

The appeal challenges a single-judge order passed on Sunday declining to direct Mr. Wangchuk’s transfer from Safdarjung hospital to Medanta hospital in Gurugram, where his family wishes him to be treated.

Modi should listen to the legitimate demands of protesting students: Rahul

Sandeep Phukan
NEW DELHI

The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Monday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of being “the most anti-youth Prime Minister India has ever had” while backing the students’ demands related to recurring examination paper leaks as “legitimate”.

The Congress, while condemning the police action against protesters attempting to march to Parliament on the opening day of the Monsoon Session, also sought to underline that it had been raising the issue of paper leaks long before the present agitation led by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP).

In a video message, Mr. Gandhi stressed that the Congress had been raising the issue “not for weeks or months, but for years”.

“The country has a majority of young people. Prime Minister Modi is the most anti-youth PM India has ever had. The boys and girls who are walking the streets of Delhi are not criminals. They are demanding their rights,” Mr. Gand



Rahul Gandhi

hi said. The Opposition leader said it was the right of a student to have “an education system that respects them, that is fair and that is working”.

“There’s absolutely nothing wrong in what they are doing. And it is disgusting what the government is doing and what the police is doing,” he said.

“Tear-gassing students, lathi-charging students is not democratic. It is not India’s way... They have legitimate demands. The Prime Minister should accept these demands and do something about it,” Mr. Gandhi said. In a post on X, Mr. Gandhi, addressing the police and government employees, said the right to protest was an inviolable fundamental right. “Power

does not last forever. Accountability will certainly be enforced,” he said.

Those responsible for leaking examination papers continued to go free while students raising “valid issues” were being beaten and detained, he said.

“This government is not just failing the youth – it is pouncing on them,” he said. The Congress leader claimed that “everybody is sick and tired of how the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) has captured our education system”.

The Opposition leader claimed there had been 152 paper leaks affecting 7.5 crore students, and questioned why Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan remained in office.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra reiterated that the party had consistently demanded a discussion on paper leaks and the education system. The Congress’s calibrated response is an attempt to reclaim the space the CJP appears to have carved out among youth in recent days, with activist Sonam Wangchuk emerging as the face of the protest.

Internet cut off for mobile phone users in Central Delhi

Aroon Deep
Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

In the first widespread communications blackout in Delhi since the farmers’ agitation in 2021, mobile Internet was switched off throughout Central Delhi, even as demonstrators poured into Jantar Mantar and security forces were dispersing them with force. The shutdown impeded the flow of visuals from the area. Protesters and journalists alike resorted to Wi-Fi hotspots at nearby establishments.

Mobile Internet was also shut down for a two-hour period last Saturday morning when activist Sonam Wangchuk was forcibly hospitalised by plain-clothes police officers.

An industry source told *The Hindu* that 150 sites across Central Delhi were ordered to have Internet access cut off; the order was first issued till noon and subsequently extended till 6 p.m.

“Such a measure is not only disproportionate but



Scattered footwear at the protest site in New Delhi after the police crackdown on Monday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

also strikes at the heart of the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression, including the right to peacefully protest and to access information online, all recognized under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India,” SFLC said in a statement.

IFF criticised the lack of publication of a shutdown order, required by the Telecommunications (Temporary Suspension of Services) Rules, 2024. A copy of the orders, issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, obtained later in the day by *The Hindu*, cited “public

safety and averting public emergency” as reasons.

“Residents of the capital do not know which authority directed the shutdown, on what grounds, over which precise areas, for which services, or for what duration,” IFF added. “An unpublished order is an unaccountable order. It cannot be challenged before a court, and the judicial review guaranteed by the Supreme Court becomes illusory.”

The shutdown lasted until 6 p.m., significantly deferring videos of the crackdown on protesters.

Protesters’ anger extends beyond paper leaks

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

Four years after the Prime Minister inaugurated the Central Vista Avenue and renamed Rajpath as Kartavya Path, police jeeps and motorcycle-borne police personnel drove on the verdant lawns, chasing down protesters who had gathered on Monday morning to take part in the march to Parliament.

The call was given by the newly minted Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), born on social media and focused solely on demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. But the accrued discontent of the protesters went beyond the anger over the spate of paper leak incidents. Their collective despair centred on what they saw as the government’s indifference and refusal to even acknowledge their concerns.

One of the many common threads connecting those who faced police lathis was that many of them had voted for the Bharatiya Janata Party in the past or came from fa-



Police lathi-charge CJP supporters during their march to the Parliament in New Delhi on Monday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

milies that had traditionally supported the BJP.

‘Modi’s arrogance’

“How can the government continue to ignore the spate of paper leaks?” asked Sadhna Singh (name changed). Ms. Singh wanted her real name to be withheld fearing retributive action from the government. The government, she said, sends regular updates on various social media groups but did not say a word about the paper leaks or recognise the protest.

“Yesterday, P.V. Sindhu

won a gold medal in Japan in badminton, and the government is claiming credit for it. But you can’t bear to even acknowledge this,” Ms. Singh said.

Next to her, 50-year-old Kavita Verma had joined the protest. She has voted for the BJP since 2014.

“I felt pride for the brilliant roads they gave us. They did good work in the initial years, but it has been a sharp downside. People can clearly see Narendra Modi’s arrogance. You cannot run a country on the power of lathi,” she said.

She is angry that the

peaceful protest was disrupted by the police using lathis and tear gas shells. “Why are the students being treated as terrorists?” she added.

This group was resting at Rafi Marg, next to the artificial waterbody, at 1 p.m. after they were dispersed by the police from the barricade close to the Press Club of India. Since entry to Metro stations had been closed, they were wondering how to return home.

The calm broke with a fresh surge of protesters being chased down Rafi Marg by the police. Delhi Police vans and buses rolled down the road, picking up protesters at random and stuffing them into the vehicles. The protesters ran to the India Gate lawns. Just as they settled down there to continue their agitation, police motorcycles and vans arrived, driving on the lawns to chase them away.

Change after noon

Rachna Chawla, 26, an IT professional, spoke to *The Hindu* even as a police motorcycle tailed the group. Ms. Chawla said while anger over the paper leaks

may have been the starting point, the protests had grown beyond that.

Ms. Chawla said she was surprised that for the first few hours the movement was unhindered, but something changed after noon. The conversation was punctuated by police sirens and persistent honking from police vans, warning protesters to stay away.

It started raining, and the protesters crowded at the bus stand on Janpath.

Nishant, 26, who hails from Nawada, Bihar, was livid. His life is not marked by stories of paper leaks. His anger is for inchoate reasons – from his low salary, to long hours of working, to the one-room tenement that he shares with his family near R.K. Puram, to schools shut down in his village, to rising inflation, to the ethanol-mixed petrol that is affecting his old motorcycle; the reasons keep going on.

“I voted for BJP, twice,” he underlined. “The government is blind, mute and deaf. It can’t see the protests, it can’t hear our complaints and it can’t speak a word about all this,” he said.

Police outnumbered by a sea of marching protesters

Vijaita Singh
Nistula Hebbar
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police and other security personnel were outnumbered and taken aback by thousands of protesters who arrived in and around Jantar Mantar on Monday, a senior government official said.

Despite multiple layers of barricades, deployment of around 3,000 security personnel and an Internet shutdown, large crowds comprising mostly students and young people were able to reach the doorsteps of Parliament, before they were tear-gassed and beaten with batons.

The “leaderless” protesters faced little resistance from the police as they marched from Jantar Man-

tar towards Raisina Marg, *The Hindu* witnessed.

All radial roads leading to Parliament were teeming with protesters who brought down the barricades as they marched on, with the police using buses to block their movement, just 100 metres from the Parliament complex, where the first day of the Monsoon Session commenced on Monday.

The crowd had gathered based on a call given by the online youth group, Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), to march to Parliament demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the recent NEET(UG) examination paper leak.

The forcible removal of activist Sonam Wangchuk from the dais at Jantar Mantar likely gave a fillip to



Police personnel deployed during the CJP’s march to Parliament in New Delhi on Monday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

the protest as hundreds of people started pouring in in solidarity.

Swelling protest

On Sunday evening, after intelligence sources conveyed to the government that the numbers were growing at the protest site, the Union government through the Deputy Com-

missioner of Police, New Delhi, Sachin Sharma, reached out to the CJP members for the first time. “The DCP approached us first on Sunday evening, offering a meeting with the district magistrate. After we declined, this morning they offered talks with Minister of State (Independent Charge) and subse-

quently a Union Secretary. When we refused, the DCP asked us what we want to do. We said a delegation will meet a Union Cabinet Minister. Then they asked us to give a list of names of possible Ministers and that is how Health Minister J.P. Nadda met us,” said Saurav Das of the CJP.

Seeing the intensity of the protests, the Union government deputed Mr. Nadda to engage with members of the CJP.

