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INSIDE



**U.S. proposes to
levy \$1.03 lakh
as H-1B visa fee**

WASHINGTON
The U.S. administration on Monday proposed a \$103,265 fee for all H-1B visa cap-subject applications, including those eligible for the advanced degree exemption, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said. **» PAGE 14**

**Hopes of finding
22 missing sailors
alive are fading**

BHUBANESWAR
The search and rescue operation for the sunken Panama-flagged bulk carrier in the Bay of Bengal has been expanded to cover a wider area, as hopes of finding the 22 remaining crew members alive diminish with every passing hour. **» PAGE 4**

**Cong. questions
drive to privatise
the space sector**

NEW DELHI
The Congress on Monday questioned the Centre on the privatisation push in the space sector. He said ISRO’s satellite assets could be transferred to private companies and questioned the reported plan to hand over a spaceport to a private firm. **» PAGE 5**

**TCS to buy out
Porsche’s MHP
for €320 mn**

MUMBAI
Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) is planning to fully acquire MHP Management-und IT-Beratung GmbH (MHP), Porsche AG’s Germany-based management and IT consulting subsidiary, for an enterprise value of €320 mn. **» PAGE 12**

T.N. drops Parandur airport project; new sites ‘identified’

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay on Monday announced his government’s decision to drop the proposed airport project in Parandur and identify alternative sites for a second airport in Chennai.

Making a *suo motu* statement in the Assembly, he said a new terminal, Terminal 5, would be developed in the north-western part of the Chennai airport in collaboration with the Airports Authority of India (AAI), along with an approach road and a flyover.

The main Opposition DMK sought to speak on the issue, but Speaker J.C.D. Prabhakar said he would not allow a debate on an announcement made under Rule 110 of the Assembly.

Former Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu said he was not seeking a debate but wanted to clarify. DMK members then



The [alternative] site will be finalised after studying the technical feasibility and consulting the departments concerned
C. JOSEPH VIJAY
Tamil Nadu Chief Minister

walked out after the Speaker stood his ground.

‘Experts consulted’

The Chief Minister said he had consulted experts on establishing a new airport and that a few alternative sites had been identified that would cause minimal damage to farmland and human settlements. “The site will be finalised after studying the technical feasibility and consulting the departments concerned,” he said, recalling his visit to Parandur in 2025 to express solidarity with protesting farmers and his earlier announcement at

Vikravandi opposing the project.

Mr. Vijay said he was fully aware of the role of airports in industrial development but maintained that an airport should not be built at Parandur as it would affect vast tracts of farmland and human settlements. He said the Chennai airport currently handled 30 million passengers a year. “After the completion of Terminal 5, the passenger capacity will increase to 55 million a year. It will improve the services and transport facilities until a new airport is completed,” he said.

Braving the weather



Rough outing: Fishing boats off the Visakhapatnam coast on Monday despite the IMD’s advisory against venturing into the sea until Tuesday, as conditions along the north Andhra Pradesh coast are expected to stay rough. K.R. DEEPAK

CRPF officer injured, houses torched in Manipur

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

A Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) sub-inspector was injured and at least two houses were torched after violence erupted between two groups in Manipur on Monday.

Officials in Imphal said unknown miscreants burnt a house in the Taphou Kuki village in the Kuki-dominated Kangpokpi district in the early hours. Soon after, another house was torched at Taphou Naga village in the adjoining Naga-dominated Senapati district.

Caught in the crossfire
As tension mounted, two groups exchanged fire after 9 a.m. The CRPF sub-inspector was caught in the crossfire and got shot. He



Burning streets: A road blocked by local people amid reports of violence in Senapati, Manipur, on Monday. ANI

was later admitted to a local hospital.

Local people in Senapati blocked National Highway 2 (NH-2), also known as the Imphal-Dimapur (Nagaland) road, for a few hours after the violence. Following the incidents, security forces heightened alert along the highway and in

vulnerable villages in the two districts.

The Taphou Kuki village authority condemned the “highly deplorable, inhuman, and unacceptable” arson attack, appealing to individuals and groups to refrain from violence, destruction of property, and any actions that may further

escalate tension and suffering among the people.

Probe sought

“We urge the district administration, police, and other competent authorities to take immediate and appropriate action to investigate the incident, identify those responsible, and ensure that justice is delivered in accordance with the law,” the village authority said in a statement.

Amid the unrest, public transport services on NH-2 continued for the third day on Monday. More than 250 passengers, including women and children, left Imphal for Dimaapur and Guwahati in five buses and seven vans under fool-proof security.

A Manipur government statement said the departures were delayed due to

the situation that arose in Senapati district earlier in the day. Adequate security personnel and road-opening parties have been deployed on vulnerable stretches of the highway to ensure free and safe movement of the vehicles.

“However, timely intervention by the government and the public support prevented the situation from escalating further, and the vehicles left for Dimaapur and Guwahati at around 1 p.m. Both sides involved have agreed to maintain peace in the area,” the statement read.

About 100 passengers, who started their journey from Guwahati on Sunday, reached Imphal on Monday afternoon. No untoward incidents were reported along the highway during their journey.

the situation that arose in Senapati district earlier in the day. Adequate security personnel and road-opening parties have been deployed on vulnerable stretches of the highway to ensure free and safe movement of the vehicles.

1.07 cr. names removed in Karnataka’s draft SIR rolls; electorate drops to 4.46 cr.

Rishita Khanna
BENGALURU

With 1.07 crore names removed during the special intensive revision (SIR), Karnataka’s electorate has shrunk to 4.46 crore voters as per the draft electoral rolls published on Monday. An overwhelming number of missing names were marked “absent, shifted, duplicate, dead, and others (ASDDO)”.

Announcing the figures at the end of the enumeration phase, Karnataka Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) V. Anbu Kumar said the electorate comprised over 2.22 crore men, 2.24 crore women, and 2,871 others. Voters can check their names on the CEO’s official website.

The CEO said a special campaign will be held in areas reporting high ASDDO numbers, where voters will be assisted in filling Form 6 (for inclusion). The dates for the campaign are yet to be announced.

Discrepancy notices

As many as 43.81 lakh notices for hearing will be served on voters whose enumeration forms contained logical discrepancies and those who could not be mapped. Notices may also be issued if a complaint is filed against a voter or if the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) has reason to suspect that a voter is ineligible.

With the enumeration phase ending, voters are likely to face the same ASDDO-related issues. Just as people remained unaware that their names were on the ASDDO list until 12 days before the enumeration



V. Anbu Kumar, CEO for Karnataka, addressing the media on the Karnataka SIR, in Bengaluru on Monday. K. MURALI KUMAR

Breaking down draft deletions in Telangana’s SIR process

The Hindu Data Team
CHENNAI

Driven by a deletion rate of 35% or more in Hyderabad and adjoining urban areas, Telangana has registered the highest deletion rate – 21.7% in the enumeration phase of the

phase ended, they now have no way of knowing if they will receive a notice until one is actually served.

“We only have numbers on how many people will receive notices, and the names will not be known until the notice is generated,” the CEO said.

The entire process – from an ERO generating a notice to it being served – is to be completed within just seven days. This could become a major hurdle, especially for voters living in another district or city while remaining registered in their native constituency, as they must attend the hearing in person.

There is, so far, no online option to check whether

special intensive revision (SIR) process in the country. In contrast to northern States though, the gender ratio in the draft rolls improved from 1,018 to 1,028.

DATA POINT
» PAGE 9

er a person is likely to receive a notice. The CEO reiterated that the names will be known only after a notice is generated. The process has now placed the burden of saving one’s vote squarely on the voter.

In the enumeration phase, Booth Level Officers (BLOs) were instructed to hand over enumeration forms to voters and a family member above the age of 18 could fill them on the voter’s behalf. However, in this stage, BLOs can serve notices on anyone available at the address. The notice will also carry a QR code to submit one of the 11 documents online, but the voter alone must appear for the hearing.

INBRIEF



Provide cow to woman seeking self-reliance: U.P. CM to officials

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday instructed officials to provide an abandoned cow to a woman who expressed her desire to rear cows during a ‘Janata Darshan’ event in Lucknow, according to an official statement. In response to her request, the Chief Minister directed the Additional Chief Secretary of Animal Husbandry Department to ensure she received an abandoned cow and the benefits of any applicable government schemes. In her application to Mr. Adityanath, Poonam Devi stated that she wanted to become self-reliant through cow rearing. PTI

Assault case: HC rejects bail petition of Gujarat AAP MLA

The Gujarat High Court on Monday rejected the bail plea of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Chaitar Vasava in an assault and extortion case in which he was sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment along with eight others by a sessions court. Vasava has not yet been disqualified as a member of the State Assembly. A single Bench of Justice Vimal K. Vyas rejected Vasava’s plea for suspension of sentence and observed that being a member of the Assembly, he ought to have guided the aggrieved persons to seek lawful remedies rather than resort to intimidation and coerce government employees. PTI

Suvendu, Mamata spar over Annapurna Bhandar scheme benefits in Bengal

Trinamool chief claims women being given benefits based on caste and religion, questions BJP govt. linking it to eligibility; CM denies discrimination, says 1.45 crore people received funds

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

The disbursement of cash to women under West Bengal’s Annapurna Bhandar scheme has given a handle to the Opposition parties to target the Suvendu Adhikari-led government.

Trinamool Congress chairperson Mamata Banerjee took the opportunity on Monday to target the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) regime in the State. “Before the election, the BJP did not discuss eligibility to receive the money. Will the BJP now decide who is eligible? Why are women not receiving money under the Annapurna scheme? Women are being given benefits based on caste and religion,” the former Chief Minister said.

Women in different parts of the State came out in protests last week alleging that they have been denied benefit of ₹3,000 per month under the scheme. Ms. Banerjee had launched



Women protesting after allegedly failing to receive funds under the Annapurna Bhandar scheme, in Malda on Monday. PTI

a scheme to give cash to women in the State in 2021 named Lakshmir Bhandar and before the change of regime the number of beneficiaries who were receiving a sum of ₹1,500 per month had climbed to 2.2 crore.

On Monday, Ms. Banerjee assured women who have been denied benefits that she will stand by them. “Take down the names of those who are being deprived of Lakshmir Bhandar and Annapurna Bhandar benefits. They

will be contacted. I was with you, I am with you, and I will remain with you,” the Trinamool chairperson said.

Alleging that the BJP government has denied her permission to hold public meetings, Ms. Banerjee also added that those who think she will retire from politics simply because of permission being denied are mistaken. “Our fight will not stop until the BJP itself is forced into political retirement,” she said.

Hours later, Chief Minis-

ter Suvendu Adhikari said that 1.45 crore beneficiaries have been disbursed with Annapurna Bhandar funds.

The Chief Minister tried to defend the fact that beneficiaries of Annapurna Bhandar are being scrutinised and questioned why the scheme was promised to women between 25 years and 60 years of age during the Trinamool regime if it was universal.

Allegations denied

Mr. Adhikari refuted allegations of Muslim being denied benefits under the scheme and said that about 19.20 lakh Muslims have got payments under the scheme. “Those eligible, whether Hindu or Muslim, Trinamool or BJP, have received the benefits,” the Chief Minister said. He said that a portal has been opened where people can lodge complaints for denial of benefits and also complain if anyone who is non-deserving is availing of scheme benefits.

Stalin challenges TVK candidate’s victory in Kolathur

Press Trust of India
CHENNAI



M.K. Stalin

DMK president M. K. Stalin on Monday filed a petition in the Madras High Court, seeking to declare the election of TVK candidate V.S. Babu from the Kolathur Assembly constituency as void and consequently declare him as duly elected from that constituency.

In his petition, Mr. Stalin submitted that after the election was over and results were declared, he had duly nominated senior advocate N.R. Elango as his authorised representative for checking and verification of the burnt memory/microcontroller in the Control Unit, Ballot Unit and VVPAT (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail) for 14 selected EVM sets pertaining to Kolathur constituency.

During checking and verification by Mr. Elango, grave and alarming irregularities came to light. Mr. Elango immediately wrote to the District Election Officer informing him of these grave lapses.

Without addressing them, the District Election Officer declared that the checking and verification had been carried out successfully and was complet-

ed on August 5 in accordance with the prescribed procedures.

On August 6, Mr. Stalin wrote to the District Election Officer highlighting the specific failures that had come to light. He emphasised that the certificates issued by the engineer cannot be, and were not, substitutes for technical/failure reports explaining the causes of the failures.

‘Claim not acceptable’

Mr. Stalin refused to accept the District Election Officer’s claim that the process had been successfully carried out. Therefore, he has filed the present petition, challenging the order of the District Election Officer.

Mr. Stalin also sought a direction to the authorities to conduct 100% counting of VVPAT slips relating to Kolathur Assembly constituency.

Row over U.P. IAS officer’s ‘bid’ to influence civil judge deepens as HC takes serious exception

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

The controversy surrounding allegations that senior IAS officer and Devipatan Divisional Commissioner Durga Shakti Nagpal attempted to exert pressure on a civil judge intensified on Monday, with civil society members demanding a high-level probe by the Uttar Pradesh government.

The demand comes after the Allahabad High Court’s Lucknow Bench on Friday took serious exception to the allegation.

The Gonda civil judge, in a letter to the district judge, earlier alleged that she received repeated phone calls while on leave on July 15 from a number linked to the Devipatan Division Commissioner’s office, headquartered in Gonda. According to her, Ms. Nag-

The judge alleged that the IAS officer attempted to discuss a pending case over repeated phone calls

pal, who wanted to discuss a long-pending land dispute, asked pointed questions about how long the judge intended to stay on leave. She also said the “phone calls and the tone used amounted to interference”.

The High Court observed that the pressure prima facie exerted by Ms. Nagpal “struck at the independence of the judiciary and obstructed the administration of justice”.

Ms. Nagpal, however, said she had not tried to discuss the merits of the case and had only sought to know when the judge would resume hearing the

matter.

Justice Syed Qamar Hasan Rizvi held that the allegations could not simply be ignored, and directed that the matter be placed before the appropriate Bench dealing with criminal contempt. Justice Rizvi noted that the tone of the alleged conversation showed the judge was being pressured. The court directed that the matter be placed before the appropriate Bench after seeking directions from the Chief Justice or the senior judge.

“I have sent a letter to the Chief Secretary demanding the transfer of Durga Shakti Nagpal and an independent inquiry,” activist Amitabh Thakur said. He has also demanded clear protocols to be issued regarding officials contacting judicial officers over pending cases.

Farmers’ body terms NCDC (Amendment) Act an onslaught on federal rights of States

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) on Monday said the National Cooperative Development Corporation (Amendment) Act, 2026 is an onslaught on the federal rights of States. The umbrella organisation of farmer groups, in an official statement, alleged that the new law would divert resources from the priority sector of agriculture and agriculture-based rural industrial and infrastructure development. It also alleged that the new law was framed to suit the “corporate model of urban-centric development”.

The Parliament of India passed the NCDC (Amendment) Bill, 2026, in August to amend the NCDC Act of 1962, expanding the financial and operational scope of the statutory corporation. Citing the Constitution’s Seventh Schedule, the SKM said “cooperation”



The law also does away with the old rule that required eligible industrial and village cooperatives to be based only in rural areas. FILE PHOTO

was in the State list, and the NCDC (Amendment) Act, 2026, is a “naked intrusion” by the Union government into the powers of the States. “As per International Cooperative Alliance principles, autonomy and independence are basic principles of cooperation along with democratic control. The law, which permits NCDC to directly intervene in the cooperative societies and take their shares openly, violates the basic principles of cooperation and facilitates centralisation of power into the

hands of the Union government,” the SKM’s statement read.

The SKM argued that by directly extending financial aid to cooperative societies, the NCDC would centralise cooperative institutions under the power of the Union government for political dominance over States. “This reflects the authoritarian character of the corporate class fully endorsed by BJP-RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) combine,” the statement added.

The SKM said the Supreme Court, through an

order in 2021, had stated that the Union government has limited powers to intervene in cooperative societies that are under State governments. The new amendment had been brought to nullify the apex court’s order, it added.

The law also does away with the old rule that required eligible industrial and village cooperatives to be based only in rural locations. “Cooperatives are the soul of rural India and are capable of bringing widespread developments in the villages. The NCDC (Amendment) Act permits its operations to extend to non-agricultural sectors and abolish the stipulation of developing industries in the rural regions... means the resources meant to use for agriculture and rural industrial and infrastructure expansion will be diverted for urban-centric development suitable for corporate development model,” the statement read.

Jarange firm on Aug. 29 fast over Maratha quota demand

Press Trust of India
JALNA

Maratha reservation activist Manoj Jarange on Monday said he would begin a hunger strike at Antarwali Sarati in Jalna on August 29 unless the Maharashtra government acted on his demands by August 28.

Mr. Jarange sought reservation for eligible Marathas under the Other Backward Classes category on the basis of Kunbi records, completion of the process of issuing certificates and validity documents, and withdrawal of cases against protesters.

A three-member ministerial delegation urged him to reconsider the agitation. Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil, part of the delegation, said the government would address hurdles within “two or three days” and act against officials found responsible.

Another KSU leader arrested for Shillong violence; 15 FIRs filed

Press Trust of India
SHILLONG

The Meghalaya police on Monday arrested another leader of the Khasi Students Union, alleged to be one of five masked persons identified in connection with the August 19 violence during the outfit’s black-flag bike rally in Shillong, particularly attacks on Assam-registered vehicles.

KSU assistant organising secretary Jeremiah Pohthmi was arrested from the city’s Nongmensong area, East Khasi Hills SP Vivek Syiem told reporters.

Police produced him before a court and sought his custody for further investigation, the SP said.

