TUESDAY, JULY 14, 2026

The Indian EXPRESS

KOLKATA, LATE CITY, 20 PAGES

JOURNALISM *of* COURAGE

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indicated:

Distribution Channel	As at March 31, 2026		As at March 31, 2025		As at March 31, 2024	
	MAAUM (₹ billion)	% of Total MAAUM	MAAUM (₹ billion)	% of Total MAAUM	MAAUM (₹ billion)	% of Total MAAUM
Direct	7,007.12	57.68%	5,982.42	56.33%	5,361.79	57.67%
Third Parties	5,142.20	42.32%	4,637.47	43.67%	3,935.77	42.33%
Total MAAUM	**12,149.32**	**100.00%**	**10,619.89**	**100.00%**	**9,297.56**	**100.00%**

6. **Scheme Concentration Risk:** A portion of our mutual fund QAAUM and revenue from mutual fund operations is concentrated in a limited number of schemes, and any adverse developments affecting these schemes could materially affect our business. As at March 31, 2026, our top 5 schemes by mutual fund QAAUM accounted for 42.57% of our total mutual fund QAAUM and our top 10 schemes by mutual fund QAAUM accounted for 59.47% of our mutual fund QAAUM. Any adverse developments affecting these schemes could have a disproportionate impact on our overall assets under management, revenues, and profitability.

7. **B-30 Cities Redemption Volatility Risk:** B-30 investors tend to be relatively newer to mutual fund investing and may exhibit higher redemption volatility during periods of market stress or market downturns compared to MAAUM sourced from T-30 cities; additionally, any material reduction in our B-30 MAAUM, or higher-than-anticipated redemption volatility from B-30 cities, could have an adverse effect on our business, financial condition, results of operations and cash flows. The table below sets forth geographic breakdown of our mutual fund MAAUM as at the dates specified:

Geographic Breakdown	As at March 31, 2026	As at March 31, 2025	As at March 31, 2024
Top-30 Cities mutual fund MAAUM (₹ billion)	9,376.55	8,172.80	7,285.34
% of Total mutual fund MAAUM	77.18%	76.96%	78.36%
B-30 Cities mutual fund MAAUM (₹ billion)	2,772.77	2,447.09	2,012.22
% of Total mutual fund MAAUM	22.82%	23.04%	21.64%
B-30 Equity mutual fund MAAUM (₹ billion)	1,558.17	1,390.08	1,024.78

8. We do not own 'SBI' trademark or the "SBI FUNDS MANAGEMENT LIMITED" logo, and termination of the SBI Trademark License Agreement with State Bank of India or any inability to use the "SBI" name or the "SBI FUNDS MANAGEMENT LIMITED" logo may materially and adversely affect our business, prospects, financial condition, and results of operations.

The table below sets forth details of our expenses in relation to royalty to SBI for logo as a percentage of total expenses for Fiscal 2026, Fiscal 2025 and Fiscal 2024:

Particulars	Fiscal 2026	Fiscal 2025	Fiscal 2024
Royalty expenses for logo (₹ in million) **(A)**	506.32	412.59	266.24
Total expenses (₹ in million) **(B)**	9,706.16	8,718.13	7,524.57
Royalty expenses for logo as a percentage of total expenses **(C=A/B)%**	5.22%	4.73%	3.54%

9. A significant component of our PMS business has historically been derived from our mandate to manage a portion of a statutory provident fund institution in India's corpus, where we have served as a portfolio manager since the inception of its equity investment program. As at March 31, 2026, we held a 49.9% market share of this institution's equity corpus under management *(Source: CRISIL Report)* reflecting the depth of our institutional track record. This fund in India is currently undertaking a comprehensive update of its investment management structure, including appointment of new portfolio managers and asset management companies across its fixed income and exchange traded fund mandates. As part of this process, we have received a reallocation notice under our fixed income mandate, which may result, for the time being, in a material reduction of assets under management in our discretionary PMS business. Any such reallocation may also impact assets under management and mutual fund market share.

10. **Offer related risk:** The Offer is by way of an Offer for Sale of up to 170,956,631 Equity Shares of face value of ₹1 each aggregating up to ₹ [●] million by State Bank of India and Amundi India Holding, who are also our Promoters and who shall be entitled to the entire proceeds from the Offer (net of its portion of the Offer-related expenses) and the Company will not receive any proceeds from the Offer.

11. The Price/Earnings Ratio based on diluted EPS for Financial Year 2026 for the Company at the upper end of the price band is 38.16. The composite Industry peer group Price / Earnings ratio is 41.64.

12. **Weighted Average Return on Net Worth for Financial Years ended 2026, 2025 and 2024 is 38.77.**

13. **The average cost of acquisition of Equity Shares for Promoter Selling Shareholders ranges from ₹0.15 per Equity Share to ₹4.35 per Equity Share.**

14. **Weighted average cost of acquisition of Equity Shares of the Promoters (including the Promoter Selling Shareholders):**

Name	Number of Equity Shares of face value of ₹1 each on a fully diluted basis	Weighted average cost of acquisition ("WACA") of Equity Shares of face value of ₹ 1 each	WACA of Equity Shares face value of ₹1 each (in ₹ per Equity Share) acquired in last one year*	WACA of Equity Shares face value of ₹1 each (in ₹ per Equity Share) acquired in last three years*
Promoters				
State Bank of India^	1,231,167,252	0.15	Nil	Nil
Amundi India Holding^	736,080,140	4.35	Nil	Nil
Amundi Asset Management	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

As certified by Kirtane & Pandit LLP, Chartered Accountants (FRN: 105215W/W-100057), by way of their certificate dated July 10, 2026.
^Also the Promoter Selling Shareholder.
**Pursuant to resolution dated November 10, 2025 passed by the Board, and resolution dated December 9, 2025 passed by the Shareholders, the Company undertook a bonus issue of Equity Shares in the ratio of three Equity Shares for every one Equity Share held. Acquisition price of Equity Shares acquired pursuant to such bonus issue is nil.*

15. **Weighted Average Cost of Acquisition for all Equity Shares transacted by our Promoters (including our Promoter Selling Shareholders), members of the Promoter Group and shareholders with the right to nominate directors or other rights to the extent applicable in 1 year, 18 months and 3 years immediately preceding the RHP and as on date (July 10, 2026) is as follows**

Period	Weighted Average Cost of Acquisition of Equity Shares (in ₹)**	Cap Price is 'X' times the Weighted Average Cost of Acquisition	Range of acquisition price: Lowest Price - Highest Price (in ₹)*
Last one year	Nil	N.A.	Nil – Nil
Last 18 months	Nil	N.A.	Nil – Nil
Last three years	Nil	N.A.	Nil – Nil

As certified by Kirtane & Pandit LLP, Chartered Accountants (FRN: 105215W/W-100057), by way of their certificate dated July 10, 2026.
***Pursuant to resolution dated November 10, 2025 passed by our Board, and resolution dated December 9, 2025 passed by our Shareholders, the Company undertook a bonus issue of Equity Shares in the ratio of three Equity Shares for every one Equity Share held. Acquisition price of Equity Shares acquired pursuant to such bonus issue is nil.*

16. **Weighted average cost of acquisition, Floor Price and Cap Price:**

Past Transactions	WACA	Floor Price (In times)	Cap Price (In times)
WACA for Primary Transactions	Nil	N.A.	N.A.
WACA for secondary sale/acquisition of shares	Nil	N.A.	N.A.
Since there were no Primary Issuance or Secondary Transactions of equity shares of the Company during the 18 months preceding the date of filing of this advertisement, where either issuance or acquisition/ sale is equal to or more than five per cent of the fully diluted paid-up share capital of the Company (calculated based on the pre-issue capital before such transaction/s and excluding employee stock options granted but not vested), the information has been disclosed for price per share of the Company based on the last five secondary transactions where Promoters Selling Shareholders, the members of the Promoter Group, are a party to the transaction, during the last three years preceding to the date of this advertisement irrespective of the size of the transaction:			
Based on primary issuances	Nil	N.A.	N.A.
Based on secondary transactions	1.72	316.72 times	333.58 times

As certified by Kirtane & Pandit LLP, Chartered Accountants (FRN: 105215W/W-100057), by way of their certificate dated July 10, 2026.

17. **The 9 BRLMs associated with the issue have handled 123 public issues in the past three years out of which 40 issues closed below the issue price on listing date**

Name of BRLMs	Total Public Issues	Issue Closed below IPO price on listing date
Kotak Mahindra Capital Company Limited*	2	1
Axis Capital Limited*	5	2
BofA Securities India Limited*	0	0
HSBC Securities and Capital Markets (India) Private Limited*	0	0
ICICI Securities Limited*	11	4
Jefferies India Private Limited*	0	0
JM Financial Limited*	4	1
Motilal Oswal Investment Advisors Limited*	13	6
SBI Capital Markets Limited*^	7	3
Common issues of above BRLMs	81	23
Total	**123**	**40**

**Issues handled where there were no common BRLMs.*
^SBI Capital Markets Limited ("SBICAPS") is an associate of our Company and State Bank of India, one of the Promoter Selling Shareholders, in terms of the SEBI Merchant Bankers Regulations. Accordingly, in compliance with the proviso to Regulation 21A of the SEBI Merchant Bankers Regulations and Regulation 23(3) of the SEBI ICDR Regulations, SBICAPS would be involved only in the marketing of the Offer. SBICAPS has signed the due diligence certificate and has been disclosed as a BRLM.

Additional Information for Investors

With reference to the Red Herring Prospectus and the abridged prospectus to the Red Herring Prospectus ("**Abridged Prospectus**"), each dated July 8, 2026, filed by SBI Funds Management Limited ("**Company**") with the RoC, SEBI and the Stock Exchanges, as applicable, investors may note the following:

1. Two of our Promoters, namely State Bank of India and Amundi India Holding, who are also the Promoter Selling Shareholders, have, pursuant to separate share purchase agreements entered into with each of the transferees set out in the table below, each dated July 9, 2026, transferred an aggregate of 32,752,608 Equity Shares having face value of ₹1 each ("**Sale Shares**"), representing 1.60% of the pre-Offer paid-up Equity Share capital of our Company on a fully diluted basis, to such transferees. The Sale Shares were transferred post the filing of the Red Herring Prospectus and Abridged Prospectus (such transfers, the "**Transfers**"), and the particulars of the Transfers are set out below:

Date of transfer	Nature of transaction	Name of the transferor (also the Promoter Selling Shareholders)	Name of the transferee	Whether transferee is connected, in any manner, with the Company, the Promoters, members of the Promoter Group (including the Promoter Selling Shareholders), the Directors, the Key Managerial Personnel, the Subsidiaries, and the Group Companies and their respective directors and key managerial personnel^	Number of Equity Shares	Percentage of pre-Offer share capital of our Company on a fully diluted basis (%)	Transfer price per Sale Share (in ₹)	Total consideration (in ₹ million)
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	3P INDIA EQUITY FUND 1	No	2,613,240	0.13%	574.00	1,499.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	MALABAR INDIA FUND LIMITED	No	871,080	0.04%	574.00	499.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	NEO SECONDARIES FUND	No	871,080	0.04%	574.00	499.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	NEO SERIES 1 LVF	No	871,080	0.04%	574.00	499.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	PI OPPORTUNITIES FUND - II	Yes*	3,484,320	0.17%	574.00	1,999.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	360 ONE SPECIAL OPPORTUNITIES FUND - SERIES 13	No	696,864	0.03%	574.00	399.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	360 ONE PRIVATE EQUITY FUND - SERIES 2	No	435,540	0.02%	574.00	249.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	360 ONE SPECIAL OPPORTUNITIES FUND - SERIES 11	No	435,540	0.02%	574.00	249.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	360 ONE EQUITY OPPORTUNITY FUND - SERIES 4	No	174,216	0.01%	574.00	99.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	TATA AIG GENERAL INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED	No	1,742,160	0.09%	574.00	999.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	CARNELIAN BHARAT AMRITKAAL FUND	No	871,080	0.04%	574.00	499.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	MALAKSHMI TRUST	No	261,324	0.01%	574.00	149.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	ARA INVESTMENTS	No	174,216	0.01%	574.00	99.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	GO DIGIT GENERAL INSURANCE LIMITED	No	435,540	0.02%	574.00	249.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	AKASH MANEK BHANSHALI	No	3,484,320	0.17%	574.00	1,999.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	HARA GLOBAL CAPITAL MASTER FUND I LTD	No	1,742,160	0.09%	574.00	999.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	DYMON ASIA MULTI-STRATEGY INVESTMENT (SINGAPORE) PTE. LTD	No	435,540	0.02%	574.00	249.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	ALROX ENTERPRISES PRIVATE LIMITED	No	871,080	0.04%	574.00	499.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	BENNETT COLEMAN & CO LTD	No	871,080	0.04%	574.00	499.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	SUPRIYATA PRIVATE LIMITED	No	435,540	0.02%	574.00	249.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	PULKIT BENEFIT TRUST	No	1,219,512	0.06%	574.00	699.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	VAIDEHI SOMANI	No	522,648	0.03%	574.00	299.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	CLARUS CAPITAL I	No	1,742,160	0.09%	574.00	999.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	ANAND RATHI GLOBAL FINANCE LIMITED	No	522,648	0.03%	574.00	299.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	CAPRI GLOBAL VENTURES PRIVATE LIMITED	No	435,540	0.02%	574.00	249.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	VIRGIN SECURITIES AND CREDITS PRIVATE LIMITED	No	871,080	0.04%	574.00	499.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	EMERGING SECURITIES PRIVATE LIMITED	No	435,540	0.02%	574.00	249.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	PRUDENT CORPORATE ADVISORY SERVICES LIMITED	No	435,540	0.02%	574.00	249.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	NARANTAK DEALCOMM LIMITED	No	435,540	0.02%	574.00	249.99
July 10, 2026	Secondary sale	State Bank of India	SMITA CONDUCTORS PRIVATE LIMITED	No	435,540	0.02%	574.00	249.99
July 9, 2026	Secondary sale	Amundi India Holding	SUSQUEHANNA ASIA TECHNOLOGY PTY LIMITED	No	2,177,700	0.11%	574.00	1,250.00
July 9, 2026	Secondary sale	Amundi India Holding	WHITEOAK CAPITAL INDIA OPPORTUNITIES FUND	No	1,742,160	0.09%	574.00	1,000.00

^For the purpose of this confirmation, 'connected with' is deemed to mean that there are no common directorships, common key managerial personnel and/or more than 1% equity investment interest.

** Napean Opportunities LLP, PI Opportunities Fund-I and PI Opportunities Fund-II are part of the Premji Invest group. The existing investments by Napean Opportunities LLP, PI Opportunities Fund-I and one of the transferees listed in the table above, namely PI Opportunities Fund-II (collectively, the "**Entities**") in SBI General Insurance Company Limited, a member of the Promoter Group and a Group Company, exceeds 1% equity investment interest in SBI General Insurance Company Limited. Further, the Entities have appointed a nominee director on the board of directors of SBI General Insurance Company Limited.*

Details of the transfers were included in the advertisement dated July 10, 2026, published in all editions of Financial Express and Jansatta and in the Mumbai edition of Navshakti (the "**addendum to the RHP**").

2. Investors should read this advertisement along with the RHP and the abridged prospectus, filed with the RoC and submitted to SEBI and the Stock Exchanges, the pre-Offer and Price Band advertisement and addendum to the RHP before making an investment decision with respect to the Offer.

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BASIS FOR OFFER PRICE

The "Basis for Offer Price" on page 121 of the RHP has been updated with the above Price Band. Please refer to the websites of the BRLMs: https://investmentbank.kotak.com, www.axiscapital.co.in, https://business.bofa.com/bofas-india, www.business.hsbc.co.in, www.icicisecurities.com, www.jefferies.com, www.jmfl.com, www.motilaloswal.com and www.sbicaps.com, respectively for the "Basis for Offer Price" updated for the above.

You may scan the QR code for accessing the website of Kotak Mahindra Capital Company Limited.

AN INDICATIVE TIMETABLE IN RESPECT OF THE ISSUE IS SET OUT BELOW:

Submission of Bids (other than Bids from Anchor Investors):

Bid/Offer Period (except the Bid/Offer Closing Date)	
Submission and Revision in Bids, Eligible SBIFM Employees and Eligible SBI Employees Bidding in the Employee Reservation Portion and Eligible SBI Shareholders Bidding in the SBI Shareholder Reservation Portion	Only between 10.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. IST
Bid/Offer Closing Date	
Submission of electronic applications (online ASBA through 3-in-1 accounts) for RIBs	Only between 10.00 a.m. and up to 5.00 p.m. IST
Submission of electronic application (bank ASBA through online channels like internet banking, mobile banking and syndicate ASBA applications through UPI as a payment mechanism where Bid Amount is up to ₹0.50 million)	Only between 10.00 a.m. and up to 4.00 p.m. IST
Submission of electronic applications (syndicate non-retail, non-individual applications)	Only between 10.00 a.m. and up to 3.00 p.m. IST
Submission of Physical Applications (Bank ASBA)	Only between 10.00 a.m. and up to 1.00 p.m. IST
Submission of physical applications (syndicate non-retail, non-individual applications where Bid Amount is more than ₹0.50 million)	Only between 10.00 a.m. and up to 12.00 p.m. IST
Modification/Revision/cancelled of Bids	
Upward Revision of Bids by QIBs and Non-Institutional Bidders categories#	Only between 10.00 a.m. and up to 4.00 p.m. IST on Bid/Offer Closing Date
Upward or downward Revision of Bids or cancellation of Bids by RIBs, Eligible SBIFM Employees and Eligible SBI Employees Bidding in the Employee Reservation Portion and Eligible SBI Shareholders Bidding in the SBI Shareholder Reservation Portion	Only between 10.00 a.m. and up to 5.00 p.m. IST

**UPI mandate end time shall be 5:00 p.m. on the Bid/Offer Closing Date*

 # QIBs and Non-Institutional Bidders can neither revise their bids downwards nor cancel/withdraw their bids

On the Bid/ Offer Closing Date, the Bids shall be uploaded until:

(i) 4.00 p.m. IST in case of Bids by QIBs and Non-Institutional Bidders, and

(ii) until 5.00 p.m. IST or such extended time as permitted by the Stock Exchanges, in case of Bids by RIBs, Eligible SBIFM Employees and Eligible SBI Employees Bidding in the Employee Reservation Portion and Eligible SBI Shareholders Bidding in the SBI Shareholder Reservation Portion.

On Bid/Offer Closing Date, extension of time may be granted by Stock Exchanges only for uploading Bids received by RIBs after taking into account the total number of Bids received up to closure of timings for acceptance of Bid cum Application Forms as stated herein and as informed to the Stock Exchanges.

Bid/ Offer Programme

Event	Indicative Date
ANCHOR INVESTOR BID	MONDAY, JULY 13, 2026
BID/OFFER OPENS ON	TUESDAY, JULY 14, 2026
BID/OFFER CLOSES ON	THURSDAY, JULY 16, 2026[1]
Finalisation of Basis of Allotment with the Designated Stock Exchange	On or about FRIDAY, JULY 17, 2026
Initiation of refunds (if any, for Anchor Investors)/unblocking of funds from ASBA Account*	On or about MONDAY, JULY 20, 2026
Credit of Equity Shares to dematerialized accounts of Allottees	On or about MONDAY, JULY 20, 2026
Commencement of trading of the Equity Shares on the Stock Exchanges	On or about TUESDAY, JULY 21, 2026

[1] UPI mandate end time and date shall be at 5.00 pm on Bid/Offer Closing Date, i.e. Thursday, July 16, 2026.

**In case of (i) any delay in unblocking of amounts in the ASBA Accounts (including amounts blocked through the UPI Mechanism) exceeding two Working Days from the Bid/Offer Closing Date for cancelled/ withdrawn/ deleted ASBA Forms, the Bidder shall be compensated at a uniform rate of ₹ 100 per day or 15% per annum of the Bid Amount, whichever is higher from the date on which the request for cancellation/ withdrawal/ deletion is placed in the Stock Exchanges bidding platform until the date on which the amounts are unblocked (ii) any blocking of multiple amounts for the same ASBA Form (for amounts blocked through the UPI Mechanism), the Bidder shall be compensated at a uniform rate ₹ 100 per day or 15% per annum of the total cumulative blocked amount except the original application amount, whichever is higher from the date on which such multiple amounts were blocked till the date of actual unblock; (iii) any blocking of amounts more than the Bid Amount, the Bidder shall be compensated at a uniform rate of ₹ 100 per day or 15% per annum of the difference in amount, whichever is higher from the date on which such excess amounts were blocked till the date of actual unblock; (iv) any delay in unblocking of non-allotted/ partially allotted Bids, exceeding two Working Days from the Bid/Offer Closing Date, the Bidder shall be compensated at a uniform rate of ₹ 100 per day or 15% per annum of the Bid Amount, whichever is higher for the entire duration of delay exceeding two Working Days from the Bid/Offer Closing Date by the SCSB responsible for causing such delay in unblocking. The BRLMs shall, in their sole discretion, identify and fix the liability on such intermediary or entity responsible for such delay in unblocking. The Bidders shall be compensated in the manner specified in the SEBI ICDR Master Circular, which for the avoidance of doubt, shall be deemed to be incorporated in the deemed agreement of the Company with the SCSBs, to the extent applicable, issued by SEBI, and any other applicable law in case of delays in resolving investor grievances in relation to blocking/unblocking of funds. The processing fees for applications made by the UPI Bidders using the UPI Mechanism may be released to the remitter banks (SCSBs) only after such banks provide a written confirmation on compliance with SEBI ICDR Master Circular, which has also prescribed that all individual investors applying in initial public offerings opening on or after May 1, 2022, where the application amount is up to ₹ 0.50 million, shall use UPI. RIBs, Eligible SBIFM Employees and Eligible SBI Employees Bidding under Employee Reservation Portion for up to ₹ 0.50 million (net of Employee Discount, if any), Eligible SBI Shareholders Bidding under SBI Shareholder Reservation Portion for up to ₹ 0.50 million and individual investors Bidding under the Non-Institutional Portion Bidding for more than ₹ 0.20 million and up to ₹ 0.50 million, using the UPI Mechanism, shall provide their UPI ID in the Bid-cum-Application Form for Bidding through Syndicate, sub-syndicate members, Registered Brokers, RTAs or CDPs, or online using the facility of linked online trading, demat and bank account (3 in 1 type accounts), provided by certain brokers.*

ASBA* | **Simple, Safe, Smart way of Application!!!**

*Applications Supported by Blocked Amount ("**ASBA**") is a better way of applying to offers by simply blocking the fund in the bank account.

For further details, check section on ASBA.

Mandatory in public issues.
No cheque will be accepted.

UPI UNIFIED PAYMENTS INTERFACE

UPI-Now available in ASBA for Retail Individual Investors and Non Institutional Investor applying in public issues where the application amount is up to ₹ 500,000, applying through Registered Brokers, Syndicate, CDPs & RTAs. UPI Bidders also have the option to submit the application directly to the ASBA Bank (SCSBs) or to use the facility of linked online trading, demat and bank account. Investors are required to ensure that the bank account used for bidding is linked to their PAN. Bidders must ensure that their PAN is linked with Aadhaar and are in compliance with CBDT notification dated February 13, 2020 issued by the Central Board of Direct Taxes and the subsequent press releases, including press release dated June 25, 2021 read with press release dated September 17, 2021, and CBDT circular no. 7 of 2022 dated March 30, 2022, read with press release dated March 28, 2023, and any subsequent press release in this regard.