Posting on X after the meeting, the Minister said: “The meeting took place in a cordial atmosphere. An initial verbal discussion was held in detail with their delegation and they submitted a written petition around 4 p.m. I have requested all those protesting to end their sit-in and assist the administration in

restoring normalcy.” With-in Parliament too, senior Ministers of the NDA government went into a huddle with one meeting between Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Mr. Pradhan lasting nearly three-and-a-half hours.

No briefing was done post the meeting but it is assumed that issues with regard to the leak of NEET question papers and the resulting protests were discussed.

A government official told *The Hindu* that clear directions were given to the police to not use force against the protesters. However, when they broke barricades and marched towards Parliament, police personnel first fired tear gas shells as warning shots and then baton-charged them.

Police deny snooping on CJP stir, say videos are for ‘law and order’

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police have denied carrying out intrusive surveillance of the ongoing Cockroach Janta Party’s protests at Jantar Mantar. It told the Delhi High Court on Monday that videography at the site was undertaken solely to maintain law and order.

Appearing for the Delhi Police, Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, said protests were a regular feature at Jantar Mantar and recording activities at the site was a standard practice.

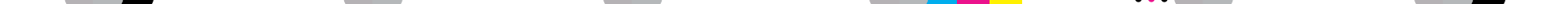
“At Jantar Mantar, some protest or another is always going on. These are

always recorded. This is only for the purpose of law and order. There is no snooping,” Mr. Mehta submitted.

The submissions came during the hearing of a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by former Jawaharlal Nehru University Students’ Union president Aishe Ghosh, challenging what she described as the Delhi Police’s “indiscriminate and continuous surveillance” of the CJP’s agitation at the Jantar Mantar.

Ms. Ghosh’s plea said the surveillance apparatus has been used as “an instrument of intimidation and deterrence against student protesters”.

India's green transition is missing long-duration energy storage

CM YK  A IN-X



Political actors of all hues have normalised using the police and criminal law as a shield to protect their reputation, whenever they come to power. This creates a structural risk for democracy. The actions of the police indicate a wider pattern of speech-related arrests, and authoritarianism under the TVK government, where defamation, the IT Act and cyber crime provisions are invoked at will for any criticism against individuals in the government or the ruling party. Complaints being filed by the TVK cadre and the *suo motu* action of the police targeting dissenters could run the administration off the rails. The clarity with which the government is ready to treat allegations against Ministers as criminal misinformation or defamation, rather than let them take the natural course of civil suits or political contestation, is disheartening. A new government has the opportunity to rewrite the rules of engagement with the public, to be tolerant of dissent, and not to misdirect the power it is vested with, just to curb opposition. Every government keen on development could be enriched by criticism and dissent articulated on public platforms, if it is willing. It must remember that the restriction of harmful, obscene and indecent content must be balanced with the overwhelming supremacy of freedom of speech.

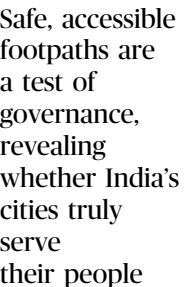
Press and play

Spain smothered the opposition with possession and positional football

Another high point for the tournament was Lionel Messi's enduring genius. Argentina's quality in the final was dire and the behaviour of its players petulant, but that should not detract from the 39-year-old's excellence in bringing his country to the cusp of defending its crown. Kylian Mbappe's experience was bitter-sweet; he won the Golden Boot (10 goals) and became the all-time top-scorer in World Cups (22) but remained a mute spectator as Spain subjugated his star-studded France in the semifinal. Jude Bellingham inspired England to third place, the best performance for the nation since winning in 1966. But the summer sojourn laid bare the team's continued lack of cutting edge after back-to-back runner-up finishes at Euro 2020 and 2024. The World Cup will also be etched in memory for a plethora of missteps, which governing body FIFA unfortunately condoned. By arbitrarily invoking immigration rules, and trying to interfere politically in on-field matters, the co-host U.S. pushed the envelope in undesirable ways. Commercially driven hydration breaks and the half-time show in the final were tedious and disruptive. Football should be allowed to flow freely, on and off the turf.

Few sights are more ordinary in an Indian city than a pedestrian being pushed off a footpath and onto the road. A mother, holding a school bag in one hand and a child in the other, walks around a parked car. An elderly man tests a broken footpath before stepping down onto the road. A wheelchair user gives up before the journey has even begun. A vendor, debris, an open drain, a two-wheeler, and a signboard together form what is still, with bureaucratic optimism, called a pavement. The citizen is then forced to walk on a road designed as though only vehicles possess rights.

These are not failures of willpower alone; rather, they are exacerbated by the built environment. A city that makes walking difficult quietly prescribes sedentary living. Footpaths, therefore, are not decorative strips of cement



Citizens, too, have a role, though not the only one. First, walk deliberately: begin with 10 to 15 minutes after two major meals, or build towards 30 minutes at a fixed time each day. Second, convert short errands into walking errands; distances under one kilometre should not automatically require a scooter or car. Third, combine walking with public transport by using the metro, bus, or shared mobility for part of the commute. Fourth, make walking social: families, resident welfare associations, and workplaces can create walking groups and car-free morning routines. Fifth, reclaim walking as a health check. If breathlessness, knee pain, fear of falling, or

The Supreme Court has moved the footpath from the margins of municipal housekeeping to the centre of constitutional rights. The next task is to move it from judgment to habit, budget, design, and enforcement. A country battling diabetes, hypertension, obesity, stress, and road deaths cannot treat walking as an afterthought. India does not merely need more roads; it needs more rights of way for ordinary citizens. The footpath is where public health, dignity, and democracy meet. We need to take our cities back from cars. We need to rebuild our cities for people. The proportion of encroachment-free footpaths should become a barometer of whether elected governments value citizens' fundamental rights in every ward and on every major road.

As we look forward, it is worth recalling our shared history and common sacrifice. Recently, I visited the Kirkee War Cemetery in Pune where members of the Royal Canadian Air Force killed during the Second World War were laid to rest. As I walked through the memorial site, I was reminded that our countries have stood shoulder to shoulder in the past, not just on the battlefield but for common causes and for the shared security of our countries. Let us continue that long-standing tradition as we reshape the defence cooperation between our two countries.

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

Battleground Bidadia

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Share of funding spent on environmental initiatives in 2023-24

8.4 in per cent. Only 8.4% of the total corporate social responsibility spending was allocated to environmental initiatives in the financial year 2023-24, according to a Sattva Consulting report. It also stated that 30 of India's 50 most climate-vulnerable districts received only 1% (₹106 crore) of the total environmental CSR spending over the past three years. PTI

Number of polluted river stretches in India in 2025

296 The number of polluted river stretches declined to 296 in 2025 from 351 in 2018, according to the Central Pollution Control Board report. The government said rivers are polluted mainly due to untreated or partially treated sewage, industrial effluents, inadequate dilution, dumping of solid waste, and other non-point sources of pollution. PTI

Key reforms advanced by Haryana to boost ease of doing business

21 Haryana has emerged as one of the leading States in the Centre's compliance reduction and deregulation initiative, with 21 of the 28 priority reforms either approved or under implementation to make the regulatory environment simpler and more business-friendly. An official said that another 15 reforms are currently under implementation across departments. PTI

Number of UPI users onboarded on the payments platform

55.49 crore. Parliament was informed that around 55.49 crore UPI users were onboarded on the payments platform until June 2026, on Monday. UPI transactions stood at 24,162 crore in volume and ₹314 lakh crore in value in FY 2025-26, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha. PTI

Forex inflows received by India under the RBI's swap facility

20.72 in \$ billion. India received \$20.72 billion in foreign exchange inflows under the Reserve Bank of India's swap facility as of July 17. The facility was introduced to encourage overseas fundraising by state-owned firms and foreign currency non-resident deposits. REUTERS
COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

Follow us facebook.com/thehindu X.com/the_hindu instagram.com/the_hindu

Why inflation is rising in India

India's recent inflation surge has been mainly driven by higher fuel costs and food price pressures rather than excess demand; food inflation stems largely from supply shocks such as poor monsoons, while rising oil prices have pushed up production costs and manufactured goods inflation

ECONOMIC NOTES

Rohit Azad
Indranil Chowdhury

Inflation, except during the COVID-19 pandemic, has remained relatively low in India for over a decade. But it is back with a bang. Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation is hovering close to 10% in June (**Chart 1a**). After remaining low – negative, or close to 0 – until December last year, the climb started with a sharp jump since March this year.

Even those with only a fleeting connection to economics believe that prices rise when demand outpaces supply (overheating), and vice versa. But is that really the case?

Before we go into the causes, let us look at what contributed to this rise in WPI inflation in the first place. The WPI is a weighted average of three sub-categories of commodities: primary articles (food, minerals, etc.), fuel and power and manufactured products. **Chart 1b** shows the contribution of each to total WPI inflation. The latter two – the orange and the red bars – have contributed to this dramatic jump in recent months. Fuel and power prices require little explanation as they are determined by oil prices purchased from abroad and are essentially imported prices. However, primary commodity and manufactured product prices need to be understood.