Pohthmi’s arrest comes days after police arrested

three senior KSU leaders – president Raymond Kharjana, vice-president Pynkmenlang Sanmiet and general secretary Reuben Najiar – in connection with the same case.

13 vehicles damaged

The August 19 rally, which had been permitted by the East Khasi Hills district administration, turned violent when some participants allegedly pelted stones at vehicles and attacked bystanders. At least 31 vehicles were damaged, and 18 people were injured in the violence, according to the State government.

CM Conrad K. Sangma on Monday informed the Assembly that 15 FIRs had been filed in connection with the violence.

Stone quarries and crushers in the vicinity put Assam’s semiconductor plant at risk

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

Dust-producing stone quarries and crushers in the vicinity could cripple Assam’s semiconductor unit, a signature pet project of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, before it can start, an environmental activist has warned.

The ₹27,000 crore Tata Semiconductor Assembly and Test (TSAT) facility is being developed in Morigaon district’s Jagiroad, about 55 km east of Guwahati. It is a major component of India’s chip-making ambitions and is linked to the vision of building a self-reliant ecosystem under the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM).

Over 60% of the work at the TSAT facility, coming up where a unit of the Hin-



Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma inspecting progress of the semiconductor project at Jagiroad near Guwahati. FILE PHOTO

dustan Paper Corporation once stood, is complete.

According to the ISM guidelines, a semiconductor plant requires ISO Class 1 to 5 vibration-damped cleanrooms to prevent microscopic dust contamination, and millions of gallons of ultra-pure water daily for wafer-rising, chemical processing, and cooling.

However, stone quarries

and crushers within a 5 km radius of the facility have reportedly been covering the Jagiroad area with a blanket of dust. Local organisations said excavation and blasting carried out in the hills of Sonaikuchi Reserve Forest (near the semiconductor plant) have caused flash floods and threatened public health.

Raising concerns over

the potential impact of dust and pollution on Assam’s flagship industrial project, Golaghat district-based environmental activist Rohit Choudhury urged the State government to enforce restrictions on polluting industries and activities within a 15-km radius of the TSAT facility.

RTI response

In a letter to the Assam Chief Secretary on August 22, he cited an RTI reply from the State’s Industries, Commerce, and Public Enterprise Department and an earlier government directive to argue that exemption granted to pre-existing and pipeline polluting industries could undermine the very objective of protecting the proposed Ratan Tata Electronic City at Jagiroad.

SC bans constructions near Rajasthan’s Jojari river to curb pollution

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday banned any construction or development activities within 100 metres of Jojari River in Rajasthan. The court also prohibited hazardous industries within 500 metres of either side of the existing flood line along the river’s flow path.

The decision by a Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta is the latest in a series of interventions made by the apex court to protect the seasonal river, which has faced a barrage of contamination that has affected around two million lives in the water-starved State.

On August 4, the apex

court had suggested that the Rajasthan government prepare a 20-point resolution plan to deal with the issue of contamination in the Jojari, Bandi and Luni rivers in the State.

The Jojari river passes through Jodhpur, the Bandi river flows through Pali, and the Luni river runs through Balotra. The Bandi and Jojari rivers merge with the Luni river near Balotra city.

‘Consider relocation’

The Supreme Court had said that the entire industrial area in Pali was located along the river bank. It had said that the State authorities would have to consider relocating industries away from the river in the long run.



CMYK

Jaishankar meets Putin in Moscow, hands over PM Modi's personal message

CM urges PM to drop move to truncate rail division

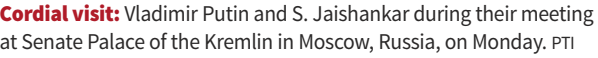
The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Women take out a rally demanding implementation of a National Register of Citizens before the Census in Manipur on Monday. ANI

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday said that he plans to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the upcoming summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to be held at Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. He made the remarks at the meeting with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, who called on Mr. Putin in the Kremlin.

At the meeting in the Kremlin, Mr. Jaishankar briefed the Russian President about his meetings in Moscow and said, "Prime Minister Modi looks forward to meeting you at the SCO summit, then welcoming you to India for the BRICS Summit, and, in due course, as per your mutual convenience, having the annual summit, so we have



“Progress on market access, removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers, strengthening payment mechanisms, and stronger business-to-business engagement will be critical for addressing this imbalance and achieving our shared objective of U.S. \$100 billion in bilateral trade by 2030,” he said, calling for growing engagement between Indian and Russian businesses. He referred to the “complicated international scenario” as a window for new opportunities and “de-risking”.

“Our discussions focused on our cooperation in trade, investments, energy, fertilizers, nuclear, connectivity, technology, space and mobility domains,” he said. He added

6 arrested for fake airline job racket; victims are from Delhi, neighbouring States

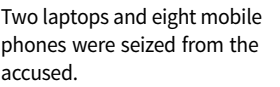
Ajit Doval

At the previous round of SR talks in August 2025, India and China agreed on setting up an Expert Group under the WMCC “to explore Early Harvest in boundary delimitation in India-China border areas”.

Lavpreet Kaur
NEW DELHI

From a small room in a commercial building in Noida Sector 62, three women posing as HR executives at an airline company spent their days calling young jobseekers and offering them roles at Indira Gandhi International Airport. Except, the airline did not exist. Neither did the aviation institute they claimed candidates had to enrol in before joining.

The telecallers, undergraduates aged between 20 and 25, were arrested last week, along with the alleged mastermind and two other accomplices, for duping job aspirants from Delhi, Chandigarh, Haryana and Punjab, the Delhi police said. Ten victims have been identified so far.



he received a call from a woman who introduced herself as Karishma. She told him that a diploma in airport management from “Future Wings Learning Institute” was mandatory for the job. Mr. Kumar transferred ₹7,000 through UPI. It was only when the woman stopped answering his calls, that Mr. Kumar realised that he had been cheated and that no such airline exists.

The trail led investigators to a rented office at Gaur City Centre Mall in Noida, where mastermind Sandeep Kumar, 23, and his associate Akhil Kumar, 27, were arrested on August 18. Subsequently, the police arrested Rakesh Kumar, 47, a website developer, who allegedly designed and hosted the fake websites for a fee, along with Shweta, Sapna and Sakshi, the telecallers.

The crime came to light after Vikas Kumar, a resident of Paharganj, came across an Instagram advertisement on June 10 offering a job at “Bretish Airways” based at IGI Airport. After filling in his details,

Home Minister directs police chiefs to detect and deport illegal immigrants

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah during the inauguration of the 9th National Security Strategies Conference on Monday. ANI

The Home Minister said an AI-based analysis of information available on Multi Agency Centres (MAC) platforms should be done to create standard operating procedures (SOPs) to counter various national security challenges.

officers working at the cutting-edge level, and domain experts from specialised fields joined the conference through virtual mode, the Union Home Ministry said.

On the first day of the conference, discussions focused on critical aspects of national security, including response to counter-

For effective tackling of terrorism and radicalisation, Mr. Shah emphasised on training for implementation of the Ministry's PRAHAAR scheme, expediting trials by bringing back fugitives, using the trial in absentia provisions and undertaking comprehensive and integrated approach while investigating Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) cases.

Second day of the conference will focus on the threat landscape from sub-aerial systems and formulating countermeasures.

Indian polls are conducted transparently, asserts CEC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Polls in India are conducted transparently under the concurrent audit of political parties, candidates or their representatives at all stages, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar said on Monday.

He was speaking at the second regional conference on 'Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELC 2.0) and ECINET' in Lucknow which focuses on strengthening electoral literacy and democratic awareness among young citizens through educational institutions.

He said elections in India are held strictly as per the Constitution, law and instructions issued by the Election Commission.

IN BRIEF



The Cockroach Janta Party on Monday called for a march on September 5, accusing the Centre of failing to honour the promises made on July 25 to convince the outfit to withdraw its 36-day agitation against exam irregularities. The march will start at India Gate and head toward the Delhi Police Headquarters, as per a statement. It said the march would be led by kin of students who died by suicide following the cancellation of the NEET exam and the re-test, and those who were allegedly subjected to police excesses during the July agitation. The police said they have not received any requests for a march. PTI

Three Bambiha gangsters deported from Malaysia: govt.

The office of the Union Home Minister said on Monday that three fugitive gangsters linked to the Bambaia Gang, wanted for multiple crimes including cross-border arms and narco-trafficking, were deported from Malaysia. Indian agencies have facilitated the deportation of 51 hardened criminals in 2026 alone, it said. "Indian agencies got three gangsters apprehended in Malaysia, deported them to India, and sent them to police custody. The fugitives, namely Jaspreet Singh, Ajay Singh and Pawandeep Singh, are linked to Bambaia Gang and are accused of multiple crimes, including extortion, cross-border arms and narco-trafficking, and a foiled grenade attack in Ludhiana," it said in a post on X.

Hopes fade for 22 sailors of sunken *MV Ocean Winner*

The search and rescue operation for the sunken Panama-flagged bulk carrier in the Bay of Bengal has been expanded to cover a wider area, as hopes of finding the 22 remaining crew members alive diminish with every passing hour. Despite days-long search operations, neither debris of the vessel nor any of its 22 missing crew members could be traced, an Indian Coast Guard (ICG) spokesperson said on Monday. The Navy and ICG are coordinating the operation about 700 km east of Visakhapatnam in the Bay of Bengal. "On August 22, two Chinese nationals were rescued after a distress call was received from *MV Ocean Winner*, which had sailed with iron ore from Paradip for China on August 20. The vessel sank at a location where the sea is extremely deep," said Commandant Amit Uniyal, ICG spokesman.

Congress targets Modi govt. on price rise and unemployment

The party flags rising prices of food items, including sugar, onions, and milk; party president Mallikarjun Kharge points out that graduates account for 67% of unemployed Indians aged 20 to 29; he slams govt. for absence of jobs after graduation

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday targeted the Narendra Modi government over unemployment and price rise, with party president Mallikarjun Kharge accusing the government of “completely ravaging” young India’s entire pathway from education to employment.

Mr. Kharge cited a recent NITI Aayog report estimating that 8.7 crore Indians in the 15-29 age group were not studying, working, or receiving training. Youth unemployment stood at 15.6%, rising to 19.5% among young women, he said, citing the Periodic Labour Force Survey for July.

“Where are the jobs after graduation,” Mr. Kharge asked in a post on the so-



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has accused the government of putting the youth’s future at risk. FILE PHOTO

cial media platform X, pointing out that graduates account for 67% of unemployed Indians aged 20 to 29. He questioned the promise of creating two crore jobs every year, saying that by that calculation, 24 crore jobs should have been created in 12 years.

Mr. Kharge alleged that lakhs of government posts

remained vacant, while secure employment was increasingly being replaced by contractual and part-time work. “Expensive and inadequate education, paper leaks, delayed recruitment, a widening skills gap, and disappearing quality jobs have put the future of an entire generation at risk,” he said.

“You, Modi*ji*, promised to achieve what previous governments could not do in 70 years! You have certainly delivered on that boast: an education system that costs more, infested with RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh), examinations young Indians cannot trust, and degrees that increasingly come without jobs,” the Congress chief said.

The NITI Aayog report, “Reimagining skilling for Viksit Bharat@2047”, based on data from the 78th round of the National Sample Survey conducted in 2021, has called for subsidised training programmes to encourage self-employment, and align skills with local demand and emerging sectors.

The Congress also attacked the government over the rising prices of es-

sential commodities. The party’s communications chief, Jairam Ramesh, cited a media report on a sharp rise in onion prices, saying prices in Nashik had increased by around 76% in a month, while wholesale rates had doubled in some States.

“After sugar, now onions too are slipping out of the common man’s reach,” Mr. Ramesh said on X. The government’s buffer stock was empty, he said, adding that the rising prices of milk, oil, fruits, and other essential commodities were adding to the burden on households.

“The Modi government, which claims to have ushered in *achche din* (good days), should explain how the poor and middle class were expected to make ends meet,” Mr. Ramesh said.

Citing vacancies, Congress chief says Modi government is trying to end reservation

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday accused the Narendra Modi government of seeking to undermine reservation through what it termed a “back door” route, citing more than 8.2 lakh sanctioned posts lying vacant across civilian Central government establishments.

The figures showed that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government’s policy of “conspiring to end” the constitutional rights of disadvantaged communities had been exposed, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said.

The charge came amid the ongoing “reservation *hatao*” (remove reservation) campaign, seeking to end caste-based reservations in government jobs and educational institutions.

Sharing a Ministry-wise

Over 8.2 lakh sanctioned posts are lying vacant across civilian Central govt. establishments

breakup of the vacancies on social media platform X, Mr. Kharge said the number had risen from 4.21 lakh in 2015 to 8.24 lakh in 2024.

According to the figures cited by him, the Railways had 2.40 lakh vacant posts, while the Defence Ministry had 2.41 lakh vacancies. The Home Ministry had another 1.10 lakh vacant posts, Mr. Kharge said.

He also alleged that 5.1 lakh permanent jobs had been eliminated in public sector undertakings, while the share of contractual workers had increased from 19% to 49%.

“The question is not just about employment, but

about social justice,” Mr. Kharge said. He argued that keeping government posts vacant would effectively deny reserved-category candidates opportunities, while the sale of PSUs and increasing contractual employment would further shrink the availability of jobs covered by reservation.

“To end reservations, it is not necessary to amend the Constitution – just eliminating jobs with reservations is enough,” he said.

The Congress president alleged that the BJP’s approach was aimed at weakening the constitutional safeguards for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and Economically Weaker Sections.

The Congress has sought to frame vacancies and changes in public employment as part of a wider question of social justice.

‘Standard practice’ followed, say officials on U.S. envoy remarks

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Indian officials followed the “standard practice” of checking the modalities for public appearances by Prime Minister Narendra Modi ahead of his meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump on the sidelines of the G7 summit in France earlier this year, official sources said on Monday.

This comes hours after U.S. Ambassador Sergio Gor claimed that the External Affairs Ministry had asked for the press event not to feature questions. Mr. Gor went on to say that Mr. Trump subsequently forgot about the purported request and went on to answer questions from journalists for 45 minutes.

“Discussions regarding arrangements for public appearances of leaders are normal practice ahead of any VVIP visit. In this regard, the Indian side communicated its standard practice for such visits,” a source said, referring to the interaction between Mr. Modi and Mr. Trump in Evian, France, on June 17, 2026.

Addressing a media conclave on Sunday, Mr. Gor said the Ministry had an “ask” regarding making the meeting between the two leaders free of questions from the press.

Mr. Trump, however, forgot about the Indian side’s “ask”, Mr. Gor



Sergio Gor

claimed, and proceeded to answer questions. “A 45-minute press conference followed, and everything was on the table,” he said.

Official sources, however, pointed out that during the press interaction, all questions, both from U.S. and Indian presspersons, were aimed at Mr. Trump and that Mr. Modi was not asked any questions.

‘PM afraid of media’

Meanwhile, the Congress said the office of the Prime Minister was being “diminished and disrespected”.

In a post on X, Congress leader Pawan Khera said Mr. Gor’s remarks were revealing, suggesting that avoiding questions from the media was a regular practice under Mr. Modi. “Why is Modi so afraid of facing the media?” he asked.

In another post, Mr. Khera said Mr. Trump had not taken Mr. Modi’s concerns seriously. “A compromised PM is not taken seriously,” he said.

Opposition raises concerns over ‘weakening’ of ISRO; Centre hits back

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The government and the Opposition sparred on Monday over the future of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), with Congress general secretary (communication) Jairam Ramesh raising concern over a reported privatisation push in the space sector, and Union Minister of State for Science and Technology Jitendra Singh saying the nation’s space programme was being “scaled up”, not scaled back.

Reports about ISRO’s future role had raised “legitimate concerns”, given the capabilities it built over six decades under scientists, including Vikram Sarabhai, Satish Dhawan, Brahm Prakash, U.R. Rao, and A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Mr. Ramesh said.

ISRO’s role in rocket development and manufacturing could be “severely limited”, he alleged, adding that a substantial part of its satellite-related assets could be transferred to private companies. He questioned the reported plan to hand over the second spaceport being developed at Kulasekarapattinam in Tamil Nadu, for which ISRO is investing about ₹1,000 crore, to a private company.

‘Over 100 resignations’

“The future of the historic Sriharikota spaceport in Andhra Pradesh is itself



Union Minister of State for S&T Jitendra Singh says ISRO is focusing on frontier missions such as Gaganyaan. FILE PHOTO

anybody’s guess,” Mr. Ramesh said. He also claimed that 100-120 key ISRO professionals had left the organisation in recent months, “perhaps seeing the writing on the wall”.

Responding to Mr. Ramesh, Dr. Singh accused him of being determined to “run down every Indian achievement”. “ISRO is not being weakened. It is being enabled to concentrate increasingly on the frontier missions – Gaganyaan, Chandrayaan-4, the Bharatiya Antariksh Station, and future missions to the moon, Venus and Mars,” the Minister said. As India targets 50 launches a year, industry would have to emerge as the manufacturer at scale while ISRO focused on developing next-

generation technologies and missions, Dr. Singh said. He described this as the “natural evolution” of the space programme.

More start-ups

Citing the expansion of private participation, he said India now had more than 440 space start-ups, and referred to the July 18 launch of Skyroot Aerospace’s Vikram-1, which he said was the first privately developed Indian rocket to reach orbit. “That is not ISRO’s legacy being diluted. That is ISRO’s legacy bearing fruit,” Dr. Singh said.

The government was targeting a \$44-billion space economy, requiring private rocket factories, satellite manufacturing facilities, and a deeper supply

BJP rejects Cong. charge, says space sector is growing

NEW DELHI

The BJP on Monday rejected the Congress’ assertion that the Narendra Modi government was pursuing an “aggressive privatisation agenda” in the space sector, stating that the space programme went from a predominantly government-led initiative into a broader ecosystem. “I understand your frustration with India’s remarkable journey in space. But the numbers tell a story that is difficult to ignore”, BJP spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari said.

chain, alongside ISRO’s research and frontier missions, he said. The government’s model was “ISRO and industry together”, rather than ISRO versus industry, he added.