*ASBA has to be availed by all the investors except Anchor Investors. UPI may be availed by (i) Retail Individual Investors in the Retail Category; (ii) Eligible SBIFM Employees and Eligible SBI Employees in the Employee Reservation Portion (net of Employee Discount, if any); (iii) Eligible SBI Shareholders Bidding in the SBI Shareholder Reservation Portion with an application size of up to ₹ 0.50 million; and (iv) Non-Institutional Investors with an application size of up to ₹ 500,000 in the Non-Institutional Portion. For details on the ASBA and UPI process, please refer to the details given in the Bid Cum Application Form and Abridged Prospectus and also please refer to the section **"Offer Procedure"** on page 501 of the RHP. The process is also available on the website of Association of Investment Bankers of India ("**AIBI**") and Stock Exchanges and in the General Information Document. The Bid Cum Application Form and the Abridged Prospectus can be downloaded from the websites of the Stock Exchanges and can be obtained from the list of banks that is displayed on the website of SEBI at www.sebi.gov.in/sebiweb/other/OtherAction.do?do RecognisedFpi=yes&intmId=35 and https://www.sebi.gov.in/sebiweb/other/OtherAction.do?doRecognisedFpi=yes &intmId=43, respectively as updated from time to time. For the list of UPI apps and banks live on IPO, please refer to the link: www.sebi.gov.in. UPI Bidders Bidding using the UPI Mechanism may apply through the SCSBs and mobile applications whose names appear on the website of SEBI, as updated from time to time. ICICI Bank Limited, State Bank of India and Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited have been appointed as the Sponsor Banks for the Offer, in accordance with the requirements of SEBI circular dated November 1, 2018 as amended. For Offer related queries, please contact the BRLMs on their respective email IDs as mentioned below. For UPI related queries, investors can contact NPCI at the toll free number: 18001201740 and mail Id: ipo.upi@npci.org.in.*

THE EQUITY SHARES OF THE COMPANY WILL GET LISTED ON THE MAIN BOARD PLATFORMS OF BSE AND NSE.

In case of any revision in the Price Band, the Bid/Offer Period will be extended by at least three additional Working Days after such revision in the Price Band, subject to the Bid/Offer Period not exceeding 10 Working Days. In cases of force majeure, banking strike or similar unforeseen circumstances, the Company in consultation with the BRLMs, may for reasons to be recorded in writing, extend the Bid/Offer Period for a minimum of one Working Day, subject to the Bid/Offer Period not exceeding 10 Working Days. Any revision in the Price Band and the revised Bid/Offer Period, if applicable, shall be widely disseminated by notification to the Stock Exchanges, by issuing a public notice, and also by indicating the change on the respective websites of the BRLMs and at the terminals of the Syndicate Members and intimation to SCSBs (as defined hereinafter), Designated Intermediaries (as defined hereinafter) and the Sponsor Banks (as defined hereinafter) as applicable.

This is an Offer in terms of Rule 19(2)(b) of the SCRR read with Regulation 31 of the SEBI ICDR Regulations. This Offer is being made through the Book Building Process in compliance with Regulation 6(1) of the SEBI ICDR Regulations wherein not more than 50% of the Net Offer shall be available for allocation on a proportionate basis to QIBs (such portion the "**QIB Portion**") provided that the Company, in consultation with the BRLMs, may allocate up to 60% of the QIB Portion to Anchor Investors on a discretionary basis in accordance with the SEBI ICDR Regulations ("**Anchor Investor Portion**"), of which 40% shall be reserved as under: (i) 33.33% for domestic Mutual Funds; and (ii) 6.67% shall be reserved for Life Insurance Companies and Pension Funds, subject to valid Bids being received from domestic Mutual Funds, Life Insurance Companies and Pension Funds at or above the price at which Equity Shares will be allocated to the Anchor Investors ("**Anchor Investor Allocation Price**"), in accordance with the SEBI ICDR Regulations. Any under-subscription in the reserved category specified in clause (ii) above, may be allocated to domestic Mutual Funds. In the event of under-subscription or non-allocation in the Anchor Investor Portion, the balance Equity Shares shall be added to the QIB Portion (excluding the Anchor Investor Portion) ("**Net QIB Portion**"). Further, 5% of the Net QIB Portion shall be available for allocation on a proportionate basis to Mutual Funds only and the remainder of the Net QIB Portion shall be available for allocation on a proportionate basis to all QIBs (other than Anchor Investors) including Mutual Funds, subject to valid Bids being received at or above the Offer Price. However, if the aggregate demand from Mutual Funds is less than 5% of the Net QIB Portion, the balance Equity Shares available for allocation in the Mutual Fund Portion will be added to the remaining QIB Portion for proportionate allocation to QIBs. Further, not less than 15% of the Net Offer shall be available for allocation to NIBs of which (a) one third portion shall be reserved for NIBs with application size of more than ₹ 0.20 million and up to ₹ 1.00 million; and (b) two-thirds of the portion shall be reserved for NIBs with application size of more than ₹ 1.00 million, provided that the unsubscribed portion in either of such sub-categories may be allocated to Bidders in the other sub-category of NIBs in accordance with SEBI ICDR Regulations, subject to valid Bids being received at or above the Offer Price and not less than 35% of the Net Offer shall be available for allocation to RIBs in accordance with the SEBI ICDR Regulations, subject to valid Bids being received from them at or above the Offer Price. Further, Equity Shares will be allocated on a proportionate basis to (i) Eligible SBIFM Employees and Eligible SBI Employees Bidding under the Employee Reservation Portion, subject to valid Bids being received from them at or above the Offer Price (net of Employee Discount, if any); and (iii) Eligible SBI Shareholders Bidding in the SBI Shareholder Reservation Portion subject to valid Bids being received at or above the Offer Price. All potential Bidders (except Anchor Investors) are required to mandatorily utilise the Application Supported by Blocked Amount ("ASBA") process by providing details of their respective ASBA accounts and UPI ID (in case of UPI Bidders using the UPI Mechanism (as defined hereinafter)), in which case the corresponding Bid Amounts will be blocked by the SCSBs or under the UPI Mechanism, as applicable to participate in the Offer. Anchor Investors are not permitted to participate in the Anchor Investor Portion of the Offer through the ASBA process. For details, see ***"Offer Procedure"*** beginning on page 501 of the RHP.

Bidders/Applicants should ensure that DP ID, PAN and the Client ID and UPI ID (for UPI Bidders bidding through the UPI Mechanism) are correctly filled in the Bid cum Application Form. The DP ID, PAN and Client ID provided in the Bid cum Application Form should match with the DP ID, PAN, Client ID and UPI ID available (for UPI Bidders bidding through the UPI Mechanism) in the Depository database, otherwise, the Bid cum Application Form is liable to be rejected. Bidders/ Applicants should ensure that the beneficiary account provided in the Bid cum Application Form is active. Bidders/Applicants should note that on the basis of the PAN, DP ID, Client ID and UPI ID (for UPI Bidders bidding through the UPI Mechanism) as provided in the Bid cum Application Form, the Bidder/Applicant may be deemed to have authorized the Depositories to provide to the Registrar to the Offer, any requested Demographic Details of the Bidder/Applicant as available on the records of the depositories. These Demographic Details may be used, among other things, for giving Allotment Advice or unblocking of ASBA Account or for other correspondence(s) related to the Offer. Bidders/Applicants are advised to update any changes to their Demographic Details as available in the records of the Depository Participant to ensure accuracy of records. Any delay resulting from failure to update the Demographic Details would be at the Bidders/Applicants' sole risk.

Contents of the Memorandum of Association of the Company as regards its Objects: For information on the main objects of the Company, please see ***"History and Certain Corporate Matters"*** on page 275 of the RHP. The Memorandum of Association of the Company is a material document for inspection in relation to the Offer. For further details, see ***"Material Contracts and Documents for Inspection"*** on page 548 of the RHP.

Liability of the Members of the Company: Limited by shares.

Amount of Share Capital of the Company and Capital Structure: As on the date of the RHP, the authorised share capital of the Company is ₹2,100,000,000 Equity Shares divided into 2,100,000,000 Equity Shares of face value of ₹1 each. The issued, subscribed and paid-up pre-Offer Equity Share capital of the Company is ₹2,036,827,612 divided into 2,036,827,612 Equity Shares of face value of ₹1 each. For details of the capital structure of the Company, see ***"Capital Structure"*** beginning on page 98 of the RHP.

Names of the Signatories to the Memorandum of Association of the Company and the number of equity shares subscribed by them: The signatories of the Memorandum of Association of the Company are as follows: subscription of one Equity Share each by Dipankar Basu and Ramanathan Viswanathan. For details of the share capital history of the Company please see ***"Capital Structure"*** beginning on page 98 of the RHP.

Listing: The Equity Shares that will be offered through the Red Herring Prospectus are proposed to be listed on the Stock Exchanges. The Company has received 'in-principle' approvals from BSE and NSE for the listing of the Equity Shares pursuant to their letters each dated May 7, 2026. For the purposes of the Offer, the Designated Stock Exchange shall be NSE. A signed copy of the Red Herring Prospectus and the Prospectus shall be delivered to the RoC in accordance with Sections 26(4) and 32 of the Companies Act, 2013. For details of the material contracts and documents available for inspection from the date of the Red Herring Prospectus till the Bid/Offer Closing Date, see ***"Material Contracts and Documents for Inspection"*** on page 548 of the RHP.

Disclaimer Clause of Securities and Exchange Board of India: SEBI only gives its observations on the offer documents and this does not constitute approval of either the Offer or the specified securities stated in the Offer Documents. The investors are advised to refer to page 451 of the RHP for the full text of the disclaimer clause of SEBI.

Disclaimer Clause of NSE (the Designated Stock Exchange) : It is to be distinctly understood that the permission given by NSE should not in any way be deemed or construed that the Offer Document has been cleared or approved by NSE nor does it certify the correctness or completeness of any of the contents of the Offer Document. The investors are advised to refer to page 460 of the RHP for the full text of the disclaimer clause of NSE.

Disclaimer Clause of BSE : It is to be distinctly understood that the permission given by BSE Limited should not in any way be deemed or construed that the RHP has been cleared or approved by BSE Limited nor does it certify the correctness or completeness of any of the contents of the RHP. The investors are advised to refer to the page 460 of the RHP for the full text of the disclaimer clause of BSE.

General Risks: Investments in equity and equity-related securities involve a degree of risk and investors should not invest any funds in the Offer unless they can afford to take the risk of losing their entire investment. Bidders are advised to read the risk factors carefully before taking an investment decision in the Offer. For taking an investment decision, investors must rely on their own examination of the Company and the Offer, including the risks involved. The Equity Shares in the Offer have not been recommended or approved by SEBI, nor does SEBI guarantee the accuracy or adequacy of the contents of the Red Herring Prospectus. Specific attention of the investors is invited to ***"Risk Factors"*** beginning on page 24 of the RHP.

BOOK RUNNING LEAD MANAGERS TO THE OFFER

kotak® Investment Banking
Kotak Mahindra Capital Company Limited
27 BKC, 1st Floor, Plot No. C – 27, "G" Block, Bandra Kurla Complex, Bandra (East), Mumbai 400 051, Maharashtra, India
Telephone: +91 22 4336 0000
E-mail: sbifml.ipo@kotak.com
Investor grievance e-mail: kmccredressal@kotak.com
Website: https://investmentbank.kotak.com
Contact person: Ganesh Rane
SEBI registration no.: INM000008704

AXIS CAPITAL
Axis Capital Limited
Axis House, 1st Floor, Pandurang Budhkar Marg, Worli, Mumbai 400 025, Maharashtra, India
Telephone: +91 22 4325 2183
E-mail: sbifml.ipo@axiscap.in
Investor grievance e-mail: complaints@axiscap.in
Website: www.axiscapital.co.in
Contact person: Harish Patel / Tosit Agarwal
SEBI registration no.: INM000012029

BofA SECURITIES
BofA Securities India Limited
Ground Floor, "A" Wing, One BKC "G" Block, Bandra Kurla Complex Bandra (East), Mumbai 400 051, Maharashtra, India
Telephone: +91 22 6632 8000
E-mail: dg.sbi_fm_ipo@bofa.com
Investor grievance e-mail: dg.india_merchantbanking@bofa.com
Website: https://business.bofa.com/bofas-india
Contact person: Sneh Ashish
SEBI registration no.: INM000011625

HSBC
HSBC Securities and Capital Markets (India) Private Limited
52/60, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400 001, Maharashtra, India
Telephone: +91 22 6864 1289
E-mail: sbiamcipo@hsbc.co.in
Investor grievance e-mail: investorgrievance@hsbc.co.in
Website: www.business.hsbc.co.in
Contact person: Harsh Thakkar / Harshit Tayal
SEBI registration no.: INM000010353

ICICI Securities
ICICI Securities Limited
ICICI Venture House, Appasaheb Marathe Marg, Prabhadevi Mumbai, 400 025, Maharashtra, India
Telephone: +91 22 6807 7100
E-mail: sbifml.ipo@icicisecurities.com
Investor grievance e-mail: customercare@icicisecurities.com
Website: www.icicisecurities.com
Contact person: Ramesh Vaswana / Shri Subramanyam
SEBI registration no.: INM000011179

BOOK RUNNING LEAD MANAGERS TO THE OFFER

Jefferies
Jefferies India Private Limited
Level 16, Express Towers, Nariman Point Mumbai 400 021, Maharashtra, India
Telephone: +91 22 4356 6000
E-mail: SBI.Funds.Management@jefferies.com
Investor Grievance ID: jipl.grievance@jefferies.com
Website: www.jefferies.com
Contact person: Akshat Shah / Hanu Bansal
SEBI registration no.: INM000011443

JM Financial
JM Financial Limited
7th Floor, Cnergy, Appasaheb, Marathe Marg, Prabhadevi Mumbai 400 025, Maharashtra, India
Telephone: +91 22 6630 3030
E-mail: sbimf.ipo@jmfl.com
Investor grievance e-mail: grievance.ibd@jmfl.com
Website: www.jmfl.com
Contact person: Prachee Dhuri
SEBI registration no.: INM000010361

motilal oswal Investment Banking
Motilal Oswal Investment Advisors Limited
Motilal Oswal Tower, Rahimtullah Sayani Road, Opposite Parel ST Depot, Prabhadevi, Mumbai 400 025, Maharashtra, India
Telephone: +91 22 7193 4380
E-mail: sbifmipo@motilaloswal.com
Investor Grievance e-mail: moiaplredressal@motilaloswal.com
Website: www.motilaloswal.com
Contact person: Ronak Shah / Shashank Pisat
SEBI registration no.: INM000011005

SBICAPS Complete Investment Banking Solutions
SBI Capital Markets Limited*
1501, 15th Floor, A & B Wing, Parinee Crescenzo Building, G Block, Bandra Kurla Complex Bandra (East), Mumbai 400 051, Maharashtra, India, **Telephone:** +91 22 4006 9807
E-mail: sbifm.ipo@sbicaps.com
Investor grievance e-mail: investor.relations@sbicaps.com
Website: www.sbicaps.com
Contact person: Aradhy Rajyaguru / Raghavendra Bhat
SEBI registration no.: INM000003531

REGISTRAR TO THE OFFER

KFINTECH EXPERIENCE TRANSFORMATION
KFin Technologies Limited
301, The Centrium, 3rd Floor, 57 Lal Bahadur Shastri Road, Nav Pada, Kurla (West), Kurla, Mumbai 400 070, Maharashtra, India
Telephone: +91 40 67162222/18003094001
E-mail: sbifml.ipo@kfintech.com
Investor grievance e-mail: einward.ris@kfintech.com
Contact person: M. Murali Krishna
SEBI registration no.: INR000000221

CHIEF COMPLIANCE OFFICER, COMPANY SECRETARY AND HEAD LEGAL

Vinaya Datar
SBI Funds Management Limited
9th Floor, Crescenzo, C – 38 & 39, G Block, Bandra Kurla Complex, Bandra (East), Mumbai 400 051, Maharashtra, India, **Telephone:** +91 22 6179 3000, **E-mail:** companysecretary@sbimf.com

Investors may contact the Chief Compliance Officer, Company Secretary and Head Legal, the BRLMs or the Registrar to the Offer in case of any pre-Offer or post-Offer related problems, such as non-receipt of letters of Allotment, non-credit of Allotted Equity Shares in the respective beneficiary account, non-receipt of refund orders or non-receipt of funds by electronic mode. For all Offer-related queries and for redressal of complaints, investors may also write to the BRLMs

SBICAPS is an associate of our Company and State Bank of India, one of the Promoter Selling Shareholders, in terms of the SEBI Merchant Bankers Regulations. Accordingly, in compliance with the proviso to Regulation 21A of the SEBI Merchant Bankers Regulations and Regulation 23(3) of the SEBI ICDR Regulations, SBICAPS would be involved only in the marketing of the Offer. SBICAPS has signed the due diligence certificate and has been disclosed as a BRLM.

AVAILABILITY OF THE RHP: Investors are advised to refer to the RHP read with the addendum to the RHP and the abridged prospectus dated July 10, 2026 and the ***"Risk Factors"*** beginning on page 24 of the RHP before applying in the Offer. A copy of the RHP will be made available on the website of SEBI at www.sebi.gov.in and is available on the websites of the BRLMs, Kotak Mahindra Capital Company Limited at https://investmentbank.kotak.com, Axis Capital Limited at www.axiscapital.co.in, BofA Securities India Limited at https://business.bofa.com/bofas-india, HSBC Securities and Capital Markets (India) Private Limited at www.business.hsbc.co.in, ICICI Securities Limited at www.icicisecurities.com, Jefferies India Private Limited at www.jefferies.com, JM Financial Limited at www.jmfl.com, Motilal Oswal Investment Advisors Limited at www.motilaloswal.com and SBI Capital Markets Limited at www.sbicaps.com and at the website of the Company, SBI Funds Management Limited at https://sbifunds.com/investor-relations and the websites of the Stock Exchanges, for BSE at www.bseindia.com and for NSE Limited at www.nseindia.com.

AVAILABILITY OF THE ABRIDGED PROSPECTUS: A copy of the Abridged Prospectus shall be available on the website of the Company, the BRLMs and the Registrar to the Offer at: https://sbifunds.com/investor-relations, https://investmentbank.kotak.com, www.axiscapital.co.in, https://business.bofa.com/bofas-india, www.business.hsbc.co.in, www.icicisecurities.com, www.jefferies.com, www.jmfl.com, www.motilaloswal.com, www.sbicaps.com and www.kfintech.com, respectively.

AVAILABILITY OF BID CUM APPLICATION FORM: Bid cum Application Form can be obtained from the Registered Office of the Company, SBI Capital Markets Limited, Tel: +91 22 6179 3000; **BRLMs:** Kotak Mahindra Capital Company Limited, Tel: +91 22 4336 0000, Axis Capital Limited, Tel: +91 22 4325 2183, BofA Securities India Limited, Tel: +91 22 6632 8000, HSBC Securities and Capital Markets (India) Private Limited, Tel: +91 22 6864 1289, ICICI Securities Limited, Tel: +91 22 6807 7100, Jefferies India Private Limited, Tel: +91 22 4356 6000, JM Financial Limited, Tel: +91 22 6630 3030, Motilal Oswal Investment Advisors Limited, Tel: +91 22 7193 4380 and SBI Capital Markets Limited, Tel: +91 22 4006 9807 and **Syndicate Members:** Investec Capital Services (India) Private Limited, Tel: +91 22 6849 7400, Kotak Securities Limited, Tel: +91 22 6218 5410, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Limited, Tel: +91 22 7193 4200 / +91 22 7193 4263, JM Financial Services Limited: Tel: + 91 22 6136 3400, SBICAP Securities Limited, Tel: +91 22 6943 2521, Registered Brokers, SCSBs, Designated RTA Locations and Designated CDP Locations for participating in the Offer. Bid cum Application Forms will also be available on the websites of the Stock Exchanges at www.bseindia.com and www.nseindia.com and at all the Designated Branches of SCSBs, the list of which is available on the websites of the Stock Exchanges and SEBI.

SUB-SYNDICATE MEMBERS: 5paisa Capital Ltd., Alankit Imaginations Ltd., Almondz Global Securities Ltd., Amrapali Capital & Finance Services Ltd., Anand Rathi Share & Stock Brokers Ltd., Anand Share Consultancy, ANS Pvt Ltd., Arihant Capital Markets Ltd., Asit C Mehta Investment Intermediates Ltd., Axis Securities Ltd., Centrum Broking Ltd., Centrum Wealth Management Ltd., Choice Equity Broking Private Ltd., Dalal & Broacha Stock Broking Private Ltd., DB(International) Stock Brokers Ltd., Eureka Stock & Share Broking Services Ltd., G Raj & Co. (Consultants) Ltd., HDFC Securities Ltd., IDBI Capital Markets & Securities Ltd., IIFL Capital Services Ltd., Innovate Securities Pvt Ltd., Jhaveri Securities, Jobanputra Fiscal Services Private Ltd., Kalpataru Multiplier Ltd., Kantilal Chhaganlal Securities Pvt. Ltd., Keynote Capitals Ltd., KJMC Capital Market Services Ltd., Lakshmishree Investment & Securities Pvt Ltd., LKP Securities Ltd., Marwadi Shares & Finance, Nirmal Bang Securities Pvt Ltd., Nuvama Wealth and Investment Ltd (Edelweiss Broking Ltd), Patel Wealth Advisors Pvt Ltd., Prabhudas Lilladher Pvt Ltd., Pravin Ratilal Share and Stock Brokers Ltd., RR Equity Brokers Pvt. Ltd., Sharekhan Ltd., SMC Global Securities Ltd., SS Corporate Securities Ltd., Tanna Financial Services, TradeBulls Securities (P) Ltd., Upstox Securities Private Ltd. and Yes Securities (India) Ltd.

ESCROW COLLECTION BANK: ICICI Bank Limited | **REFUND BANK:** Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited

PUBLIC OFFER ACCOUNT BANK(s): Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited and State Bank of India

SPONSOR BANK(s) : ICICI Bank Limited, Kotal Mahindra Bank Limited and State Bank of India

UPI: UPI Bidders can also Bid through UPI Mechanism.

All capitalised terms used herein and not specifically defined shall have the same meaning as ascribed to them in the RHP read with the Addendum.