Structural differences in pricing

The Polish economist Michal Kalecki argued that while primary commodity prices are demand-determined, industrial prices are cost-determined. In other words, inflation of industrial commodities is not determined by a demand and supply mismatch. Come to think of it, this is commonsensical if you leave aside the quintessential demand-supply curves out of your head. After all, prices of cars, cycles, or toothbrushes do not fluctuate with a change in their demand. If more cars are demanded, more are produced and supplied to the customer instead of increasing the price. Prices of tomatoes or mangoes, on the other hand, vary quite significantly with a mismatch between demand and supply.

Viewed this way, the demand and supply curves need to be reconstructed (**Graph 1**). For primary commodities (panel (a)), supply is virtually fixed, represented by a vertical curve on the quantity axis, whereas demand follows the usual downward sloping curve. A decline in supply (shifting of the supply curve in panel (a) to the left) will increase its prices. In the case of food, for example, a bad monsoon will affect production adversely, thereby decreasing supply and increasing its prices. A good monsoon, on the other hand, will bring the prices down. Inflation here is demand-pull.

For the manufactured commodities (panel (b)), the supply curve is flat, which means a rise or a fall in demand (shifting of the demand curve) will bring about an equivalent supply of such commodities with no change in their prices. Again, the reason is simple. Most such commodities, except in cases of supply constraints, are produced in factories that run below capacity, so an increase in their demand simply increases their production. Demand here, quite opposite to the earlier case, has no role to play in determining their prices. Prices are determined instead by the cost of

Decoding India's inflation

A look at the main drivers of India's recent inflation and the forces shaping prices across the economy

Chart 1a: Wholesale Price Index (WPI): YoY inflation (%)

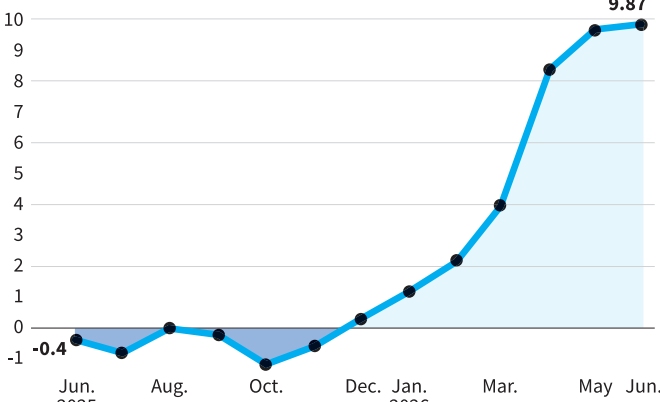
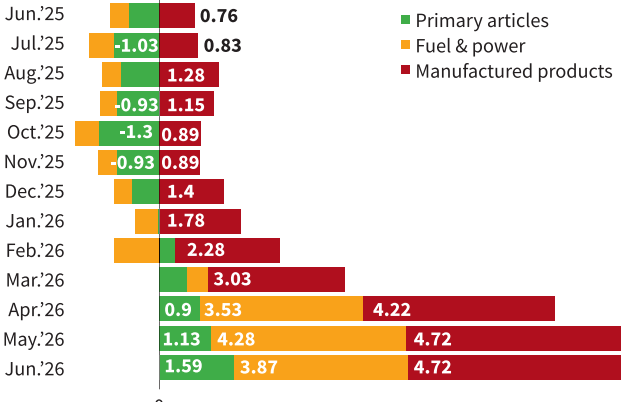
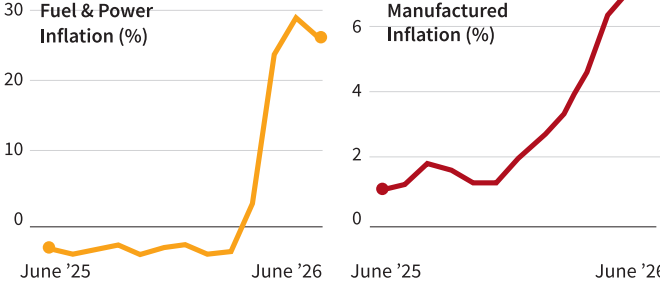


Chart 1b: Weighted contribution to WPI inflation (in %)

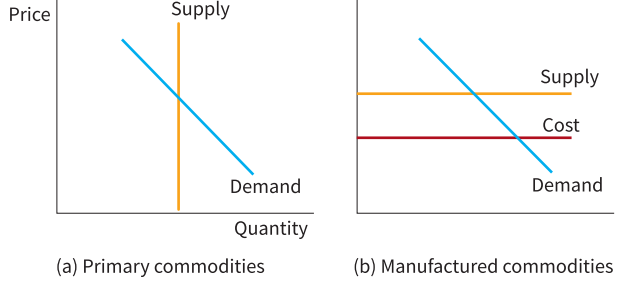


Source: Authors' calculations; Office of the Economic Adviser, DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India (WPI, base 2022-23)

Chart 2: Fuel and power and manufactured inflation (%)

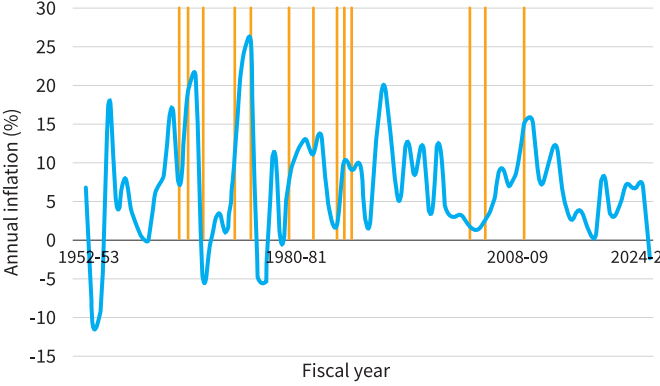


Graph 1: Structural differences in pricing



Source: Authors' calculations; Office of the Economic Adviser, DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India (WPI, base 2022-23)

Chart 3: Food articles: annual WPI inflation and drought years (1953-54 to 2025-26)



production. The supply curve is nothing but a profit markup over the cost (the vertical difference between supply and cost is the profit markup). A rise in the costs would push the cost curve up, and, unless the capitalists want to absorb this rise in cost through a lower markup, this would get passed on as higher prices in the market. Inflation here is purely cost-push.

What happened in the Indian case?

Having seen this difference, let us apply this idea to the inflationary problem currently facing India. If manufactured prices are cost-determined, what do their costs depend on? While wage cost is an important component of total costs, it is usually not the factor that pushes prices up because Indian workers do not really have space to bargain for higher wages. In other words, Indian workers are mostly price-takers; they make do with what they get. It is the material costs instead, which create the inflationary impulse.

One of the most important materials used in the production of any industrial commodity is oil. If we plot the movement of oil and power against the manufactured prices (**Chart 2**), we can

see almost a one-to-one correspondence between the two. A rise in fuel and power prices raised the manufactured inflation as well.

Food prices, too, have risen. One likely reason is the adverse impact of an inadequate monsoon, as a result of the El Niño effect, on agricultural production this year. **Chart 3** plots data on food price inflation with years in which the country experienced droughts. In every instance, drought conditions were accompanied by a significant rise in food inflation, much in line with the Kaleckian structuralist idea. To be sure, there have been instances in which food price inflation has taken place even in the absence of such supply shocks. These could perhaps be the years of high demand. Suffice to say that a drought is a sufficient, even if not a necessary, condition for food prices to soar.

What is to be done?

Given these structural differences, can something be done to control inflation? Let us start with the food prices. We believe food prices need to be decoupled from the vagaries of nature to the extent possible. That India solely depends on the

rain gods to feed its population is in itself quite unscientific and an anachronism in the modern era of technology. The country must invest heavily in agriculture, particularly in irrigation infrastructure, which is not entirely dependent on the monsoon.

As for manufactured goods, controlling fuel and power costs, when crude oil prices are rising, may be difficult, but there are still ways that they can be controlled. Instead of the ill-thought-out inflation targeting framework, the government should apply a countercyclical indirect tax policy to keep fuel and power prices in check. If the government can reduce the customs and excise duties when crude prices soar, the cost at the pump can be controlled. In fact, this is exactly what the government did a few months ago, which is why pump prices were held constant despite soaring crude prices in the international markets. Unfortunately, the government has withdrawn this measure, which is one of the primary reasons WPI inflation has risen sharply. (The authors are a part of the DevMac (Development Macroeconomics) network, which seeks pluralism in Economics)

THE GIST

Manufactured goods prices are determined largely by production costs, while primary commodity prices respond more to changes in demand and supply.

Higher global crude oil prices have raised fuel costs, which in turn have pushed up inflation in manufactured goods.

Food inflation has been exacerbated by an inadequate monsoon, underscoring the need for greater investment in irrigation and measures to cushion fuel price shocks.