Sriharikota would remain central to major programmes, including PSLV, LVM3 and human spaceflight, while Kulasekarapattinam would add capacity for the growing small-launch sector, he said.

Dr. Singh also cited the increase in foreign satellites launched by ISRO from 35 before 2014 to more than 430, and Chandrayaan-3’s successful landing near the Moon’s south polar region, to highlight what he described as the results of the government’s space strategy.

Rules at tribal hostels undermining dignity of students, says Rahul

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Monday wrote to Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis alleging that rules governing tribal hostels were undermining the dignity and access to education of students and said Adivasi students had been on hunger strike for over 10 days.

In his letter to Mr. Fadnavis, Mr. Gandhi followed up on interactions with students in Pune during the *Chhatron ki Gunj* (echo of students) programme last Saturday. He said students from across Maharashtra had told him about hostel rules that “strip them of their dignity and shut off their path to education”. Mr. Gandhi expressed particular concern over facilities for women, saying said female students returning after an extended absence were required to undergo pregnancy tests and other medical examinations to establish their “fitness”. This was an “attack on their dignity and humanity”, he said.

Mr. Gandhi flagged a rule barring those above 30 from hostel accommodation, saying it excluded many students still completing their studies or preparing for examinations.

He also alleged that hostels were unsafe and often lacked food, sanitation and



Rahul Gandhi

medical care, with students suffering injuries and deaths, including from snake bites. “These students are not asking for charity. They are demanding what is theirs by right,” Mr. Gandhi said, urging Mr. Fadnavis to hear the students’ concerns.

Earlier in the day, the party had sought a special committee to probe the deaths of tribal children allegedly due to malnutrition in Madhya Pradesh and of tribal girls following snakebite in Maharashtra and demanded action against officials found responsible. Adivasi Congress chief Vikrant Bhuria also called for a safety audit of tribal hostels, citing alleged lapses in facilities in the two States.

Turning to Maharashtra, he alleged that more than 70 girls at a tribal hostel in Gadchiroli were made to sleep on the floor in a single room. Six girls were hospitalised following a snakebite incident, of whom three died, he said.

‘PM taking forward Sant Ravidas’s ideals’

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

BJP president Nitin Nabin on Monday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s leadership was taking forward Sant Ravidas’s ideals of social harmony, equality and selfless service, with development reaching the poorest of the poor.

He was speaking at the party’s *Samrasta Sankalp Abhiyan* (Social Harmony Pledge Campaign) event, organised to mark the 650th birth anniversary of Sant Shiromani Ravidas, a Bhakti poet, who fought for the marginalised sec-

tions of society.

Mr. Nabin said that under the Modi government, development schemes were being delivered to the poor and the last person in society. About 25 crore people had been brought out of poverty, he said. He said the BJP’s resolve was to unite every section of society and realise the goal of a Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Among those present were Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, BJP State president and Minister of State Harsh Malhotra. Mr. Nabin said the party’s entire cadre was carrying forward the campaign.

T.N. govt. to pay for three domestic LPG cylinders a year: CM

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay on Monday announced the reimbursement of the cost of three domestic LPG cylinders a year for eligible home-makers under the Annapoorani Super Six Scheme, which will be launched on Pongal Day in 2027. A total of 1,30,16,104 families will benefit from the scheme, which is expected to cost the government around ₹4,000 crore a year.

In the run-up to the Assembly election, Mr. Vijay had promised six free LPG cylinders to each family a year and free travel for wo-

men on all government buses across Tamil Nadu.

Making a *suo motu* statement in the Assembly, the Chief Minister said the money for the cylinders would be credited into the bank accounts of the beneficiaries. “The government will collect the list from the oil companies after the beneficiaries receive the cylinders following registration and credit the money into their bank accounts,” he said.

Criteria for eligibility

Families with an annual income not exceeding ₹2.5 lakh, middle and marginal farmers, and families of persons with disabilities



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay speaking at the Assembly session on Monday.

are eligible for the free cylinders.

Mr. Vijay said there had been a shortage of cylinders in the last four

months because of the war in West Asia, forcing the people to opt for alternative fuels. The increase in fuel prices had also eaten

into the family income. “Though the government is facing a financial crisis, it has decided to reimburse the money for the LPG cylinders to ease the burden on the people and fulfil the TVK’s election promise,” he said.

‘No restrictions’

Mr. Vijay also announced the expansion of the Vettri Payanam scheme (previously Vidiyal Payanam) to allow women to travel on express, LSS, and deluxe buses. The expansion will come into effect on Gandhi Jayanti (October 2) and cost the exchequer roughly ₹6,000 crore a year.

In a *suo motu* statement, he said women are now allowed to travel free only on ordinary buses in the cities and municipal areas, and in the hill areas for up to 40 km. He said that from October 2, women could travel without paying fares on mofussil buses plying between districts and on buses operating in the hill areas.

“There is no income ceiling or other restrictions. The expansion will enable girl students to travel to colleges at faraway places and women to travel across the State. Transgender persons can also make use of the scheme,” he said.

A IN-X

Alok Bhattacharya
Gayatri Saberwal

What Galileo missed

U.K. forecasts 'biggest' El Niño yet will break heat records



Invisible actors

The ECI must stop filing of bulk applications for deletion of voters

The Election Commission of India (ECI)’s Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls has seen allegations of bulk filing of applications seeking to delete voters’ names from draft lists using Form 7 in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and, more recently Uttarakhand. Ground reports by *The Hindu* from Karnataka, Rajasthan and Gujarat noted that these forms were often filed in bulk fraudulently using names of people who were unaware of the filing. In several instances, hundreds of objections were filed under a single person’s name. Form 7 is filed to object to an existing name – or to request its deletion – on the electoral rolls for reasons such as death, shifting, or ineligibility. The ECI’s Booth Level Officer or the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) has to conduct an inquiry on the application and issue a notice to the voter before taking any action. While Booth Level Agents (BLA) of political parties can file up to 10 Form 7s a day, totalling 30, there is no limit on how many forms an individual registered as a voter from the same constituency can submit. To prevent misuse, the ECI has said that if a person files more than five objections, it will trigger a mandatory review by the ERO to ensure the legitimacy of the claims.

The Opposition parties have alleged that the form was being misused through “systemic and coordinated efforts” to delete names of eligible voters and embolden the BJP’s efforts to wrongfully gain electoral advantage. In the case of Uttarakhand, the Congress has alleged that the manner in which the bulk forms were submitted online pointed to “institutional” access being granted to some in the process. These parties have also sent delegations and submitted representations to the ECI. What is important to note is that in most cases, voters were unaware that applications for deletion of their names had been filed at all, leaving it to workers of political parties active in the constituency to bring it to their notice. According to ECI data, for the third phase of the SIR covering 16 States/three Union Territories there are 3,42,409 BLAs of political parties for an electorate of 36,73,87,831 or one BLA for approximately 1,073 voters. These numbers include agents from ruling and Opposition parties. In such a situation, it is incumbent upon the ECI to step in and protect the voting rights of an individual rather than leave it to the grassroot strength of political parties. The ECI should thus take immediate steps to address this concern. Abnormal patterns should be investigated and the process should be monitored, with a uniform, country-wide Standard Operating Procedure, requiring verification of identity and constituency of the objector and the following of due process before any elector is deleted pursuant to a Form 7.

Perfect host

India was successful as a host of badminton World Championships

The 2026 BWF World Championships in New Delhi marked the rise of France as an on-court force and of India as a capable host. Alex Lanier’s triumph in singles, and Thom Gicquel and Delphine Delrue’s in mixed doubles, were the first golds in France’s history. It was just over three months ago that the European nation finished a worthy runner-up to China in the Thomas Cup, the de facto World Cup in badminton. The Worlds success has established France as a serious contender in a sport otherwise dominated by Asian countries. In fact, Lanier is just the third non-Asian this century – after Spain’s Carolina Marin and Denmark’s Viktor Axelsen – to win the singles gold at the World Championships. The 21-year-old did that at a spruced-up Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, which was in the dock earlier in January when pigeons and monkeys intruded into the arena during the India Open. The massive facelift ensured that the marquee event’s return to India after 17 years would be long remembered. An Se-Young will also go back with happy memories after reclaiming the women’s singles crown from three-time titlist Akane Yamaguchi. The victory extended the 24-year-old reigning Olympic champion’s stellar 2026, during which she has won an Uber Cup gold medal, and the individual and team trophies at the Badminton Asia Championships.

For India, the competition was the 12th straight edition where it secured at least one medal, with Gayatri Gopichand and Treesa Jolly bagging a bronze in women’s doubles. The performance is the latest in a series of good outcomes for Indian badminton after an ordinary 2025, where Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty’s World Championships doubles bronze was the best result. This year, Lakshya Sen reached the All England Open final, and Ayush Shetty at the Badminton Asia Championships. P.V. Sindhu’s victory at the Japan Open Super 750 last month was only her second Tour title in the last four years, and there were also triumphs for Satwiksairaj and Chirag at Singapore Open Super 750, and for Devika Sihag, Tanvi Sharma and Ashmita Chaliha at the Super 300 level. Yet, the feeling is unmistakable that India should have done better at a home World Championships, with Lakshya’s second-round defeat to the unheralded American teenager Garret Tan the most disappointing. There is no questioning the 25-year-old’s capability; he is a World Championships bronze medallist, a two-time All England finalist and finished an agonising fourth at the Paris 2024 Olympics. But no Indian men’s singles player has won an elite BWF Super 1000-level title since K. Srikanth in 2017. A swift end to this drought is essential for the overall health of the sport.

On August 20, 2026, the Supreme Court of India delivered its judgment on the Reference made on the correctness of the judgment in *Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board vs A. Rajappa (BWSSB)*, 1978, particularly the test for determining whether an activity falls within the definition of “industry” under Section 2(j) of the Industrial Disputes (ID) Act, 1947. A brief history of the Reference. In *State of U.P. vs Jai Bir Singh (2005)*, 5 SCC 1, a five-judge Bench referred the seven-judge Bench decision in *BWSSB* for reconsideration. A seven-judge Bench was constituted and, by order dated January 2, 2017, referred the matter to a nine-judge Bench. By order dated February 16 2026, the nine-Judge Bench framed four questions concerning the correctness of the test in *BWSSB*, the impact of the 1982 Amendment and the Industrial Relations Code (IRC), 2020, whether government welfare activities count as “industrial activities,” and the scope of “sovereign functions” under Section 2(j).

By the time the questions were framed, the IRC, 2020 had been brought into force from November 21, 2025, also repealing the ID Act, 1947. By virtue of this repeal, the Reference had effectively been rendered otiose. Even so, the nine-judge Bench proceeded to hear the matter.

Judges and reactions

Of the nine judges, Justice D. Datta and Justice U. Bhuyan held that “the reference requires no answer”. Justice B.V. Nagarathna found the exercise “unnecessary and only academic in nature”. Justice P.S. Narasimha held that “an authoritative interpretation of the definition industry’ was compelling at the time of the Reference”, but “such a determination has now become unnecessary, with the repeal of the said provision.”.

Importantly, even the opinion written by the Chief Justice of India (CJI) for four judges acknowledges this. Even as it sought to re-formulate the Triple Test laid down by *BWSSB*, it describes its reformulation of the Triple Test as merely “hypothetical”, and expressly states that it will not apply to any pending case. The ID Act has been repealed, and there can be no future cases under it either. Even the reformulated test framed by four judges was prospective and would not alter pending disputes, which would continue to be governed by the *BWSSB* framework, and since the ID Act, 1947 has been repealed, there can be no future cases under it.

The four questions framed on February 16, 2026 concern only Section 2(j) of the ID Act. The interpretation of Section 2(p) of the IRC was not before the Court.

The CJI, writing for four judges, recognises that the IRC “is an independent legislative enactment and must be interpreted on its own terms, having



V. Gopala Gowda

Former Judge of the Supreme Court of India



Maitreyi Krishnan

Practising advocate

The top court’s treatment of *BWSSB* highlights the enduring anxiety over the scope of labour protection

regard to its text, scheme, and object”. At the same time, the same opinion says, in view of the reformulated Triple Test in their opinion, the principles laid down in *BWSSB* shall not be regarded as the “sheet anchor for the interpretation of the IRC should such a question arise in the future”. While on the one hand it refuses to construe a provision, in the same breath it rules on how *BWSSB*, as a precedent, may not be used to construe it. This in itself is a form of construing it, and is an attempt to police the tools available for a future interpretive exercise.

Justice Narasimha also says that it is important to ensure that the interpretation of the definition of “Industry” under the IRC “is not burdened by the existing interpretations” under the ID Act, 1947. Justice Nagarathna’s opinion on this issue is important. While affirming the judgment in *BWSSB*, she recognised that the extent to which its reasoning carries over to the interpretation of “industry” under the IRC is to be tested by comparing the actual text of the two provisions. Such a comparison can be meaningfully undertaken only in a case arising under Section 2(p), and not in the abstract.

The interpretation of the definition of industry under the IRC cannot be seen in abstract and would have to be understood in light of the rich jurisprudence that has developed with *BWSSB* and after.

The importance of *BWSSB*

There is a deeper thread – an anxiety about the judgment in *BWSSB*, which needs to be addressed. This anxiety is what gave rise to the Reference itself. The five-judge Bench in *Jai Bir Singh* (2005) questioned the correctness of *BWSSB*, observing that its “worker-oriented approach” was “unmindful of the interests of the employer or owner of the industry”.

This finds an echo in the CJI’s opinion. Having hypothetically reformulated the tests in *BWSSB*, and having stated that *BWSSB* shall not be regarded as the sheet anchor for the interpretation of the IRC, the opinion of the CJI, for four judges, speaks of the judgment finally lifting a “burden” and permitting the law to “move forward unencumbered”.

This again finds echo in the judgment of Justice Narasimha, who states that the interpretation of the definition of “industry” under the IRC, 2020 “must be freed of the bondage of ratio” in *BWSSB*. In this light, it is essential to recognise what “burden” of *BWSSB* causes such anxiety.

There can be no dispute about the asymmetry between capital and labour, or the imbalance in their respective bargaining power. Justice Bagchi recognises this when he reminds us that one must always “bear in mind that a workman seldom enters the field of negotiation as an

The fact is youth unemployment has a household cost



Gargi Sridharan

Economist



Basit Abdullah

Assistant Professor at the Institute of Management Technology, Hyderabad

Unemployment among educated youth in India extends beyond jobseekers, placing prolonged financial pressure on families

different question: what happens to families when an educated young adult cannot find work? How households experience that unemployment may depend not only on the absence of work, but also on how long the search lasts and on the resources families have to sustain it.

The households that invested in education

Around 15.4% of Indian households have a tertiary-educated young adult (18-29 years). These are households that have invested in higher education in the expectation that it would provide a pathway to secure employment and upward mobility. Yet, one in five households is supporting at least one unemployed tertiary-educated young adult (20.8%). The household consequences are measurable. Compared to households without any educated unemployed youth, those with unemployed youth spend, on average, ₹1,087 less per month on consumption overall, and ₹710 less per household member.

On average, these households have only 1.5 earning members, compared with two in households without an unemployed educated youth. For 14.4% of them, there is no active earning member at all, while 39.5% depend on a single earner. And in nearly two-thirds (62.5%), no one in the household has a regular salaried job.

The pressure on households becomes more serious when unemployment persists. Nearly three in five (58%) unemployed tertiary-educated youth have been searching for work for more than a year. Close to three in 10 (28.9%) have been unemployed for more than two years. A household supporting an unemployed graduate for a few months faces a different pressure than one financing a job search stretching across one or two years. Extended unemployment depletes savings, reduces consumption, and forces

equal....” The Constitution recognises this, with Article 42 requiring the state to secure “just and humane conditions of work,” while Article 23 prohibits “traffic in human beings”, “begar, and other forms of forced labour”. The conditions that necessitated these protections have simply changed form.

Labour legislation recognised this extreme imbalance and sought to ensure a modicum of bare protection. This is not a “pro-worker” understanding of the law, but just a check against the imbalance tilting toward the employer. The fact that such bare protection is described as “pro-worker” says less about the protection than about where the baseline has been unfortunately naturalised. While the freedom to dismiss without explanation is part of the ordinary run of business, a requirement to explain is called a burden. The warning of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar rings true – liberty from the control of the state is another name for “the dictatorship of the private employer”.

The 13-judge Bench decision in *Kesavananda Bharati* (1973) recognised that justice, social, economic and political, formed part of the Constitution’s basic structure. The underlying inequality between employer and workman has not narrowed since 1947. In fact, the policy of “ease of doing business” has widened it. This is exactly why the social justice vision of Part IV of the Constitution calls for more protection now, not less.

The issue of labour rights

The ID Act, 1947 – to maintain industrial peace – provided basic protections and a forum for adjudicating disputes, where the labour courts and tribunals have been given wide powers to adjudicate on the same. To be excluded from its definition of “industry” is to be excluded from that bare minimum protection, and from the remedy available under it. The significance of *BWSSB*’s definition of “industry” lay in ensuring that this protection reached everyone the Act was meant to cover, rather than excluding workers from the one recourse the law offered them.

Given the overarching objective of industrial peace, there was never a reason to treat *BWSSB*’s interpretation as a burden rather than as the Act doing precisely what it was designed to do. The anxiety surrounding it has always rested on the same premise: an eagerness to remove workers from the protection of the law.