For **SBI FUNDS MANAGEMENT LIMITED**
On behalf of the Board of Directors
Sd/-
Vinaya Datar
Chief Compliance Officer, Company Secretary and Head Legal

Place: Mumbai, Maharashtra
Date: July 13, 2026

SBI FUNDS MANAGEMENT LIMITED is proposing, subject to receipt of requisite approvals, market conditions and other considerations, to undertake an initial public offer of its Equity Shares and has filed a red herring prospectus dated July 8, 2026 read with the addendum to the red herring prospectus dated July 10, 2026 ("**RHP**") along with an abridged prospectus dated July 8, 2026, with the Registrar of Companies, Mumbai-I, Securities and Exchange Board of India ("**SEBI**"), BSE Limited ("**BSE**") and the National Stock Exchange of India ("**NSE**", together with "**BSE**", the "**Stock Exchanges**"). The RHP along with the abridged prospectus is made available on the website of SEBI at www.sebi.gov.in as well as on the website of the BRLMs i.e., Kotak Mahindra Capital Company Limited at https://investmentbank.kotak.com, Axis Capital Limited at www.axiscapital.co.in, BofA Securities India Limited at https://business.bofa.com/bofas-india, HSBC Securities and Capital Markets (India) Private Limited at www.business.hsbc.co.in, ICICI Securities Limited at www.icicisecurities.com, Jefferies India Private Limited at www.jefferies.com, JM Financial Limited at www.jmfl.com, Motilal Oswal Investment Advisors Limited at www.motilaloswal.com and SBI Capital Markets Limited at www.sbicaps.com, the website of the NSE at www.nseindia.com and the website of the BSE at www.bseindia.com and the website of the Company at https://sbifunds.com/investor-relations. Potential investors should note that investment in equity shares involves a high degree of risk. For details, potential investors should refer to the RHP (read with the addendum to the RHP and the abridged prospectus) and the abridged prospectus which has been filed with the Registrar of Companies, Mumbai-I, including the section titled ***"Risk Factors"***. Potential investors should not rely on the DRHP for making any investment decision.

The Equity Shares have not been and will not be registered under the U.S. Securities Act or any state securities laws in the United States, and may not be offered or sold within the United States or to, or for the account or benefit of, U.S. Persons, except pursuant to an exemption from, or in a transaction not subject to, the registration requirements of the U.S. Securities Act and applicable state securities laws in the United States. The Company has not registered and does not intend to register under the U.S. Investment Company Act in reliance on Section 3(c)(7) of the U.S. Investment Company Act, and investors will not be entitled to the benefits of the U.S. Investment Company Act. Accordingly, the Equity Shares are only being offered and sold (i) to persons in the United States or to or for the account or benefit of, U.S. Persons, in each case to investors that are both "qualified institutional buyers" (as defined in Rule 144A under the U.S. Securities Act and referred to in the Red Herring Prospectus as "U.S. QIBs" and, for the avoidance of doubt, the term U.S. QIBs does not refer to a category of institutional investor defined under applicable Indian regulations and referred to in the Red Herring Prospectus as "QIBs") and "qualified purchasers" (as defined under the U.S. Investment Company Act and referred to in the Red Herring Prospectus as "QPs") in transactions exempt from or not subject to the registration requirements of the U.S. Securities Act and in reliance on Section 3(c)(7) of the U.S. Investment Company Act; or (ii) outside the United States to investors that are not U.S. Persons nor persons acquiring for the account or benefit of U.S. Persons in "offshore transactions" as defined in, and in reliance on, Regulation S under the U.S. Securities Act and the applicable laws of the jurisdiction where those offers and sales occur.

CONCEPT

Investigators probe fire at a music bar in Bangkok that killed 27 people

Over 70 injured, 25 critical; people were trapped in toilets

Reuters
Bangkok, July 13

A HUGE fire tore through a music bar in Bangkok overnight, killing at least 27 people and leaving 25 hospitalized in critical condition on Monday as investigations began into the Thai capital's deadliest blaze in 17 years.

Bangkok city officials said the fire at the Rong Beer Na Ladprao bar in a northern part of the Thai capital broke out shortly before midnight Sunday, and it took about half an hour for firefighters to bring it under control. The bar, which in Thai calls itself a brewery or beer hall, featured live music and claimed to accommodate as many as 600 customers. It was not clear how many were there on Sunday night.

According to Bangkok's Erawan emergency services center, the number of injured was 73, with 25 in critical condition. The Bangkok city government on Monday evening said there were 28 dead, one more than Erawan's tally. Bangkok Governor Chadchart Sittipunt said most of the deaths were caused by smoke inhalation.

The site had been cordoned off by daybreak Monday as dozens of Thai forensic officers combed for clues about what caused the fire.

The scale of the devastation inside was visible through the shattered windows, with burned-out tables still holding empty beer bottles.

Thai national police chief Kittharath Punpetch said most of the dead were found trapped in windowless bathrooms near one of the rear exits of the bar, where they may have sheltered to escape the flames in the hall.

He said the exit had not been used, and people may have been obstructed from reaching it by a table set up in the hall to sell candy, or because it was too dark to find it.

Access to another exit near the kitchen might also have been narrowed by shelving units and lockers, said Kittharath, who visited the scene Monday morning. There were signs that at least some of the exit doors might have been locked shut, he added.

Investigators are focusing on the ceiling above the performance stage, where they found materials that may have been used as decorative elements, he said. Police will examine whether flammable materials were used in the interior and how electrical wiring was installed across the ceiling.


A screen grab taken from a social media video released on Monday shows a person running for safety as flames engulf the Rong Beer Na Ladprao music bar in Bangkok. REUTERS

'There was a boom... there was no way to get out at all'

Bangkok: A survivor of the fire at a Bangkok bar that killed at least 27 people on Sunday night described escaping the blaze by seconds after she stepped out for a smoke. "There was a boom – a very fast boom ... There was no way to get out at all," 41-year-old Usa Tadsree told reporters, adding her two friends died when the fire ripped through the bar at around midnight.

She described sitting on the street as rescue workers brought out the body of a friend with whom she had been happily drinking and listening to music moments before, her face covered by a white cloth.

"I lost my mind," she said. "It looked like she was asleep."

Among the crowds at the Bangkok bar on Sunday were musicians, a taxi driver, and young people who had come from outside the city seeking work. By Monday morning, victims' friends and relatives had gathered at the Institute of Forensic Medicine, where bodies were brought for identification.

"If anyone has found my son at any hospital, please inform me," Jansuda Tanla, 41, said through tears, describing her son by his tattoo. Her son Din, 27, a singer in a Thai pop rock band, had been performing at the bar when the fire broke out, she said.

"He couldn't finish his vocational school so he took up singing," she said. "I told him he should give it a go. I was in debt ... and he was able to pay it off for me." REUTERS

Houthis accuse Saudi Arabia of striking Sanaa airport, threaten strong retaliation

Reuters
July 13

THE IRAN-aligned Houthi movement that controls northern Yemen accused Saudi Arabia on Monday of launching airstrikes against the international airport in Sanaa, and vowed to retaliate.

Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree called the attacks "blatant aggression" and said they had ended a period of de-escalation in the long-running conflict. He said Saudi Arabia would bear the consequences and that the attack would not go unanswered.

The Saudi government's communication office did not respond to the accusations. Earlier on Monday, the defence ministry of Yemen's internationally recognised government said its armed forces had targeted the runway at Sanaa International Airport to prevent an Iranian plane from landing.

A spokesman for Yemen's armed forces said the aircraft landed safely at Hodeidah airport, a Houthi-controlled facility. The government, which operates from the southern port of Aden, has the backing of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states.


Smoke rises after an explosion at the Sanaa International Airport compound after Saudi airstrikes, in Yemen, on Monday. AP

UNDER LAW, VANCE WOULD GET ELEVATED, TAKE FINAL CALL

Trump for standing order to bomb Iran if it assassinates him

Associated Press
Washington, July 13

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump is suggesting he has left standing orders for the US military to destroy Iran " at levels they've never seen before " if Tehran follows through on its long-standing threats to kill him.

But the US government has no way to create an automatic, preauthorized "dead man's switch" that would prompt immediate retaliation.

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

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

"The US has, for a whole variety of reasons, never utilized a technical 'dead man's switch,'" said Garrett M. Graff, author of "Raven Rock: The Story of the US Government's Secret Plan to Save Itself -- While the Rest of Us Die."

The United States does have extensive contingency plans for continuity of government in the event of a nuclear attack or other major catastrophe that wipes out most or all of Washington. But those plans also do not allow for immediately launching retaliatory strikes upon the death of a president, even if that president had demanded that the military be ready to do so.

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

A mourner carries a placard reading 'We Will Kill Trump' during the funeral procession of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Tehran. FILE

UK says a Tehran-backed group behind attacks on Jewish community, bans IRGC

London: A series of arson and vandalism attacks on Jewish sites in Britain were work of a proxy group backed by Iran, the UK government said Monday.

The government said it is banning the Islamic Movement of the Companions of the Right, or IMCR, also known as Harakat Ashab al-Yamin al-Islamia.

It also banned Iran's powerful paramilitary Revolutionary Guard as a threat to national security. Committing sabotage on behalf of the group will be punishable by up to life imprisonment after Parliament approves the legislation, which the government expects to take place by the end of the week.

Security Minister Angela Eagle said in a statement that the IMCR has claimed seven attacks in the UK.

The group had said online that it was responsible for a string of arson attacks on Jewish sites in London in recent months, including fires at synagogues and Jewish charity ambulances, as well as a Persian-language media organization critical of Iran's government. AP

Hasina to face prison if back in Bangladesh, says minister

Reuters
Dhaka, July 13

OUSTED BANGLADESHI Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will be jailed if she returns from self-imposed exile in India, a minister said on Monday, days after Hasina told *Reuters* she planned to go back in December and surrender to a court.

Hasina faces a death sentence in Bangladesh and her party is banned following a popular uprising against her long rule in 2024 that the United Nations said killed 1,400 people.

"Sheikh Hasina is a convicted criminal. If she surrenders, action will be taken against her as per laws of Bangladesh," said Shama Obaed Islam, Bangladesh's state minister for foreign affairs. "She will have to go to jail and further proceedings will follow as per the provisions of the law," he added.

The country's war crimes court sentenced Hasina in November to death in absentia for ordering a deadly crackdown on a student-led uprising. She has denied the charges from exile.

Hasina, in her first interview during her exile, told *Reuters* last week she intended to return voluntarily.

Self-immolation of 25-year-old sparks anger against Balen govt, protests planned in Nepal

Yubaraj Ghimire
Kathmandu, July 13

GANESH NEPALI'S mortal remains were on Monday consigned to flames at Aryaghat on the bank of the Bagmati River, two days after he succumbed to injuries that he inflicted upon himself, The incident has brought anti-Balen Shah groups together, pushing the Prime Minister into the defensive.

The incident triggered multiple protests against the many alleged "lapses" committed by the government in its 103-day tenure.


Nepal PM Balendra Shah. FILE

Majjid Ansari, a law student and Gen Z activist who ultimately paved the way for Balen's rise to power with Rastriya Swatantra Party sweeping the March 5 polls, is among the many arrested and assaulted by the police during the past two days.

Ansari, 26, currently under treatment at the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital, said he has not been given any reason for his detention.

He also appealed to all human right groups to make the government answerable for his assault and arrest when he had gone to a 'holding centre' in Kirtipur where those displaced after the April 26 demolition had been kept temporarily.

They were being asked to vacate the facility without another alternative location. Incidentally, entry to two media offices, Kantipur and Himalaya TV, were blocked for some time.

The protestors demanded the new PM be more respectful towards the poor. Sympathisers of Ganesh Nepali and victims of the April demolition drive had joined the protest in front of Singha Durbar, which houses the Prime Minister's Office. They had assembled in big numbers but their plan for a much bigger rally on Monday did not take place because of the rain.

US judge voids Trump settlement with IRS, says it was 'improper'

Agencies
Washington, July 13

A US judge on Monday voided President Donald Trump's settlement with the IRS that gave him and his companies sweeping tax protections and initially set up a nearly $1.8 billion government fund to pay victims of so-called government weaponisation that was later abandoned.

Terming it "improper purpose", US District Judge Kathleen Williams found Trump and the IRS, which he oversees, were not truly adverse to each other as is required in civil lawsuits under the US Constitution.

Williams referred a Trump lawyer in the case and senior Justice Department officials who signed off on the settlement to state bar authorities to determine if their actions violated legal ethics rules.

"The nature of the suit itself and conduct of the parties and Alan Garrett ... make plain that this was an attempt to use the Court to provide some legitimacy to an agreement to confer immunity to people... affiliated with the President and to earmark billions... from American taxpayers to redress grievances not defined in the law," Williams wrote.

Sam Neill, known for *Jurassic Park* role, dies at 78

Associated Press
Wellington, July 13

SAM NEILL, a smoothly elegant and versatile actor whose career moved from art film to blockbuster as he dodged velociraptors in *Jurassic Park* and played Holly Hunter's husband in *The Piano*, has died. He was 78.

In 2023, Neill disclosed he had been diagnosed with angioimmunoblastic T-cell lymphoma, a rare type of non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Neill died on Monday in Sydney, according to a statement posted to the actor's social media page.

His death was "sudden and unexpected," the statement said, adding that he "remained cancer free" when he died. A cause of death wasn't specified.

"Sam was surrounded by family and passed with the dignity that has characterized his whole life," his family wrote.

Neill was one of a host of actors and directors who achieved international fame after an explosion of Australian films that began in the late 1970s, a list that includes Paul Hogan, Mel Gibson, Geoffrey Rush, Russell Crowe, Jane Campion, Peter Weir and Gillian Armstrong. His range was remarkable, playing opposite Helena Bonham Carter in the Alan Ayckbourn comedy *Sweet Revenge* to chopping off Hunter's finger in *The Piano* to poking his own eyes out in the sci-fi horror *Event Horizon*.


Sam Neill during the Toronto International Film Festival on September 6, 2019. FILE

Perhaps Neill achieved his highest level of fame in "Jurassic Park" playing paleontologist Alan Grant, who is summoned to an island off Costa Rica where a theme park has been built to house herds of cloned dinosaurs. He co-starred alongside Laura Dern, Jeff Goldblum and Richard Attenborough.

• BRIEFLY

SOUTH AFRICA

Police probing death of World Cup footballer Jayden Adams


South Africa's Jayden Adams during the 2026 football World Cup. AP

POLICE SAID Monday they are investigating the death of South Africa World Cup soccer player Jayden Adams, after his body was found this weekend at a property in the city of Cape Town. The 25-year-old Adams died two weeks after helping South Africa reach knockout stage of a World Cup for the first time. "Cape Town central police registered an inquest for probe following the discovery of the body of a 25-year-old male on Saturday," police said. AP

EUROPEAN UNION

EU chief seeks social media curbs for kids

THE EUROPEAN Union will move to limit young children's access to social media across 27-member bloc, European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said on Monday. Von der Leyen presented a paper from two experts recommending a tiered approach, with under-13s only allowed to use social media for limited periods under the supervision of parents, caregivers and teachers. REUTERS

NIGERIA

Eight killed as gunmen open fire after funeral

GUNMEN OPENED fire at people after a funeral in north-central Nigeria, killing eight, police said Monday. The attack occurred in the early hours of Sunday in the Otukpo-Nobi community of Benue state. Five others were wounded, state police spokesperson Udeme Edet said. It wasn't clear what triggered the attack. Amnesty International Nigeria said at least 10 people were killed. AP

Fast-moving wildfire rages near Paris, highways closed

Reuters
Paris, July 13

A WILDFIRE tore through a forest near Paris on Monday, forcing highway closures and mobilising water-bombing aircraft, while Spain's death toll from one of its deadliest wildfires rose to 13, as much of western Europe simmered in a string of heatwaves.

The region is enduring its third heatwave of the summer, with tinder-dry vegetation and high temperatures fuelling blazes from the Iberian Peninsula to France. Many scientists say climate change is making wildfires more frequent and difficult to combat.

France deployed hundreds of firefighters to tackle the fast-moving blaze which had broken out alongside a motorway near Fontainebleau, home to one of France's best-known royal palaces.

The death toll from last week's devastating wildfire in Spain's southern province of Almeria reached 13 after a 93-year-old British woman died from burns on Sunday, with 10 people still missing as of Monday, according to authorities.

Visiting Almeria on Monday, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez called to reinforce fire prevention in the country. But the impact of the summer scorchers could be more grim.

• THE SUGAR, CALLED ERYTHRULOSE, IS ALSO FOUND IN RASPBERRIES AND SELF-TANNERS; IT HIDES IN THE INTERSTELLAR MEDIUM

Sweet discovery: Astronomers find 'sugar' lurking in Space

Adithi Ramakrishnan
New York, July 13

THE SPACE between stars just got a little sweeter. Astronomers have detected a type of sugar in space that's also found in raspberries and self-tanners.

The sugar, called Erythrulose, lurks in what's called the interstellar medium: thin clouds of gas and dust littered between stars.

Sugar does more than sweeten tea and powder doughnuts. Different varieties fuel our cells and even make up DNA. Scientists are itching to know how sugars form because they're a key ingredient for life as we know it.

Using two dish-shaped radio telescopes in Spain, researchers collected data from a large gas cloud near the center of the Milky Way.

They identified the sugar in gas form by comparing telescope signals to samples in the lab. It's the latest kind of sugar detected in space — in a region crossed by NASA's twin Voyager, the farthest spacecraft to ever travel from Earth.

The results were published Monday in the journal 'Nature Astronomy'. Scientists have found interesting chemistry in our galaxy, including building blocks for genetic material and parts of the cell.

They spotted a cousin to table sugar near the center of the Milky Way about 25 years ago, and black grains from asteroid Bennu retrieved by NASA's Osiris-Rex spacecraft yielded other sugars, including a key DNA ingredient.


A radio telescope at the Yebes Observatory in Spain. AP

The latest sugar isn't essential for life, but can easily convert to a form that's thought to be crucial to kick-starting life on Earth. And it's one of the most complex sugars spotted so far, said astrophysicist Erika Hamden with the University of Arizona.

It's "a pristine example of the stuff that's just floating out in the galaxy," said Hamden, who had no role in the new research.

These interstellar investigations are all about understanding how life got started. Did faraway comets or space rocks deliver the essential ingredients to us? Or were the essential components already here that eventually gave rise to our solar system?

"The new sugar lends evidence to the latter theory. Researchers want to look for more sugars in space and learn about how they convert to different forms. Finding them in one spot means they're likely also hiding in distant corners of the galaxy along with other important bits," said study author Izaskun Jiménez-Serra, an astrophysicist at the Center for Astrobiology in Spain.

"The key ingredients for the origin of life could be present in other regions across the galaxy, opening the possibility for life to develop elsewhere in the universe," Jiménez-Serra said. AP

TUESDAY, JULY 14, 2026

The Indian EXPRESS

KOLKATA, LATE CITY, 20 PAGES

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SAYS U.S. WILL BLOCKADE IRAN IN STRAIT

US guardian of Hormuz, to charge ships 20% for safe passage: Trump

As US, Iran trade attacks, oil prices rise over 4 per cent

Elwely Elwelly, Tala Ramadan & Katharine Jackson
Dubai, Washington, July 13

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump said on Monday the United States was reinstating its blockade of Iranian shipping in the Gulf and would ensure the Strait of Hormuz stays open — for a fee — after the two sides exchanged more missile and drone attacks.

The latest hostilities followed an announcement by Iran at the weekend that it was closing the strait, and cast further doubt on the viability of an interim deal to halt the war and drove oil prices higher.

"The Hormuz Strait is open, and will remain open, with or without Iran. We are reinstating the Iranian blockade... All other countries will have fair and open use of the Strait," Trump said on Truth Social. "The USA will be, from this point forward, known as 'the guardian of the Hormuz Strait', but as such, and as a matter of fairness, will be reimbursed, at the rate of 20% on all cargo shipped, for any and all costs necessary to do the job of providing safety and security to this very volatile section of the world. The process and formation will begin immediately," he said.

Iran's top joint military

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Boys play in the waters of Strait of Hormuz as smoke rises from a blast off Bandar Abbas, Iran, Monday. AP

Commerce Secy: India, US framework deal ready, to be signed at right time

Says will provide pathway to address US tariffs under Section 301

Ravi Dutta Mishra
New Delhi, July 13

THE INDIA-US trade deal will provide a pathway to address the proposed US tariffs on India under the Section 301 trade probe and will aim to protect Indian exporters from additional tariffs after the signing of the deal, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said on Monday, adding that there is agreement on the framework deal and the signing will take place at the "right moment".

On June 9, government officials had said the India-US deal can be finalised only after

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal

PLEAS ASK FOR CBI PROBE, CAG AUDIT

Ram temple 'theft': SC steps in, seeks SIT status report

CJI-led bench issues notices to Centre, State, Trust

Ananthakrishnan G
New Delhi, July 13

THE SUPREME Court on Monday sought a status report from the Special Investigation Team (SIT) constituted by the Uttar Pradesh government to probe the alleged misappropriation of donations at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

A three-judge bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant also issued notices to the Centre, the Uttar Pradesh government and the Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust.

The bench, which included Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana, was hearing separate petitions seeking a CBI probe into the alleged misappropriation of donations, an audit of the Trust's finances by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), and directions to safeguard the interests of devotees and donors.

"Since it's averred in the petition(s) that FIR has already been registered and SIT has been constituted to investigate the matter, we direct the SIT constituted by the state of Uttar Pradesh to submit a status report. Post this matter for further consideration next Monday. The status report shall also give the particulars of the composition of the SIT," the bench said.

The SIT, set up by the Uttar Pradesh government on June 13, comprises Lucknow Divisional Commissioner

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Trust member Dinendra Das inspects the donation room at the Ram temple, Monday. ANI

Happening today

● **INDIA'S LARGEST GLOBAL** textile event, Bharat Tex 2026, begins at Bharat Mandapam. The four-day event will showcase India's growing global leadership in textiles, fashion, sustainability, technology, innovation, investment and international trade.

● **COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY** Minister Piyush Goyal will be in Belgium to hold CEO-level meetings to discuss partnerships in a range of sectors — from aerospace, defence to cybersecurity and sustainable manufacturing.

TRACK THESE AND MORE ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Rs 5 lakh to every Rath Yatra organiser, rose petal shower on jal jatris in Bengal, courtesy govt

Ravik Bhattacharya
Kolkata, July 13

THE BJP government in West Bengal on Monday announced a slew of measures for the upcoming Rath Yatra festival, including a grant of Rs 5 lakh each to Rath Yatra committees in the state.

The government has also decided to set up seva kendras (service centres) in 75 Rath Yatra melas (fairs) across the state.

This is the first time that the BJP-led government has announced sops for religious festivals after coming to power in May this year.

"We have to hold on and

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari addresses a presser in Kolkata, Monday. PTI

SC sets aside foreigner tag for 27 in Assam: 'Follow fair process'

Bench says no coercive action until Tribunals decide afresh on citizenship

Apurva Vishwanath
New Delhi, July 13

UNDERLINING THAT citizenship determinations must be carried out through a "fair, lawful and reasonable process," the Supreme Court on Monday set aside a batch of 27 judgments of the Gauhati High Court that upheld ex-parte orders of Foreigners Tribunals declaring the individuals in these cases to be foreigners.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta remanded all 27 cases to the relevant Foreigners Tribunals for fresh adjudication, noting that the question of citizenship carries significant constitutional weight. "Citizenship and foreigner status occupy a field of high constitutional and legal significance," the court observed.