BUILDING BLOCKS



Engineers get the train to float above the tracks using electromagnetic suspension. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

How magnetic levitation lifts and propels high-speed maglev trains

Maglev trains use powerful magnetic fields to move above the track without wheels, eliminating rolling friction, enabling speeds of over 400 km/hr; however, the technology requires dedicated guideways with precision engineering, making construction and operation expensive

Vasudevan Mukunth

Maglev' is a portmanteau of 'magnetic levitation'. Instead of running on wheels, maglev technology uses strong magnetic fields to lift the train and move it forward. Since the train floats above the track, there is no rolling friction during normal operations, nor are operations affected by inclement weather, like rain or snow. The result: the train can move at extremely high speed, topping 400 km/hr, while also giving passengers a smooth ride.

How is a train lifted? Nature has four fundamental forces: the two nuclear forces, the electromagnetic force, and gravity. Of them, gravity is the weakest by far – around 1039 times weaker than the electromagnetic force. This is why a small magnet can stay stuck to your fridge despite having the entire gravitational force of the earth pulling it down. The same idea applies to lifting a train weighing somewhere from 150 to 500 tonnes.

Engineers get the train to float above the tracks using electromagnetic suspension (EMS). The train has two 'arms' that wrap around the guideway over which it runs. Strong electromagnets on these arms point magnetic fields up towards the protruding parts of the guideway. Say you are lifting a bag with your hand. Your fingers wrap around the bag's strap. The train's arms do something like this – they wrap only just halfway, and from the bottom part, i.e., where the tip of your finger would be, exert a magnetic field into the underside of the strap. When these electromagnets are turned on, they exert a magnetic field that

attracts them towards the guideway, i.e., your fingers would be attracted towards the strap. As a result, the train is pushed upwards. The train is fit with sensors that help it float around 10 mm above the guideway at all times.

In a closely related technology called electrodynamic suspension (EDS), there are superconducting magnets on the train that are cooled to a very low temperature. When the train moves, the magnets that move with it induce an electric current in coils built into the sides of the tracks. (The phenomenon is called electromagnetic induction.) The result is a repulsive force that pushes the train up. Since the magnets have to move to induce the current, the train often needs to be travelling at around 100 km/hr before the effect can kick in, and until then it uses wheels. The train also hovers higher above the track, at around 100 mm.

But in exchange for requiring wheels, EDS can support higher speeds. EMS systems operate at around or under 500 km/hr whereas the SCMAGLEV EDS system in Japan achieved 603 km/hr during testing in 2015.

How does the train move forward? The walls of the guideway are lined with coils that carry an alternating current (AC). This current creates a magnetic field that constantly shifts its poles (north to south) along the track. The magnets on the train are attracted to the 'opposite' pole ahead and repelled by the 'like' pole behind. As a result, the train is simultaneously pulled forward from the front and pushed forward from the back. And to make the train go faster, engineers just need to increase the frequency of the AC.

Similarly, the current is used to switch

the direction of the magnetic field to slow the train or altogether stop it. This process may also use regenerative braking to divert the energy 'saved' by braking to the electric grid.

If a fast-moving maglev train starts to drift, there are magnets on the sides that repel/attract accordingly to ensure it stays centered. For emergencies or when the magnetic braking fails, the system is also fit with friction brakes. They come in two forms, although there are other technologies as well. One: the maglev train is also fit with 'regular' auxiliary wheels, and these wheels have a braking system akin to those in other trains and cars. Two: braking pads between the guideway and the train apply friction to further slow it down.

What are the downsides of maglev? The maglev system including the guideway cannot reuse existing guideways and stations vis-à-vis non-maglev trains. It needs its own. And this infrastructure is very expensive as the guideway needs to have magnets and coils with precision engineering.

The Shanghai Maglev, which was completed in 2004, cost ₹580 crore to ₹720 crore per kilometre (adjusted for inflation). This is excluding the cost of preparing the local terrain first – and operational costs like maintenance. Ergo, there needs to be very high and consistent passenger demand. Otherwise, the economics won't work out.

On the engineering front, while there is no rolling friction, a train moving very fast – especially over 300 km/hr – experiences aerodynamic resistance due to the flow of air around the train's body. This is why maglev trains have aerodynamic designs (which can add to

the cost), including a front portion that resembles a bird's beak.

Is maglev technology used elsewhere? Maglev is essential about using magnetic fields to support or move objects – a use-case that arises in many enterprises. High-speed turbines and compressors suspend their rotating shafts in a magnetic field instead of conventional bearings, minimising mechanical contact and allowing the blades to turn faster. Similarly, modern aircraft carriers use the linear motor technology that pushes maglev trains forward to accelerate aircraft on the vessels' runways.

Factory automation systems also use it to achieve the rapid, precise motion crucial in semiconductor manufacturing, food and medicine packaging, CNC machining, inspection cameras involving lasers or X-rays, and DNA sequencing, among others.

Scientists have also used magnetic fields to levitate biological samples, liquid droplets, molten metals, and even small animals for experiments. Following a suggestion by his wife, the British physicists Andre Geim and Michael Berry used a magnetic field to levitate a frog in 1997. This was possible because a form of magnetism called diamagnetism gives all materials a very weak magnetic field. The duo had to work out the strength of the field required to 'cancel out' the gravitational force exerted on the frog by the earth. Thus, they were able to get the frog to float using a 10-tesla magnet.

For this work the duo won an Ig Nobel Prize in 2000. Today, Geim remains the only scientist to have won both an Ig Nobel Prize and a Nobel Prize. Berry is also a noted physicist, known for his work on semi-classical physics.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

What is the meaning of “apple polishing”? (Rahul Sharma, Kola, Rajasthan)

It means “flattery”. Believe it or not, this is an expression which owes its origin to the practice followed by school children. What is it that people do in order to win the approval of their superiors? They either give them gifts or flatter them. Some school going children did the same thing in order to be in the teacher's good books. These kids took apples to school and polished them till they gleamed. Then they presented them to the class teacher! They hoped that by doing this, the teacher would overlook their poor performance in class and instead give them good marks.

Vani's apple-polishing didn't get her anywhere.

Do not use this word in formal contexts. It is considered slang.

What is the difference between “homophone” and “homonym”? (P.V.V.S. Lakshmi, Kakinada)

In everyday contexts these two words are used interchangeably. But there is a difference in meaning between the two. The word “homophone” comes from the Greek “homo” meaning “same” and “phone” meaning “sound”. Strictly speaking therefore, the word homophone is used to refer to words which sound alike, although they have a different spelling and meaning. Here are a few examples: mail, male; wear, ware; metal, mettle; etc. A homonym, on the other hand, is used to refer to words which have the same spelling and pronunciation but have a different meaning. For example May (month), may (possibility); can (be able), can (put something in container); bear (the animal), bear (to carry). As I mentioned earlier, this distinction is seldom maintained in everyday conversation. People in general tend to use “homonym” to mean “homophone”.

A note about the pronunciation. The first “o” in both the words is pronounced like the “o” in “hot”, “pot”, and “got”. The second “o” is like the “a” in “China”. It's the first syllable which has the stress in both words. This is one way of pronouncing the words.

How do you answer someone who says “Nice to meet you”? (P. Lokeshwar Rao, Mosopalli)

When you are introduced to someone and the person says, “Nice to meet you” the standard reply is “Nice to meet you” with the emphasis on “you”. It's like “How do you do?” When someone says “How do you do?” your reply is, “How do you do?”. Other ways of responding to “Nice to meet you” are “Likewise”, “It's a pleasure meeting you”, “Same here”, etc.

Is the word “orange” a Tamil word? (P. Somasundaram, Chennai)

Many Tamilians would like to think so! Some argue that the word orange comes from the Tamil words “six” and “five” respectively. The good news is that the word does come from an Indian language – Sanskrit. Scholars who have studied the origin of words contend that the word “orange” comes from the Sanskrit “naranga”.
Published in The Hindu on May 1, 2001

THE DAILY QUIZ

On July 21, 356 BCE, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World was destroyed in an act of deliberate vandalism. Test your knowledge of the monument

Prathmesh Kher

- QUESTION 1**
What was the monument called, and to which Greek deity was it dedicated?
- QUESTION 2**
Who deliberately set fire to the temple in 356 BCE, and what was his stated motive?
- QUESTION 3**
What measure did the Ephesian authorities reportedly take to deny Herostratus the fame he sought?
- QUESTION 4**
Besides being a place of worship, what important civic and economic function did the temple serve?
- QUESTION 5**
Which ancient writer included the Temple of Artemis among the Seven Wonders of the World in his famous epigram?