As the ID Act stands repealed and the IRC takes its place, it is necessary to return to the promise of social justice in the Constitution. The labour codes that have replaced the ID Act, including the IRC, are built on a premise of exclusion – narrowing who falls within the protection of the law – and will have to answer to that mandate.

difficult choices about what employment the young adult should accept.

The data show a clear pattern: the ability to sustain prolonged job search is associated with household earning capacity. For someone in a household surviving on one earner or without a regular salary, the pressure to start earning is likely to arrive much sooner. What looks like the duration of an individual’s unemployment, therefore, is also a measure of how long a family must sustain the wait. These families must push their unemployed youth toward immediate employment, even if it means accepting positions far below their qualifications. The choice is not between a ‘good job’ and ‘bad job.’ It is between ‘any job’ and economic insecurity.

The policy question

Current employment policy largely treats youth joblessness as an individual problem, addressed through apprenticeships, skilling and hiring incentives. The evidence here suggests that the consequences of unemployment extend beyond the individual jobseeker to the household supporting them. The length of the transition from education to work also matters, because someone is financing that wait. Recruitment delays, prolonged selection processes and extended job searches impose very different costs on a household with several earners than on one relying on a single income or without a regular salaried worker. Therefore, employment policy needs to pay greater attention to how long young people remain unemployed, and to the economic circumstances of the families supporting them during that period. Reducing avoidable delays in entry into work is not only a labour-market concern; it can also reduce the strain that prolonged unemployment places on households.

The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AI-assisted learning

I write this letter as Professor of Medicine, Sri Ramachandra Medical College and Research Institute, Chennai. While the article, “Beyond the red pen” (EducationPlus, August 24), has laid out well-known aspects of learning using Artificial Intelligence (AI) into a crisp model (PRISM-X), it does not address the practical difficulties a human brain may face when using AI for

learning. The writers have rightly placed prompting efficiency first in the model since the first prompt in a conversation – which some call as the mother prompt – is critical. An AI model’s response is only as good as the prompt. I have observed that AI models are progressively designed in such a way that obtaining a good response requires longer and elaborate prompts. The bottleneck is “Reflective capability” in

learning through AI. Assuming that the user has good prompting skills, handling the AI output is not that easy. Reflective capability requires extensive background knowledge, a deeper understanding of current concepts, and an awareness of misconceptions and future applications. For this, the learner has to spend considerable time reading traditional books, articles and observing real-world

applications. So, it takes considerable time and effort for a person to challenge an AI model, identify misinformation and find wrong concepts put forth by the AI model. This means the world is perhaps stuck at the second stage of PRISM-X – not just students, but teachers as well. I fear that using AI without the skill for “Reflective capability” will, in the long run, erode learners’ thoughts and

make them accept half-truths — something which AI models are very good at. We need to educate students on how to upskill on “Reflective capability” before attempting to implement methods to assess their use of AI.

Dr. Emmanuel Bhaskar,
Chennai

Vacant seats

The report, “Over 13,000 UG seats still up for grabs at

Delhi University” (Inside pages, August 24), is not surprising. The vacant seats mirror the prevailing state of the education system in the country. Education no longer seems to guarantee employment or a livelihood. The National Education Policy needs a complete restructuring.

Balasubramaniam Pavani,
Secunderabad

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

Smart glasses highlight gaps in privacy laws

In June, reality star Kylie Jenner posted her latest collaboration on social media – a new design for Meta’s line of AI-powered “smart glasses”. Images of her wearing the glasses filled social media, as did videos of her teenage self lamenting the lack of privacy she was afforded because of her fame. The irony was unmissable: how is Ms. Jenner, who was once so worried about privacy, now promoting a device that enables surveillance?

Smart glasses are the latest addition to the wearable technology space. It is also a dangerous example of how current laws are unable to keep up with today’s tech innovation.

According to Meta, these glasses allow you to see and answer calls, messages, and notifications via voice command. Built-in speakers help you listen to music and an integrated camera enables you to capture photos or videos through the lenses. Meta describes these glasses as “normal-looking eyewear with discreetly integrated glasses technology.” Hidden from the naked eye, these glasses contain “tiny speakers, microphones, [and] a lightweight camera.” The tech giant isn’t shying away from how inconspicuous these features are; rather, it is flaunting it.

Privacy and data concerns
In India, the glasses, which have been advertised everywhere, retail at around ₹25,000. Stickers that claim to completely cover the LED recording indicator are also widely available. Meta says that if the LED is covered, the glasses will block the recording until the sticker is removed. Yet, workarounds are just a Google search away. The glasses also make a shutter sound when they start and stop recording, but this is not a strong indicator that you are being recorded. Further, Meta argues that the glasses are “designed for privacy, controlled by you.” But this “control” is limited to the wearer, and not the recorded



Sonikka Loganathan

As wearable tech becomes more advanced, banning it will become increasingly difficult. Instead, laws should be framed with an understanding of how AI is changing the landscape

subject, such as requiring additional verification before use. The website adds, “Meta collects data needed to help ensure that your glasses and app are reliable, secure and operating normally.” An investigation by Swedish newspapers *Svenska Dagbladet* and *Goteborgs-Posten* found that Meta’s contracted workers, who sometimes review the data to track user experience, were able to view sensitive content filmed on the smart glasses, including wearers using the toilet. In a comment to *BBC News*, Meta said its privacy policy states that it sometimes uses contractors to review data shared with them.

In this context, concerns about women’s privacy have grown. Data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) show that in 2023, before the glasses entered the market, there were 3,678 cases of women-centred cybercrimes. Of these, 2,767 cases involved the transmission or publication of sexually explicit material. Consider how much easier these glasses would make it to record people without their knowledge, including in private spaces. The potential risks to children are equally concerning. In 2023, the NCRB recorded over 698 cases related to the use or storage of child sexual abuse material. If adults cannot often recognise when the glasses are recording, a child certainly cannot.

These risks are compounded by the glasses’ battery life, offering 4-9 hours of active use. This means entire movies can be recorded, university lectures can be taped, confidential documents scanned, and patient information collected. It also means that even those who are not intentionally engaging in malpractice could invariably do so – by capturing something private in the frame’s periphery, for example. Ultimately, these glasses allow for the extensive, non-consensual collection of data.

Lacuna in the law
India’s laws today do little to

protect people from this surveillance. The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (DPDPA) is technologically agnostic, making the purpose of data collection the key consideration. In a public space, people can neither grant consent nor monitor how their information is used.

Following the landmark *K.S. Puttaswamy vs. Union of India* 2017 decision, reasonable expectation of privacy was recognised as a fundamental right under Article 21. This means that people, even in public spaces, don’t generally expect to be captured in detail. But the DPDPA excludes information that is made publicly available. Hence, the reasonable expectation of privacy granted by *Puttaswamy* is not met because the Act does not regulate how someone is being recorded in public. The Act’s scope is diluted further since there are minimal indicators that you could be in someone’s frame, unlike someone recording on their phone.

This combination of rapid tech innovation and a lack of legal regulation and public awareness creates the perfect storm. With devices such as these glasses becoming common, people may be collecting information with little knowledge of where the data are being used. Without legal safeguards, digital accountability risks becoming an afterthought.

Banning such devices isn’t practical from a business or tech standpoint. Meta might be the biggest player in this space today, but Google and Reliance are also entering the smart glasses market. As wearable tech becomes more advanced, banning it will become increasingly difficult. Instead, laws should be framed with an understanding of how AI is changing the landscape. There is a need for assessments on how technology will evolve, the risks that may accompany it, and the government’s responsibility in ensuring that citizens are adequately protected.

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People’s Plan 2.0: an ambitious dream

A campaign which decentralised governance in Kerala is planning a comeback

STATE OF PLAY

Tiki Rajwi

On August 16, many of the best-known names linked to an ‘experiment’ that changed the way Kerala thought about democratic decentralisation came together in Thiruvananthapuram to celebrate a birthday. The People’s Plan Campaign (PPC) was turning 30 years old the next day. The conclave, a non-governmental initiative, saw participation from elected representatives, former Ministers and bureaucrats and hundreds of activists who had lovingly nurtured the PPC and gave it direction through the intervening years. But more than a nostalgic anniversary reunion, it was meant to discuss and plan the ‘People’s Plan Campaign 2.0’.

The plan, as explained by Communist Party of India (Marxist) veteran and former Finance Minister T.M. Thomas Isaac, who had been in charge of the PPC when he was a member of the Kerala State Planning Board, included student internships with local bodies and a tech-driven campaign coordinated through an online portal. Opening the August 16 event, K.M. Shaji, Minister for local self-government in the ruling Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) government, recalled how successive governments in Kerala had supported the PPC as a process of deepening democracy.

A rich history
The PPC as an idea traces its roots to the ‘Gram Swaraj’ concept of Mahatma Gandhi. It draws strength from the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, and the enactment of the Kerala Panchayati



Raj Act and the Kerala Municipality Act which institutionalised local governance structures. Kerala officially launched the People’s Plan Campaign on August 17, 1996. At the time, it was run on campaign mode as the concept of participatory planning was new to the people. Grama sabhas and urban ward assemblies were organised across the State in the months that followed. The Left Democratic Front (LDF) government also took the big step of devolving 35%-40% of the Plan outlay to local governments.

The State Planning Board’s Economic Review had noted how the programme marked a major shift by placing local self-governments at the centre of development planning. With its rich history of social reformation through the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the land reforms that transformed the agrarian system, and its high social indicators in literacy and health, Kerala was ideally suited for such an experiment.

Looking back, the programme may not have been a 100% success, but it was also far from a failure. It made participatory democracy deeper and local governments stronger. The ‘Kudumbashree’ scheme in particular grabbed the spotlight on national and international stages. As noted by Mr. Isaac and Richard W. Franke, Professor Emeritus at the Montclair State University,

in their book *People’s Planning – Kerala, Local Democracy and Development*, “from a mere government-led administrative reform, the PPC has made the process of decentralisation an object of mass action and a part of the popular politics.”

Modern challenges
Yet, as an updated 2.0 version is being ambitiously discussed, the challenges are many, such as waning public enthusiasm and low participation in the grama sabhas, especially in urban areas. When compared to the 1990s, attracting the younger generation to such an endeavour in a fast-paced, rapidly urbanising Kerala would prove a ponderous task, but also the most vital one. Government estimates show that 96.43% of Kerala’s population could be living in urban areas by 2036. The People’s Planning 2.0 would then have to factor in many things: centralisation trends in the government, changing aspirations of the people, and the increasing fiscal stress faced by Kerala.

Yet, the spirit of co-operation fostered through programmes such as the PPC remains all the more relevant today. Many of the hurdles faced by local governments in the last 30 years – unemployment, waste disposal, gender justice and issues faced by marginalised sections – persist. Moreover, more demanding problems have emerged: limited income sources, climate change, and an ageing society. In these changed times, local bodies would need to evolve a new political and fiscal culture with stronger public involvement, and elected members with impeccable credentials.

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Hyderabad, adjoining ACs drive Telangana’s record SIR deletions

Just 20 constituencies in and close to the capital city account for half of the State’s deletions

DATA POINT

Pon Vasanth B.A.
Srinivasan Ramani
Areena Arora

At the end of the enumeration period of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process in Telangana, the State registered a 21.7% deletion of names from its pre-SIR electoral rolls, the highest in the country so far. **Table 1** shows the percentage of deletions in the major States where the SIR has been undertaken. The draft electoral roll in Telangana will see the addition and re-entry of electors following the corrections period, but even taking that into account, the 21.7% figure is a rather large one. Only Uttar Pradesh with 18.7%, Tamil Nadu with 15.2%, and Gujarat with 14.5% come close to Telangana in the draft-stage deletion rate.

Map 1 shows the deletion rate across Assembly Constituencies (ACs) in the State. In 21 ACs, the deletion rate was a whopping 35% or more, and 19 of these fall in the “Highly Urban” band. Most were in and around the cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad – Musheerabad registered the highest deletion rate in the State at 45.2%, followed by Sanathnagar (44.9%), Malakpet (44.8%), Lal Bahadur Nagar (44.4%), Jubilee Hills (44.1%), Secunderabad Cantonment (42.8%) and Serilingampally (42.7%). The smaller map shows the 15 constituencies of Hyderabad district. Across the 21 “Highly Urban” constituencies, nearly 70% of those deleted were taken off the rolls because they had “shifted”.

Unlike States such as Bihar, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh and Kerala, which recorded a drop in gender ratio between their 2024 Lok Sabha rolls and their final SIR rolls, Telangana’s draft rolls show a slight increase – the ratio rose from 1,018 in the pre-SIR roll to 1,028 in the draft roll (**Table 2**). Ta-

mil Nadu saw a similar bump, from 1,034 in its 2024 Lok Sabha roll to 1,044 in its final SIR roll. Telangana’s figure, however, is at the draft stage and could still change.

The urban-rural split in terms of deletions was sharp (**Table 2**). In “Highly Urban” constituencies, the deletion rate was 40.4%. In “Moderately Urban” constituencies it was 29.8%, but that figure is driven by the peri-urban belt adjoining Hyderabad rather than by the district towns: Maheswaram (41%) and Rajendranagar (38.9%), both in Rangareddy district, Patancheru (31.9%) in Sangareddy district, and Medchal (31.5%) in Medchal Malkajgiri district all recorded rates at or above the “Highly Urban” range. The urban seats in the same band were lower – Warangal West at 28.9%, Nizamabad (Urban) at 27%, Khammam at 24.6%, and Warangal East at 19.5%.

In contrast, in the “Moderately Rural” and “Highly Rural” constituencies, the deletion rate was much lower – 12.37% and 11.92% respectively. In the former category, again, several of the highest deletion rates are in areas not far from Hyderabad. Among “Highly Rural” constituencies, Achampet (16%), Makthal (15.7%), Mudhole (14.9%), and Yellandu (14.6%) registered the highest deletion rates.

To classify Telangana’s 119 constituencies, night-time light intensity from SHRUG database maintained by Development Data Lab was used. And for each constituency, the average brightness across its area was calculated. Because a few city seats are far brighter than the rest, the values were first converted to a logarithmic scale, then grouped using Jenks Natural Breaks – a standard mapping technique that finds the cut-off points where the data separate most naturally – into “Highly Urban”, “Moderately Urban”, “Moderately Rural” and “Highly Rural”.

More granular analyses will follow in forthcoming articles. (With inputs from Swathi Vadlamudi)

A great purge

Telangana is likely to witness the biggest drop in its electoral rolls compared to other major States if the ongoing ‘Claims and Objections’ phase of the Special Intensive Revision does not bring more voters back onto the rolls



TABLE 1: Share of deleted voters did not change much in most of the major States between draft and final SIR rolls

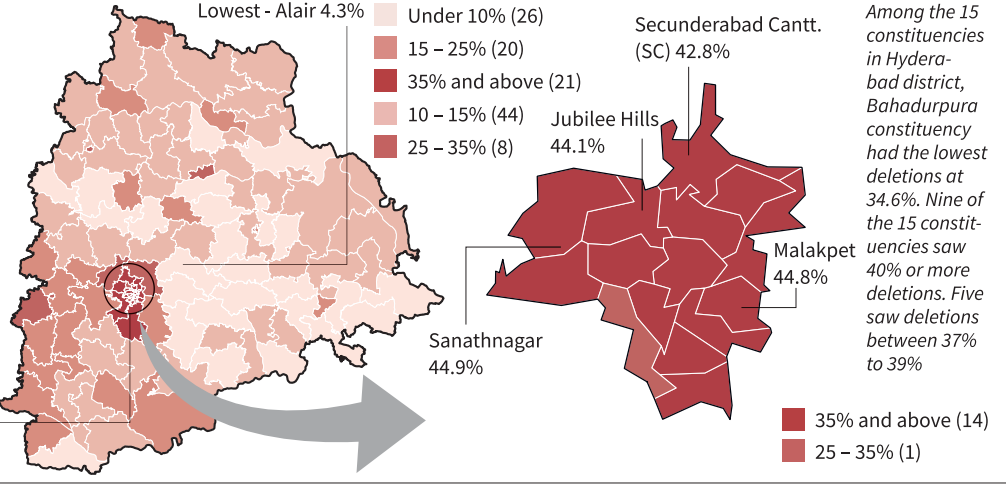
State	Deletions % compared with pre-SIR rolls	
	in draft SIR rolls	in final SIR rolls
Telangana	21.7	-
Uttar Pradesh	18.7	13.2
Tamil Nadu	15.2	11.6
Gujarat	14.5	13.4
Chhattisgarh	12.9	11.8
Kerala	8.7	3.2
Bihar	8.2	6
Rajasthan	7.7	5.7
West Bengal	7.6	8.1
Madhya Pradesh	7.5	6

TABLE 2: Deletions were concentrated in urban areas, with 21 highly urban ACs losing roughly four out of every 10 voters

Measure	Highly Rural	Moderately Rural	Moderately Urban	Highly Urban	All Telangana
Assembly constituencies (ACs)	21	65	12	21	119
Pre-SIR share in electorate (%)	14.02	47.24	13.84	24.89	-
Share in electorate, draft SIR (%)	15.78	52.87	12.40	18.95	-
Female per 1,000 male, pre-SIR	1,044	1,052	996	954	1,018
Female per 1,000 male, draft SIR	1,025	1,038	1,027	1,004	1,028
Deletions	5,65,518	19,77,351	13,96,366	34,00,000	73,39,235
Deletion (%)	11.92	12.37	29.83	40.38	21.7
- shifted (%)	52.28	50.54	61.96	69.38	61.58
- absent (%)	7.58	12.10	20.23	19.50	16.73
- death (%)	25.42	21.18	8.46	7.11	12.57
- duplicate (%)	14.72	16.18	9.34	4.02	9.13

MAP 1:

All the 21 constituencies that saw deletions of 35% or more in the draft SIR rolls were in and around the Hyderabad region



Among the 15 constituencies in Hyderabad district, Bahadurpura constituency had the lowest deletions at 34.6%. Nine of the 15 constituencies saw 40% or more deletions. Five saw deletions between 37% to 39%

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO AUGUST 25, 1976

Dhillon wants sustained road safety campaigns

New Delhi, August 24: Although the standard of public transport has considerably improved sustained campaigns to educate the public about road safety along with regular drives to check over-speeding, violation of traffic regulations and driving under the influence of liquor would greatly help to minimise the rising incidence of road accidents in the country.