The Foreigners Act 1946 prescribes a special burden of proof on individuals to prove

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

E. EXPLAINED

Test of powers

The case tests the limits of Foreigners Tribunals' powers to render crucial decisions on citizenship without the participation of the accused — and whether constitutional courts can refuse to assess documentary evidence due to procedural delays.

POLITICS PAGE 6

IN 2 YEARS, 193 SENT FROM ASSAM TO BANGLADESH

Search for Trust CEO: Ram devotee, 20 years' leadership experience

Maulshree Seth
Lucknow, July 13

CANDIDATES AGED 50 to 70, "practising Hindu" with "devotion to Lord Ram" — these are among the key qualifications the Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust has laid down in a notification issued Monday as it formally launched the search for the Ram temple's first Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in the wake of the alleged donation theft.

The move marks the biggest administrative overhaul of the body that runs the Ayodhya temple since it was constituted in 2020. Unlike the existing arrangement, where trustees directly supervised several operational functions, the CEO is expected to oversee day-to-day administration, leaving the

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

'Platform has no political colour... PM shouldn't be rigid'

EXPRESS interview

PTI

SONAM WANGCHUK
ACTIVIST

Saurabh Dwivedi
New Delhi, July 13

ACTIVIST SONAM Wangchuk entered the 16th day of his hunger strike at Jantar Mantar on Monday, as part of the protest organised by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) seeking Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation over the leak of NEET-UG questions.

In an interview to *Indian Express Hindi*, Wangchuk urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to listen to the "voice of the people", and urged "leaders from all parties" to join the protest. Excerpts:

The opposition to your protest suggests the basic issue is a comprehensive reform of the exam system. Will the resignation of an individual resolve this?

Definitely not, but it will pave the way for accountability. Until the government institutes accountability, this kind of impunity and arbitrary decision-making will continue. This is not just an indictment of the education system, but of the entire Indian society. What sort of doctor would you get if the

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Business as Usual
By EP UNNY

WEST BENGAL P 4

WHY A MOSQUE INSIDE AIRPORT HAS STIRRED ROW

No matter who wins, France vs Spain a dive into football's future

Sandip G
New York, July 13

BEHIND FRANCE'S relentless attack is a 24-year-old conductor with dreadlocks and instincts that seem borrowed from another era. Behind Spain's impenetrable defence is a 19-year-old whose composure belongs to a man twice his age. The France versus Spain semifinal in Dallas is many things at once: a tactical chess match, a collision of European giants, a game that deserved to be a final. Above all, it is a window into football's future.

Some of those players are already superstars. Kylian Mbappe is only 26, arguably not yet at his peak. But it is the names beyond Mbappe that hum with possibility, players who could fill the vast space Messi and Ronaldo, Modric and De Bruyne, will eventually leave behind.

Michael Olise is the fulcrum of France's machine. Before this World Cup, he was known chiefly to European football devotees. Now he is unmissable, a playmaker of equal

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Lamine Yamal, 19, of Spain; (right) France's Michael Olise, 24, with Kylian Mbappe, 26. AP

● CAPITAL'S UNASSUMING BUILDINGS THAT SERVED AS NATION'S BACK OFFICES BEING RAZED UNDER CENTRAL VISTA PROJECT

No more than 9 storeys, nothing lavish: Backstory of buildings making way for new central secretariat

Damini Nath
New Delhi, July 13

EXPRESS special

NIRMAN BHAWAN was the first to go down in May, after which the hammer came down on Udyog Bhawan; Shastri Bhawan and Krishi Bhawan will be the next to be demolished. With that, the Capital's unassuming Nehruvian-era buildings, which served as the nation's back offices, housing several key Central ministries and thousands of staff, will make way for a new central secretariat, Kartavya Bhawan.

Government records documenting their construction, along with publications from the time, tell the story of how a newly Independent nation sought to catch up with the demands of an expanding governance machinery despite limited resources.

In 1947, the Union government primarily worked out of the North Block and South Block Secretariat buildings that were designed by Herbert Baker and Edwin Lutyens. Behind these blocks were World War II-era hutments that accommodated more government officials, according to the records.

The task of expanding the Secretariat fell on the Central Public Works Department (CPWD), then a department under the Ministry of Works,

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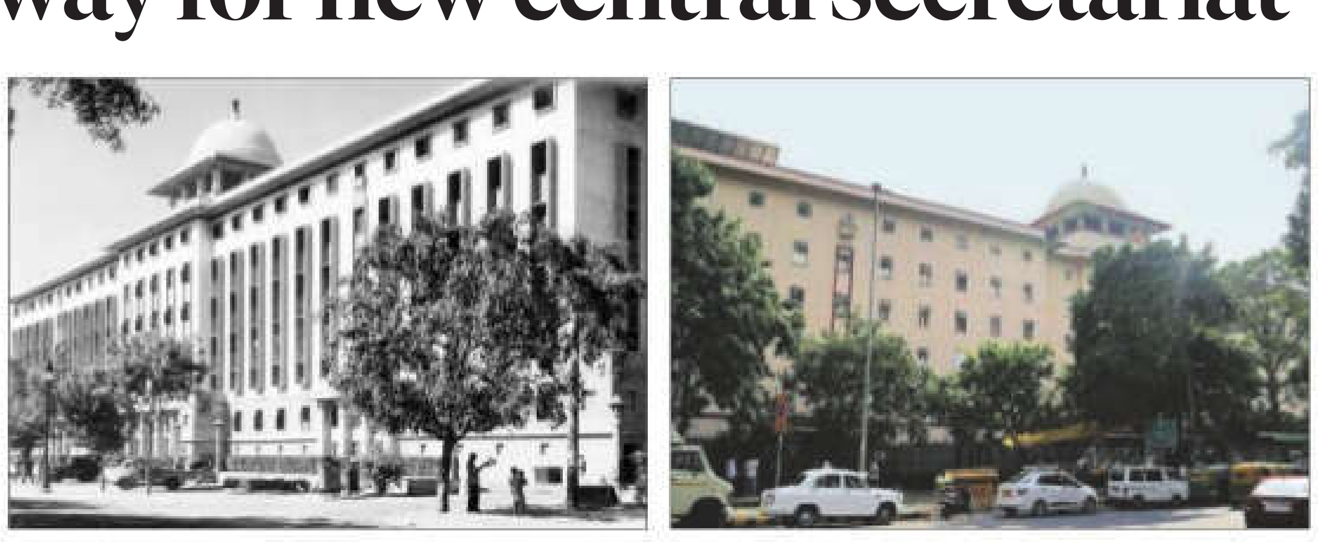


The old Udyog Bhawan in 1962; (right) Krishi Bhawan is set to be demolished soon. EXPRESS ARCHIVE

Badrinath temple official arrested over donations 'misappropriation'

Aiswarya Raj
Dehradun, July 13

AN OFFICIAL in the office of the chairman of the Badrinath-Kedarnath Temple Committee has been arrested in Uttarakhand for allegedly misappropriating temple donations, police said Monday.

According to Chamoli Police, the official was accused of misappropriating 'thali bhent' (plate offerings) at Badrinath Dham. On July 8, Yudhveer Pushpwan, officer-in-charge of the Badrinath Temple, on behalf of the BKTC, submitted a written complaint at Badrinath Police Station. The complaint stated that after information was received regarding financial irregularities during the counting of 'thali bhent' donations on July 2, the chairman of the temple committee ordered a departmental inquiry.

An SIT arrested Pramod Nautiyal from his residence in Dehradun late Sunday. He was produced in court. "The investigation further found that, at different times, the accused allegedly removed Rs 500 currency notes, packets containing gold and silver coins, a Shaligram stone, and a packet of saffron from the counting room and illegally took them into his possession. Statements of the complainant and other relevant witnesses have been recorded. Based on the CCTV footage and other documentary evidence, the police said they had gathered sufficient evidence against the accused," the Chamoli police said in a statement.

According to the police, preliminary inquiry found prima facie evidence that Nautiyal, an employee of the temple committee, had illegally taken temple cash and other offerings from the donation counting room for his personal benefit. Based on the complaint, an FIR was registered at Badrinath Police Station for theft by clerk or servant and aggravated criminal breach of trust of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita.

Superintendent of Police Surjeet Singh Panwar said that an SIT was constituted under the supervision of DSP. During the investigation, the SIT inspected the scene, recorded statements of the complainant and other witnesses, and examined the CCTV footage from the donation counting room recorded on July 2. "The footage allegedly showed accused Pramod Nautiyal repeatedly taking cash and other offerings out of the counting room by concealing them beneath his mobile phone and in his pockets," the police have said.

The Badrinath-Kedarnath Temple Committee (BKTC) had earlier taken disciplinary action by suspending Nautiyal. According to the order issued by the committee, a show-cause notice was served to Nautiyal on July 3, after allegations of irregularities in the discharge of his official duties came to light.

On July 10, Nautiyal had moved the Uttarakhand High Court after the FIR seeking relief in the matter. The high court had asked the state counsel to get instructions and listed it on July 16.

CEO

Trust to focus on policy decisions.

As per the notification, those wishing to apply must have at least 20 years of executive leadership experience in a large organisation, government department, institution or company.

Applicants must have handled multiple functions, including administration, finance, human resources, public relations, information technology, security and legal affairs. Those with experience in managing large religious institutions will be given preference.

In a key eligibility condition, the Trust has said the applicant must be a "practising Hindu" with "devotion to Lord Ram" and should be proficient in both Hindi and English.

The Trust has uploaded the detailed eligibility criteria on its official website and appointed a secretary to assist the panel during the selection process. Applications must be submitted by 4 pm on July 18 through the email address specified in the notification.

A three-member selection committee, constituted to oversee the appointment, had met on Monday and decided to invite applications through email.

The committee comprises retired Supreme Court judge Justice Pramod Kohli, retired Lieutenant General Vishnukant Chaturvedi, and retired nuclear scientist and former chairperson of the Shri Saibaba Sansthan Trust in Shirdi Suresh Haware.

Speaking to *The Indian Express* over the phone last week from Srinagar, as he participated in the ongoing Amarnath Yatra, Haware had called his new assignment a management challenge "bigger than Tirupati, Shirdi or even many of the country's largest business organisations".

"The challenge before us is very big because it is a question of public trust. Once trust is broken, it takes years to rebuild. Therefore, the system we create has to be transparent," he said, adding that he believes the task starts with finding the right person. And "the primary requirement is *Ram ke prati shraddha ka bhav* (devotion to Lord Ram)".

On why Ayodhya requires a different model of administration, he had said: "It is a symbol of faith and identity… This is perhaps the biggest temple institution in the country… That makes the responsibility much greater."

According to the annexure issued by the Trust about the responsibilities, the CEO will function as the highest executive authority of the organisation and report to the Trust's General Secretary. As per the notification, the CEO will be appointed for an initial three-year term, extendable based on performance, and will be headquartered in Ayodhya. The salary and other service conditions will be finalised through mutual discussions.

Two UP cops booked for murder after 'custodial' death of Dalit man

Manish Sahu
Lucknow, July 13

A DALIT labourer, 44, died after police in UP's Ballia allegedly picked him up to locate his son, with his family alleging he was harassed and assaulted. A murder case has been registered against two policemen, a village head and three others. The cops have been suspended, even as police deny custodial assault.

The case has sparked protests by the victim's family, who alleged that police assaulted Kamji Gond to force him to reveal the whereabouts of his son, Vishal Gond, 22, an accused in an assault case. Police rejected the allegations, saying that Kamji developed breathing difficulties and was released into the care of a local resident.

Ballia Police said a murder case was registered against six people, including Sub-Inspector Sachin Saroj, Constable Ankit Singh and village head Ashutosh Shankar Singh at Revati police station. Arrests have not been made. Two of the accused are members of the Dalit community.

SP Ballia, Omvir Singh, said the sub-inspector and constable who were involved in the questioning have been suspended, while the SHO of Revati police station, Raj Kishore Singh, has been removed from his post pending further inquiry.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Vishal said the sequence of events began on July 7, when he got into an argument with a local shopkeeper, Suraj Kannaujia, after visiting his shop near Khedan Chauraha in Gaighat village to buy chicken.

[FROM PAGE 1 | FULL REPORTS ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM]

'Guardian of Hormuz'

command said the US had no role in determining the future of the vital shipping route and would not be allowed to intervene in the management of the strait. The UN's shipping agency pushed back against Trump's proposal, saying it opposes any fees for straits used in international navigation and stressing that there is no legal basis for introducing mandatory tolls on strait transits. Trump has previously suggested the US could charge tolls on shipping through the strait, but it has so far not done so and it was unclear if it would follow through on Trump's declaration this time.

Before the conflict began in February, around a fifth of the world's oil and gas traffic passed through Hormuz daily, delivering more than 15 million barrels per day of fuel to global markets worth at least $1.2 billion. If the US were to impose a 20% fee, it could generate around $250 million a day.

Iran has sought to establish a permanent fee and permit system of its own for vessels using the strait.

Thousands of people have been killed in the war, mainly in Iran and Lebanon.

The US Central Command said on Monday its forces struck a submarine and ship maintenance facility in Iran on Sunday using one-way attack drones. Iran's official news agency IRNA cited a local official on Monday as saying the US had attacked military sites including Qeshm, Bandar Abbas and Abadan in southern and southwestern Iran. It confirmed the deaths of two people in the Abadan attack. Iran's Revolutionary Guards said on Monday they had targeted US military facilities in Bahrain and Kuwait, destroyed radar systems in Oman and hit fuel tanks and ammunition depots at Prince Hassan Air Base in Jordan in response to US strikes.

Bahrain said its air defence systems had intercepted several Iranian missile and drone attacks early on Monday. The latest exchanges mark an escalation in both the pace and geographic reach of attacks over the past week, throwing into question an interim US-Iranian agreement signed last month to reopen the strait and halt hostilities.

Trump has said he considers the ceasefire over, while leaving the door open to further talks. "We had a deal. It was a done deal, and then they broke it. They always break it. We've had 10 deals with these people, and so we're just going to hit them very hard," he said in a phone interview with *Fox News* on Monday.

Iran's top negotiator, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, struck a similarly forceful tone on X on Sunday: "The era of one-sided deals is over. We told you: keep your word or pay the price."

Control of the Strait of Hormuz has become one of the main battlegrounds of the conflict. Iran's effective blockade of the strait has pushed up energy prices, and Tehran said on Monday it continued to control the channel. Brent crude jumped by more than 4% on Monday on Trump's latest comments and on fears of further disruption in the Strait of Hormuz, although prices remained below peaks reached earlier in the conflict.

REUTERS

Framework deal

the US Section 301 probe is completed. The US has already proposed a 12.5% tariff on India following a Section 301 investigation into forced labour concerns. At a public hearing last week, India sought the review of proposed US tariffs, citing inconsistencies in its Section 301 investigation. The United States Trade Representative (USTR) is also investigating India, among other countries, for excess capacity under which the US is expected to propose additional tariffs.

"As of now, there are two sets of investigations that are going on. One is at an advanced stage. India has joined consultation, given its submissions. Their draft investigation report was out last month, and we expect the final investigation to be out at some point this month. In the other investigation, the draft report is still not out. We understand that once the draft report comes, it will take 4-6 weeks minimum, maybe more, to complete the outcome," Agrawal said at a press briefing here Monday.

"As far as the trade deal is concerned, whenever we are signing, all aspects of the trade relations negotiations will get addressed. Any trade deal will address all aspects of the relationship and provide a pathway for all these aspects. The pathway can be done before and after. Trade deals are about comparative advantage, which is an integral part of the deal which we have finalised. Both sides understand it. But whenever you do a trade deal, it should not happen that new tariffs are coming in. Both sides will find an innovative way to address all aspects of the trade deal," Agrawal said.

Meanwhile, senior government officials told *The Indian Express* that there were points of contention in the India-US negotiations last month. A government official, who did not want to be named, said the US is not willing to soften its demand and that things are not "hunky-dory" with Washington. Another official said that India will not open its market for US agricultural products, indicating continued differences over market access for agricultural products.

However, in a social media post on Monday, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said India and the US are committed to a "balanced" agreement. "I had fantastic meetings with USTR Jamieson Greer when he visited Delhi in June. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to an agreement that is balanced, commercially meaningful, and delivers tangible benefits for businesses, farmers, workers and consumers in both countries. Our teams remain fully engaged in achieving this objective," Goyal said.

World Cup

parts intuition and intelligence, running the French show with his passing, movement and energy. In full flight, he is a joy to watch, all snake-hipped pirouettes and delectable touches, a man who seems to have more time on the ball than physics should allow. He uses that time to bend games to his will.

His path here was not straightforward. His father, Vincent, grew up playing cricket in Nigeria before migrating to London and building a life in the corporate world. Football was never the plan. It became young Michael's fixation anyway, and Vincent would joke that it came entirely from his mother's side. She is French-Algerian, which made Olise eligible to represent four nations. He chose France because his idols were French, Zinedine Zidane above all. The admiration has since come full circle. "People see the dribbling, the tricks and the flair," Zidane said on Canal Plus, "but what impresses me most is his understanding of the game. He knows exactly when to slow it down, when to accelerate, and when to deliver the final pass."

The players around Olise only deepen the alarm for France's rivals. Desire Doue, operating to Olise's left, has explosive pace, immaculate control and the kind of versatility that leaves managers debating where best to deploy him. Bradley Barcola, only 23, offers similar electricity from the other flank. Didier Deschamps has the happiest headache of all managers, because the French cupboard is overflowing. So flush is it that Rayan Cherki, a 22-year-old of exceptional talent, has played just 61 minutes, and 20-year-old Warren Zaire-Emery had to wait until the dying moments of the Morocco quarterfinal to make his World Cup debut. Midfielder Manu Kone and centre-back Jean-Clair Todibo, two of the tournament's most assured performers, are both 25. "They could be a dynastic team," Thierry Henry has said. It is hard to argue.

Spain offer a parallel vision. Lamine Yamal turned 19 recently and is already spoken of as the player who will carry Messi's torch. He has more club goals and assists than either Messi or Ronaldo had at his age, and is the most purely entertaining player at this tournament. His left foot bends to his imagination.

On the flanks, Nico Williams and Alex Baena, both 24, provide different but complementary threats. Williams, still working his way back from injury and limited to cameos, can be as devastating as Yamal on his day. Baena is less flashy but craftier, with a hammer for a right foot that opponents underestimate at their cost.

If Yamal is Spain's figurehead, then Pedri and Pau Cubarsi form the nucleus. Pedri, 23, is the metronome. Even in the tightest spaces he finds passing lanes, rarely loses the ball, and has the rare gift of making time seem to expand around him. Xavi, who coached him at Barcelona, once said: "Pedri has no ceiling." His football at its best is improvised art, a throwback to Spain's tiki-taka peak. So deep is the Spanish midfield that 21-year-old Gavi, world-class in his own right, has barely featured.

And then there is Cubarsi, who anchors a defence broken only once in this tournament. At 19, he plays with the authority of a seasoned veteran. Only Paolo Maldini had more clean sheets in a World Cup at the same age. "It doesn't seem like he's 19," goalkeeper Unai Simon said. "The way he takes on responsibility is enviable." Xavi put it more simply: "When I watch him, my heart rate doesn't change."

Dallas cannot come soon enough.

Assam

that they are not foreigners. In this batch of cases, the Tribunals had initiated action and passed decrees without hearing the individuals.

While the Supreme Court did not examine the legislation's validity, it said that burden of proof cannot dilute due process. "The statutory burden under Section 9 of the 1946 Act remains fully applicable. The remand being directed by this Court is not intended to dilute that burden, nor is it intended to confer any equity in favour of a person who is unable to establish his or her claim in accordance with law. It is only to ensure that the serious consequence of being declared a foreigner follows from an adjudication which satisfies the requirements of the 1946 Act, the 1964 Order, and the constitutional mandate of fairness," the ruling stated.

For example, in one case, the conflict originated from an order issued by the Foreigners Tribunal on May 9, 1997, by the Illegal Migrant (D) Tribunal, which declared Sabitri Dey and her husband, Sambhu Dey, to be illegal migrants because they failed to appear in court after being summoned. The petitioners argued that they were unaware of the proceedings and that the order was based on hearsay evidence from an Enquiry Officer rather than substantive proof. They claimed that they learnt of the 1997 tribunal order in 2019 and moved the Gauhati High Court. Before the High Court, they argued that failure to provide legal aid or appoint an amicus curiae constitutes a breach of Article 21 related to the right to a fair and just procedure. The Gauhati High Court dismissed their initial appeal in 2020, citing "utter negligence" because they waited 23 years to challenge the order.

Backstory of buildings

Housing and Supply. It was during the tenure of Shridhar Krishna Joglekar, only the second Indian to hold the post after G B Deolikar, as the CPWD's chief architect from 1952 to 1968, that the four Bhawans were completed.

In their 2015 book, *India: Modern Architectures in History*, Peter Scriver and Amit Srivastava wrote that the senior CPWD architects were the most powerful players in modern planning and building in post-Independence India, but remained subordinate to the engineering hierarchy.

"Within the still-expansive territorial domain of post-Partition India, the CPWD remained responsible for producing and maintaining all buildings and infrastructure under the direct control of the central government. Still dominated by budget-minded engineers, however, such extensive power and potential to change tended to be mediated by the inertia of convention," they wrote.

The first building to come up was Krishi Bhawan, which houses the Ministry of Agriculture. *Indian Builder*, a magazine published at the time, noted the significance of the project in its March 1957 edition. A copy of the magazine, shared by photographer Ram Rahman, whose father, Habib Rahman, was the chief architect of the CPWD in the 1970s, showed photographs of the completed "multi-storeyed office buildings for the Government of India", along with advertisements by the various contractors who worked on the project.

The magazine noted that the foundation stone of Krishi Bhawan was laid on June 16, 1952, by Sardar Swaran Singh, who was then the minister in charge of the Works Ministry. The project was estimated to have cost Rs 10 crore.

Indian Builder further noted its economical design, restricted floor heights, and provision for future lifts. According to the magazine, the floor height had been restricted to 11 feet in the interest of economy. "This was the barest minimum permissible as the air conditioning ducts were to run along the ceilings of the corridors…" Though it was not possible to install all the lifts then, lift wells had been provided at various places, the magazine added. It also identified B S Godbole as the architect of the building and Joglekar as the chief architect.

The next building to come up was Udyog Bhawan, which housed the Ministry of Commerce until recently, among others. According to the CPWD's Central Vista project website, it was R I Gehlote who designed the building in 1957.

Soon after, another multi-storeyed Secretariat building was proposed at 1, Rajendra Prasad Road, triggering a wider debate over the expansion of the Central Secretariat. Files accessed from the National Archives show that the CPWD prepared the proposal in 1957, but the Cabinet approved it only in 1960. The delay was partly because the CPWD's design did not conform to the Town Planning Organisation's (TPO) recommendation for a 20-storey office tower in the open area around Vijay Chowk.

On April 11, 1960, at a meeting in the CPWD chief engineer's room, CPWD officials rested the idea of construction around Vijay Chowk. The chief architect, Joglekar, rejected the TPO's recommendation, arguing that it would violate Lutyens' vision.

"It was decided that functionally and aesthetically, no proposal to extend building activity beyond the existing boundaries into the Central Vista should be contemplated," the minutes of the meeting noted.