Visual Question:
This illustration from the 1610 work *Emblemas morales* (Moral Emblems), imagining Herostratus burning the Temple of Artemis, is topped by the Latin phrase 'In flammis fama paratur'. What does it mean? SEBASTIAN DE COVARRUBIAS/PUBLIC DOMAIN

- Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:** 1. With which physical oddity was Sobers born? **Ans: Six fingers in each hand**
2. To make his inclusion legitimate in the Police Cricket Club, how was Sobers, still in his teens, recruited? **Ans: Bugle player in the police band**
3. According to his autobiography, Sobers never ducked into a bouncer in his career after being hit on the forehead by a legendary fast bowler in a match against the touring English side in 1953-54. **Ans: Fred Trueman**
4. Name the sci-fi book he supposedly authored in 1967. **Ans: 'Bonaventure and the Flashing Blade'**
5. Where and against whom did he notch up the record-breaking knock? **Ans: At Kingston against Pakistan**
6. Name the bowler at the receiving end when Sobers hit six sixes in an over. **Ans: Malcolm Nash**
7. The winner of which ICC award is given the 'Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy'? **Ans: Men's Cricketer of the Year**
8. Which innings by Sobers did the great Don Bradman describe as 'probably the greatest exhibition of batting ever seen in Australia'? **Ans: 254 for the Rest of the World at the MCG in 1972**
Visual: Name this Indian actress and model to whom Sobers was briefly engaged in the 1960s. **Ans: Anju Mahendru**
Early Birds: Tamal Biswas | Piyali Tuli | Lalchand Bhutani | Tito Shiladitya | Arun Kumar Singh

Please send in your answers to
dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

Word of the day

Harangue:
a loud, bombastic declamation expressed with strong emotion

Synonyms: attack, lecture, criticism

Usage: *Everyone listened to her long harangue in silence.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/harangue

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ˈhæræŋ/

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

Could AI chip boom turn ASML first \$tn firm in Europe?



More valuable: An engineer works on a lithography system at ASML in Veldhoven, the Netherlands. REUTERS

Reuters
AMSTERDAM

The global artificial intelligence (AI) boom has propelled ASML to the top of Europe's stock market, as soaring demand for AI computer chips flows to the Dutch company that dominates the market for the equipment needed to make them. After blowout second quarter earnings, investors and analysts are asking a once far-fetched question: could ASML become Europe's first ever trillion-dollar firm?

Key obstacles include doubts over how long Google, Amazon, and other hyperscalers will keep spending heavily on data centres, and whether ASML, its suppliers and customers such as TSMC and Samsung can execute expansion plans. But after ASML shares spiked 60% this year to push the firm close to a \$700 billion valuation, investors and analysts say the trillion-dollar scenario is plausible.

"I think it has a really good chance of being the first company in Europe to hit the trillion mark," said Carolyn Bell, lead portfolio manager for Stonehage Fleming's Global BestIdeas, adding ASML accounted for about 8% of the portfolio.

Analyst upgrades after the second quarter show it's no pipe dream. Barclays, Susquehanna and Bernstein now have 12-month price targets above \$2,600 per share - a 49% rise from current levels and the rough threshold for a \$1 trillion market cap.

ASML is the only seller of extreme ultraviolet (EUV) lithography tools required to print the minute circuitry of the most advanced logic and memory chips. Investors compare its business to selling picks and shovels during a gold rush.

Unique assets
John Lamb of Capital Group, whose funds hold around 5% of ASML shares worth \$35 billion, praised it as a long-term holding for its "unique assets and wide moats".

"The fundamentals for the industry as a whole appear stronger than ever and ASML occupies a critical space," he said. ASML has overtaken and is now streaking away from other leading European companies Roche, LVMH, NovoNordisk, AstraZeneca and SAP.

Benefit via upgrade cycle
Shares trade at 38 times forecast earnings for 2027, according to LSEG data, well above multiples for top ASML customer TSMC, which manufactures the AI chips designed by Nvidia and used by OpenAI, Anthropic and the hyperscaler firms.

ASML investors and analysts said to justify the premium and grow into that valuation several things need to go right, notably continuing hyperscaler demand.

Trent Masters of Alphinity Investment Management, which has about 3% of its portfolio in ASML, warned that "any cooling of this will flow through to ASML's earnings".

He said other threats include ASML's ability to manage its supply chain and geopolitical risks, though he is "on balance very positive" about the company's outlook. U.S. lawmakers have proposed the MATCH Act, a law that could curtail ASML's sales and servicing of equipment in China - a market where ASML expects to have 20% of sales in 2026.

Analysts said there are also reasons ASML could keep growing even amid an AI slowdown.

Kinngai Chan of Summit Insights Group said AI memory chipmakers such as SK Hynix, Samsung and Micron are shifting production away from processes that use ASML's older DUV tools toward new and pricier EUV tools, a profitable "upgrade cycle".

ASML "can surely be" Europe's first trillion-dollar firm, ING analyst Marc Hesselink said. And then there is the possibility that chip demand accelerates. The new Terafab plant planned by Elon Musk in Texas to supply SpaceX and Tesla is a new source of revenue for ASML.

Antoine Hucher of Aviva Investors said if the company executed its strategy well and AI demand held up, ASML would keep growing, though nothing was certain. "ASML could well become the first European company to reach a \$1 trillion market cap," he said. "However, the volatility we have seen with AI stocks in the last few weeks suggests the journey to this achievement won't be a straight line."

How PayPal went from Wall Street favorite to unwilling merger target

Investors believe PayPal has lost its way as rivals introduced new payment methods; company's attempts to retrench have not convinced market; bid of \$53 billion not enough for board of directors' approval, sources say; many question whether company can attract better offers

NEWS ANALYSIS

Reuters

Five years ago PayPal was a Wall Street favourite and a leader in digital payments. Since then the stock has plunged, Apple Pay dominates payment services in the U.S. and PayPal is facing takeover bid it does not like. What happens next?

The company synonymous with digital payments this past week got a \$53 billion offer to be taken private by upstart rival Stripe and buyout shop Advent International.

PayPal's board is discussing the bid but believes \$60.50 a share is not enough, people familiar with the company said.

It is a comedown for a company that helped to pioneer e-commerce and email-based payments, launching the careers of tech titans Elon Musk and Peter Thiel in the process.

Founded in 1998, the San Jose, California, firm was acquired by eBay in 2002 and spun off as an independent company in 2015. Continued growth pushed its market value as high as \$360 billion in 2021.

Slowdown woes
But since then its growth has slowed and competition intensified, while multiple attempts in recent



In focus: PayPal and Stripe logos are seen in this illustration. REUTERS

years to jumpstart its business have borne little fruit.

Dealmakers are now weighing the value of PayPal's sprawling payments ecosystem, from its 400 million-plus consumer accounts to its merchant checkout business, raising the question of whether the company is worth more as a single entity or as a collection of assets, such as the Venmo peer-to-peer payment app, that could be sold off in pieces.

PayPal declined to comment for this story.

In February, when the company named a new CEO, it acknowledged a need to address its position relative to competitors and within the broader industry landscape.

"While some progress has been made in a num-



Last year, a deal with OpenAI to embed the PayPal digital wallet and processing into ChatGPT spurred a clash between the board and the executive team

ber of areas over the last two years, the pace of change and execution was not inline with the board's expectations," it said.

Enrique Lores, who took over as CEO in March, has not commented on whether PayPal would pursue a sale.

While bigger rivals such as Apple, Google and Samsung and upstarts including Stripe and Affirm re-

lentlessly rolled out new ways for consumers and businesses to pay for goods and services, analysts say PayPal was slow to explore opportunities in digital banking and commerce, or to offer fresh options when more people were using their phones to pay.

"Why bother becoming a digital bank if you can just be the world's biggest checkout button?" said Dan Dolev, senior analyst at Mizuho. "I think it was too easy to drink the honey straight from the checkout jar." Investors and industry executives are frustrated with PayPal's performance, said one source familiar with the company's deliberations. PayPal started before the iPhone even existed, but last year Apple Pay's U.S. market share ex-

Japan's Suzuki's no-frills cars once ruled India; expands R&D as buyers demand lots of frills

INSIGHT

Reuters
NEW DELHI



Out of touch: Employees check a fully assembled car at the manufacturing plant of Maruti Suzuki in Manesar, Haryana. REUTERS

For some 40 years, Suzuki cars dominated India's roads. The Japanese company's relentless focus on keeping prices and running costs low put millions of people behind the wheel. Hatchbacks made by its Indian arm Maruti Suzuki commanded between half and four-fifths of the country's new car sales in recent decades.

But as Indians got richer, they gravitated to bigger and flashier rides - and the automaker's emphasis on affordability started to become a drag. Maruti Suzuki's share of the world's third-largest autos market now lingers at around 39%, near an all-time low.

Suzuki's struggles reflect how cost-sensitive managers in Japan were slow to adapt to the changing tastes of newly affluent Indians, four people familiar with its business told Reuters. Executives, the people said, for years felt that demand for sunroofs, advanced technology and SUVs hadn't trumped questions of affordability for Indians.

Reuters is reporting for the first time details about the deliberations between Indian and Japanese officials at Suzuki as they struggled to pivot beyond a long-successful strategy that emphasised value before everything else.