This was stated by Dr. G.S. Dhillon, the Union Minister of Shipping and Transport, while inaugurating the 13th meeting of the Transport Development Council here this morning.

Dr. Dhillon said the procedure regarding issue of driving licence and fitness certificate would also need to be tightened so that only competent and experienced persons secured the driving licences and fitness certificate issued to mechanically sound vehicles.

He said it would have a deterrent effect on rash and negligent driving if persons responsible for accidents were to pay compensation to the victims of their families in all cases.

Referring to the national permit scheme for goods transport which aims at removal of hurdles in the free movement of vehicles, Dr. Dhillon said that out of the total number of 5,300 permits allotted in various States, nearly 3,000 permits had been issued in pursuance of this scheme which formed part of the 20-point economic programme of the country.

The Minister also drew the attention of the members to the scheme regarding mechanisation of cycle rickshaws and requested them to strive for its early implementation in order to improve the economic conditions of the rickshaw pullers.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO AUGUST 25, 1926

Imperial bank of India

Calcutta, August 25: The Imperial Bank of India has fulfilled its undertakings to open hundred new branches within five years. The announcement was made yesterday by Mr. H.C. Edmondson, while presiding at the annual general meeting of shareholders on the Calcutta register of the Bank. The burden of opening majority of the new branches, he said, fell on Bengal Circle which opened 66, while seven new sub-agencies and pay offices were also established.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Number of polling stations in Delhi after the SIR exercise

14,947 The number of polling stations in Delhi has gone up to 14,947 from 13,033 after rationalisation under the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) exercise. The number of polling-station locations has also increased from 2,696 to 2,856, according to a statement by the Delhi chief electoral officer (CEO) on Monday. PTI

Number of weeks for CPCB to fix standards for 3 new pollutants

10 The National Green Tribunal has allowed the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) 10 weeks to standardise the methods for testing three new parameters or pollutants in ambient air. The three new pollutant in ambient air are aluminium, iron and silica. At present, the CPCB tracks 12 major pollutants under the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). PTI

Number of airports to be awarded to private players by the govt.

11 The government plans to award 11 airports, including those at Varanasi and Tirupati, to private players in five bundles under the public-private-partnership model. The Civil Aviation Ministry has proposed the private partners for 11 airports, grouped into five bundles, with each bundle to be awarded to a single concessionaire, according to an official document. PTI

Percentage increase in average retail price of onion year-on-year

59 in per cent. Data maintained by the Centre shows that the all-India average retail price of onion rose 59 per cent year-on-year to ₹43.53/kg on August 24, from ₹ 27.37/kg a year ago. The Centre has started moving bulk onion stocks through dedicated railway rakes – the ‘Kanda Express’ – from Nashik in Maharashtra to major consuming centres. PTI

Bills passed in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly on Monday

8 Eight Bills, including the one allowing portions of park and garden land to be used for public infrastructure and utility projects, were passed by the Karnataka Legislative Assembly on Monday without discussion, amid the Opposition’s protest demanding the resignation of Cabinet Minister B. Nagendra. PTI
COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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How the SC ruling redefined ‘industry’

The majority held that ‘industry’ under the IRC must be interpreted based on its own specific text and statutory context, unburdened by the legacy of the 1978 precedent; Justices B.V. Nagarathna, Dipankar Datta, and Ujjal Bhuyan formed the minority view that a re-evaluation of the 1978 judgment was ‘unwarranted’

EXPLAINER

Krishnadas Rajagopal

The story so far:

A nine-member Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court of India recently held that the nearly half-century-old interpretation of the term ‘industry’ will not automatically apply to the Industrial Relations Code (IRC), 2020, which came into force in November 2025 and replaced the legacy Industrial Disputes Act, 1947. This decision effectively severs the new labour regime from an expansive, worker-friendly precedent set in 1978, establishing a clean slate for future labour law disputes.

The scope of ‘industry’

To understand the significance of this judgment, one must look back to the historic 1978 ruling in *Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board v. R. Rajappa*. Authored by Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, that seven-judge Bench significantly broadened the definition of Section 2(j) under the 1947 Act. The 1978 judgment introduced the triple test, which classified systematic or organised operations based on employer-employee cooperation to provide goods or services for consumers as an industry.

This sweeping definition brought various activities, including hospitals, educational institutions, and municipalities, under the legal definition of an industry. The only exclusions were core sovereign functions of the state, such as defence, judiciary, and law enforcement. For nearly half a century, this judgment had enabled workers across diverse sectors to access legal recourse, enforce labour rights, and engage in collective bargaining against unfair practices.

The crux of the judgment

The Constitution Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, addressed the



Word of caution: Justice B.V. Nagarathna stressed that altering the definition of industry could create uncertainty and disrupt industrial peace. AFP

question whether the 1978 definition of ‘industry’ should govern Section 2(p) of the IRC.

The majority held that ‘industry’ under the IRC must be interpreted based on its own specific text and statutory context, unburdened by the legacy of the 1978 precedent. Chief Justice Kant noted that while the core principles of the 1978 ruling had stood the test of time, the 1978 judgment would no longer act as the “sheet anchor” for interpreting ‘industry’ under the IRC.

Pending cases under the 1947 Act will continue to be governed by the 1978 Bangalore Water Supply precedent. All future disputes governed by the new Industrial Relations Code will be interpreted afresh.

Differing points of view on the Bench

The nine-judge Bench reflected nuanced positions on the balance between worker

protections and modern economic realities.

An opinion authored by Chief Justice Kant, and shared with Justices Satish Chandra Sharma, Alok Aradhe and Vipul M. Pancholi, held that the ‘triple test’ of 1978 Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board case judgment will continue to be applied to pending industrial disputes.

The Chief Justice, however, found that the 1978 verdict could have been articulated differently and set down a “reformulated” triple test, which would operate prospectively. However, the possibility of using the recast triple test to determine if an operation was an industry or not under Section 2(j) of the repealed 1947 Act is non-existent as the new labour law, The Industrial Relations Code 2020, has already come into force. The Bench has unanimously made it clear that ‘industry’ under the 2020 Code will be

“interpreted independently” to align with contemporary industrial dynamics, and not be burdened by the 1978 verdict.

Justices B.V. Nagarathna, Dipankar Datta, and Ujjal Bhuyan formed the minority view on the Bench that a re-evaluation of the 1978 judgment was “unwarranted”. Justice Nagarathna cautioned that altering the definition could create uncertainty and disrupt industrial peace.

Justice Nagarathna argued that the 1978 judgment had offered a broad-based definition of ‘industry’. She highlighted that the judgment was a child of its time, when public sector workers were transitioning into private employment due to a changing industrial landscape inspired by privatisation, liberalisation and globalisation of the Indian economy.

Justice Joymalya Bagchi supported the need for the reference to the nine-judge Bench, but expressed his inability to agree to a “reformulated” triple test. Justice Bagchi said an apprehension that the triple test conceived in the 1978 judgment converted any organised activity into an industry was misplaced.

The judge agreed with Justice Nagarathna that even the state could enter into seemingly non-sovereign functions. The concept of ‘sovereignty’ has itself undergone changes with the passage of time. Absence of a profit motive did not take an activity outside the realm of industry, he observed. He said it was unwise to “re-draft” Justice Iyer’s triple test. Justice Datta echoed the need for judicial consistency. Sharing his opinion with Justice Bhuyan, Justice Datta remarked that institutional credibility relies on respecting finality rather than perpetuating doubt over established law.

A step towards a new era

By severing the IRC from the 1978 precedent, the Supreme Court has set the stage for a new chapter in Indian labour law, leaving it to future courts to decide where the lines between employer authority and worker protections will ultimately be drawn.

THE GIST

A nine-member Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court recently held that the nearly half-century-old interpretation of the term ‘industry’ will not automatically apply to the Industrial Relations Code, 2020.

A 1978 ruling had introduced the triple test, which classified organised operations based on employer-employee cooperation to provide goods or services for consumers as an industry. This judgment had enabled workers across diverse sectors to enforce labour rights.

Did Press Note 3 relaxations help attract more FDI?

The Centre says that 29 FDI projects worth ₹4,895.65 cr. had been reported to it under the revised framework

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan

The story so far

The Union government on Friday said that India had received foreign direct investment (FDI) worth ₹4,895 over just the last few months, from companies that have benefitted from recent relaxations made to India’s FDI rules.

The aim of the relaxations was precisely to ease the flow of investments that had earlier been locked out of India.

What was the earlier rule?

The Union government had issued Press Note 3 in April 2020, in which it amended India’s FDI policy. The existing rule at the time stated that any entity of Bangladesh and Pakistan could invest in India only after securing Government approval. Press Note 3 widened this stipulation to

include any country that shared a land border with India. So, this included Pakistan, China, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan.

The popular perception is that the government took this decision as a result of border clashes between India and China at Galwan.

However, Press Note 3 was issued in April 2020, before those clashes took place in May.

The reason the change was made was to prevent hostile takeovers of companies ailing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. India and a few other countries had noticed that, early on in the pandemic, Chinese companies were buying up majority stakes in companies in the countries whose stock prices had plummeted due to the pandemic. The FDI restriction was aimed at curbing this.

While the origin of the rule was not directly linked to the border clashes, its

extension over the years was certainly a result of the frigid relationship between India and China.

What was the relaxation?

In March 2026, the Centre eased the Press Note 3 restrictions somewhat. It said that FDI from entities would be allowed in India through the automatic route, without needing express government approval, if these entities had less than 10% stake based in countries that share a land border with India.

In other words, companies that had minority and non-controlling stakes held by these land-border countries could invest in India through the easier route.

The government did this because it said that a lot of investment into India had been held up because even companies that had tiny stakes owned by Chinese entities faced stricter restrictions on their investments into India.

“It is expected that the new guidelines will provide clarity and ease of doing business in India, and facilitate investments which can contribute towards greater FDI inflows, access to new technologies, domestic value addition, expansion of domestic firms and integration with global supply chain,” the government had said in March when it eased the rules.

What has been the benefit?

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry said on Friday that a total of 29 FDI projects worth ₹4,895.65 crore had been reported to it under its revised framework up to August 10, 2026.

It added that these investments span a range of sectors, including information technology, artificial intelligence, information and communication, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, data centres and transport services, among others.

Further, the investments have come from several countries, including Mauritius, the U.S., the Republic of Korea, Japan, Singapore, Luxembourg, and the Cayman Islands.

In relative terms, this investment amount is not all that significant. For instance, it amounts to less than 1% of the total FDI India received in 2025-26. But it is still early days, and for India and FDI, every little bit helps.

THE GIST

The Union government had issued Press Note 3 in April 2020, stipulating that any country sharing a land border with India could invest in the country only after securing Government approval.

In March 2026, the Centre eased the Press Note 3 restrictions somewhat. It said that FDI from entities would be allowed in India through the automatic route, without needing express government approval, if these entities had less than 10% stake based in countries that share a land border with India.

CACHE



Privacy concerns: Protesters have expressed their anger against Flock by blocking cameras, reporting them to DeFlock in order to map them and pressuring clients to end their Flock contracts. REUTERS

What has fuelled the backlash against Flock cameras in U.S.?

Flock, a maker and operator of surveillance cameras and licence plate readers, has come under fire as critics accuse it of surveilling Americans and failing to do enough to curtail the misuse of data, including by some law enforcement officers

Sahana Venugopal

The story so far
The head of Flock, a maker and operator of surveillance cameras, that works with a range of clients in the United States, issued an apology this month after the *Washington Post* reported that multiple law enforcement officers had abused his product network, with at least one case involving an officer who misused Flock to stalk his ex-partner through her car's licence plates.
Across the U.S., anger is mounting against the surveillance camera firm, with critics going so far as to disrupt or even destroy the Flock cameras in their communities.

How do Flock cameras work?
Founded in 2017, Flock developed its business with the help of a two-way strategy: the sale of surveillance hardware, as well as surveillance-as-a-service subscriptions. Flock products include licence plate reader (LPR) cameras, video cameras, mobile security trailers, audio detection devices, drones, and software offerings. Instead of just buying and using a single camera, clients can join the Flock network and enable (optional) law enforcement access.
Due to this strategy, Flock's devices can help police officers collect data across wider areas and with more cameras, to detect incidents ranging from stolen cars to gun shootings.
The company's numbers certainly

impress. According to its 2026 factsheet, over 2,800 crimes were solved weekly with Flock technology, while over 2,000 missing people have been located. Flock reported that it has partnered with over 6,000 "communities" across 49 U.S. states, as well as "thousands" of law enforcement agencies.
What caused the outrage against Flock cameras?
There are a number of reasons uniting the Americans who are against Flock. These range from the company's reputational challenges and the misuse of its Flock cameras, to the general anger over mass surveillance technologies.
Company founder and CEO Garrett Langley made headlines last year when he referred to a critic's anti-Flock advocacy organisation (called DeFlock) as "terroristic." He apologised for his comments this July, and promised to improve on the company's responses to the public's concerns.
Still, the *Washington Post* report in August that covered incidents where police officers misused Flock data to stalk women has added yet more fuel to the fire.
Soon afterwards, Flock announced that it was updating its safeguards, and cutting its default ALPR (Automated Licence Plate Reader) data retention period to seven days, unless legally required to keep the images for longer.
On its "Myths vs Facts" page, Flock noted that it does not carry out facial recognition, predictive policing, or demographic profiling. Flock stated that it

did not contract with the U.S. agency ICE (Immigrations and Customs Enforcement) or the tech firm Palantir, both of which are associated with mass surveillance. Even so, media outlets have identified Flock cameras as being AI-powered. U.S. lawmakers have also raised questions about the possibility of ICE accessing Flock data.
Despite its outreach attempts, Flock is still facing public fury. One reason for this was a May 2025 report which alleged that Texas officials had used thousands of cameras in the Flock network to track down a woman who had an abortion, as part of an investigation. Flock dismissed these reports last year and stated that it was a missing persons case. However, later findings by the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) advocacy group support the original report.
While the verdict was pending, a simplistic version of the events entered the public consciousness: social media users began claiming that Flock had worked with the police to enforce the Texan abortion ban and target a woman.
In recent weeks, protesters have expressed their anger against Flock by blocking cameras, reporting them to DeFlock in order to map them, pressuring clients to end their Flock contracts, or even destroying Flock cameras. For example, a trending Instagram Reel with over 2 million views and 2,69,000 likes taught watchers how to dismantle a Flock camera without being detected by other cameras.
Furthermore, U.S. media outlets reported that in July, the Los Angeles

Police Department (LAPD) would not renew its original contract with Flock, due to "serious concerns" regarding civil liberties, privacy, and the data being collected from the cameras.
Does India face a similar dilemma?
Across Indian cities, more law enforcement bodies are experimenting with AI-powered cameras in order to catch traffic rules violators through their licence plates.
While these automated solutions seem encouraging, there has been a lack of human follow-up when it comes to penalising the offenders. Another challenge is in ensuring that the authorities are handling facial recognition data securely and privately.
Meanwhile, the use of CCTV cameras by both police departments and private citizens is rampant, but these surveillance efforts are fragmented.
Unlike with Flock, it is hard to share private camera feeds with the police in real time and derive useful insights from the data. Since they are owned by everyday users rather than leased by a dedicated company, these surveillance cameras are often unreliable and poorly maintained.
However, Indian citizens have become more vocal in calling out the use of smart glasses and AI-powered surveillance vans by the police, such as during the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) demonstrations in July. The potential misuse of facial recognition data to harass lawful protesters is a serious concern in these instances.

THE DAILY QUIZ

Sean Connery, the working-class Edinburgh boy who became the first actor to portray James Bond on-screen, was born on this day in 1930. A quiz on the Scottish actor

Mohammed Hidhayat

- QUESTION 1**
Before acting, a young Connery represented Scotland in which bodybuilding contest?
- QUESTION 2**
Which 1962 film introduced Sean Connery as James Bond to the world?
- QUESTION 3**
Connery won his only competitive Oscar for playing a tough Chicago cop in which 1987 film?
- QUESTION 4**
Which cause did Connery campaign for consistently, from the 1990s devolution vote through the 2014 referendum?
- QUESTION 5**
The Man Who Would Be King, starring Connery and Michael Caine, opens in British India and features which Indian actor in its cast?



Visual question: A still from Connery's final live-action outing. Name the 2003 film and identify the acclaimed Indian actor on the left.