Eventually, at its December 22, 1960, meeting, the Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Nehru decided to keep the proposed buildings restricted to fewer storeys, with no construction around Vijay Chowk.

Cost was a primary concern. "Construction of office buildings of more than 6 storeys would involve prestressed concrete construction or steel frames, high-speed lifts and escalators, requiring foreign exchange, which Government can ill afford at present. Also, in view of the subsoil water in Delhi, it will be inadvisable to undertake the construction of buildings more than six storeys high," according to a Cabinet note prepared by Secretary T Sivasankar.

Another concern was the message that a 20-storey government building would send to the citizens of a newly independent country still grappling with widespread poverty. "Although the buildings so far put up by the Central PWD are only six-storeyed ones on which the maximum possible economy has been achieved and which are utility buildings designed to meet functional needs, there has been criticism in Parliament of extravagance in constructing large palatial and 'prestige' buildings. If skyscrapers, as proposed by the TPO, are built, it would be difficult to counter the criticism that money is being squandered on lavish construction when it ought to be conserved for urgent and productive uses," the Cabinet note said.

On December 22, 1960, the Cabinet approved the plan, largely accepting the CPWD's objections to the TPO's proposal.

SIT report

Vijay Vishwas Pant, Inspector General of Police (Lucknow Range) Kiran S and Special Secretary (Finance) Neel Ratan. The SIT submitted its preliminary report to the state government on June 23.

Appearing for the Centre and the state government, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said that a notice need not be issued to the Trust at this stage. "We will place it (SIT report) for Your Lordship's consideration in a sealed cover because an investigation is going on," Mehta said.

The bench turned down Mehta's request to defer the issuance of notice to the Trust.

The Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Teerth Kshetra was set up following the Supreme Court's November 2019 Ayodhya judgment. The Court had directed that the government formulate a scheme within three months for setting up the Trust and transferring the disputed land to it. Acting under the Acquisition of Certain Area at Ayodhya Act, 1993, the Centre constituted the Trust on February 5, 2020, and transferred the acquired land to it through a Gazette notification.

While one of the petitioners had also sought the SIT report, Mehta opposed the request.

"We will see later on. It's an ongoing investigation. You know the law well," the CJI said.

The petitioners also sought directions for preservation of records, including financial records, physical documents, digital ledgers, UPI transaction logs and bank statements, to prevent any tampering with evidence.

"Much water has flown since I filed this petition. SIT was constituted, and certain developments have occurred. So, at this stage, because some CCTV footage, DVR records are perishable in nature, they may be destroyed, damaged…," one of the petitioners said.

Wangchuk

exam paper is leaked? Such doctors would be attending to your children; engineers who passed by cheating would construct your buildings, which will eventually collapse, and lives will be lost.

More importantly, honesty holds no value in the country today. Everything operates on dishonesty; everything is up for sale — from exam papers to votes. How can any country progress like this? Forget becoming a 'developed' nation, how will we even be able to face this global village?

Today marks the 16th day of your hunger strike. Has the Narendra Modi government made any contact with you, directly or indirectly?

No. So, our attempt now is to make our voice even louder so that it can reach them. If it has not reached them, it is not just the fault of the government, it is also the fault of the people of this country who have not helped to amplify it to an extent that it can be perceived as a critical issue. Will you wait to raise your voice until you are alone with nobody beside you? If the people come out and raise their voices, the government will have no choice but to engage in a dialogue to resolve it. But we hope that the government is not so insensitive. Perhaps they will attempt to resolve the matter in a day or two.

Are the channels for dialogue open? If you are invited for talks, is it possible you may agree on the broader issue of long-term reforms, rather than just insisting on the resignation?

A resignation, or accountability, is merely the starting point. The door must then open to determine the right course of action. This issue must be debated during the Monsoon Session of Parliament. And to formulate those broader reforms, the government should rope in these young people or educationists like me.

Does it bother you that the support on social media is not reflecting on ground?

About 5,000-7,000 people turn up throughout the day. The numbers may not have exceeded our expectations, but they aren't so low as to cause concern. People should observe a one-day fast in solidarity. They must take some of this pain upon themselves to convey the gravity of the situation to the government.

People have pointed out that if the objective is the same, why are you on the stage while Left-affiliated students are protesting on the ground? Also, since Left student outfits… dominate the gathering here, some people are keeping their distance.

We have extended an invitation to BJP as well. I personally urge everyone to join me on the stage, but I was told that due to the sheer numbers, it wouldn't be feasible. I leave these logistical decisions to the organisers.

Are the organisers expecting Opposition leaders like Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav to join the protest?

I am very hopeful that leaders from all political parties will come. If they don't, it will only reflect their narrow-mindedness, and the public will eventually reject them. This platform has no political colour.

Did you have any apprehensions before associating yourself with the CJP?

I researched them and spoke with them. I don't believe they are doing this for personal gain. As for the future, everyone is free to enter politics if they choose to.

What would be your message to PM Modi?

It is in the long-term interest of the government to listen to the voice of the people. He should be sensitive, not rigid. A democracy is run through empathy and compassion, not through rigidity.

I have never met him personally.

Bengal

take forward our culture and traditions. There are so many Rath Yatras in Bengal that are hundreds of years old. West Bengal was not only a cultural hub but also a place of religious traditions," Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari said.

"Earlier, the state government used to send some traffic police to such Rath Yatras. But this time we will honour the Rath Yatra committees and help them preserve the culture and traditions. The state government will grant Rs 5 lakh each to 60 Rath Yatra committees in Bengal. The list of recipients will be updated next year," the CM said after a virtual meeting with district officials, police officers, and members of Ratha Yatra committees.

He asked the committees to use the grant to better maintain raths (chariots), especially the wooden ones, in need of repair.

The Adhikari government also made announcements keeping in view the holy month of Sravan. "This is the time for Sravan Melas, when jal jatris (kanwariyas) walk to temples. We have decided to set up seva kendras every five kilometers from Sheoraphuli to Tarakeshwar Dham. We have granted Rs 15 crore for the preservation and development of Tarakeshwar Dham. There will be tents, medical camps, and places to rest for the jal jatris. We will also shower rose petals on them… every Monday during the Sravan month," the chief minister said.

During her tenure, former chief minister Mamata Banerjee used to give an annual financial grant to over 40,000 Durga Puja committees. Along with this financial aid, she had announced a complete exemption from government taxes and fees, an 80 per cent waiver on electricity bills, and free fire brigade services for Durga Puja committees. Her initiatives were criticised by Opposition.

Govt hikes daily cooked diet allocation for hospital patients

The West Bengal government has nearly doubled the daily allocation for cooked diet provided to patients at government health facilities, raising it from Rs 56.64 to Rs 110 per admitted person per day with effect from August 1, officials said on Monday.

The Health and Family Welfare Department, in a notification, said the revised rate was approved following a review by a committee constituted in compliance with a Calcutta High Court order.

The panel reviewed the existing rate in June, taking into account the prevailing market prices of food items, it said.

Mohammad Lahek Ali

CPI(M) leader held for Baruipur mob violence

Tanusree Bose
Kolkata, July 13

POLICE ARRESTED CPI(M) leader Mohammad Lahek Ali Sunday night for allegedly inciting violence in the wake of the rape and murder of the 11-year-old girl in Baruipur, taking the number of arrests in the case to 34. He was produced in court on Monday which sent him to eight-day police custody. The police also named former Left MP Sujan Chakraborty in the mob violence incident.

The arrest comes soon after DSP (District Enforcement Branch) Santanu Mukhopadhyay was appointed as the new investigating officer in the case.

Ali has been booked under several sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, including those related to rioting and promoting enmity, besides some other sections of the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, the Maintenance of Public Order Act, and Railways Act.

Meanwhile, Ali, who was brought to a Baruipur court on Monday, told media persons outside the court premises, "All allegations are a lie, this is a politically motivated arrest. I was protesting, so to curb that, I was arrested."

Reacting to Ali's arrest, Chakraborty, who has also been named in the case, told media persons, "One of our leaders who was a candidate this time (in Baruipur West Assembly seat) has been arrested. This arrest is a politically motivated arrest. The government is trying to instill fear. He has been charged with lynching, but he went to the spot later, and this can be verified in the CCTV footage."

Eggs being hurled at Tirthankar Ghosh on Monday. ANI

Ex-TMC MLA's son held for 2021 post-poll violence & extortion

Tanusree Bose
Kolkata, July 13

POLICE ON Monday arrested Tirthankar Ghosh, the son of former TMC MLA Nirmal Ghosh in connection with alleged post-poll violence that erupted across the state following the 2021 Assembly elections. Police said he was also booked for extortion.

According to police, Tirthankar — who ran as the TMC candidate in the 2026 Assembly polls from Panihati but lost to the BJP candidate, the mother of the RG Kar rape-murder victim — has been charged with assault, extortion, criminal intimidation, attempted murder, and illegal display of firearms. He was produced before a court and sent to six-day custody.

Meanwhile, former MLA Nirmal Ghosh is also an accused in the alleged extortion case.

On the day of his son's arrest on Monday, Nirmal moved the Calcutta High Court seeking legal protection from any coercive action against himself. The case is likely to come up for hearing later this week.

The first case against Tirthankar stems from the widespread post-poll violence that erupted after the 2021 Assembly polls. Several complaints were lodged against both Tirthankar and his father, Nirmal Ghosh, for allegedly orchestrating violent assaults on BJP workers.

The second case involves the alleged violent extortion of a lottery ticket worth Rs 1 crore from a resident. As per the complainant, Partha Sarkar, who worked as a driver for local pub owner Susanta Sarkar, he had purchased a lottery ticket in November 2024 and subsequently won the Rs 1 crore jackpot.

Upon learning of the win, the pub owner allegedly forced Partha to accompany him to Nirmal's residence to hand over the ticket to the then-TMC MLA. When Partha refused to give up the ticket, Tirthankar Ghosh and a group of henchmen allegedly assaulted him. The complaint further alleged that Tirthankar forcefully snatched the lottery ticket and threatened to kill Partha if he opposed.

Following the recent change of government, Partha approached the police. The probe has already led to arrests of pub owner and a local councillor.

On Monday, Tirthankar's arrest led to massive celebrations outside the Khardah police station, where a large crowd of residents and BJP workers gathered, beating drums and chanting slogans. Tensions flared briefly when people reportedly hurled eggs at him as he was being escorted out of the police station.

ANTI-GOONDA ACT TAKES EFFECT

CM says law to dismantle TMC's 'hooligan network'

Suvendu reasserts ISKCON-made mid-day meals to start August 1

Press Trust of India
Kolkata, July 13

THE STATE'S anti-goonda law came into force on Monday, with Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari framing it as a tool to dismantle "34 years of communist harmads" and "15 years of TMC goons", while the opposition, and sections of the ruling camp warned its sweeping powers could be vulnerable to misuse.

The TMC, when it was in the opposition, used the term 'harmad' to describe armed goons of the CPI(M) which, along with other Left parties, ruled the state from 1977 to 2011. The Mamata Banerjee-led party then wrested power and governed the state till the BJP ousted it earlier this year.

The West Bengal Public Safety and Control of Anti-Social Activities Act, 2026, came into force on Monday, two weeks after it was passed in the Assembly through a voice vote, substantially expanding the state's powers to tackle organised crime, extortion, illegal mining, cybercrime and public disorder.

Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari pays tribute to Nepali poet Bhanu Bhakta at the state Assembly in Kolkata on Monday. ANI

Calling the law necessary, Adhikari sought to place it within a larger political narrative of restoring law and order after successive governments.

"This law was essential to deal with 34 years of communist harmads and 15 years of Trinamool goons," the CM said, making it clear that the legislation was aimed at dismantling entrenched criminal-politician networks rather than targeting ordinary political workers.

The remarks came three days after Adhikari had announced in Baruipur that the legislation would become operational from July 13.

The law broadens the definition of "goonda" and "anti-social activity", bringing within its ambit habitual offenders, organised criminal syndicates, extortionists, land grabbers, illegal sand miners and smugglers, and persons involved in serious cybercrime and financial fraud.

One of its provisions empowers the administration to order preventive detention for up to 12 months without trial if authorities believe an individual poses a threat to public safety or is preparing to commit organised anti-social offences.

District magistrates, police commissioners and officers of DIG rank or above have also been empowered to issue externment orders directing alleged habitual offenders to leave a locality or even an entire district for up to one year. It further makes offences under its ambit cognisable and non-bailable.

Meanwhile, the CM said Monday that ISKCON will start supplying midday meals to schools in Kolkata and other parts of the state from August 1.

He also announced that the per-student allocation under the primary school midday meal scheme would be increased to Rs 10 from the existing Rs 6.78 from August 1.

Activist seeks HC stay on new law

AN ACTIVIST Monday filed a PIL in the Calcutta High Court seeking a stay on the state's anti-goonda law, arguing it is oppressive and violates the Constitution. Milan Malakar was represented before a division bench of the court. Declining to hear the matter urgently, the bench said it would be heard in due course. **ENS**

Bodies of nine fishermen recovered from sunken trawler

Sweety Kumari
Kolkata, July 13

POLICE IN South 24 Parganas district have recovered the bodies of nine fishermen from a trawler that capsized in the Bay of Bengal near the Sundarbans earlier this month.

Teams from Gobardhanpur police station, along with the forest department and the Indian Coast Guard, identified a sunken trawler near the Raktachara area on Sunday. The trawler was later salvaged and brought to Sitarampur in Gobardhanpur, where nine bodies were recovered from it. There were 15 people aboard the trailer; the six others remain missing.

The ill-fated trawler has been identified as 'FB Maa Kali'.

On July 2, the trawler with 15 fishermen had set out to sea from the Digha Shankarpur fishing harbour in Purba Medinipur district. Due to adverse weather conditions, the trawler got lost at sea a few days ago, and had been untraceable since then.

The bodies have been sent to the Kakdwip Sub-divisional Hospital for post-mortem examination. The joint search operations continued Monday to locate the six missing fishermen.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister's Office on Monday announced an ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh for the kin of each deceased, and Rs 50,000 each for the injured.

Mamata camp moves HC, seeks permission to access accounts frozen by ED

Press Trust of India
Kolkata, July 13

THE MAMATA Banerjee-faction of the TMC on Monday moved the Calcutta High Court seeking permission to operate three of the party's bank accounts frozen by the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

The ED has frozen the three bank accounts of the Trinamool Congress with balances amounting to Rs 440.42 crore in connection with its probe based on an FIR lodged by Bidhannagar police in alleged dishonest financial dealings, unlawful collection of money, and routing of suspected funds through certain bank accounts of the TMC.

Justice Krishna Rao reserved interim order on the prayer after arguments by the parties in the matter were concluded.

Appearing for the ED, Additional Solicitor General S V Raju questioned the maintainability of the petition, claiming that those who moved the petition have no authority to do so.

The TMC's lawyer stated that the signatories have the authority to file the petition on behalf of the TMC. Representing the TMC, senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi stated before the court that the party's constitution authorises the working committee to authorise anybody to conduct such matters.

The ED's lawyer stated that a civil court order restrained them from representing the party. Raju stated that the authorisation is undated while the exparte order of the civil court Judge at Alipore here was passed on July 7.

Singhvi stated before the court that there is no question of suppression as the civil court order was passed ex parte and the Mamata faction was not represented before it. He said freezing of the bank accounts of the party was done when the opposing faction was yet to be recognised as the TMC by the ECI.

TET protest

Primary school teachers stage protest to demand a resolution of TET-related issues, in Kolkata on Monday. PTI

'Couldn't persuade us': SC junks job regularisation petition of madrasa staff

Express News Service
Kolkata, July 13

THE SUPREME Court Monday dismissed a clutch of petitions by teachers and non-teaching staff of madrasas in West Bengal seeking regularisation of their appointments and claims for salaries and allowances under the state government's grant-in-aid scheme.

A bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and A G Masih examined 13 such claims out of 350 and said none of them could persuade it to grant relief.

"Pursuant to our order, particulars of 13 petitioners out of more than 350 were screened and placed before us. We proceeded on the basis that if one of the 13 would persuade us to hold, we would look into the claims of other cases. Unfortunately, neither of the 13 could persuade us. All writ petitions are without merit and hence dismissed," the bench ordered.

Origins of dispute

The dispute has its origins in petitions concerning the validity of the provisions of the West Bengal Madrasah Service Commission Act, 2008, which established a statutory commission to recommend the appointment of teachers in aided madrasas. It stripped local madrasa managing committees of their traditional power to appoint teachers independently.

A single-judge bench of the Calcutta High Court struck down the Act in 2014, and a division bench upheld this a year later, in 2015.

The High Court declared the Act unconstitutional, holding that it was violative of Article 30 of the Constitution, which provides that all minorities shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

In January 2020, however, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of the 2008 Act. In February 2023, the Supreme Court set up a committee to examine the validity of appointments made after the High Court's 2015 decision holding the Act unconstitutional and its own January 2020 order upholding it.

The committee found the appointments invalid, but hundreds of staff members hired outside the commission's framework during the years of legal limbo challenged the decision in the Supreme Court.

EXPRESS special

Faith meets flight path: 136-yr-old mosque at Kolkata airport sparks security, expansion row

Curbs an administrative call: govt; locals say don't relocate, strengthen security

Sweety Kumari
Kolkata, July 13

LOCATED ABOUT 150 metres inside the high-security zone of Kolkata's Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport and barely 165 metres north of its secondary runway, the 136-year-old Gouripur Jama Masjid, also known as the Bankra Mosque, has for decades occupied one of the country's most sensitive aviation zones.

For nearly three decades, local residents had been allowed to offer prayers at the mosque under an elaborate security protocol. Five times a day, security personnel would open a black gate along Jessore Road, allowing 10-25 local residents into the highly sensitive and restricted area of the airport, after stringent CISF screening, usually upon producing their Aadhaar cards. Every Friday, the number surged to nearly 80. After security clearance, the people were ferried to the mosque in a designated airport shuttle bus across an airside route that overlaps with active aircraft taxiways. Towering concrete walls topped with razor wire and watchtowers separate this access route from the runway.

This arrangement has now sparked a controversy after prayers at the mosque have been suspended for the last four days. According to airport sources, public entry through Gate 8, has been temporarily suspended following objections from the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) over unrestricted civilian movement through the highly sensitive area. Sources also cited repair of the approach road which was damaged due to rain.

However, the suspension comes amid renewed push for the mosque's relocation to facilitate airport expansion and address long-standing aviation safety concerns.

Airport officials said that successive state governments did not pursue relocation proposals by the Airport Authority of India (AAI) citing religious sentiments.

The matter regained urgency following recent parliamentary discussions, a joint inspection by AAI and North 24 Parganas district authorities, and a high-level meeting at the District Magistrate's office where the officials presented the operational need for relocation to members of the mosque committee.

Security concerns

According to airport officials, the structure violates global aviation safety protocols that mandate no permanent civilian building within 240 metres of an active runway. They also said that because of the mosque's height and location, aircraft approaching the secondary runway from its side cannot utilise its full length, compelling pilots to use an 88m-long displaced threshold to safely clear the structure, therefore, leaving only 2,832 metres for landing. While this is sufficient for narrow-body aircraft such as the Airbus A320 and Boeing 737, officials said it prevents the safe operation of wide-body international aircraft including the Boeing 787 and Airbus A330.

Citing other safety concerns, the officials said that approaches from the opposite direction require an even larger 488-metre landing gap because of visibility constraints, rendering flight operations impossible during periods of low visibility.

To cope with these limitations, airport authorities have also been forced to construct a specialised taxiway bypass around the obstruction. Instead of following a seamless landing and taxi sequence, aircraft have to be routed through this designated taxiway to the primary runway for safe operations.

The gate through which locals enter the Kolkata airport to offer prayers at the Gouripur Jama Masjid. SWEETY KUMARI

According to officials, the secondary runway also cannot be equipped with an advanced Instrument Landing System (ILS), unlike the 3,633-metre primary runway, because of the mosque's proximity. As a result, operating flights during dense winter fog or when the primary runway is under maintenance remains a major challenge.

"When there is a tall physical obstruction like a building, trees, or in this case, a 136-year-old mosque, right in front of the runway, planes cannot initiate their normal glide slope from the absolute beginning of the concrete. If they did, they would fly dangerously close to, or even hit, the top of the structure," a senior aviation official at the Kolkata Airport said.

He added that removing the obstruction would allow the secondary runway to function at full capacity, enable aircraft to land safely from both directions, and open Kolkata to more long-haul international operations.

To address the aviation concerns keeping in mind the religious sentiments, the local administration has proposed constructing a larger, modern mosque on a dedicated plot outside the airport premises.

"We have launched a coordinated push to end this deadlock. The ball is now in the court of the government and not with AAI. Let them decide and take a call," a senior airport official had said last month.

"The mosque's proximity to the secondary runway hinders airport expansion and delays flight operations. We are unable to use the runway's full operational capacity. It is also a security concern because, unlike apron staff, civilians are being allowed to cross the taxiway using only Aadhaar cards," another official had said.

The controversy

Meanwhile, Friday's closure of Gate 8 has triggered a row, with Siddiqullah Chowdhury, president of the West Bengal State Jamiat-e-Ulama and head of the mosque committee, criticising the decision.

"I have lived in this area for 40 years. Closing Gate 8 without any formal notice or detailed discussion is unfair," Chowdhury told reporters Sunday.

"We are Indian citizens; we understand airport safety and logistics. We previously requested that the authorities provide their security concerns in writing so we could sit together and find a collaborative solution. I appeal to the public not to take to the streets or create ruckus. We are writing to the Governor and the airport management to reopen the gate for prayers and initiate a dialogue," he said.

Where is Masjid located

Slamming the BJP government, he said, "The BJP wants disturbance. We do not have any fight with RSS and the BJP. If they act forcefully, people will say that the Modi government or Suvendu's government dismantled the mosque. It's clear that if this happens, Muslims will react."

Responding to the objections, Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari said that national security and the safety of the airport will always get absolute priority.

"In terms of geopolitics and security, this airport's location is critical given its proximity to Bangladesh and China. Unrestricted civilian access simply cannot be permitted inside a defence and transport hub of this nature," he said.

Clarifying that the move is strictly administrative and not religious, Adhikari said, "We are not stopping anyone from practising their religion. They claimed that if the BJP comes to power, Muslims will be chased away and will not be allowed to offer namaz. Yet Bakri Eid was celebrated, and the Muharram procession was also held safely."

BJP state president Samik Bhattacharya also backed the relocation proposal, saying it would help transform Kolkata airport into a world-class aviation hub while preserving religious rights.

"This is not a matter of a temple or a mosque. Even if it were a temple instead of a mosque, it could still be shifted. When visibility drops to zero, flights are unable to land at our Dum Dum Airport. Expansion is necessary," he said.

North Dum Dum MLA Sourav Sikdar said, "While biometric data and special passes are mandatory to enter this high-security zone, members of the general public had been moving through it using just a standard identity card. Airport authorities rightly argued that even the Chief Minister cannot enter the aircraft apron area without clearance. Allowing the general public free access across active taxiways poses a severe, unsustainable security risk."