Adding sunroofs
Maruti Suzuki managers first floated the idea of adding sunroofs about a decade ago, the people said. But Japanese bosses considered the feature - which

has become a symbol of upward mobility in India - impractical given India's extreme heat and dusty roads. They worried that adding a more powerful air conditioning unit and strengthening the cabin to accommodate the panel would increase costs and distract from Suzuki's mission of providing affordable transport.

The carmaker didn't introduce sunroofs until 2022. By then, fast-growing domestic rivals Tata Motors and Mahindra & Mahindra - which both currently have a market share of around 14% - had sunroofs as standard features on between a quarter and a third of their cars sold in India, according to data from auto research firm JATO Dynamics.

Market erosion
This account of the missteps that eroded Suzuki's iron grip on India and its subsequent efforts to woo customers back is based on interviews with more than 20 people, including executives, suppliers and others with direct knowledge of the automaker and its Indian business. Most spoke on condition of anonymity because they were

not allowed to talk to the media.

Maruti's head of corporate affairs, Rahul Bharti, said in an interview that Japanese managers were not reluctant to embrace the changing tastes of local customers. Instead, he said, they had prioritised factors such as cost and climate, as well as emissions and safety considerations.

Indian and Japanese executives engage in "extensive" talks before introducing products and new features, Bharti said. Maruti's market share had declined recently because of a collapse in demand for small cars, the automaker's slow rollout of SUVs and its 2020 decision to stop selling diesel cars, he added.

While it is committed to building affordable and compact models, Suzuki has now directed local managers to "pay more attention to the Indian customer," he said.

Tata and Mahindra did not return requests for comment.

To be sure, Maruti Suzuki still runs a lucrative business in India. Revenue has more than doubled over the last five years to \$19 billion and profit tripled to

\$1.5 billion as margins improved. About 60% of the 3.3 million cars Suzuki sold in the last financial year were in India, and Maruti contributed nearly half of its profit. But while it is making more money from selling fewer cars, the company has fallen short of chief executive Toshihiro Suzuki's goal of owning half the market.

Maruti Suzuki also risks being seen by younger drivers as a 'brand for their parents or grandparents,' said Toshihide Kinoshita, an automotive analyst at Nomura Securities.

In India, the typical buyer of a new car is in their mid-30s. The average age in the United States is 51, according to data from Cox Automotive.

People's car
Japanese car manufacturers increasingly see India, the world's fastest-growing major economy, as a lifeline.

Many face an existential threat in traditional strongholds like Southeast Asia from the low costs and fast-paced innovation of Chinese rivals. They are also being squeezed by tariffs in the U.S. and slow growth at home as Japan's population shrinks. Chinese electric vehicle (EV) makers, however, are largely shut out of India, which has increased scrutiny of investments from China after a deadly border clash between the two countries in 2020.

Japanese carmakers sense the opportunity: Toyota and Suzuki have announced plans to spend a cumulative \$11 billion to expand manufacturing and other operations in India by 2030.

Maruti Suzuki is now a

ceeded PayPal's by 10 percentage points, according to PYMNTS Intelligence, a research company.

Lags many rivals
PayPal has also lagged many rivals in adopting AI and pushing into agentic commerce, in which AI agents negotiate and complete purchases on user's behalf.

Owen Lau, an analyst at financial services firm Clear Street in New York, said PayPal prioritised winning market share by pricing aggressively, but failed to charge enough to generate attractive returns. Clear Street began coverage of PayPal this past week with a hold rating and a price target of \$61 a share, compared with a \$57.09 stock price on Friday.

Lau said growth has slowed across key parts of the business, including Venmo, while newer products such as buy now, pay later have not panned out. PayPal's user base has plateaued, he said, making growth a secondary concern to boosting profits from existing customers.

"They just want to win market share," he said, adding "they're not charging appropriately, and they're losing momentum in other parts of the business."

The company has had three CEOs in four years and this March embarked on its second turnaround effort since long time chief Dan Schulman stepped

aside in 2023.

Bid may be raised
A technology executive familiar with the matter said last year a deal with OpenAI to embed the PayPal digital wallet and processing into ChatGPT spurred a clash between the board and the executive team led by Alex Chriss, the CEO who succeeded Schulman. Chriss departed following Lores' appointment, after the board asked to delay the deal.

Still, the board is unlikely to support a deal at \$53 billion, said another person familiar with the company.

Some discussions at the board level have centered on whether the bid is enough to even warrant opening negotiations, the person said. The board is weighing whether the company could be worth more based on its intent to hit milestones in its latest turnaround plan, the source added.

The sources spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private deliberations. Wall Street analysts believe Stripe and Advent can afford to pay more, and will.

They have assembled \$17 billion in equity, Reuters has reported, and have raised \$50 billion in bank financing, potentially giving them the capacity to raise their offer.

Fight back?
Maruti has been here before. Its market share dipped below 40% in 2011, though newer models and an expanded sales network helped it recover.

This time, competition is fiercer. Better equipped rivals and the fall in market share mean Suzuki now faces its toughest situation in India "in the last 40 years," chief executive Suzuki told reporters at the Tokyo auto show last year.

In order to regain dominance, Suzuki is expanding R&D teams at Maruti and giving executives flexibility to make more decisions locally, five people told Reuters. It aims to cut the average product development time to 36 months from 48 months, four sources said.

Maruti has also built more car-testing labs in India to speed up design and execution, Bharti told Reuters. It has introduced pricier and more design-forward cars, including a three-row minivan that starts at about \$25,000. It plans seven more SUVs by 2030, which will join a recently released model that has a sunroof and advanced driver assistance systems.

The brand is also reversing its decision not to use large display screens in some vehicles, according to three sources, who said Japanese executives had felt they would be a distraction for drivers.

Bharti said Maruti and Suzuki executives had discussed those concerns. Large displays and similar features are always "on the cards," he said, though it continues to weigh customer demand against the realities of Indian driving conditions.

Khalil al-Hayya, Hamas' negotiator in Gaza talks, named group chief



Ebola death toll in Congo rises to 930, including health workers

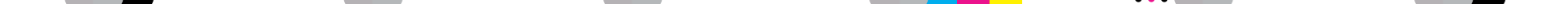


Tehran using Hormuz as leverage, other nations must 'step up': Rubio



Trump dismisses Mamdani's threat to arrest Netanyahu in New York



CM YK  A IN-X



Mexican newspapers displaying the news of the capture of Ismael 'El Mayo' Zambada in July 2024, in Mexico City. AFP

Last of Mexico’s narco old guard jailed for life

Agence France Presse
MEXICO CITY

Ismael “El Mayo” Zambada, founding leader of the legendary Sinaloa cartel, was sentenced in a U.S. court on Monday to life in prison and called for an end to the brand of brutal violence he used for decades to grow the cartel into the world’s largest drug trafficking organisation.

After a journey from poor farm-worker to one of the world’s most powerful and wealthy criminal bosses, Zambada was arrested at a U.S. airport in July 2024.

Known for keeping a low profile and avoiding being photographed, Zambada, now 76 years old, spent decades rising through the cartel ranks, evading both capture and multiple assassination attempts.

He was born in 1950 in Sinaloa – a rugged mountainous state of Mexico known for producing corn, beans, cattle, and some of the world’s most notorious drug traffickers. His early years coincided with the emergence of Sinaloa as a marijuana and opium growing region – and eventually a transit point for Colombian cocaine going to the United States.

Mexico’s drug violence has surged since then.

Since 2006, almost half a million people have been killed, and 1,30,000 are missing, according to government estimates.

U.S. court documents paint him as not just smart, but violently ruthless.

He allegedly ordered the killing of his own nephew, who was then found dead in a car by the side of the road.

His former partner Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman is already serving a life sentence in the U.S.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Associated Press
RAMALLAH

Picture this: a gas station customer pulls out a wad of bills to pay for a fill-up. The cashier refuses the money, explaining that the station’s bank has stopped accepting notes and coins as deposits because it already is drowning in cash.

In most places, cash is king. But in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, having too much is gumming up the machinery of daily life. The Palestinian banking system has more Israeli shekels than it can manage. As a result, paper money has gotten harder for residents to spend and for businesses to put into their accounts.

The excess liquidity stems from a conflict between the Bank of Israel and the Palestinian Monetary Authority, which oversees Palestinian banks and financial institutions. Israel limits the amount of physical currency it takes back from the West Bank. Palestinian officials say the cap has not kept pace with growth and is one mechanism used to keep the territory in a state of economic crisis.

Unlike in Gaza, where years of an almost total blockade have caused cash

shortages, banks in the West Bank are running out of vault space to store stacks of shekels. With Bank of Israel refusing to accept more notes and coins, commercial banks can’t convert the money into electronic balances to pay suppliers or process transfers on behalf of their customers.

“The banks have been shackled” in their ability to deal with the crisis, Mohammad Manasra, the Deputy Governor of the Palestinian Monetary Authority, said in an interview with AP. “What is being practised in the West Bank is economic warfare.”