Questions and answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. This writer became the first physically disabled author to win the Akutagawa Prize. Name the novel which won her the prize and its translator. **Ans: Hunchback by Saou Ichikawa, translated from Japanese by Polly Barton**
2. This novel won the Man Booker International Prize in 2018. Name the novel and the author. **Ans: Flights by Olga Tokarczuk**
3. This elusive Italian novelist writes under a pen name. The last book in her famous quartet series was shortlisted for the International Booker Prize in 2016. Name her, the book and the series. **Ans: Elena Ferrante's The Story of the Lost Child; Neapolitan Quartet or Neapolitan Novels**
4. This author from Kerala has won most of the major literary awards the State has to offer. Name her. **Ans: K.R. Meera**
5. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak translated short stories of this Bengali author. **Ans: Mahasweta Devi**
Visual: This translator won the 2022 International Booker Prize for her work on a Hindi novel. Name her, the book and its author. **Ans: Daisy Rockwell's translation of Geetanjali Shree's Tomb of Sand**
Early birds: Tamal Biswas| Siddhartha Viswanathan| Neil Lal| Piyali Tulj| Sukdev Shet



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

Is it correct to say "He has good command over English"? (B. Senthil, Madurai)
Careful users of the language would frown on this. They would argue that one can have command over people, but not over language. You can for example say:
"He has total command over his men. They will do whatever he wants them to."
But when it comes to language, they would prefer "of" to "over".
"We are looking for someone who has good command of English."
"Many children in the south have little or no command of Hindi."
"I am told that Prakasham has good command of French."
There is a tendency these days however, even among some native speakers, to say "have good command over English".
The purists may not like this, but as the Americans would put it, that's the way the cookie crumbles.
To be on the safe side, avoid saying "command over English".

Which of the following sentences is correct? "The Government has many problems" or "The Government have many problems"? (D.S.R. Ramaswamy, Bangalore)
Both are acceptable. It depends on how you view the Government. Do you consider the Government to be a single impersonal unit, or do you look upon it as consisting of separate small units? If you view it as a single unit, then you can use a singular verb "The Government has many problems".
If, on the other hand, you view the Government as comprising several different units, then you can use the plural verb "have" – "The Government have many problems".
There are many words in English, which can take either the singular or the plural verb – family, jury, committee, staff, team are just some of the nouns. Here are a few examples.
"The jury was/were beginning to look bored."
"The family was/were planning to move to Australia."

What is the meaning of "ground zero"? (N. Raja Mani, Secunderabad)
This is a term that has been heard quite frequently on CNN. "Ground zero" was originally used to refer to an atomic explosion; it is the site at which an atomic explosion took place. This is how dictionaries define the term: "the point on the surface of the earth or water directly below, directly above, or at which an atomic or hydrogen bomb explodes".
Today the term is used informally to mean a place of rapid development or change; a place of violent activity.
"About ten years ago no one had heard about Vasudeva Nagar. But today it has become the ground zero from which restaurants and designer shops radiate."
The term "ground zero" is also used to mean elementary level; a "starting point". For example,
"Many of my students will be starting at ground zero."
"My boss didn't like the ad campaign. Looks like I have to return to ground zero."
Published in The Hindu on September 25, 2001

Word of the day

Nefarious:

extremely wicked

Synonym: villainous

Usage: *The committee unearthed a nefarious plot to manipulate the election process.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/nefariou

International Phonetic Alphabet: /niˈfeəɪ.əs/

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

INBRIEF



SEBI unveils index for market infrastructure institutions

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has introduced an Information Technology Resilience Index (ITRI) for market infrastructure institutions (MIIs), including stock exchanges and depositories, as part of efforts to strengthen the resilience of their IT systems. In a circular, the markets regulator said the index would assess the MIIs across nine parameters, including availability, security, integrity, governance, reliability and monitoring, business continuity, modularity and flexibility, scalability, and other relevant factors. SEBI said that the MIIs would be required to develop an Early Warning System (EWS) to detect any deterioration in ITRI parameters that could potentially lead to performance issues, system slowness or other disruptions, and take remedial measures.

Third Wave Coffee raises ₹408 crore in funding

Third Wave Coffee, a Bengaluru-based coffee and food firm, has raised ₹408 crore in a funding round led by existing investor WestBridge Capital while the round also witnessed participation from Creagis and other angel investors. The new funding is expected to fuel Third Wave Coffee's next phase of expansion, with capital directed towards geographic growth in existing markets, building greater density in high-potential cities and strengthening the brand's ability to serve a wider range of consumer occasions, according to the company. Third Wave Coffee has accelerated its national footprint by entering Ahmedabad, Mangalore and Agra last year while strengthening its presence across Delhi, NCR, Hyderabad, Chennai, Mumbai and Pune. In June 2026, it entered East India with three cafés in Kolkata. The firm is currently evaluating opportunities in other eastern markets, including Guwahati, Ranchi, Patna and Bhubaneswar.

Haryana: Godrej to invest ₹20,000 crore

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Godrej Industries Group is eyeing up to ₹20,000 crore investment in the State of Haryana generating almost 40,000 jobs.

It signed a memorandum of understanding with the State government under which the firm would build upon about ₹12,000 crore it had already invested till date.

Godrej Properties Ltd (GPL) is expected to be a key driver of the Group's expansion, with plans to invest ₹16,000 crore in Haryana by FY28.

GPL currently has 18 projects across Gurugram, Sonipat, Faridabad, Panipat and Kurukshetra. Its future expansion plans are expected to extend beyond residential development.



Godrej Properties Ltd (GPL) will be the key driver of expansion.

Godrej Ventures, the Group's real estate private equity arm, has invested about ₹1,000 crore in the State so far and plans to deploy an additional ₹3,500 crore towards Grade A+ office infrastructure in Gurugram. The office investments alone is likely to generate over 30,000 direct and indirect jobs, Pirojsha Godrej, Chairperson, Godrej Industries Group said.

ALLEN eyes ₹3,800-crore IPO to fund institute's expansion

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

ALLEN Career Institute, a 38-year-old test-preparation firm, is gearing up for major expansion across India, backed by technology investments, selective acquisitions and a proposed initial public offering (IPO) of about ₹3,800 crore.

The Kota-based education firm, which has grown from a family-run coaching institute into a professionally-managed, technology-enabled education business, is looking to use the IPO proceeds to accelerate regional expansion and strengthen technology, artificial intelligence (AI) and



Allen opens Mangaluru Centre.

automation capabilities.

Organic/inorganic route
The firm is also evaluating expansion into additional markets through a combination of organic growth and selective acquisitions,

In-principle nod for airports' privatisation

Public Private Partnership Appraisal Committee approves proposal for third round of privatisation covering 11 airports in five bundles

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The government's Public Private Partnership Appraisal Committee (PPPAC) has given in-principle approval to the Ministry of Civil Aviation's proposal for the third round of airport privatisation, covering 11 airports across five bundles, according to a government document.

The proposal will now move towards securing the PPPAC's final approval, following which it will be placed before the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA).

The 11 airports being considered for privatisation in five bundles include Amritsar and Kangra; Varanasi, Gaya and Kushinagar; Bhubaneswar and Hubballi; Raipur and Aurangabad; and Tiruchirappalli and Tirupati.



The airports being considered for privatisation include Amritsar and Kangra; and Tiruchirappalli and Tirupati. FILE PHOTO

Responding to the PPPAC Chair's concern over the risks of oligopolistic concentration and over-leveraging in the airport sector, the Ministry of Civil Aviation said it plans to cap the number of airport bundles that can be awarded to a single bidder.

The modalities for the proposed cap are being finalised and will be submitted as part of the proposal seeking the PPPAC's final recommendation, according to the Record of Discus-

sion dated August 20.

The issue of bidder concentration gained prominence following the previous round of airport privatisation, in which the Adani Group won bids for all six airports on offer.

At the time, the PPPAC had rejected key recommendations from the Finance Ministry and NITI Aayog, including a limit of two airports per bidder and requirement for prior airport operations and management experience.

Domestic sugar prices fall, volatility remains a concern

The Hindu Bureau
COIMBATORE/NEW DELHI

With the Centre's announcement last week permitting import of 10 lakh tonnes of raw sugar, domestic prices are cooling down. However, the price volatility remains a matter of concern.

The current sugar marketing season that began

on October 1 last year saw a substantial quantity of sugar sold at ₹38-39 a kg (ex-mill price).

Prices started going up in January, to ₹48 a kg, and stood at ₹56 a kg on Monday (Maharashtra ex-mill price).

The price was ₹58 a kg (Maharashtra ex-mill) on August 22 and ₹62 a kg on August 21.

An industry source said the ex-mill prices are likely to hover between ₹50 and ₹60 till Nov. - December.

Office-bearers of the Indian Sugar & Bio-Energy Manufacturers Association (ISMA) told reporters in New Delhi on Monday that the recent firmness in sugar prices should not be construed as shortage of sugar in the country.

UPI turns a decade-old, sees 13,000-fold surge in transaction volume

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

The Unified Payments Interface (UPI), launched on August 25, 2016 by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), has completed 10 years of transforming digital payments in India.

UPI has emerged as the backbone of India's digital payments ecosystem and a critical driver of financial inclusion, the Finance Ministry said in a release.

Over the decade, UPI's annual transaction volume expanded from 1.78 crore transactions in FY17 to over 24,162 crore transactions in FY26, representing a 13,000-fold surge in transaction volume.

Transaction value rose sharply from ₹0.07 lakh crore in FY17 to approximately ₹314 lakh crore in FY26, translating into a more than 4,000-fold increase in transaction value, the Ministry said.

UPI is currently opera-



Annual transaction volume expanded from 1.78 crore in FY17 to 24,162 crore in FY26.

tional in 11 countries and has emerged as one of the most successful pillars of digital public infrastructure, providing an interoperable, real-time payments platform that enables seamless peer-to-peer and peer-to-merchant transactions via a single application. "By bridging the digital divide, advancing financial inclusion, and expanding access to digital financial services, UPI has empowered individuals and communities across the country while driving broad-based economic participation," it added.

Sustainability should drive savings, not just compliance, say industry leaders

Balasubramanyam C.P.
CHENNAI

Sustainability is being viewed as a direct lever for reducing costs, improving efficiency and strengthening competitive advantage, industry leaders said at the CII TN Sustainability Manufacturing Summit 2026.

During a panel discussion titled "Making Sustainability Profitable: Cutting Costs, Creating Value," executives from Festo, Amara Raja Group, TAFE and sustainability consultancy LGS Assurance highlighted how identifying waste, improving resource efficiency and embedding sustainability into product and manufacturing decisions can deliver measurable business value.

Tapan Upadhyay, who heads application engineering and technical support at Festo, said companies should first identify where energy is being wasted before investing in new sustainability projects. "The greenest energy is the energy that you do not use, do not waste," he said.

Citing audits conducted by Festo, he said improperly installed pneumatic tubing can cause compressed-air leakage of between 100 and 300 litres a minute, with around 150 litres a minute being a rough average. "A single incorrectly cut joint could cost a company around ₹1 lakh annually, he said, while faulty installation could result in a similar cost.

He also highlighted the cost of over-sizing components, a practice adopted as a safety precaution. Selecting a cylinder one size larger than required can increase air consumption by as much as 50%, while a



Offering perspectives: Panelists at the CII TN Sustainability Manufacturing Summit 2026. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

20% optimisation in payloads could deliver an additional 15-20% saving. In the example he cited, combining such measures could reduce running costs by around 70-80%.

Highlighting that push towards circularity as having commercial benefit, Prasant Tiwari, Chief Sustainability Officer, at Amara Raja Group, said around 85% of the lead used in the company's battery manufacturing comes from recycled sources.

The company has also established what he described as India's largest lead-recycling smelter.

"My EBITDA (earnings before interests, taxes, depreciation and amortisation) margins are highly dependent on what is the cost of lead in energy. So this is also hedging to the business," he said.

He also highlighted the company's water-management initiatives, saying Amara Raja had become "12x water positive" and was able to secure good-quality water for direct use in its plants.

The company is also seeking to optimise the use of treated water that was previously used for gardening, including through drip irrigation.

Mr. Tiwari urged manufacturers to view requirements such as zero liquid discharge, renewable energy adoption and carbon taxation as regulatory requirements.

Ashok Muthuswamy, Vice President for Business Excellence, TQM and Sustainability, TAFE said the company uses augmented reality, virtual reality and other immersive technologies to develop digital prototypes and identify design and manufacturing problems before physical production starts.

The company has also extended digital quality checks to its suppliers.

Keerti D'Souza, founder of LGS Assurance, framed the business case for sustainability around the three Ps - people, planet and profits. While acknowledging that profitability remains the fundamental objective of business, she said companies must consider the social and environmental dimensions alongside financial returns. She cited occupational health and safety, including workplace ergonomics, as an area where even a 5% improvement or saving can generate a tangible return.

When asked what single

TCS to buy out Porsche's MHP for €320 mn EV

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) is planning to fully acquire MHP Management-und IT-Beratung GmbH (MHP), Porsche AG's Germany-based management and IT consulting subsidiary, for an enterprise value of €320 million, excluding customary post-closing adjustments for net debt and working capital.

The acquisition is part of a broader €1.25 billion, five-year strategic partnership between TCS and Porsche under which TCS will provide artificial intelligence (AI) services across Porsche's mobility value chain. The transaction and partnership remain subject to regulatory approvals, with the acquisition to be completed through a TCS subsidiary.

TCS will establish a dedicated AI Mobility Centre of Excellence for Porsche. The centre will focus on deploying AI-driven solutions across manufacturing, engineering, operations and customer experience.

MHP reported a CY 2025 turnover of €742 million and has 4,500 employees. Besides Germany, the company operates through subsidiaries in Romania, the U.K., the U.S., India and Mexico. "MHP brings strong automotive and industrial consulting and implementation experience, with strengths in business transformation, AI, SAP, manufacturing digitalisation, and connected mobility," TCS said.

argument could persuade a sceptical CEO that sustainability is profitable, the panelists offered different perspectives. Ms. D'Souza pointed to research and development as a key source of value creation. Mr. Muthuswamy suggested framing sustainability initiatives in terms of both "opportunity and threat." Mr. Tiwari emphasised the need for a clear business case based on profits, growth and a sustainable business model.

Mr. Upadhyay identified quantification as a common obstacle. Companies may recognise that a sustainability initiative will deliver benefits, he said, but often struggle to translate those benefits into monetary terms. Understanding the cost of resources such as compressed air can make it easier to demonstrate the potential return on investment to senior management.

Ravichandran Purushothaman, Chairman of CII Southern Region, cited the carbon footprint of smartphones as an example. A standard smartphone can carry a footprint of around 50-60 kg of CO₂ equivalent, while a larger iPhone model can reach 100-120 kg. With Chennai emerging as a major manufacturing hub for iPhones, the cumulative impact is "significant".

Bakan Jagdish Sudhakar, IFS, CEO of the Tamil Nadu Green Climate Company, said the state has established a greenhouse-gas emissions baseline using 2019 as the reference year, in line with IPCC guidelines. He also expressed confidence that Tamil Nadu could achieve carbon neutrality ahead of India's national target of 2070.

Xiaomi Xring chip, partners with TSMC for production, sources say



Self-reliance: A Xiaomi store in Shanghai, China. REUTERS

Reuters
BEIJING

Chinese smartphone maker Xiaomi on Monday unveiled a new version of its in-house Xring handset processor, betting that greater control over key components will strengthen its supply chain and reduce reliance on external chip suppliers.

The Xring O3 comes a year after Xiaomi launched its first proprietary smartphone processor, the Xring O1, marking the latest step in the world's third-largest smartphone vendor's push to join rivals Apple, Samsung Electronics and Huawei in developing its own chips.

Smartphone processors, also known as systems-on-chip (SoC), combine computing, graphics, AI (artificial intelligence) processing and imaging functions in a single component. TSMC will manufacture the new chip using its 3-nanometre production technology, two people familiar with the matter said.

Greater control

Developing more chips in-house could give Xiaomi greater control over product features and improve its bargaining power with suppliers.

The sources declined to be identified because the plans are not public. Xiaomi and TSMC did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the chip's manufacturer, production technology or shipment targets. One source said the chip is expected to power Xiaomi's upcoming flagship folding phone, with shipments targeted at 2,00,000 to 3,00,000 units.

Its expansion into foldable phones, a higher-priced market segment, could intensify competition with Huawei.

Huawei shipped 1.6 million foldable phones in China in the second quarter, giving it a 68% market share, followed by Honor with 13.7% and Oppo with 8.5%, according to research firm Smart Analytics Global.

Push for in-house chips

Xiaomi's chip push reflects a broader industry trend as device makers seek to differentiate their products and reduce dependence on suppliers such as Qualcomm and MediaTek, intensifying competition in premium smartphones.

The Beijing-based company restarted development of large, in-house chips in 2021 and has said it plans to invest at least 50 billion yuan (\$7 billion) over a decade in the effort.

Xiaomi said on an earnings call last week that cumulative shipments of devices powered by the Xring O1, including smartphones, tablets and watches, had surpassed 1 million units since its launch.

The sources said Xiaomi has sold about 150,000 smartphones based on the Xring O1 since its May 2025 launch.

Snoring, subways and stealth ads: how big pharma targets China's waistline

Drug firms can't advertise prescription medicines directly to consumers in China; weight-loss drugmakers promote obesity awareness in public; social media, family, friends led patients to seek medicines by name, hospital staff say; 'some campaigns could cross a line into drug advertising'

FOCUS
Reuters
SHANGHAI

Weight-loss drugmakers, vying to tighten the belts of Chinese consumers, are promoting obesity awareness in metro stations, exercise studios and soccer stadiums as local restrictions prevent the direct advertising of prescription medicines in the world's second-largest drug market.

China's rate of overweight or obese people could reach more than 65% by 2030, the country's National Health Commission has said.

Novo Nordisk, Eli Lilly, Pfizer and local firm Innovent Biologics are competing for market share with their versions of once-weekly GLP-1 weight-loss injections in China.

Lilly led the once-weekly GLP-1 sales on Alibaba's Tmall e-commerce platform and JD.com in the second quarter, according to Jefferies.

China does not allow drug companies to advertise prescription medicines directly to consumers. They can provide information to the public about the risks of specific diseases and recommend that they engage with doctors. Campaigns cannot mention product names,



All out: Billboards from Innovent Biologics and Meituan at a metro station in Shanghai. REUTERS

but might indirectly encourage people to seek help.