District Magistrate Shilpa Gourisaria said the land belongs to AAI and airport security falls under CISF and BCAS. "There is no direct role that the district administration has to play in this. We have had some rounds of meetings already. If they require law and order related assistance, we will definitely cooperate in all possible ways," she said.

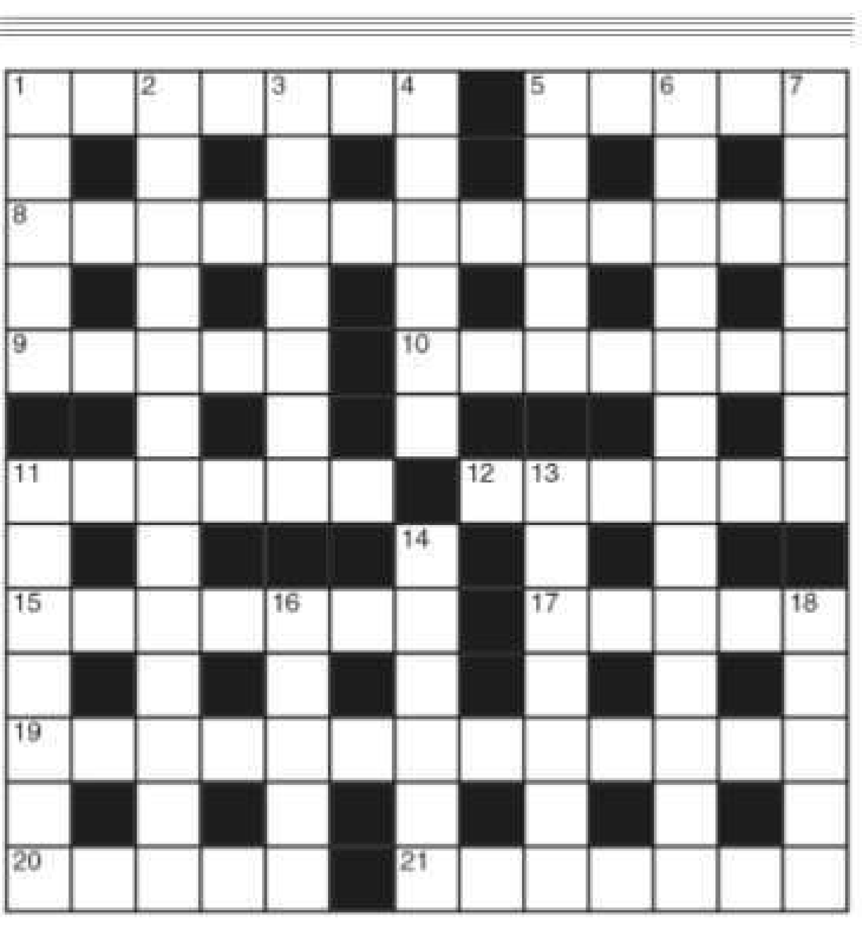
What locals say

However, for local residents, the mosque is not just an operational obstacle, but a place woven into generations of worship history.

"We come here with our identity cards and go for prayers. One is not allowed to carry any bag or external items. We have been praying here for more than 40 years. Generation after generation we've prayed here. Now, whatever the government decides we will have to follow," Sheikh Hussain, an elderly resident, said.

Another resident, requesting anonymity, said that security could be strengthened instead of relocating the mosque. "If they are concerned about security, they can step up frisking. But demolishing the mosque would be very unfortunate for us."

• CROSSWORD 6040



ACROSS

1 Jettison a mouldy cargo (3-4)
5 Quote about a lady's hat (5)
8 Act altruistically but lose control (6,7)
9 Bring up a matter of higher wages (5)
10 Like hell cats in a melee (7)
11 Just puts a point on blunt end (6)
12 Wanders aimlessly in the snow? (6)
15 Is stout perhaps, so doesn't dance (4,3)
17 The prospects for new wives (5)
19 Release after confession without charge (9,4)
20 See as new comforts (5)
21 He was invited we hear and gave an estimate (7)

DOWN

1 Tender proposal (5)
2 They're likely to get stuck abroad (7,6)
3 No sense spoiling unanimity (7)
4 Words get muddled at end of day when tired (6)
5 The measure not taken with permission (5)
6 Do all card players fall for her? (5,2,6)
7 Carries out personal property (7)
11 Captive may be shot a long time afterwards (7)
13 Regret being about to level out income (7)
14 The way to loop cord (6)
16 A spot of refreshment (5)
18 The going rate for a drug (5)

SOLUTIONS CROSSWORD 6039 ACROSS: 1 Treat, 8 Bankrupt, 9 Essen, 10 Simplify, 11 Edict, 12 Gas, 16 Camera, 17 Amuses, 18 Pad, 23 Entry, 24 New issue, 25 Miami, 26 Anecdote, 27 Jenny. DOWN: 2 Residual, 3 Agencies, 4 Patina, 5 Skips, 6 Cubit, 7 Stays, 12 Gap, 13 Sad, 14 Turnpike, 15 Ferryman, 19 Adults, 20 Knead, 21 Owner, 22 Aside

JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective circles below. Select the letters in the shaded circles and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

If the ___ __ was simple enough to understand, we'd be too simple to understand it. — Emerson (5,4)

CRAIN

HIOSDM

DMONU

ISWYHM

SOLUTIONS: Cairn, Mound, Modish, Whimsy
ANSWER: If the **human mind** was simple enough to understand, we'd be too simple to understand it. — Emerson

• OVER THE HEDGE

BY MICHAEL FRY & T LEWIS

• CALVIN & HOBBES

BY BILL WATTERSON

• MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG

SUDOKU 6379

DIFFICULTY LEVEL 1s
INSTRUCTIONS

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

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

DIFFICULTY LEVEL
1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius

SOLUTION SUDOKU 6378

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

• ROYAL STARS

BY GEORGIA NICOLS

ARIES (MAR 21 - APR 20): Be aware of the limitations of the Moon Alert. Though, this can be a warm and happy day, especially with family members. Tonight: Socialise.

TAURUS (APR 21 - MAY 21): Be aware that most of this day is a Moon Alert. Restrict your spending to food and gas. However, it's an excellent opportunity to think about how you communicate with others. Tonight: Home and family.

GEMINI (MAY 22 - JUNE 21): Today the only New Moon that occurs in your Money House all year is happening. Meanwhile, today is a Moon Alert. Therefore, be careful about spending. Tonight: Discussions.

CANCER (JUNE 22 - JULY 23): The New Moon brings a lovely opportunity to improve your image. Meanwhile, due to the Moon Alert, restrict your spending to food or gas. Tonight: Check your money.

LEO (JULY 24 - AUG 23): Today's New Moon is your chance to think about your spiritual values and small resolutions. "Do not take lightly small good deeds, believing they can hardly help; for drops of water, one by one, in time can fill a giant pot." (Dilgo Khyentse.) Tonight: You win.

VIRGO (AUG 24 - SEP 23): Your focus today is on friendships — what they mean to you and what kind of a friend you are. Use today's New Moon to think about how to improve your friendships. Meanwhile, restrict spending to food and gas. Tonight: Enjoy privacy.

LIBRA (SEP 24 - OCT 23): Today's New Moon is at the top of your chart. This is the day for a reality check and think about the direction you're headed. Commit to nothing today because there's a Moon Alert for most of this day. Tonight: Be friendly.

SCORPIO (OCT 24 - NOV 23): Today's New Moon is a great chance to think about what travel or further education you want to explore. Because it's a Moon Alert, don't act or commit. Tonight: You're admired.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV 24 - DEC 22): The Sun, the New Moon and retrograde Mercury are all in one of your Money Houses. However, today is a Moon Alert. Therefore, resist the urge to act or commit financially. Tonight: Explore.

CAPRICORN (DEC 23 - JAN 20): Relations with partners, spouses and close friends will be interesting today because the Sun, the New Moon and Mercury retrograde are all opposite your sign. (People from your past are popping up.) Because today is a Moon Alert, commit to nothing. Tonight: Check your finances.

AQUARIUS (JAN 21 - FEB 19): In a way, this is an excellent day for you to think about how you can improve your health, as well as how you can improve your job. However, because today is a Moon Alert, do not take action yet. Make notes and observations, but wait until tomorrow. Tonight: Cooperate and listen.

PISCES (FEB 20 - MAR 20): This is a very creative day for you. Enjoy socializing with others, especially people from your past. Restrict spending the food and gas because of the Moon Alert. Tonight: Work to get better organised.

Nagaland: 1 killed, 4 injured in IED blast near Assam Rifles vehicle

Sukrita Baruah
Guwahati, July 13

A WEEK after two Assam Rifles personnel were killed in an ambush in Manipur, one personnel has been killed and four other injured in a suspected IED blast in Nagaland's Sukhovi.

The deceased has been identified as Havaldar Mohd Iqbal from the 28 Assam Rifles.

According to an Assam Rifles official, the party of personnel was moving from a part of the training centre in nearby Dimapur to another in Sukhovi in Chumoukedima district when the incident took place on Monday afternoon.

"There are not many operations in that area because it has been peaceful for a very long time. The institute is basically in three parts, so the party was making a routine movement from one part to another," the official said.

A statement from the PRO Defence Kohima stated that the explosion that hit the vehicles is suspected to be an IED blast.

MAHARASHTRA GOVERNMENT DEFENDS VERIFICATION EXERCISE

Opp questions deletion of 92 lakh Ladki Bahin beneficiaries after polls

Vallabh Ozarkar
Mumbai, July 13

A DAY after *The Indian Express* reported that the Maharashtra government had removed more than 92 lakh beneficiaries from the Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana, the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) accused the BJP-led Mahayuti government of delaying beneficiary verification until the Assembly elections got over and questioned the payment of Rs 14,000 crore to women who were later found ineligible for the scheme.

Opposition leaders also sought to know why beneficiaries who were found ineligible continued receiving payments for months before the verification exercise was completed.

Alleging that the scheme was brought to "buy votes" for elections, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut demanded the money be recovered and action taken against officials responsible for the payments.

"These 92 lakh beneficiaries were given money. Who is going to recover it? The then chief secretary, finance secretary, the entire Cabinet, the secretary of the women and child development department and everyone who approved these payments should be held responsible. Their assets should be attached and the money recovered," Raut said.

Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis meets Andhra Pradesh Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan, who underwent surgery at Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, in Mumbai on Monday. PTI

Claiming that the debt burden is "staggering", Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Arvind Sawant said, "The names of lakhs of women were cancelled. They were the ones who voted the current government to power. It wasn't just the women who voted; their families did too... Now, what is the government going to do? We are the ones facing the consequences. It is public money... This is gross violation of the Constitution... the CAG report highlights numerous issues... The debt burden is set to exceed 100% of the state's revenue."

Questioning the timing of the verification exercise, Congress leader Vijay Wadettiwar said, "If 92 lakh women were ineligible, why were they paid? And if they were eligible then, why are they being removed now?" Accusing the government of making promises before the election and changing course afterwards, state Congress president Harshvardhan Sapkal said, "The government promised Rs 2,100 after elections. That promise remains unfulfilled and now 92 lakh beneficiaries have been removed in the name of eKYC.."

NCP (SP) spokesperson Clyde Crasto also questioned the steady rise in the number of deletions and said, "First it was 26 lakh, then 80 lakh and now 92 lakh. If so many beneficiaries did not satisfy the conditions, why were they paid in the first place."

Mahayuti minister rejected the criticisms, saying those removed did not satisfy the scheme's eligibility conditions. Minister Uday Samant said some beneficiaries were government employees, some belonged to families with incomes above the prescribed ceiling and some men had also received benefits. "No eligible woman has been removed from the scheme," Samant said.

According to Minister Sanjay Shirsat, the verification exercise would continue. "Those who did not meet the conditions were removed. The scheme is not being stopped," he said.

Earlier, Women and Child Development Minister Aditi Tatkare had said the eKYC exercise could not begin immediately after the scheme's launch because fo the Model Code of Conduct ahead of the Assembly elections. The verification exercise began after the new government assumed office.

• BRIEFLY

Flight carrying the mortal remains of the Indian nationals who died in the July 11 boat accident in Phu Quoc, Vietnam, arrives at Mumbai airport on Monday. ANI

MAHARASHTRA

Flight carrying bodies of 15 Indians killed in Vietnam lands in Mumbai

A FLIGHT carrying the bodies of 15 Indian nationals killed in a boat tragedy in Vietnam last week has landed at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai. The Vietnam Airlines flight VN 979 from Ho Chi Minh City landed at 9.19 pm on Monday, sources said. Of the 15 victims, 10 were from Tamil Nadu, three were from Andhra Pradesh, and two were from Kerala. Two of the deceased were women. The bodies will be flown to Coimbatore, Chennai, Hyderabad and Trivandrum, the sources said. A speedboat carrying 32 Indian tourists and four local crew members capsized near Hon May Rut Ngoai off Phu Quoc Island on Friday, killing 15 Indian tourists. Sixteen others were rescued and have returned to India after receiving medical treatment, while one survivor remains in critical condition at a hospital in Phu Quoc. The tourists were returning from an island visit when the boat capsized. PTI

Cricketer dies during match in Doda district

A CRICKETER died during a tournament in J&K's Doda district. Identified as Sohail, a resident of Bhaderwah, officials said he suddenly collapsed while bowling during the match being held in Sports Stadium in the Thaloran area of Gandoh tehsil. He was immediately rushed for medical treatment but was declared dead. The exact cause of death is yet to be ascertained. The body has been sent for medico-legal formalities and will be handed over to the family after completion of the necessary procedures, officials added. ENS

Patna firing case: Faisal Khan gets anticipatory bail

A PATNA civil court on Monday granted anticipatory bail to educator and YouTuber Faisal Khan, also known as Khan Sir, in a firing case outside his institute. The court also granted anticipatory bail to three of his staff members, while the two security guards held in the case secured regular bail, according to Khan's lawyers. Advocate Arvind Kumar Mouar said the Principal District and Sessions Court granted anticipatory bail to Khan, KGS manager Kanhaiya Kumar Singh, Ajit Kumar and Ankit Kumar Pandey. ENS

THREE-LANGUAGE POLICY

47% of CBSE schools offer 2 or more Indian languages, Board tells SC

Vidheesha Kuntamalla
New Delhi, July 13

SEEKING TO defend the three-language policy before the Supreme Court, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Monday said 47.3% of the 28,848 schools affiliated with the Board already offer two or more native Indian languages to Class 9 students. They are therefore fully compliant with the three-language policy "without any additional teacher", while 99.19% have at least one Indian-language teacher.

The figures, disclosed in a counter affidavit filed by CBSE, along with separate affidavits from the Education Ministry and NCERT, constitute the Board's defence of the policy in response to the litigation by parents and foreign-language teachers.

"Recognising that schools may require time to build full teaching capacity in different Bhartiya Bhashas, the Board has permitted flexible staffing arrangements as an interim measure," CBSE stated.

The petition, filed by parents from Delhi, Gurugram, Noida and Chennai along with teachers, challenges CBSE's May 15 circular making three languages compulsory in Class 9 from July 1, 2026. It will be heard by the Supreme Court Tuesday.

The petition argues that the circular is unconstitutional, arbitrary and violates Articles 14, 19, 21 and 21A, alleging that it abruptly reversed a CBSE notification issued just 36 days earlier, which stated that "R3 (third language) is not applicable till the academic session 2029-30 at the Class 9 level".

The petition also contends that schools are being asked to implement the policy without textbooks, teachers or a board assessment framework, forcing students to use Class 6 textbooks and allowing students of other subjects with only "functional proficiency" to teach the third language.

CBSE argued that the petition has been overtaken by subsequent developments. It told the court that the June 29 implementation guidelines and the July 10 clarification circular had "addressed" the grievances raised by the petitioners, rendering the principal reliefs sought "unnecessary and infructuous."

Under the three-language policy, Class 9 students will now study three languages, with at least two being Bhartiya Bhashas. However, as a one-time relaxation, students pursuing two non-native languages (example: English + French) can choose any Bhartiya Bhasha.

The Board also disputed the central premise of the challenge — that foreign languages are being pushed out of schools.

"There is no prohibition on the study of a foreign language," the affidavit states, adding that a foreign language may continue either as one of the three languages, or as an additional fourth language.

It argues that the petition "wrongly presents a conditional retention of foreign languages as an 'elimination'." In another affidavit, NCERT stated that it had already undertaken the preparation, review, vetting, finalisation and dissemination of textbooks in 22 Scheduled Languages as part of the implementation of the third-language framework. NCERT further stated that the ministry has constituted a High-Powered Task Force, in coordination with CBSE, NIOS and academic experts, to expedite the development of textbooks for the transition phase for Class 9.

SC orders SIT probe into death of MP ex-Cong MLA's driver

Express News Service
New Delhi, July 13

THE SUPREME Court Monday directed the Madhya Pradesh DGP to form a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the 2023 death of Salman Khan, who was the driver of former Congress MLA Vikram Singh.

The court was hearing a plea by Salman Khan's wife Rajiya Ali. She alleged that her husband was run over with a vehicle by people linked to a rival BJP candidate.

"Having regard to the nature of the allegations and counter-allegations, it seems to us in the interest of justice and fair play that the subject FIR should be investigated by a team of senior officers," said a three-judge bench presided over by CJI Surya Kant.

"We consequently direct the DGP, MP, to constitute a Special Investigation Team comprising three officers in the rank of Senior Superintendent of Police (IPS cadre) and two officers not below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police…," it ordered.

The bench, also comprising Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana, directed that the officer heading the SIT should be from the Madhya Pradesh cadre, but not hailing from the state. It added that the officers of the SIT should be from outside the police jurisdiction of the Chatarpur district, where the alleged incident occurred. It asked the DGP to form the SIT within two days.

Punjab caps pvt school fee hike at 5 per cent, extra charge in last 3 years to be returned

Express News Service
Chandigarh, July 13

PRIVATE SCHOOLS in Punjab that raised fees by more than 5% annually over the past three years will have to refund the excess amount, CM Bhagwant Mann on Monday said, adding that such institutions will also not be allowed "the escape route" of "adjusting" the overcharged money.

"Those private schools that have increased fees by more than 15% over past three-year period will be required to refund the excess amount to parents. For example if a school increased fee by 25 per cent during past three years, then they will have to refund parents the excess 10%," Mann said.

Mann was addressing a press conference to announce the immediate implementation of an ordinance on capping fee hike by private schools in the state. He said Governor Gulab Chand Kataria has given his approval to the "Punjab Regulation of Fee of Un-aided Educational Institutions (Amendment) Ordinance, 2026", which the Cabinet had cleared last month.

Mann said a regulatory committee headed by Deputy Commissioners will scrutinise fee hikes. "We will not allow 'vidya mafia' (education mafia) to be created... This is a historic decision and Punjab will become the first state where private schools will refund excess fees charged," he said, adding "we will not allow private schools to become factories for profit only".

Day after Bihar double murder, accused injured in police encounter

Himanshu Harsh
Patna, July 13

THE MAIN accused in the murder of an Army soldier and his father in Bihar's Vaishali district on Sunday was injured in a police encounter after allegedly trying to escape from custody.

According to Vaishali Superintendent of Police Shubhank Mishra, Jagdish Rai was arrested from a men's hostel in the Bahadurpur area of neighbouring Patna district following searches by a special police team. Jagdish is a cousin of the killed soldier and is the main accused in the double murder in Rajaso village.

"While Jagdish was being brought to Vaishali for legal proceedings, he allegedly snatched a constable's rifle near Bidupur Bazaar, jumped out of the police vehicle, and opened fire on the escort team while attempting to flee," the SP said.

The officer added that police then carried out "necessary and controlled retaliatory action in self-defence and to bring the accused under control", during which Jagdish sustained a bullet injury below the knee.

He was taken under police escort to Sadar Hospital in Hajipur, where he is undergoing treatment. Doctors have told police that he is out of danger. No police personnel were injured in the exchange of fire, SP Mishra said. Sources said Jagdish has a criminal history and was previously jailed in connection with a murder case and an NDPS case. Police said searches are still underway to arrest the remaining suspects.

The encounter came a day after 52-year-old Munarik Rai and his 32-year-old son, Jitendra Kumar, an Army jawan who was posted in Rajasthan's Jodhpur, were shot dead over a long-running land dispute in Rajaso village. Jitendra, who had returned home days earlier following his brother-in-law's death, later succumbed to his injuries, while his father died on the spot.

The police action comes amid intense political heat over last month's Bhojpur encounter, which prompted a judicial inquiry. The Opposition and Jan Suraaj have been accusing the NDA government of promoting what they allege was a "fake encounter culture".

DELHI CONFIDENTIAL

New Role, New Challenges

FOLLOWING HIS election to the Rajya Sabha, BJP's national general secretary Vinod Tawde is being keenly watched by the party's Maharashtra leaders as he goes about renewing old ties and building new ones in the state. Tawde's recent meeting with NCP(SP) leader Eknath Khadse, who had quit the BJP in 2020 owing to differences with Devendra Fadnavis, has not gone down well with the section backing the Maharashtra Chief Minister. BJP sources said Tawde's meeting with another NCP-SP leader, Jayant Patil, amid speculation that the Sharad Pawar-led party could be considering backing the NDA at the Centre, has also triggered whispers in the party circles.

Memorable Journey

INSTEAD OF taking a 50-minute flight, Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Riaz Hamidullah opted to travel by train from Guwahati to Agartala during one of his recent work trips. The 571-km scenic journey takes about 15 to 16 hours, traversing challenging terrain, tea gardens and 21 tunnels across the Barail Hill Range. Hamidullah, who will soon complete his term in India, called it time travel.

Campaign Coordination

WITH LEADER of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi set to visit Dehradun on Friday to address students as part of his nationwide 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' campaign, his team reached the Uttarakhand capital on Monday to make arrangements for the programme. Senior leaders from the state, along with coordinators for the campaign, have been directed to ensure that the programme is conducted without any hiccups. Meetings were held on Monday for smoother coordination between Gandhi's team, the state unit and the campaign, said sources.

Top court stays HC's cow slaughter ban order in TN

State says blanket ban contravenes TN Animal Preservation Act provisions

Express News Service
New Delhi, July 13

THE SUPREME Court on Monday stayed a Madras High Court order directing the Tamil Nadu government to ensure that no cows or calves are slaughtered in the state.

Issuing notice on the Tamil Nadu government's appeal challenging the May 27 High Court order, a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta directed that the judgment should remain on hold in the interim. The bench said that prima facie the judgment's last paragraph by which the ban was imposed needs "correction".

Appearing for the state, Senior Advocate A M Singhvi pointed out that the HC order is unsustainable in law. According to the Tamil Nadu government's plea, the original petition only raised the question of whether cows and calves could be sacrificed in places not designated as slaughterhouses on the occasion of Bakri Eid, but the HC Division Bench went further and ordered an absolute and blanket ban.

Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay-led TVK government contended that the HC order contravenes the provisions of the Tamil Nadu Animal Preservation Act, 1958, which permits the slaughter of cows above the age of 10 years if a competent authority declares them unfit for work and breeding.

The state also argued that even legislations such as the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Slaughter House) Rules, 2001, Tamil Nadu Urban Local Bodies Act, 1998 and the Tamil Nadu Urban Local Bodies Rules, 2023, do not impose any total ban on slaughter but only prescribe conditions for it.