Central banks in most countries take back cash from commercial banks and credit them electronically so they can settle payments and meet customers’ needs. But in the occupied West Bank – where Palestinians have no say over monetary policies guiding the shekel – the economy runs differently.

The territory has relied predominantly on the Israeli shekel for decades and depends on Israel to facilitate trade, collect taxes and process payments for imported goods under agreements dating to the 1990s. A surfeit of cash accumulates because the Palestinian economy runs almost exclusively on physical currency, and



In dire straits: In Gaza, years of an almost total blockade have caused acute cash shortages. REUTERS

more enters from Israel than can exit.

Why? Employers in Israel and its settlements pay Palestinian labourers in cash, and Palestinian citizens of Israel often purchase goods like cigarettes and fuel in the West Bank, bringing in even more shekels. As more cash flows in, the surplus trapped inside Palestinian banks grows, neither earning interest nor getting turned into loans, investments and bill payments.

Israel’s cash transfer limit from the West Bank’s banking system is 18 billion shekels (\$5.9 billion) a year. Banks now accumulate an estimated 30 billion shekels a year, said Moayad Afaneh, an economist who has advised the Palestinian

Authority. In the past, Israeli officials expressed reluctance to accept more, citing concerns that returned money could be linked to laundering, tax evasion or terrorism.

‘Economic strangulation’ Bank of Israel said in a statement that it follows the current government’s policy on how many shekels to accept but that fewer Palestinians have worked in Israel since the war in Gaza started, thereby reducing the cash entering the West Bank.

Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich’s office did not respond to requests for comment but in September 2025 Mr. Smotrich threatened to “use all of the tools” at his disposal

Ugandans and Tanzanians find fragile refuge in Kenya as repression soars

Agence France Presse
NAIROBI

Tanzanian Opposition official David Djumbe fled to Kenya after a crackdown on dissidents in his country, but now lives in constant fear of a cross-border abduction.

Dozens of Ugandans and Tanzanians are thought to be hiding in neighbouring Kenya after recent elections in their countries triggered mass arrests, kidnappings, and murders.

Mr. Djumbe was personal assistant to Tanzania’s Opposition leader Tundu Lissu, who was jailed ahead of October’s election. Tanzania’s security forces unleashed a ruthless crackdown on protests sparked by alleged rigging



Tanzanian police keep watch during protests in Dar es Salaam against the government’s ban on political gatherings. AFP

of the vote, with rights groups and the Opposition saying thousands were killed. The government says the number was 518.

After the vote – in which President Samia Suluhu Hassan winning 98% – Mr. Djumbe received a warning by phone call, saying: “You only have three days before you disappear.”

Ugandan rights activist Eriza, who asked to give a fake name for fear of reprisals, said he was on an Army hit-list during elections in January in which President Yoweri Museveni won a seventh straight term.

The President’s son, Army chief Muhoozi Kainerugaba, openly boasts on social media of kidnapping

and torturing Opposition figures in his “basement” and spearheaded a crackdown during the election, saying on X that security forces had killed 30 Opposition supporters and arrested 2,000. The main Opposition candidate, Bobi Wine, was forced into hiding and has now fled to the United States.

Five refugees interviewed by the AFP said they only feel “relatively safe” in Kenya. Kenyan security forces have been accused of dozens of abductions targeting government critics – which they deny – especially since mass protests against President William Ruto in 2024.

But, it remains a relative safe-haven compared to the extreme repression in its neighbours.

Against the current



A police van wades through floodwaters following heavy monsoon rain in Landi Kotal in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, on Monday. AFP

In one of Kyiv’s most frequently bombed neighbourhoods, residents choose to stay

Associated Press

KYIV

Residents of Kyiv’s historic Lukianivka neighbourhood share a dark joke: Russian strikes hit the area so frequently, they ought to be issued military service documents as though they are living on the front line of the war.

Real estate agent Dmytro Zhekov acknowledges the danger up front when he tries to draw prospective renters to one of the Ukrainian capital’s most frequently bombed areas. In his sales pitch on social media, he highlights the neighbourhood’s many virtues: affordable rents, easy access to the city centre, a well-connected metro line and historic landmarks.

The district includes a Soviet-era weapons plant that has become one of

Russia’s most frequent targets in Kyiv, with its roof blackened by repeated strikes. Across the street, the Lukianivka metro station, which gives the neighbourhood its name, has been hit at least eight times. During air raids, it also serves as a shelter for residents. Craters have become a permanent part of the urban landscape.

Residents no longer ask whether Lukianivka will be hit again, only when. Living here means re-opening businesses beside the charred ruins of a market, cutting hair in buildings scarred by shrapnel, moving theatre performances underground and choosing to rebuild, not leave.

“After every attack, I walk down the main street, and it feels like watching a wound widen,” resident Vladyslav Darmohrai said.

Lukianivka’s main thoroughfare, Dehtiarivska Street, follows part of the ancient Via Regia, the medieval trade route that carried merchants into Kyiv for centuries.

The neighbourhood later grew into a working-class district of factories, markets and the Lukianivka prison, whose inmates have included former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, who was incarcerated for 2 and half years for striking a gas deal with Russia in a case that was largely viewed as retribution by her political rival, then-President Viktor Yanukovich.

Successive eras, from the Soviet industrial period to Ukrainian independence and, now, the repeated Russian bombardment, have continued to shape the neighbourhood,



Against the odds: A vendor works near a shopping mall destroyed by Russian attacks in Kyiv’s Lukianivka neighbourhood, Ukraine. AP

which now includes renters displaced by the war.

The neighbourhood’s role as a crossroads gave rise to Lukianivka’s iconic market, which had served residents since the late 19th century until it was destroyed in a Russian strike on May 24.

It’s now a charred maze

of kiosks, frozen in the moment of the attack. Blackened loaves of bread still sit on the shelves of what was once a bakery.

For many residents, the market lives on in childhood memories of parents and grandparents leading them hand in hand through its crowded aisles

to buy fruit, flowers and everyday necessities.

Alyona Lukianets, 32, spent 11 years building her produce business there. After the strike, she returned to find her stall reduced to ashes. Weeks later, she went back to work.

Her new stall, assembled from wooden pallets and tarpaulins outside the market’s ruins, bears little resemblance to the one she lost. Every morning she still lines up baskets of berries and fresh vegetables with the same care. The acrid smell of the destroyed market behind her sometimes still hangs in the air.

“I don’t know what it will take for us to leave this place,” Ms. Lukianets said.

Rents and options

Julia Sosnovska had wanted a dog ever since she

to prevent the creation of a Palestinian state, including “economic strangulation.” Israel has imposed a series of measures that have hobbled the West Bank’s economy since Hamas-led militants attacked in October 2023, starting the war in Gaza.

It revoked most work permits for Palestinians who used to work in Israel, cutting off a major source of income in the occupied territory. It has withheld tax and customs revenue collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, which in turn has been unable to fully pay public sector workers – including teachers and hospital staff – for more than a year.

With growing needs for vault space, banks are having to pay to store and insure cash they’re unable to offload. They’re accepting less from businesses and households, which in turn have to find alternative ways to store cash safely.

The excess shekel problem is “directly affecting the government’s ability and the private sector’s capacity to continue providing services to major industrial sectors and the Palestinian people,” Mr. Manasra said.

As an example, he noted most of the West Bank’s fuel and electricity is imported from Israel or purchased from Israeli utilities.

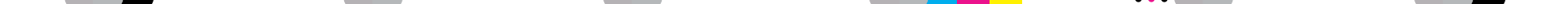
When banks have too much of their assets tied up as physical cash, they don’t have the funds when their clients – like the Palestinian Authority or West Bank cities – need to transfer payments to import fuel, water and electricity.

Fears of looting by Israeli soldiers conducting increasingly common home raids have made the problem worse, Mr. Afaneh, the economist, said. Palestinians are depositing more into banks because they fear soldiers will confiscate it, claiming suspiciously large sums could be used for illicit purposes or terrorism.

Having too much cash on hand also hurts the banks’ bottom lines because they can’t lend out money like most banks, which today do so electronically.

A 2022 International Monetary Fund study estimated excess cash reduced Palestinian banks’ profits by about 20%, a figure Mr. Afaneh said is likely much higher today.

With their earnings stuck outside the traditional banking system, business leaders fear the cash glut will eventually prevent West Bank companies from being able to import fuel, food and medical supplies from Israel or elsewhere abroad, Jaber said.

CM YK  A IN-X

Silencing the doubters, the Ro-Hit way

Let's just leave the former skipper to his devices. He knows not to overstay his welcome; let's accord him that respect, because it isn't a privilege but a right he has earned

R. Kaushik

Rohit Sharma is not an angry man. Just as well, because anger doesn't suit him. Rohit Sharma is not a bitter man. Just as well, because bitterness doesn't suit him, either. These last few days, why, even months, must have been difficult for the stylist from Mumbai, one of the very few remaining batters in international cricket you'd travel miles to watch. In a rapidly changing world where aesthetics are fast being supplanted by raw power and where strength has superseded timing, Rohit is an anachronism. He doesn't batter so much as caress the cricket ball, apologetic that he must dismiss it from his presence because that's what his vocation demands, almost reverential in the manner in which he accumulates his runs, with an elegance and grace that come so naturally to him.