"Don't forget to pay attention to Dad's snoring and promptly visit a respiratory department or sleep centre," a banner with a Lilly logo advised commuters recently at a metro station in Shanghai's central Jingan district. Snoring is a common symptom of sleep apnea, which is strongly linked to being overweight. Lilly's GLP-1 drug Mounjaro has been shown in clinical trials to alleviate the condition.

Ads from Innovent and e-commerce giant Meituan displayed on a wall in the same station last month said 'scientific weight management' can reverse fatty liver disease. Another ad at a soccer stadium in Suzhou



Sales of GLP-1 therapies for weight management could reach 30 billion yuan in the next 5 to 7 years, up from an estimated 3 billion to 4 billion yuan at present

YANG HUANG
J.P. Morgan's

during a July match said "Innovent Biologics weight loss amazing!" repeatedly, astream on the Weibo social media platform showed.

Gym chain Supermonkey touted via social media platform Xiaohongshu a partnership with Pfizer to launch a "healthy weight loss party" in June and July. A Pfizer employee told a

crowd at one such party in Shanghai that the company hoped to help them build a lasting, healthy way of life. Afterward, a trainer led a weightlifting session for attendees, a post by the drugmaker on Xiaohongshu - which was later deleted - showed.

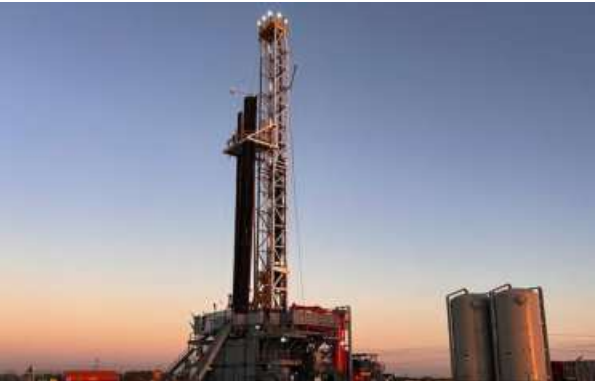
Go beyond campaigns

The communication efforts of drugmakers go well beyond campaigns related to other medicines, said Jia Hepeng, a professor of science communication at Soochow University in Suzhou.

"I rarely see pharmaceutical companies promoting prescription drugs for hypertension, tumors, and other diseases in public settings, or even through indirect advertis-

Exxon ramps up automated drilling in Permian

FOCUS
Reuters
MIDLAND, TEXAS



Removing risk: An automated oil drilling rig operated by ExxonMobil in Midland, Texas, U.S. REUTERS

In rural west Texas where oil rigs and pump jacks dot the sparse flat landscape, an ExxonMobil contractor sits in a small office on a drilling rig, using controls on a screen to operate robotic machinery and move tall steel pipes weighing roughly 2,000 pounds.

This work would usually require human overseers standing on the rig floor, the most common location for accidents on a rig. Exxon, the largest oil producer by volume in the U.S., operates more than 30 drilling rigs in the Permian Basin, two of which are automated rigs with robotic equipment. By 2028, the

company aims to transition half of its fleet to automated rigs to reduce the need for workers to perform potentially dangerous work and increase efficiency to drill wells faster, an executive told Reuters.

The Permian Basin in Texas and New Mexico, the biggest U.S. oilfield, revolu-

tionised energy markets two decades ago when development of the shale basin turned the U.S. into one of the leading oil-producing countries. But the relatively quick decline rate of shale wells has prompted drillers to develop more technologies to extract the oil. Some in the industry

are also concerned about when the Permian's production could begin to decline. Exxon plans to grow its Permian production by almost 40% to 2.5 million barrels of oil equivalent per day by 2030. By contrast, rival oil major Chevron plans to hold production steady at about 1 million boepd, focusing instead on free cash flow.

Tech combination

The automated drilling rigs are part of a combination of technologies and strategies Exxon is using to boost production, said Bart Cahir, Exxon's senior vice president of unconventional, in an interview on the rig.

"When we take people off the rig floor, those same individuals are now able to think ahead and plan for

the next operation and that combination gives us efficiency," he said.

"This is the productivity play." The company installed its first automated rig, supplied by drilling contractor Helmerich & Payne, last year. It drilled two miles horizontally underground in a little over six days, the third fastest time in Exxon's history.

Exxon's use of automated rigs in the Permian and its goal of expanding the fleet has not been previously reported.

Reducing risk

On one of Exxon's automated rigs in Midland, a gate surrounds the drilling floor with a sign reading "Red Zone: Restricted Area." A drawing of the Grim Reaper illustrates the risk that workers face

around heavy equipment and pressurised systems. Where workers would usually help move columns of drill pipe over two stories tall, robotic arms now position the pipes and connect them to a drill string. This allows drilling to continue deeper into the well bore.

Employees on the rig communicate with Exxon's central operations team in Houston to determine the precise movements the robotic system should make. Removing workers from the so-called Red Zones allows them to focus on other operations on the rig and cuts variability in the work viz. more feet per day can be drilled, Cahir said.

"By getting people out of that higher risk area, we are essentially eliminating that risk."

Why Dutch insurers are on sidelines as defence spend to rise

FOCUS
Reuters

The Dutch government's pledge to increase defence spending to 3.5% of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2035 as part of NATO commitments is already running into difficulty on differences with some of the financial institutions it wants to help fund plan.

Talks initiated by the Dutch Defence Ministry (MoD) in 2024 with big domestic insurance companies to explore a framework for potential defence investments have stalled over insurers' requests for government help in screening defence companies.

Dutch insurers had a

combined €455 billion (\$531.44 billion) in assets under management at the end of March, including pension funds they own such as AZL, and Dutch dentists' fund SPT, according to De Nederlandsche Bank data.

Due diligence skills

Yet the Dutch Insurers Association, representing the sector in the talks, said they lack expertise to perform due-diligence in the secretive defence sector, while a spokesperson for the MoD said screening investments remains the responsibility of investors.

"We need the government for this. Defence is a very untransparent industry for us and the government is the party that has all the context, the infor-



Fund crunch: Dutch frigate HNLMS Evertsen at the port of Heraklion, Crete island, Greece. REUTERS

mation needed to really make a good decision," a spokesperson for the insurers' association said.

The last substantive discussions with the government were held last Sep-

tember and no further talks have been scheduled, the association said.

The Netherlands spent around 2.2% of GDP on defence last year, and the MoD estimates that meet-

ing the 3.5% target by 2035 will require extra defence spending of €16 billion-€19 billion a year. The government aims to source roughly half of future defence purchases domestically

and from European suppliers, to build up the country's defence sector.

Growing interest

Dutch insurers have shown growing interest in the sector. To become significant investors, however, they would need specific information about where a defence company sells to and details of all its products, to comply with their own environmental, social and governance (ESG) policies that prohibit investment in companies producing certain weapons or supplying certain countries, the association spokesperson said.

The MoD acknowledges that gathering information on suppliers can be difficult because of secrecy requirements and has launched a website compil-

ing public information on suppliers, though the insurance industry says the material does not fully address its needs.

Insurers want bonds

Another challenge for insurers investing in defence companies is that their risk and investment profile is better suited for fixed-income instruments, such as bonds and other forms of debt, analysts and the insurers' association said.

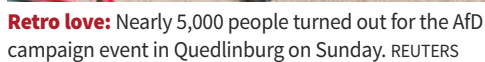
"A government-issued defence bond could be a more natural investment. Fixed-income securities represent a much larger share of insurers' portfolios than direct equity. A bond could therefore fit more easily," the association spokesperson said. Top Dutch insurers NN

Group, ASR Nederland and Achmea combined had nearly €146 billion in fixed-income portfolios as of the end of June, with the largest portions allocated to government debt.

Sovereign debt tool

One solution, the association says, would be for the Netherlands to set up a sovereign debt tool, like France which is at the forefront of Europe's defence push. That could broaden the addressable pool of funds available to insurers, while also shifting the duty of vetting defence firms onto the debt issuer.

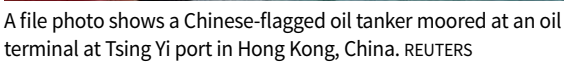
Last year, Bpifrance launched €450 million Defence Fund targeting retail investors and the €1 billion European Defence Bonds aimed at institutions.



Reuters
QUEDLINBURG

The AfD has rejected allegations of racism, saying it just wants stricter controls over immigration.

Reuters
SINGAPORE



Yummy treat: Russia's first ever locally born giant panda Katyusha tastes the offerings made to her on her third birthday at the Moscow Zoo on Monday. Katyusha was born to a Panda couple which arrived in Russia in 2019 from China. AFP

Associated Press
HONG KONG

"Automation could partially offset a shrinking workforce rather than being purely a threat to it," Mr. Cao said.

RAISING THE BAR

Pant is India's top wicketkeeper run-getter in away Tests



ANI
Rishabh Pant went past M.S. Dhoni to become the country's highest run-getter as a designated wicketkeeper in away or neutral Tests. The left-hander has 2,534 compared to Dhoni's 2,496. Pant also overtook Adam Gilchrist to become the third-highest six-hitter in Test cricket. He has 102 maximums while Gilchrist smashed 100.

ONE OF A KIND

Pant plays his shots and I cannot bat like him, feels Jurel



PTI
Rishabh Pant's century partnership with Dhruv Jurel helped India gain dominance in the second Test. Referring to his flamboyant batting partner, Jurel said: "Test cricket has different ways of playing. Pant plays his shots and I cannot bat like him. With his experience, he would talk about which bowler can be taken down".

PENALTY

Jaiswal and Asitha fined for breaching code of conduct



AP
India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal and Sri Lanka seamer Asitha Fernando were both fined 25% of their match fee for breaching Level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct during the second Test. The two were involved in a heated exchange on Sunday. One demerit point each has also been added to their disciplinary records.

NOT SHYING AWAY

Fulton takes full responsibility for the team's poor performance



FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR
I think the outcome was bigger than the performance. I think that got the better of us. If we had just gone back to our normal approach, which I was hoping we would, it would have been different. I take full responsibility for that — India men's hockey team head coach Craig Fulton after the team's World Cup exit.

Jurel and Pant turn up the heat on a rain-hit day

The two put on 112 for the seventh wicket as India declares its first innings at 503 for nine; Sri Lanka tottering at eight for two in reply; only 56 overs of play possible due to interruptions

INDIA IN SRI LANKA

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
COLOMBO

The afternoon turned grim, dark clouds hung low, skyscrapers became silhouettes and vanished entirely from view. The rain was that intense, cascading in waves, just like how Arundhati Roy wrote in *The God of Small Things*: "Slanting silver ropes slammed into loose earth, ploughing it up like gunfire."

The liquid intervention at 2.13 p.m. lasted 23 minutes. The efficient ground staff at the Sinhalese Sports Club Ground covered the entire turf in sheets and the venue was not ploughed. But the showers forced a break during the second Test's second day at a time when India was coasting against Sri Lanka.

Gradually the clouds receded, the sun emerged and play resumed at 4.22 p.m., with India placed on 475 for eight and Dhruv Jurel on 95. He took his time, was stationary on 99 for a while before scampering for a single after tapping Asitha Fernando towards mid-off. Later he hoisted

SCOREBOARD

INDIA — 1ST INNINGS
Yashasvi Jaiswal b Asitha 45 (53b, 9x4), K.L. Rahul c Dickwella b Kumara 18 (33b, 2x4, 1x6), Devdutt Padikkal b Nuwantha 117 (193b, 12x4), Shubman Gill c Dickwella b Asitha 50 (108b, 6x4), Rishabh Pant c Udara b Nuwantha 63 (89b, 6x4, 2x6), Ravindra Jadeja b Asitha 43 (83b, 4x4), Dhruv Jurel (not out) 115 (177b, 9x4, 2x6), Saransh Jain c Mishara b Asitha 6 (8b, 1x4), Manav Suthar c Dickwella b Prabath 18 (51b, 2x4), Mohammed Siraj lbw b Prabath 3 (29b), Prasidh Krishna (not out) 4 (7b, 1x4); Extras (b-8, lb-3, nb-3, w-7): 21; Total (for nine wkts. decl. in 138 overs): 503.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-37 (Rahul, 10.4 overs), 2-66 (Jaiswal, 16.6), 3-186 (Gill, 51.5),

the seamer for a big six. Even as Mohammed Siraj left and last-man Prasidh Krishna appeared, Jurel (115 n.o., 177b, 9x4, 2x6) ensured that India crossed 500. Aptly Shubman Gill declared the first innings at 503 for nine.

At close, Sri Lanka was struggling at eight for two with Yashasvi Jaiswal's diving catch to terminate Lahiru Udara's stint being the highlight.

India's batting effort rested entirely on two wicketkeeper-batters – the maverick Rishabh Pant and the efficient Jurel.

4-281 (Padikkal, 76.2), 5-296 (Jadeja, 84.1), 6-307 (Saransh, 86.5), 7-419 (Pant, 112.1), 8-458 (Suthar, 124.4), 9-489 (Siraj, 136.1).

SRI LANKA BOWLING
Asitha 29-5-106-4, Kumara 20-4-68-1, Prabath 42-7-132-2, Nuwantha 38-3-154-2, Dinusha 3-0-8-0, Dhananjaya 2-0-8-0, Mishara 4-0-16-0.

SRI LANKA — 1ST INNINGS
Lahiru Udara c Jaiswal b Prasidh 1 (6b), Kamil Mishara (batting) 5 (5b), Prabath Jayasuriya lbw b Suthar 2 (7b); Total (for two wkts. in three overs): 8.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-1 (Udara, 1.2), 2-8 (Prabath, 2.6).

INDIA BOWLING
Siraj 1-0-1-0, Prasidh 1-0-1-1, Suthar 1-0-6-1.

Their 112-run seventh-wicket partnership anchored India past the 400-mark. Pant (63, 89b, 6x4, 2x6) fell off the first ball after lunch, while trying to clear long-off against off-spinner Keshara Nuwantha. Jurel, though, remained calm. He accumulated runs at a steady trot even as Manav Suthar flickered a while before edging left-arm spinner Prabath Jayasuriya. After Siraj walked in, Jurel held onto the strike as much as he could while the former defended. Jurel on-drove Asitha for four and then the skies opened up.

Earlier, resuming at 300 for five, India lost Saransh Jain as he awkwardly fended a short-pitched delivery from Asitha. But there were no Monday morning blues as Pant, who had retired hurt on the opening day, returned. Lahiru Kumara steamed in and pitched it short around the leg-stump. Pant just swivelled and pulled a massive six that hit the roof. While Jurel remained patient, Pant was busy. Host skipper Dhananjaya de Silva placed fielders at fine-leg, third-man, backward square-leg and sweeper-cover. Pacers, be it Asitha or Kumara, ran in and bounced, hoping for a miscued hit. Pant remained unruffled, and suffered a few blows too as he ducked and weaved. He pinched some fours off Nuwantha while Jurel pulled Asitha past the ropes. Prabath found Pant drilling one straight down the ground and soon the batter reached his 50. Jurel too followed suit and then Pant whipped a six off Prabath over mid-wicket as India moved to 419 for six at lunch. Pant dominated the first act, and it was time for Jurel to flourish in the second part. He precisely did that for his second Test century.



Perfect mix: Jurel brought up his second Test hundred with a blend of caution and aggression. ANI

Playing Test cricket is a privilege, says Jurel

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
COLOMBO

Time seemingly paused as Dhruv Jurel batted on 99. With Mohammed Siraj for company, and an anxious Indian camp watching from the dressing room, Jurel took 13 deliveries to move to his coveted hundred while surviving a run out attempt too in the process. His knock deflated host Sri Lanka in the second Test.

Speaking to the media here on Monday and recalling the nervous 90s phase, Jurel said: "When I was on 99, he (Asitha Fernando) started bowling good lengths. When I played that shot (for the hundred), I thought it was going past the fielder and that there was a gap, but then I was like oh, God!"

On a stop-start day due to the rains, Jurel seemed at ease. "I am used to it, because I was here with India-A and am aware of the situation, about the (rain) breaks. I was just trying to bat in partnerships and also assess the conditions. Even if I scored a 100 to-



day, tomorrow I will go and start from zero, that's how it is." When Sri Lanka turned up for the first innings, Jurel donned the big gloves. "Right now, (Rishabh) Pant has a sore right shoulder. We are closely monitoring him. Today I kept wickets, hopefully he will be fit," said Jurel. Among the rivals, Jurel lauded Asitha: "It was so hot and he used the short ball. It's not easy for a bowler, and he was really challenging, especially when I was on 99." Stressing that playing red-ball cricket is important, Jurel said: "Playing Test cricket is a privilege. We want to play well both in white and in blue".

Abid's five-for puts North on top; East in command

DULEEP TROPHY

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

Abid Mushtaq's left-arm spin bamboozled West Zone as North secured a 64-run first-innings lead on day two of the Duleep Trophy quarterfinals at the BCCI Centre of Excellence here on Monday. The Jammu & Kashmir tweeker excelled with a fine five for 39 as West, starting from 31 for two, was bundled out for 187, with only Shams Mulani showing a semblance of fight (52, 94b, 7x4, 1x6).

And by the time a combination of bad light and rain ended proceedings, North was 171 runs in the green with Ayush Badoni at the crease on a confident 39 (49b, 5x4), and six wickets and two days remaining.

Abid had served an appetiser late on the opening day by casting West opener Prithvi Shaw with a classic left-arm spinner's delivery. In the opening session of day two, he ran through the middle-order, bowling 11 overs, conceding 13 runs and claiming three wickets. Chief among those dismissals was that of captain



Wrecker-in-chief: Abid ran through the West Zone middle-order. ALLEN EGENUSE J.