The HC's order, the state argued, amounts to "judicial lawmaking". The appeal also contested the conclusion that the relevant authorities had conceded the veracity of the averments in the petitioner's affidavit filed in support of his writ petition.

It said the state's stand was that it had already taken necessary action to prevent slaughter in public places and that any sacrifice would be allowed only in confined spaces, away from the public.

Coimbatore resident K Surya Prasanth, General Secretary of the Indu Makkal Katchi-Tamilagam, had moved HC alleging that authorities had made arrangements for ritual sacrifice in areas not designated as slaughterhouses.

In a counter-affidavit before the HC, the Tamil Nadu Police had said that officials visited the scene and inspected the place designated for cow slaughter. The authorities concerned had erected a temporary shed for slaughter in a non-public area, without causing any obstruction to traffic or offending the religious sentiments of persons belonging to other communities, it added.

In its judgment, the HC bench of Justices G R Swaminathan and V Lakshminarayanan had cited Article 48 of the Constitution, stating that it mandated that the state should take steps to prohibit the slaughter of cows, calves, and other milch or draught cattle.

Interpreting the Tamil Nadu Animal Preservation Act, 1958, the HC said it permits slaughter only when the animal is over 10 years old and unfit for work and breeding.

EXPRESS special

SRIJAN SAATHI CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED IN APRIL

'Enrol supporters with a fee, get posts': Digital move divides Bihar Congress

Asad Rehman
New Delhi, July 13

SEVEN MONTHS after the Congress's Bihar debacle, trouble is brewing within the state party unit over its digital outreach campaign, with several senior leaders questioning both the process and its outcome.

The Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee, led by Rajesh Ram, launched the Srijan Saathi Jansampark programme on April 11 in a bid to strengthen the organisation and establish a "transparent and robust digital system" that would link organisational positions with grassroots work and active participation.

In a letter issued the same day, Ram laid down targets that aspiring office-bearers must meet to be considered for various organisational posts at the state and district levels.

Congress aspirants are required to enrol party supporters as "srijan saathis" by collecting Rs 50 from each of them — significantly higher than the party's Rs 10 membership fee. Appointments in the state unit are supposed to be based on the number of such supporters enrolled by various aspirants.

The digital campaign, monitored through a mobile app, seeks to connect the Congress leadership with grassroots workers and the public across the state. Existing Congress members as well as non-members can enrol as "srijan saathis" after paying Rs 50 and registering through the app.

Defending the Rs 50 fee, Ram told *The Indian Express* that the exercise was "not a membership drive" but a mechanism to assess level of support enjoyed by aspiring party leaders.

Critics within the party, however, allege that the programme effectively makes financial capacity a key criterion for organisational appointments.

According to Ram's letter, a leader would be recommended for the post of Bihar Congress vice-president upon enrolling 3,000 "srijan saathis", 2,000 for general secretary, 1,000 for secretary, and 200 for a district-level office-bearer's post.

Several senior state Congress leaders argue that the initiative runs contrary to the ideological position articulated by the party and LoP Rahul Gandhi. "On one hand, Gandhi talks about running the party on ideology. On the other, the Bihar Congress is witnessing what appears to be the sale of organisational posts," a senior Congress leader said.

"Anyone with enough money can enrol 2,000-3,000 people and stake claim to a senior position. If someone spends Rs 1.5 lakh to enrol 3,000 people and submits the list, they become eligible for recommendation as vice-president without any other checks and balances," the leader added.

Sources said the offices of Gandhi and Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge have been apprised of the row. A senior party MP has taken up the issue of "high fee for srijan saathis" with Kharge, who is learnt to have expressed surprise and said he would look into the matter.

Cong MP: Against party rules; pilot project approved by AICC brass, says state chief

Bihar Congress chief Rajesh Ram. @RAJESHKRINC

"People who joined the party only recently are getting senior organisational posts because they can spend money, while those who have worked for years are being overlooked," another Congress leader said.

Senior Congress leader and party MP from Katihar, Tariq Anwar, told *The Indian Express*: "I am against this programme. In the name of organisational restructuring, undeserving people are being encouraged. This is akin to distributing posts on the basis of how many members someone can enrol." He added that the programme was launched "unilaterally".

Asked about the Rs 50 fee, Anwar said: "This is completely wrong and against party rules."

Responding to criticism, Ram said the initiative was a "pilot project approved by the AICC leadership and could eventually be replicated elsewhere". "This is not a membership drive. It is an organisational reform. If someone wants to become a general secretary, 2,000 people endorse that person by paying Rs 50 and completing digital process on Bihar Congress mobile app. It helps us assess the support a candidate has. Earlier, there was no objective criterion for becoming an office-bearer. People had to lobby with leaders in Delhi or Patna. We have done away with that," he said.

Ram said, "This isn't the sale of posts but an attempt to build a new leadership. It challenges existing delegate-based system in Bihar Congress, which is why some leaders are opposing it."

Assam govt: In 2 yrs, 193 'foreigners' sent to Bangladesh, 67 under revived 1950 law

Sukrita Baruah
Guwahati, July 13

A TOTAL of 193 people declared foreigners by Assam's Foreigner Tribunals have been "pushed" into Bangladesh over the last two years, including 67 'declared foreigners' who have been sent across the border by invoking 1950 Immigrants Expulsion Act revived last year, data submitted by the Assam government in the legislative assembly shows.

This data was submitted by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who is also the home minister, in response to a question by All India United Democratic Front MLA Badruddin Ajmal on the same day that Foreigners Tribunals are in the spotlight. On Monday, a Supreme Court Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta had set aside a batch of 27 judgments of the Gauhati High Court that had upheld Foreigners Tribunal orders declaring the appellants to be foreigners' ex-parte -- meaning that the proceedings had been conducted and orders passed in their absence – ruling that citizenship determinations must be carried out through a fair, lawful and reasonable process.

The Supreme Court remanded all 27 cases to the concerned Foreigners Tribunals for fresh adjudication, noting the question of citizenship carries significant constitutional weight.

On the same day, AIUDF MLA raised a question in the ongoing Assam assembly session on the number of people who have been "pushed back" to Bangladesh in the last two years. In the response submitted by Sarma, the Assam government has submitted that a total of 1679 people have been sent to Bangladesh between July 1 2024 and June 30 2026, categorizing them through formal deportation, those who have been "sent back" and those who have been "expelled".

Of these 1679, 192 have been listed as people who have been declared foreigners by FTs, while one, Moriom Begum, is a baby girl who had been sent across with her mother who is a Declared Foreigner.

Legally, those declared foreigners by Foreigners' Tribunals can appeal in the Gauhati High Court and Supreme Court. Additionally, the formal process of deportation entails a handover to the authorities of the other country after mutual verification that an individual is a national of the other country.

Since May 2025, the Assam government has taken recourse to "pushing" declared foreigners "back", or forcing them across the international border without entering discussions with the other country.

Then in September, the government announced that it is reviving the defunct Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950, framed an SOP, and invoked it on multiple occasion directing declared foreigners to leave the country within 24 hours, after which authorities send them across the international border.

Bengal RS bypoll: Nominations in

Former TMC MPs Sukhendu Sekhar Ray, Sushmita Dev and Prakash Chik Baraik after filing their nomination papers for the Rajya Sabha bypolls on a BJP ticket, in Kolkata, on Monday. EXPRESS

'Poll panel or Modi's personal fiefdom?' Opp criticises Form 6 'change', demands rollback

Express News Service
New Delhi, July 13

THE OPPOSITION on Monday slammed the Election Commission over a Form 6 "change", with the Congress accusing the poll panel of having become "Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personal fiefdom".

The allegations follow *The Indian Express*'s report on Sunday that the EC's online version of the electors' registration form — Form 6 — has a new section that seeks the status of the applicant's parents vis-à-vis the last SIR.

Congress's RS MP Pawan Khera said what the "Genie was to Aladdin, (CEC) Gyanesh (Kumar) is to Modi" as "he simply carries out the master's wishes". "The latest example: the EC has introduced a new mandatory section in the online version of Form 6, although the downloadable version contains no such provision, without any prescribed amendment to the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960. The EC, which cannot add even a comma to a statutory form on its own, has inserted an entirely new section — as if it has ceased to be a constitutional body and become Modi's personal fiefdom," said Khera.

CPI(M) MP John Brittas wrote to CEC Gyanesh Kumar, demanding a rollback of the provision, saying the EC's "constitutional legitimacy rests not merely upon the fairness of elections but equally upon scrupulous fidelity to the law governing those elections".

"By introducing a new mandatory declaration through ECINET portal, without a corresponding amendment to the statutory Rules, the Commission has effectively amended subordinate legislation through executive action. Such an exercise is plainly ultra vires," Brittas wrote in his letter. "Since Form 6 is prescribed under the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, any alteration thereto necessarily requires amendment of the Rules through a notification issued by the Ministry of Law and Justice and published in the Official Gazette," said Brittas. EC didn't respond to a request for comment on the allegations.

The Indian Express had reported that the ECINET portal, as accessed on Saturday, showed an unlettered "declaration form" part inserted between parts "J" and "K" of Form 6, asking for details of the applicant or their parents in the last SIR. But the copy of Form 6 available for download on same portal, ostensibly for filling & submitting physically, doesn't include new declaration part.

● BJP SOURCES SAY THE NEW CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT BILL WILL BE BROUGHT DURING MONSOON SESSION ONLY AFTER ENSURING THAT THE GOVT HAS A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY FOR ITS PASSAGE

Modi govt mounts new bid for women's Bill: DMK, NCP-SP outreach to abstentions

CAPITAL CONTEXT
BY LIZ MATHEW

A WEEKLY LOOK AT POLITICS IN A STATE FROM THE VANTAGE POINT OF NEW DELHI

WITH THE Monsoon Session of Parliament scheduled to begin on July 20, the BJP-led NDA government has stepped up its efforts to muster a two-thirds majority to push a fresh constitutional amendment Bill to advance reservation for women to 2029 — along with a Delimitation Bill for expansion of Lok Sabha from 543 MPs up to 850 — which was defeated in the Lower House in April.

BJP sources said the new constitutional amendment Bill will be brought in Parliament during the upcoming session only after ensuring the government has a two-thirds majority.

With 20 rebel TMC Lok Sabha MPs pledging their support to the NDA and six Shiv Sena (UBT) MPs joining the NDA's ally Shiv Sena, the ruling alliance's tally in the LS could rise from the existing 293 MPs to 329 if Speaker Om Birla deems these crossovers valid. However, even this number is below the required 360 for a two-thirds majority if all MPs are present and voting in the House.

So BJP is now trying to get Opposition parties like the NCP (SP), which has eight MPs, on board, sources said, adding that the party is optimistic that some non-NDA MPs may also abstain when the Bill is put to vote.

The Opposition camp has maintained that such attempts by the Narendra Modi government would not succeed.

"Despite misusing the central agencies to break the parties and offering everything possible to individual MPs, BJP cannot bulldoze this constitutional amendment Bill. The parties are very concerned about attempts BJP is making. They (BJP) are definitely trying their best, but are not going to succeed," Congress MP and party general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal told *The Indian Express*.

BJP leadership has been in discussions with DMK, which the treasury benches expects to "abstain if not vote in favour of the Bill". The DMK has yet to take a decision about its stand, even as it has already sought separate seating from the Congress benches in LS after the latter joined hands with Vijay's TVK to form a government following the recent Tamil Nadu polls. The DMK, which was ousted from power by the TVK, had earlier led a campaign over the delimitation issue, arguing that an exercise just on the basis of census data would be an "injustice" to the southern states that have succeeded in controlling population.

Sources in DMK said the government has reached out to the party leadership to find a "middle path". "We have concerns and we have conveyed it to them (BJP). As far as we know, the government is ready to address them positively. Now, there is no such issue that we cannot resolve. We are hopeful that they will come up with a solution," said a senior DMK leader.

Acknowledging the discussions between the government and her party over the issue, DMK leader Kanimozhi Karunanidhi told *The Indian Express*: "We have raised some issues. Tamil Nadu's interests will have to be protected. We will not allow the states to be punished for successfully implementing the population control measures."

@MKSTALIN

DMK chief M K Stalin burns a copy of the Bill in April. Party sources said govt has reached out to its leadership to find a "middle path".

Outreach to Opp

BJP sources said senior party leaders are "constantly in touch" with the regional leaders as well as individual MPs from the Opposition side, including from the SP and even Congress. "Hectic efforts are beig made. But we will not hurry the Bill unless adequate and more numbers are ensured. We do not want to take any chances," said a senior BJP leader.

The BJP has also been in backroom negotiations with the NCP(SP) to get its support for the proposed Bill, but the ruling party is wary of the Sharad Pawar-led outfit, sources said. "From our past experiences, there is a trust deficit issue when it comes to the NCP (SP). Our top leadership has respect for Sharad Pawar, but we have experienced last-minute flip from his party," said a BJP leader.

Some Congress leaders say they are concerned BJP could soon manage to secure the numbers required to push the Bill through Parliament. "But we will not let it happen without a fight," said a senior Congress MP.

"We have reached out to DMK for keeping the Opposition intact since the Opposition stood together to ensure the fall of the Bill in LS in April. It was (DMK chief) M K Stalin who burnt the Bill and led the campaign against the government's delimitation move. Congress MPs are not only from the South. We stood together for Opposition unity," the Congress MP said.

According to Congress MP, Tamil Nadu CM C Joseph Vijay's fresh assertion that the state would not accept the delimitation Bill was a "message" for the DMK. At a public meeting in Karur last Friday, Vijay argued that the delimitation Bill would "weaken" the southern states' representation in Parliament and reduce Tamil Nadu's share in central funding. "If DMK shifts its stand now, it will become Vijay's biggest political weapon against that party," said an Opposition leader.

Govt's calculus

In the April special session, the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 — meant to advance reservation of 33% seats for women in an expanded LS and Assemblies and facilitate delimitation of constituencies — was defeated in the Lok Sabha. Of the 528 members present in the House, 298 voted in favour of the Bill and 230 opposed it.

If the DMK's 22 LS MPs abstain and every other member in the House votes, the government would require 346 for a two-thirds majority. BJP sources say this target can be achieved.

According to BJP insiders, the decision of the Aparjitha Sarangi-led Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on the 130th constitutional amendment Bill to replace its provision for automatic "removal" of ministers after a 30-day detention for serious offences with "suspension" could also be seen as a "softening of the government's tough stance" for reaching out to the Opposition, especially the regional parties.

While retaining the clause that insists the ministers should demit office after 30 days of custody, the JPC has agreed for "softening" it on the basis of the suggestions given by several Opposition parties, state governments and law institutes.

In its draft report, the JPC is learnt to have added a sunset clause that says the suspension would lapse upon discharge, acquittal or failure of the prosecution within a defined period. This, sources said, was to address the Opposition's concerns over possible misuse of the law.

"While retaining the clause to ensure transparency, the ruling party has to be seen accommodating Opposition's demands. It can be seen as an outreach to regional parties for cooperation on other Bills too," said a BJP leader, adding that "the delimitation Bill is a priority". BJP currently has 114 MPs in RS which would rise to 117 as the party is set to win all three RS seats from West Bengal in July 24 bypolls. This will take NDA strength in 245-member House to 155, just nine short of the two-thirds mark of 164.

Format C-7

(for political parties to publish in the newspapers, social media platforms & website of the party)

Information regarding individuals with pending criminal cases, who have been selected as candidates, along with the reasons for selection, as also as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates.

(As per the Commission's directions issued in pursuance of the Order dated 13.02.2020 of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in contempt petition(C) no. 2192 of 2018 in WP(C) no. 536 of 2011)

Name of the Political Party : **BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY (BJP)**
*Name of the Election : **COUNCIL OF STATES (RAJYA SABHA) BYE ELECTION 2026**
Name of State/UT : WEST BENGAL
(1) Name of the Constituency : **RAJYA SABHA, West Bengal**
Name of the Candidate : **SUKHENDU SEKHAR RAY**

Sl. No.			
1.	Criminal antecedents		
	a.	Nature of the Offences	DEFAMATION
	b.	Case No.	Complaint Case No. 1573 of 2011
	c.	Name of the Court	Court of Ld. CJM at Alipoce
	d.	Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)	No
	e.	Date of conviction, if any	Not Applicable
	f.	Details of punishment undergone, if any	Not Applicable
	g.	Any other information required to be given	Nil
2.	The reasons for the selection of the candidate, Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere"winnability" at the polls (not more than 100 words)		The candidate is a highly educated person having Degrees of Master of Arts and Legum Baccalaureus (Bachelor of Law).He was also Law officer in a Central Public Sector Undertaking from 1983 to 1996 and he resumed legal practice in the Hon'ble High Court at Calcutta and also in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. He served as Vice President of Bar Association of Calcutta High Court for two years between 2011-13. These show both of his long standing legal career and leadership qualities as senior functionary of Bar Association of Calcutta High Court.
3.	Reason as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words)		No other candidate was considered because of the reasons mentioned herein above. Moreover, the candidate was a member of the Council of States(Rajya Sabha) from August 2011 till June 2026. His performance as a Member of Parliament for about 15 years was noteworthy, his profound knowledge in Rules and Procedures of Rajya Sabha was well recognised, overall contributions on issues of national importance were remarkable. According to the party assessment, he is much above the average candidates for selection by the party to contest the Bye- Election to the Rajya Sabha.

*In the case of election to Council of States or States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name of Constituency.

Signature of office bearer of the Political Party

Shashi Agnihotri
State General Secretary
BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY (BJP)
WEST BENGAL

Format C-7

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Name of the Political Party : **BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY (BJP)**
*Name of the Election : **COUNCIL OF STATES (RAJYA SABHA) BYE ELECTION 2026**
Name of State/UT : WEST BENGAL
(1) Name of the Constituency : **RAJYA SABHA, West Bengal**
Name of the Candidate : **PRAKASH CHIK BARAIK**

Sl. No.			
1.	Criminal antecedents		
	a.	Nature of the Offences	Criminal
	b.	Case No.	Kumargram Police Station Case no:- 102/18, Corresponding to G.R. 814/18 U/S 341/323/34 of IPC
	c.	Name of the Court	Chief Judicial Magistrate Court, Alipurduar
	d.	Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)	Yes
	e.	Date of conviction, if any	Not Applicable
	f.	Details of punishment undergone, if any	Not Applicable
	g.	Any other information required to be given	Chargesheet filed, Accused is on Bail
2.	The reasons for the selection of the candidate, Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere"winnability" at the polls (not more than 100 words)		The candidate belongs to Scheduled Tribe community and works relentlessly for the upliftment of the plantation labourers in remote areas of northern part of West Bengal. He was a member of the Rajya Sabha for three years.
3.	Reason as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words)		The candidate belongs to Scheduled Tribe community and works relentlessly for the upliftment of the plantation labourers in remote areas of northern part of West Bengal. He was a member of the Rajya Sabha for three years.

*In the case of election to Council of States or States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name of Constituency.

Signature of office bearer of the Political Party

Shashi Agnihotri
State General Secretary
BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY (BJP)
WEST BENGAL

EAST COAST RAILWAY

NOTICE FOR SHORTLISTING OF BRANDS / PRODUCTS OF PROPRIETARY ARTICLE DEPOT (PAD)

Notice No.: PAD-01/2026

Invites applications in the prescribed proforma from reputed manufacturers of **Proprietary Article Depot (PAD)** brands for short listing of their brands/products to be sold through licensee run static catering units, MPS units & Fresh Fruit and Juice Stalls at stations under the jurisdiction of East Coast Railway.

Application form can be obtained from the office of the **Principal Chief Commercial Manager, East Coast Railway, Ground Floor, North Block, Rail Sadan, Bhubaneswar on any working day between 10:00 hrs to 18:00 hrs up to 06.08.2026**. The cost of application is Rs. 5,900/- (Rupees Five Thousand Nine Hundred only inclusive of 18% GST). (Rs. 5,000/- + 18% GST i.e. 900/- = Rs. 5900/-). It is to be paid in the form of Demand Draft drawn in favour of PFA/East Coast Railway, Bhubaneswar and submitted along with the application and documents. The application form and other terms & conditions can also be downloaded from East Coast Railway's website i.e. **https://eastcoastrail. indianrailways.gov.in**. Please search as Tender >> Expression of Interest of the portal.

The applications can be put in the drop box kept in office of the Principal Chief Commercial Manager, East Coast Railway, Ground Floor, North Block, Rail Sadan, Bhubaneswar on working days between 10:00 hrs to 18:00 hrs after the issue of this notification till 07/08/2026 at 11:00 hrs. Any application submitted after the aforesaid date and time will not be accepted. It is also clarified that this is not a tender notice but application for shortlisting of brands of PAD. The applications will be opened on 07.08.2026 at 12:00 hrs.

PR-296/R/26-27 **Chief Commercial Manager (Catg.)/Bhubaneswar**

यूको बैंक UCO BANK

(A Govt. of India Undertaking)

ZONAL OFFICE, SILIGURI

HILL CART ROAD, SILIGURI - 734001

PREMISES REQUIRED

Bank desires to take premises on rent having 800-1000square feet (for Branch) of carpet area preferably on Ground Floor or Premises on first floor if the same is in Malls, Shopping Centers where infrastructure facilities like lifts, escalators are available.

The premises are required in the following localities for opening of its Branch/Office:-

Sl no.	Location	Purpose	Nearest Branch / Office
1	Balurghat	Branch	UCO BANK Balurghat Branch Prachya Bharti Road P.O.Balurghat Dist Dakshin Dinajpur PIN -733101 Siliguri Zonal Office, Rajani Bagan, Hill cart Road, Siliguri, West Bengal 734001
2	Jajigram	Branch	Jajigram Vill & PO Jajigram District Birbhum Pin-731221 Siliguri Zonal Office, Rajani Bagan, Hill cart Road, Siliguri, West Bengal 734001

The details may be collected from Bank's nearest office as mentioned above or can be down loaded from our Bank's web Site at www.ucobank.com . The last date of application in sealed cover on prescribed format till 05.08.2026 (05th August 2026).

Date: 14.07.2026 **(Puneet Kumar)**
Place: Siliguri **Zonal Head, Siliguri Zone**

इंडियन बैंक Indian Bank

इलाहाबाद ALLAHABAD

ZONAL OFFICE : MIDNAPORE
Station Road, Opposite Old Water Tank
Paschim Midnapore, Pin - 721 101

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES

APPENDIX - IV - A [See Proviso to Rule 8(6) & 9(1)]

E-auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable / Movable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) & 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described Immovable / Movable Property mortgaged / charged to the Secured Creditor, the **Symbolic Possession** of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of **Indian Bank (Secured Creditor)**, will be sold on "**As is where is basis**", "**As is what is basis**" and "**Whatever there is basis**" on **27.07.2026** for recovery of the amount as mentioned below against each account due to the **Indian Bank(Secured Creditor)**, from the below mentioned Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s).