For reasons best known to us, or maybe not, we have decided that we ought to have a larger say in Rohit's future than the protagonist himself. So, we have indulged in rumour-mongering and baseless speculation. We have thrown respect out the window, we have embraced insensitivity and continued to question his place in the limited-overs scheme of things. This, despite the fact that he continues to deliver, admittedly not with the same consistency of yore which is but an inevitable fallout of advancing years.

Flawless run

From the time he was summarily axed as captain just months after leading India to a flawless title run at the Champions Trophy in Dubai in March last year, Rohit has needlessly been catapulted to the crosshairs of motivated gunslingers. Everything that he has accomplished, and that is more than most of the very best

Succession plans are inevitable in team sport because time doesn't wait for anyone and it is important to make provisions for tomorrow. But it's also equally vital not to lose sight of today

can even dare to dream of, has been conveniently ignored, if not forgotten. He has been put on trial every time he has donned the India blue and walked out to bat in a One-Day International - the only format in which he represents the country these days. If Rohit entertained a sense of persecution and utter disrespect, he was perfectly justified in doing so. But Rohit isn't wired that way. Would he have been affected by the goings-on around him? Of course, because he also is all too human. He also bleeds when nicked, he also hurts like every one of us. But he isn't the kind to sit back and mope at the unfairness of the world. He is old enough - 39, as we love to constantly keep reminding him - to understand how the world functions, how the cards are dealt, how the narrative can be twisted and manipulated so that by the end of the twisting and the manipulation, the original truth is couched in layers of misdirection. Through all of this, Rohit has maintained a stoic, admirably restrained, silence. He has taken the blows on his chin with equanimity, plunging himself into the sustained pursuit of a craft that has been his unshakeable ally for more than two decades. He has committed himself to becoming the fittest version of himself, perhaps aware that the tenuous safety net of captaincy too has been snatched away and that there is no insurance anymore - not that he has needed it in the past - against a free fall. These things happen in team sport, and especially in cricket in India, which has been dominated by strong personalities who are quickly brushed aside once we opt to move on to the 'next big thing'. Social media has merely amplified this phenomenon; everyone with access to a keyboard has an opinion, and several of these opinions are vitriolic and venomous. It takes a thick hide, or a complete disassociation with social media, to carry on as if nothing is happening, which we all know is easier said than done. Since being divested of the captaincy last year, Rohit has played in all of India's

15 ODIs - three each in Australia, at home against South Africa, New Zealand and Afghanistan, and now in England. Those 15 hits have netted him two hundreds and four half-centuries, which translates to a 50-plus knock every 2.5 innings. In his 19-year international career, he boasts 34 three-figure knocks and 62 other scores between 50 and 99 in 280 digs - a 50-plus effort every 2.92 outings. Surely, if there is a dip in returns, it stems from perception, not reality. In six of these 15 innings, Rohit's strike-rate has ranged from 100 to a period-high 125.45 which came during his delightful 138 against England in Sunday's final ODI at Lord's. Can we put away the knives we have been sharpening with unseemly glee, please?

An obsession

The 2027 50-over World Cup has been an obsession in several quarters, an obsession that has almost clouded our vision when it comes to other formats. In Test cricket, for instance, India have floundered badly in the last year and a half; home series routs at the hands of New Zealand and South Africa are more than just dampeners, they point to a systemic flaw which those in the thick of things seemed determined to ignore. The myth that India's batters are the best players of the turning ball has been exploded emphatically by honest rather than massively skilled overseas tweekers like Mitchell Santner and Ajaz Patel and Simon Harmer, yet there seems to be a marked reluctance to move away from 'lottery' turners that effectively bridge the gap in quality between India's spinners and those from outside the subcontinent. India are currently in the bottom half of the World Test Championship table, and face a monumental task as they attempt to make it to the final for the third time in four editions. Ahead of them are daunting away tours of Sri Lanka and New Zealand between August and December, followed by a five-match skirmish at home against Australia early next year. India need at least a half-dozen wins from the remaining nine games to pitchfork themselves towards a top-two position at the end of the league stage, and that's where the immediate focus must be. Instead, all the energies have been trained almost exclusively on Rohit and, to a lesser extent on Virat Kohli, and whether one or both should be in the mix for an event that is still some distance away. Succession plans are inevitable in team sport because time doesn't wait for anyone and it is important to make provisions for tomorrow. But it's also equally vital not to lose sight of today. In a desperate urge to merely target the future, Indian cricket's primary stakeholders are in serious danger of missing the wood for the trees. And by constantly subjecting a giant of Indian cricket to unforgiving scrutiny when there simply is no need, they aren't just forgetting the present but also disregarding the glorious immediate past. Mindful of the need to cover all bases in the lead-up to the World Cup, if head coach Gautam Gambhir and chief selector

Ajit Agarkar are keen that Yashasvi Jaiswal gets enough opportunities to grow into his role as an opener-in-waiting, they are perfectly entitled to do so. Truth to tell, the left-hander has done nothing wrong; despite smacking centuries in two of his last three ODI innings, he wasn't even on the plane to England, which is hardly ideal. But as they have shown with the 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, where there is a will, there is a way. Despite the grand success in the later stages of the T20 World Cup of Sanju Samson, India didn't shy away from discarding him briefly to accommodate Sooryavanshi. There is still place for Jaiswal if that is the desperation, but why it should be at the expense of a still-delivering Rohit is the million-dollar question. In so many ways, Rohit has been sought to be pushed into a corner to the extent that even the Board of Control for Cricket in India found it necessary to shoot down whispers that the Lord's ODI would be his final game in the country's colours. What started as a gentle breeze suddenly snowballed into a raging tornado. Retirement stories were planned in newspaper offices, to-be-published tributes started to stack up until Devajit Saikia, the BCCI secretary, doused raging fires with his proclamation on Friday that Lord's wouldn't be Rohit's swansong. What powers we rumour-mongers wield. As things stand, India don't play an ODI until the end of September, when West Indies come calling for a three-match series with games scheduled in Thiruvananthapuram, Guwahati (fast paralleling Ahmedabad as a must-visit centre) and New Chandigarh. That's more than two months away and there will - or at least in theory, there should - be a temporary lull in the Rohit dissection. Later this week, India will take on Zimbabwe in a three-match T20I series when Sooryavanshi will again be in the limelight. In the middle of August, Shubman Gill's side will make their first Test foray to Sri Lanka in nine years. Since losing 1-2 in 2008, India are unbeaten in the Emerald Isles, drawing 1-1 in 2010, rallying from the loss of the first Test to triumph 2-1 in 2015 and completing an unprecedented 3-0 sweep two years later. But Sri Lanka have come a long way since 2017 while India have positively regressed, and Gambhir can expect another torrid examination by spin of which Sri Lanka have plenty of resources to fall back on. In his control Rohit will use the next two months, one is sure, to keep fine-tuning his enormous skills and ensure that he is battle-ready when the Caribbeans come along. That's all that is in his control, that's the extent to which he can take things into his own hands. Already, he has quietly announced his intentions with his unwavering work ethics that have resulted in the fittest-looking Rohit in recent times. True, he picked up a hamstring injury during the IPL, but he bounced back with a brilliant 84 after a three-week layoff during which he missed five matches. Rohit isn't the only player to have contracted a

non-cricketing injury in recent times. Why, even Kohli missed the Afghanistan ODIs with a hamstring injury while Gill's repeated neck spasms and a new, disturbing development in the form of cramps are gradually becoming a source of concern. Far younger and supposedly fitter individuals like Hardik Pandya, Nitish Kumar and Harshit Rana are spending more time rehabbing than plying their wares on the cricket field. Let's just leave Rohit to his devices. He knows not to overstay his welcome; let's accord him that respect, because it isn't a privilege but a right he has earned.

THE GIST

For reasons best known to us, or maybe not, we have decided that we ought to have a larger say in Rohit's future than the protagonist himself. So, we have indulged in rumour-mongering and baseless speculation

The 2027 50-over World Cup has been an obsession in several quarters, an obsession that has almost clouded our vision when it comes to other formats

Since being divested of the captaincy last year, Rohit has played in all of India's 15 ODIs. Those 15 hits have netted him two hundreds and four half-centuries, which translates to a 50-plus knock every 2.5 innings

In his 19-year 50-over international career, he boasts 34 three-figure knocks and 62 other scores between 50 and 99 in 280 digs - a 50-plus effort every 2.92 outings

From the time he was summarily axed as captain just months after leading India to a flawless title run at the Champions Trophy in Dubai in March last year, Rohit has needlessly been catapulted to the crosshairs of motivated gunslingers



ANI