Ruturaj Gaikwad. The Maharashtra batter stepped out of the crease, only for the red cherry to dip and hold its line. Ruturaj tried to cover for his error by offering his pad first. The unimpressed umpire gave him his marching orders.

Two balls later, Urvil Patel was also trapped in front, and it was only apt that Abid provided the finishing touches by sending back No. 10 Tushar Deshpande just before tea to complete a much deserved five-wicket haul.

On the adjacent ground, the contest between East and North East moved at a more frenetic pace.

From an overnight 355 for six, East raked up 467 and then shot out its opponent for a paltry 111, with Tripura medium-pacer Abhijit Sarkar scalping five for 20 runs.

With two days to go and a mammoth 349 runs in the red, India's newest – and weakest – cricket zone has a near-impossible task.

The scores: North Zone 251 & 107/4 in 21 overs vs. West Zone 187 in 65.4 overs (Shams Mulani 52, Abid Mushtaq 5/39). East Zone 467 in 112.5 overs (Kumar Kushagra 55, Sudip Gharami 146, Shahbaz Ahmed 167) vs. North East Zone 111 in 42.5 overs (Abhijit Sarkar 5/20) & 7/0 in one over.

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

In Jammu & Kashmir's historic Ranji Trophy triumph in 2025-26, Abid Mushtaq was a silent warrior. In 10 matches, he took only 20 wickets, and in the knock-out stages, just four from three games.

But on day two of North Zone's Duleep Trophy quarterfinal versus West Zone, the left-arm spinner showed his real worth by picking up his 10th First Class five-wicket haul (five for 39).

Guile and control The 29-year-old was indeed helped by a red-soil pitch that gripped and offered sufficient turn. But Abid also displayed sufficient guile and control, without getting carried away.

"I try to bowl within the stumps and it's very difficult to play that," Abid told reporters on Monday. "My plan is to use the crease. Sometimes I bowl from height, and sometimes from the base. I believe in [higher] speed and staying straight."

Abid's methods are straight out of the Ravindra Jadeja playbook, and it was for this reason that the visiting Australians signed



Abid celebrates a wicket with Arshdeep. ALLEN EGENUSE J.

him up as a net bowler in 2023 ahead of the Test series. But back home in the Chenab valley of Jammu region, he had few red-soil wickets to practise on.

Abid credits his improvement to the better infrastructure now available and also to the support of those like P. Krishna Kumar, J&K's bowling coach for the last three years.

"There were more green wickets," Abid said. "Now we have a variety of pitches... red and black soil. When the wicket is of red soil, I have a lot of confidence. I get goose-bumps."

No wonder he made the West Zone batters dance to his tune.

India crashes out after another lacklustre show

HOCKEY WORLD CUP

Aashin Prasad
AMSTELVEEN

Sukhjeet Singh put his arms aloft in celebration after scoring a goal in the 57th minute. But it was his side's second to Argentina's five as its World Cup run was nearing the end. It summed up India's day at the Wagener Stadion on Monday.

Twenty three years ago, it was in this very arena, where India scripted one of its greatest comebacks, overturning a 2-4 deficit in 15 minutes to beat Pakistan 7-4 in the Champions Trophy. Needing a big win to stay alive in the men's World Cup, there was to be no repeat story from the current class as it went down 5-3.

The defeat was India's third in five games in this World Cup. The former champion also let in 16 goals. Finishing last in Pool E, India will play Belgium for the seventh place.

India got off to a dreadful start as Argentina capitalised on its defensive errors. Inside 40 seconds, a failed clearance allowed an unmarked Joaquin Toscani slot home for the first.



Cashing in: Argentina made India pay for its defensive errors. HOCKEY INDIA

Four minutes later, indecision from Yashdeep Siwach resulted in the defender conceding a penalty corner, which Nicolas Della Torre pushed low and hard to make it 2-0.

India found a lifeline through Sukhjeet as he scored with a backhand finish. Better control prevailed in the second quarter before further mistakes proved to be India's undoing once again. Mohith H.S. could do nothing to stop Tomas Domene's fiercely-struck reverse-hit.

Yashdeep's day got only worse when his backpass was intercepted inside the 25 yards before the resulting shot on target struck his foot. Domene made no

mistake from the spot to make it 4-1. With eight minutes to go, Lucas Toscani added a fifth.

A late resurgence saw India reduce the margin with another goal from Sukhjeet before Hardik Singh converted a penalty stroke.

Argentina progressed to the semifinals after England could only manage a 2-2 draw with the Netherlands later in the day. The Dutch will meet Spain in Friday's first semifinal while Argentina takes on Germany the same day.

The result: Argentina 5 (Joaquin Toscani 1, Della Torre 5-pc, Domene 32 & 44-ps, Lucas Toscani 52) bt India 3 (Sukhjeet 9 & 57, Hardik 60-ps).

INBRIEF



Balaji-Anirudh pair triumphs at Cancun Country Open

N. Sriram Balaji and Anirudh Chandrasekar won the doubles title at the Cancun Country Open, defeating the Mexican-Belarusian pairing of Miguel Angel Reyes-Varela and Ivan Liutarevich 6-3, 7-6(4) in the final. The champions earned 125 ranking points along with a \$9,900 prize.

Pratitee emerges sole leader; Mayank remains on top

Pratitee Bordoloi, with six points, emerged as the sole leader in the girls' section after round seven of the Asian junior chess championship in Mumbai. In open event, top seed Mayank Chakraborty maintained his lead with six points.

Important results (seventh round): Open: Mayank Chakraborty 6 drew with Vignesh Vemula 5.5; Artem Pigin (Rus) 5.5 drew with Daksh Goyal 5.5; Apoorv Kamble 5 drew with Madhvendra Sharma 5; Amanmuhmet Hommadov (Tkm) 4.5 lost to Viresh Sharnarhi 5.5; Vivaan Sardana 4.5 drew with Imangali Akhilbay (Kaz) 4.5; Ilhan Charyyev (Tkm) 4 lost to Arshpreet Singh 5; Jaiveer Mahendru 4 lost to Ahmet Gubatayev (Tkm) 5; V.S. Nandish 4.5 drew with Agnivo Chakraborty 4.5; Siddhant Salunke 5 bt Guru Prakash 4. **Girls:** Aadya Gowda 5 lost to Pratitee Bordoloi 6; Leyla Shohradova (Tkm) 5.5 drew with G. Shivambika 5.5; Mariya Kholyavko (Kaz) 5 drew with Dakshita Kumawat 5; V.C. Nivedita 4.5 lost to Prishita Gupta 5.5; Sravyasree Bheemarasetty 5 bt Shanmathi Sree 4; Sunetra Dey 5 bt Jahan Rejepova (Tkm) 4; Akshaya Sathi 5 bt Anvita Sathi 4; Kasthuri Bhai 4 lost to S. Pranavasri 5; Lala Shohradova (Tkm) 4.5 bt Sanudula Dahamdi (Sri) 3.5; Marium Fatima 4.5 bt Mrittika Mallick 3.5.

England drops pacer Carse for second Test

England pacer Brydon Carse was dropped on Monday for the second Test against Pakistan following the latest off-field incident to affect the national team. Images on social media showed Carse in police handcuffs outside a nightclub in Derby on Saturday night, following a game with his club side Durham. The ECB said Carse will be replaced in the squad by Sonny Baker for the second Test, which starts on Thursday. "Following a referral from ECB, the Cricket Regulator have confirmed that they will investigate the events," the ECB said on Monday.

LIVE TELECAST

Duleep Trophy: Quarterfinals, Day 3, JioHotstar, 9.30 a.m.
Sri Lanka vs India: Second Test, Day 3, Sony Sports Ten 1 & LIV, 9.45 a.m.
Champions League (play-offs, second-leg): Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 & LIV, 10.15 p.m. & 12.30 a.m. (Wednesday)
LaLiga: FanCode, 12.30 a.m. (Wednesday)

Praggnanandhaa beats Keymer, takes the lead



Precision play: Praggnanandhaa came up trumps in a crucial game. FLICKR/GRANDCHESSTOUR

GCT GRAND FINAL

Press Trust of India
ST. LOUIS (USA)

Indian Grandmaster R. Praggnanandhaa defeated Vincent Keymer of Germany in the second classical game to take a 9-3 lead and take a big step towards to qualifying for the finals of the concluding event of Grand Chess Tour. With both players running out of time, Keymer found a way to continue but it was in the second time control that the Indian GM cashed in with the German resigning on the 55th move. The victory meant that Praggnanandhaa is six points away from making it to the final of the \$450000 tournament. There will be two more

rapid games in which the winner gets four points and four blitz games that give two points for a win. In the other semifinal, Fabiano Caruana of United States let slip a winning position against compatriot Wesley So. Caruana called the shots from the start and showcased his brilliant preparation that led to a huge advantage subsequently. However, So's fighting qualities helped him salvage a draw. The top three from here will get a direct invite to next year's Grand Chess Tour and this event's winner will receive \$200000. The runner-up will earn \$125000 and third-placed player will get \$75000. **The results: semifinal: classical second game:** R. Praggnanandhaa bt Vincent Keymer (Ger); Fabiano Caruana (USA) drew with Wesley So (USA).

Nothing changed, I stuck to my process: Payas

A few weeks after suffering a heartbreak at the Commonwealth Championship, the 21-year-old bounces back by winning the season-opening National ranking tournament

TABLE TENNIS

Amol Karhadkar
KANPUR

Three weeks ago, he fell two points short of lifting the trophy at the Commonwealth Table Tennis Championship (CTTC) in his hometown New Delhi. But on Sunday here, Payas Jain didn't let history repeat itself. For the 21-year-old, the time since the CTTC has not been about chasing results. It has been about sticking to a process. That process bore fruit in emphatic fashion as Payas outplayed reigning National champion Manav Thakar to win the season-opening National ranking tournament at The Sportz Hub. "Nothing has changed," Payas told *The Hindu*. "Before the Commonwealth Championship, I was trying to follow the process. Even after the Commonwealth Championship, I was just trying to follow the process. The Asian Games is coming up, my main goal is to win a medal for India there."



Dreaming big: Payas' next target is an Asian Games medal. FILE PHOTO: SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

What changed, however, was the manner in which Payas went about his business. Against one of the strongest defensive players in Indian men's table tennis, he refused to be hurried. He stayed in the rallies, waited for the opportunity to turn, and passed Manav with the precision that had also been evident in his service receiving. Everything, he insisted,

was intentional. "Whether it was my body language, shot-making, strategy or tactics. The fact that everything was intentional reflected on the table. I know how Manav plays. He knows how I play. So, I was prepared for everything," Payas said. "It was a great match. I actually played well and I was feeling very confident."

A member of India's Asian Games squad, he put

together a strong domestic season and finished second in the National rankings. He is closing in on a place in the world's top 100. Payas is still awaiting inclusion in the Sports Authority of India's Target Olympic Podium Scheme list of promising athletes. The Asian Games medal, though, remains the bigger target. Sunday's crown was simply another step towards it.

Sports Ministry firm on sticking to selection guidelines for Asian Games

Sports Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Sports Ministry is firm on sticking to the selection criteria for the Asian Games and not giving in to external pressure in clearing names that do not make the cut. The government recently cleared a 492-member list for the upcoming edition in Aichi-Nagoya, leaving out the football and handball teams and excluding several former medallists, leading to protests. "There is a lot of pressure from all quarters to in-

clude many sportspersons. Many parents call up to say their child deserved a chance but was not selected. But our contention is, if someone merits selection on the basis of the government criteria, he/she will not be ignored but we cannot simply clear names," ministry sources said on Monday. "For example, if the Asian timing is 10 seconds to be even a contender in 100m, how can we send someone clocking 15s?" they added. The ministry's criteria mandate a top-six in individual and top-eight

placing in team sports in the previous edition with the government having the final say. There has been a protest over the pruned tennis list, which has seven players including two women and has left out the likes of top-ranked Sahaja Yamalapalli, with former star Rohan Bopanna raising questions. Earlier, paddler Manika Batra had also slammed her exclusion by the federation while rider Anush Agarwal, individual and team medallist in 2023, went to court but was not granted relief.

Meanwhile, a nationwide programme will be organised on August 27 as part of the National Sports Day, celebrated on August 29 to mark the birth anniversary of Major Dhyan Chand. It will have leading athletes including Manika, Deepa Karmakar, Saina Nehwal, Gagan Narang and P.R. Sreejesh among others sharing their journey, challenges and sporting experiences with youngsters across more than 1500 locations including IITs, IIMs and other leading educational institutions.

EURO LEAGUES

Agencies
ELCHE

Defending champion Barcelona cruised to a 5-0 win over Elche in its LaLiga opener on Sunday, with Raphinha and Fermin Lopez scoring a brace each and Anthony Gordon setting up two goals on his debut. Karim Adeyemi also found the net on his debut as Barcelona made light work of a vulnerable Elche side at the Martinez Valero stadium. Manager Hansi Flick had several regular starters on the bench as they continue to get up to speed after competing in the World Cup. Lamine Yamal, a key part of the triumphant Spain squad, did start on the right but was far from his best. It, however, did not matter given Barcelona's otherwise sparkling display. **Flick pleased** "Five goals against this team is good because Elche plays fantastic football," said Flick. "We are really happy



Flying start: Raphinha could not have asked for a better beginning to the league season. AP

that we won 5-0, three points. This is a fantastic start for us. It gives us the confidence which we need for the next matches," added the chief coach. Brazil international Raphinha lined up as the team's No. 9 – after Robert Lewandowski and Ferran Torres left the club – and shone. Flick's high-line defence showed the occasional sign of its frailty but goalkeeper Joan Garcia did well when called on to keep a clean sheet. Meanwhile, Ruben

Amorim made a winning start to life in Serie A as his AC Milan side opened its league campaign with a 2-1 victory at Torino. "The most important thing is to win," Amorim told DAZN. "There is one goal in football, winning." **The results:** **LaLiga:** Elche 0 lost to Barcelona 5 (Raphinha 14-pen, 67, Adeyemi 45+3, Lopez 71, 79). **Serie A:** Torino 1 (Adams 90+3) lost to AC Milan 2 (Cisse 64, Rabiot 67); Frosinone 0 lost to Juventus 1 (Bremer 22). Atalanta 2 (Raspadori 6, Krstovic 65) bt Sassuolo 1 (Odenthal 55).

Singapore u-20 coach impressed with his team's India outing

FOOTBALL

Sports Bureau
BENGALURU

The two closed-door friendly matches against India earlier this month offered Singapore's under-20 men's football team a valuable test of where it stands against strong opposition. Played at the Centre for Sports Excellence here, the games were part of preparations for the AFC U20 Asian Cup China 2027 qualifiers. India won the encounters 3-0 and 1-0. For Singapore head coach Syed Azmir, however, the results were secondary to the lessons his players could take from the outings. "We wanted to test the players against strong opposition, see how well they could execute our principles under pressure and assess different combinations within the team. It was also important to give the players international match exposure and develop their understanding of the intensity, discipline and decision-making required at this level," Azmir said.

"Ultimately, the results are important, but our bigger focus was on the performance, learning from each game and making sure we leave India better prepared than when we arrived." **Intensity** Azmir was impressed by India's performance, particularly the intensity and physicality with which the home side approached both matches. "What impressed me most about the India under-20 side was their intensity and physicality. They were aggressive in their approach, competed very well in their duels and were able to maintain that intensity throughout both matches. They were also well organised and disciplined in the way they played," he said. "You could see that they have been together for some time and are preparing seriously for their AFC qualifiers. For our players, it was exactly the type of opposition we wanted. They punished our mistakes and forced us to make decisions quicker, which gave us a very good reference of the level we need to reach," he added.

One of the missions of GCL is to build a fanbase: Rakshit

CHESS

P.K. Ajith Kumar

The third edition of the Global Chess League (GCL) in Mumbai last year proved a big hit with the fans, who were able to engage with their favourite stars at the Royal Opera House. The fourth season of the league, which opens at Bengaluru on September 5, will provide even bigger opportunities for them, according to Gourav Rakshit, the GCL Commissioner. "After Mumbai, we have a sense of what the Indian fan expects from the GCL, and we are looking forward to making it even bigger and better at Bengaluru," Rakshit told *The Hindu* over the phone. "I think our broadcast also worked extremely well, and the fans at the venue could listen to the commentary of the games through headsets. That novelty was welcomed by the fans. One of the missions of GCL is to build a fanbase of chess." He said they could look forward to spending more time with the players at Bengaluru. "At the special sections inside the fan zone now, where players can come and actually interact with the fans," he said. "The team owners too can interact with the fans, who will get a chance to experience a close con-



GCL commissioner Rakshit.



This time we have got an app where the fans can actually play along with the GM. The idea is that they could do their moves before the GMs

nection with all the players." Rakshit said the GCL was developing an app that would give plenty to the chess fans. "Most of our fans are also chess players," he said. "Now this time we have got an app where the fans can actually play along with the Grandmaster. The idea is that they could do their moves before the GMs. And they will get to actually see the live positions that are on the board. We are excited that we will give the fans at home also a different opportunity to experience GCL, not just on the stream, but in action, live inside the app".

'I don't have the car to fight for the title'

Associated Press
ZANDVOORT

Lando Norris said that he doesn't yet have a car capable of vying for the Formula One title despite back-to-back Grand Prix wins. But he added that he could "win every race" remaining this season if McLaren manages to solve its biggest vulnerability. "I know I've just won two races in a row and had

two poles in a row, but at the minute, I don't have the car I need to fight for a championship," Norris said after the Dutch GP. "We're very, very strong in high-speed (corners), and that's the place we've improved the car the most ... No one matches us in high speed, and that's a good thing," Norris said. He also urged McLaren not to get "complacent" and to focus on improving the car.