The specific details of the Peoperty intended to be brought to sale through e-auction mode are enumerated below :

Sl. No.	a) Name of Account / Borrower b) Name of the Branch	Detailed Description of the Immovable Property	Secured Creditors Outstanding Dues	a) Reserve Price b) EMD Amount c) Bid Increment Amount d) Property ID e) Encumbrance on Property f) Type of Possession
1.	**a) M/s. Ghanti Agency Prop. : Shri Pradyot Kumar Ghanti (Borrower)** **Shri Pradyot Kumar Ghanti (Borrower / Mortgagor / Guarantor),** **Shri Prabin Bera (Guarantor)** **All are at :** Vill - Uttar Patharberia, P.O. - Udbadal, Dist - Purba Midnapore, Pin - 721 425. **b) Khatial Branch**	Land & Building at Mouza - Uttar Patharberia, J.L. No. 277, LR Khatian No. 723, LR Plot No. 629, Area 03.50 Decimal, Nature - Bastu, P.S. - Bhupatinagar, Dist - Purba Midnapore, West Bengal, Pin - 721 425, **standing in the name of Shri Pradyot Kumar Ghanti** vide Sale Deed No. 3550 dated 02.09.2016, **Boundaries of the Property :** North - Land of Subodh Ghanti, South - House of Himangshu Ghanti, East - House of Abhay Ghanti, West - 6 feet wide Common Road.	**Rs. 16,58,884.00** (Rupees Sixteen Lakhs Fifty Eight Thousand Eight Hundred Eighty Four only) as on **09.10.2025**, with further interest, costs, other charges and expenses thereon.	**a) Rs. 9,00,000.00** (Rupees Nine Lakhs only) **b) Rs. 90,000.00** (Rupees Ninety Thousand only) **c) Rs. 10,000.00** (Rupees Ten Thousand only) **d) IDIB6608028934** **e) Not known to Bank** **f) Symbolic Possession**
2.	**a) Mr. Tuhin Suvra Ghosh (Borrower & Mortgagor)** Flat No. 2A, 2nd Floor, Chatterjee Building, Miya Bazar, P.O. - Midnapore, P.S. - Midnapore, Dist - Paschim Midnapore, Pin - 721 101. **b) Midnapore Branch**	Flat being No. 2-A on 2nd Floor measuring super Build up area 630 Sq.ft. of the building known as "Chatterjee Building" Mouza - Miyabazar, J.L. No. 173, under the jurisdiction of Midnapore Municipality Ward No. 8 (O) 11 (N), Mahalla Aligunj, Holding No. 558/1, Hal LR Khatian No. 4554 & 4742, RS Plot No. 1546, 1547, 1548, 1550 and corresponding LR Plot No. 2339, Sub Registry Office - Midnapore Sadar, within Police Station Midnapore, Dist - Paschim Midnapore, Pin - 721 101, **standing in the name of Tuhin Suvra Ghosh** vide Title Deed No. 2062 for the year 2021.	**Rs. 15,99,596.00** (Rupees Fifteen Lakhs Ninety Nine Thousand Five Hundred Ninety Six only) due as on **08.02.2024** with further interest, costs, other charges and expenses thereon.	**a) Rs. 12,60,000.00** (Rupees Twelve Lakhs Sixty Thousand only) **b) Rs. 1,26,000.00** (Rupees One Lakh Twenty Six Thuosand only) **c) Rs. 10,000.00** (Rupees Ten Thuosand only) **d) IDIB7005732950** **e) Not known to Bank** **f) Physical Possession**

Date and Time of E-auction : Date - 27.07.2026; Time - 11.00 A.M. to 05.00 P.M.
Platform of E-auction Service Provider : https://baanknet.com

Bidders are advised to visit the website (**https://baanknet.com**) of our e-auction service provider PSB Alliance Pvt. Ltd. to participate in online bid. For Technical Assistance Please call **PSB Alliance Pvt. Ltd. Helpdesk No. 82912 20220, email ID : support.BAANKNET@psballiance.com** and other help line numbers available in service providers helpdesk. For Registration status with PSB Alliance Pvt. Ltd. and EMD status, please contact **support.BAANKNET@psballiance.com**.

For property details and photograph of the property and auction terms and conditions please visit : **https://baanknet.com** and for clarifications related to this portal, please contact **Helpdesk No. 82912 20220**.

Bidders are advised to use Property ID Number mentioned above while searching for the property in the website with https://baanknet.com.

NOTE : THIS IS ALSO A NOTICE TO THE BORROWER(S) / MORTGAGOR(S) / GUARANTOR(S)

Date : 09.07.2026 / Place : Midnapore **Authorised Officer / Indian Bank**

DHARAVI REVAMP

BMC plans to lease out 15 acres of Mulund dumpsite to Adani-govt firm

Pratip Acharya
Mumbai, July 13

THE BRIHANMUMBAI Municipal Corporation (BMC) will lease out 15 acres of the erstwhile Mulund dumping ground to Navbharat Mega Developers Private Limited (NMDPL), the special purpose vehicle (SPV) jointly owned by the Adani Group and the Maharashtra government that is executing the ambitious Dharavi Redevelopment Project (DRP).

The proposal, which had been under discussion within the civic administration for the past few months, has now gained momentum, with the BMC's Solid Waste Management (SWM) department set to place the draft proposal before the Improvement Committee later this month for final approval.

The civic body expects to generate nearly Rs 103 crore through the proposed five-year lease.

The BMC had earlier handed over 124 acres within the larger 311-acre Deonar landfill to the Adani Group for the Dharavi Redevelopment Project (DRP), which is being executed by NMDPL, in which Adani Properties Private Limited (APPL) holds an 80% stake, while the remaining 20% is held by the Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA).

Unlike Deonar landfill, earmarked for constructing housing tenements under the Dharavi Redevelopment Project, the Mulund land parcel will be used to establish a ready-mix concrete (RMC) plant and a casting yard to support construction activities under the project.

NCP leader issues legal notice over Sunetra's election as party chief

Praful Patel calls for 'corrective measures' in the party after Ajit Pawar's death

Alok Deshpande
Mumbai, July 13

THE SIMMERING discontent within the NCP spilled into the open on Monday, with a senior office-bearer mounting a legal challenge to Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar's election as the party's national president even as working president Praful Patel publicly called for "corrective measures" in the organisation's functioning.

The twin developments exposed fresh fault lines within the party months after former Deputy CM Ajit Pawar's death.

National secretary Sachchidanand Singh has issued a legal notice to Sunetra Pawar, Praful Patel and the party's national general secretary and election nodal officer Brijmohan Srivastava, challenging the organisational election process and seeking that Sunetra Pawar's election be declared "illegal, non-existent and void".

The developments come amid growing unease within the section of the party over its functioning after Ajit Pawar's death, with some leaders privately expressing concern over what they describe as the increasing influence of Rajya Sabha MP Parth Pawar in organisational affairs.

Acknowledging the challenges before the party, Praful Patel told reporters Monday, "It is difficult to fill in the vacuum created after the death of Ajit Pawar. The party needs to take corrective measures."

The legal notice, issued on July 9, alleges that party leadership violated the NCP constitution while electing Sunetra Pawar at the party's national convention held in Mumbai on February 26. According to Singh, who also heads NCP's Jharkhand unit, a meeting held on February 17 following Ajit Pawar's demise had decided that Praful Patel would serve as interim national president. However, he alleges that the very next day, the process to elect a new national president was initiated without following procedures laid down in the party constitution.


Notice alleges NCP leadership violated the party's constitution while electing Sunetra Pawar at the convention on February 26. PTI FILE

Singh has alleged that the authority to convene a national convention and initiate the presidential election rested only with the authorised acting president and not with the general secretary. The notice alleges that mandatory constitutional processes — including appointment of an independent election authority, publication of an election schedule, invitation of nominations and voting procedures — were bypassed.

The complainant also said that despite being an incumbent national secretary, he was neither formally informed about the convention nor given an opportunity to file his nomination or participate in the election process. He claimed he attended the convention in February and raised objections, but was ignored.

The notice gives the party leadership 15 days to withdraw the documents submitted to the Election Commission, declare Sunetra's election and the list of office-bearers void, constitute an independent central election authority and conduct fresh organisational elections in accordance with the party constitution.

It warns that if these demands are not met, Singh will approach both the courts and the EC. The NCP did not immediately respond to queries seeking its response.

Discontent over Parth

Since his election to the RS in April, Parth Pawar has become increasingly influential in party affairs, calling the shots on behalf of his mother Sunetra and leading to discontent among several MLAs and office-bearers, NCP sources said.

A section in the NCP is also skeptical about the effectiveness of Parth Pawar as the party's face, claiming he is reluctant to go out and interact with the public.

Moreover, despite repeated assurances that BJP will return Finance portfolio, once held by Ajit Pawar, to NCP, the party leadership has failed to secure the ministry. Both Sunetra and Parth met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi, where the issue was reportedly discussed.

Ladakh's all 7 dists to get autonomous hill development councils: Chief Secy

Press Trust of India
Leh, July 13

IN A landmark move, the Ladakh administration on Monday announced an Autonomous Hill Development Council (AHDC) for each of its seven districts, extending the existing framework of elected local self-governance beyond Leh and Kargil.

Announcing the decision, Chief Secretary Ashish Kundra also said the proposed Union Territory-level body under a customised Article 371 framework would sit above the seven Hill Councils, exercising legislative, executive, financial and administrative powers — a first-of-its-kind governance model tailored for Ladakh.

Ladakh moved from two districts to seven in April 2026, when Sham, Nubra, Changthang, Zanskar and Drass were notified. Elected representation until now has stayed with the two existing Councils in Leh and Kargil.

"The Ladakh Administration has decided to constitute an Autonomous Hill Development Council in each of the seven districts. It is a major step towards democratic decentralisation and grassroots governance," the chief secretary told reporters here.

Explaining the legal framework, Kundra said Section 3(1) of the Ladakh AHDC Act already provides for the constitution of a council in every district through a government notification published in the Official Gazette.

He said only the necessary amendments to the Act, wherever required, and the delimitation of constituencies remain before the new councils can be constituted.

Kundra said each of the seven councils will enjoy the full powers set out in the LAHDC Act. "The new districts get the same authority that Leh has held since 1995 and Kargil since 2003, not a reduced version of it," he said.

The hill councils have authority over land ownership and land allotment within the district. Sham, Nubra, Changthang, Zanskar and Drass will exercise that authority within their own boundaries, he said.

Councils regulate recruitment and promotion for district cadre posts, he said, adding employment decisions in the new districts will rest with an elected body inside the district.

Kundra said each AHDC will have a dedicated Council Fund and the authority to levy taxes, fees and other charges in accordance with the law, giving every district an independent revenue base.

He said the councils will prepare their own development plans, enabling each district to determine its priorities instead of relying on decisions taken in Leh or Kargil. The councils will oversee key sectors such as health, education, tourism, local infrastructure and social welfare programmes at the district level, strengthening decentralised governance and service delivery, he said.

The chief secretary also outlined the administration's proposal for a Union Territory-level institution above the seven Councils under a customised Article 371 framework.

The proposed body would exercise legislative, executive, financial and administrative powers, and would be a first-of-its-kind model drawing on the best features of similar constitutional and administrative arrangements elsewhere in the country, he said.

BJP leader Tashi Gyalson hailed the extension of the LAHDC framework to all seven districts of Ladakh as a "historic milestone".

The party said the decision would strengthen grassroots democracy and ensure greater public participation in decision-making. Gyalson, a former chairman-cum-chief executive councillor of the LAHDC Leh, expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah for the move.

CM listening, Narottam: 'Will ensure Datia win, no conflict'

Anand Mohan J
Bhopal, July 13

JUST THREE days after his supporters brought traffic to a standstill, clashed with police and threatened mass resignations over the BJP denying him a ticket, former Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra shared the stage with Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, urging party workers to rally behind the man who replaced him.

At Ashutosh Tiwari's nomination rally in Datia on Monday, Mishra appeared visibly emotional as senior BJP leaders, including Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, sought to console him.

During the rally, the CM also told Mishra that the responsibility of ensuring Tiwari's win in these bypolls was on his shoulders. Yadav urged Mishra to consider Tiwari as a younger brother and ensure his victory.

Growing emotional, Mishra said, "There is no major internal conflict within the BJP; I am telling you the truth... From the 16th, I will camp right here myself. Together with all the workers, I will bow my head in respect at every single doorstep in Datia. I will visit every single village. I will ensure Ashutosh's victory."


BJP candidate Ashutosh Tiwari files his nomination papers for the Datia bypoll in Datia on Monday. PTI

The public display of loyalty came after a meeting of Chief Minister Yadav, state BJP president Hemant Khandelwal and the central leadership. For the party, this is significant as "the party organisation has for now managed to win over Mishra" to help "contain a rebellion that threatened to overshadow the by-election campaign", party sources said.

The episode also leaves Mishra at an inflection point in his political career.

Once regarded as one of the BJP's most influential leaders in Madhya Pradesh and a potential chief ministerial contender, he has now suffered consecutive setbacks — the 2023 Assembly defeat followed by the denial of a bypoll ticket that many believed would mark his return.

Meanwhile, the Congress candidate, Ghanshayam Singh, has been asserting that the BJP has damaged itself by not nominating Mishra. Singh not only belongs to Datia's erstwhile royal family, which commands respect among the local population, but has also won the seat twice, in 1993 and 2003, on the Congress ticket.

Kuki-Zo bodies turn to Mizoram to revive talks with Naga, urge Centre to defuse Manipur crisis

Deeptiman Tiwary
New Delhi, July 13

WITH EFFORTS to start a dialogue between Kuki-Zo tribes and Tangkhul Nagas in Manipur making little headway, Kuki civil society groups are now hoping that an intervention from Mizoram can help break the deadlock.

A delegation of Kuki-Zo Church leaders is headed to Aizawl to meet church authorities there and urge them to impress upon Naga church leadership in Manipur and Nagaland to facilitate dialogue aimed at ending the ongoing Naga-Kuki conflict.

"We have tried to reach out to the United Naga Council for a dialogue, but it has not been successful. So, a delegation of the Kuki-Zo Church is heading to Aizawl to talk to church authorities there. A meeting is scheduled for tomorrow (Tuesday). We hope the church in Mizoram can impress upon the Naga church authorities in Manipur and Nagaland to engage in dialogue," Kuki Zonal Council (KZC) chairman Henlienthang Thanglet told *The Indian Express*.

The outreach to Mizoram comes even as Kuki civil society organisations intensified their engagement with the Centre in Delhi, pressing for what they described as "equal justice" for the community, restoration of humanitarian access to affected areas and an expedited political solution to the larger ethnic conflict in Manipur.

The KZC and the Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM), another influential Kuki body, were in Delhi over the weekend and Monday, where they met the Centre's North East interlocutor Ajit Lal and Director of Intelligence Bureau Mahesh Dixit. The delegations also submitted a memorandum to Union Home Minister Amit Shah detailing what they described as a worsening humanitarian and security situation in Kuki-dominated areas.

At a press conference in Delhi Monday, KZC spokesperson Ginza Vualzong said the suffering of the Kuki-Zo community in the ongoing Naga conflict had not received the same attention as other incidents.

"Everyone is talking about the six Naga hostages. People don't know about the suffering the Kuki-Zo are going through. Fifteen Kuki-Zo people have been killed at the hands of NSCN(IM) and other armed groups and 14 villages have been burnt down. We condemned the killing of the Naga hostages, but justice must be equal. We are also victims," he said.

Around two dozen people have been killed in Naga-Kuki clashes since January this year, while several villages belonging to both communities have been torched.

Vualzong alleged that Kuki villagers in Kangpokpi district were facing shortage of food, medicines and fuel because supplies routed through Senapati had been disrupted. "Our right to live is being denied. In some villages people are not allowed to buy food. Half a bag of rice costs Rs 3,500 and a litre of petrol costs Rs 250. We are requesting the government to ensure uninterrupted movement of essential commodities and guarantee access to healthcare."

The organisations reiterated that the humanitarian crisis reinforced their demand for a separate administrative arrangement for Kuki-Zo people. Vualzong said the organisations had urged the Centre to expedite political dialogue with Suspension of Operations (SoO) groups.

KIM president Ch Ajang Khongsai said the memorandum submitted to Shah sought "immediate intervention on the grave security and humanitarian crisis facing the Kuki-Zo people".

Kishor files papers for Bankipur bypoll; declares Rs 96 crore assets, eight cases

Santosh Singh
Patna, July 13

JAN SURAAJ Party founder Prashant Kishor has assets worth Rs 96.06 crore, while his wife has assets worth Rs 101.93 crore, his election affidavit shows.

Kishor, a candidate for the Bankipur bypoll, filed his nomination on Monday. According to the affidavit, he has movable assets worth Rs 22.19 crore, while his wife, Dr Jahanvi Das, has movable assets worth Rs 89.51 crore.

His personal wealth is primarily derived from unlisted corporate equity, including a 100% controlling stake in Vedhas Ventures Private Limited valued at Rs 95.26 crore, along with over Rs 7.36 crore in bank fixed deposits and market investments.

On the immovable property front, Kishor owns a dismantled rice mill in Rohtas, Bihar, spread over more than three acres, residential properties in Patna's Patliputra Colony, New Delhi's Vasant Vihar and Ghaziabad, and has shares in ancestral property. His total immovable assets are valued at Rs 73.87 crore, while his wife's stand at Rs 12.42 crore.

The affidavit also shows that Kishor faces eight pending criminal cases, primarily registered in 2024 and 2025. While he has no prior convictions and no formal charges have been framed against him, the cases involve allegations ranging from unlawful assembly, rioting, obstructing public servants and criminal conspiracy to criminal defamation.

Several of these matters, originating from police stations including Gandhi Maidan, Sachivalaya and Pirbahore in Patna, are undergoing revision and legal review before the Patna High Court, while a few defamation complaints remain at the pre-cognisance stage before Chief Judicial Magistrates.


Jan Suraaj founder Prashant Kishore files his nomination papers for Bankipur bypoll, in Patna on Monday. ANI

Academically, Kishor has an extensive educational background spanning several domestic and international institutions.

Prior to filing his nomination, Kishor led a procession from the Scout and Guide Ground, which culminated at the District Collectorate. A large turnout of Jan Suraj workers, supporters and residents joined as supporters raised slogans such as "Ladenge Bankipur, Jeetenge Bankipur" ("We will fight for Bankipur, we will win Bankipur") throughout the route.

After filing his papers, Kishor told reporters, "This is not just my nomination; it is a nomination for the changing face of Bihar and for a better future for the state. It marks the beginning of a call to oust criminals from power."

Maharashtra govt orders high-level probe into Pune building collapse

Manoj More
Pune, July 13

FIVE DAYS after the waste-to-energy plant at the Moshi garbage depot of the Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) collapsed, killing nine employees, the Maharashtra government on Monday announced a high-level inquiry panel, headed by Pune Divisional Commissioner Sheetal Teli-Ugale, to "conduct an objective and impartial probe."

The probe has been ordered by the Urban Development Department. The committee has been asked to submit its preliminary report within one month and its final report within two months after fixing responsibility and suggesting preventive measures.

The government order said the committee shall conduct a thorough inquiry from technical, administrative and other relevant perspectives and submit a report.

Significantly, the committee has been asked to recommend disciplinary or criminal action against those found responsible for administrative negligence, technical lapses, breach of contract, violation of environmental rules or failure to follow safety regulations. It has also been asked to assess the loss of life, injuries, property damage and other impacts caused by the incident.

'Can't suppress past': BJP Sikh leaders weigh in to support *Satluj*

Raakhi Jagga
Ludhiana, July 13

Villagers at a special screening of *Satluj* in Gurdaspur. AP

THE BJP'S efforts to keep a safe distance from the spreading heat over issues raised by the film *Satluj* are coming under strain.

BJP Sikh leaders have expressed unease over Union Minister of State Ravneet Singh Bittu taking the lead in attacking the film and calling it a "one-sided" view of militancy years. In a swipe at Bittu, senior BJP leader and former IPS officer Iqbal Singh Lalpura said, "every person should remain within limits".

For the BJP, winning Sikh support is an uphill battle, given its estrangement from once-ally Akali Dal and the anger within the community over its farm laws. The party's Sikh leaders fear that Bittu's stance against the Diljit Dosanjh-starrer, based on the life of slain activist Jaswant Singh Khalra, will further push the community away.

Several BJP leaders *The Indian Express* spoke to asserted that no killing of innocents was justified — whether by militants or by police in alleged fake encounters. They also dismissed the argument that the film could inflame tensions between Sikhs and Hindus.

Officially, the BJP's position is as stated by its state president Kewal Singh Dhillon. Expressing his support to "Punjab's cinema and its artistes", he said: "When serious concerns were raised over the manner in which *Satluj* was removed from OTT, I felt it was my responsibility to place the matter before the government. I welcome the Centre's prompt decision to refer the issue to a review committee. Due process, transparency and respect for Punjab's cultural and creative voices must always go hand in hand."

Senior Supreme Court Advocate and BJP leader Harvinder Singh Phoolka said he supported showing the film as the younger generation must understand the realities of the militancy era, and advised Bittu to "not enter into any unnecessary controversy". "The killings of innocent people should never be forgotten irrespective of religion, and the guilty not be forgiven," Phoolka said.

Adding that it was to Punjab's credit that it defied attempts to inject communal disharmony during the time, he said: "The targeted Hindu killings were done by militants while innocent Sikhs were killed in the name of encounters by police."

Having led the legal fight for many 1984 anti-Sikh riot victims, Phoolka added: "Movies such as *Satluj* must be made to tell our generation how we all overcame those difficult times."

Lalpura appealed for "restraint". "I don't want to speak much about Bittu's comments, but every person should remain within limits. Khalra gave an account that 25,000 people were killed, and later some of it was verified by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)... If there is any confusion about the data, Bittu can take that figure from the NHRC and shouldn't blow up the issue," Lalpura, who earlier headed the National Commission for Minorities, said.

Supporting that "both sides of the story" should be told, he said the origins of militancy should not be ignored either. On the BJP stand, he added: "The party is always for Punjab, Punjabi and Punjabiyat... We all are Punjabis irrespective of our religion."

Rajya Sabha MP Vikramjit Sahney said any film based on historical events should be viewed as an artistic interpretation and must not become a means to reopen old wounds or create fresh divisions. "It is well-established that Khalra pursued the issue of disappearances only through constitutional and legal means. The Supreme Court and NHRC took cognizance of these issues, the CBI registered 62 cases, and his own abduction and murder ultimately led to convictions."

On whether *Satluj* was one-sided, Sahney said: "It is a film centred on one specific chapter... it (does not) seek to present the entire history of terrorism and militancy. Equally, neither Diljit Dosanjh nor the makers of the film have sought to justify terrorism or diminish the immense suffering caused by militancy."

Punjab BJP vice-president Fateh Jung Bajwa said his family had personally suffered during militancy, and therefore he understood the significance of portraying that period. Bajwa's father Satnam Singh Bajwa, a three-time MLA, was killed by militants in July 1987. His brother Partap Singh Bajwa is the Congress Leader of the Opposition.

Fears that Punjab's communal harmony would be disturbed by the film were unfounded, Fateh Jung added. "It stayed intact during the militancy and it is intact now."

Asked about Sikh leaders in the BJP backing Satluj, Bittu said: "Lalpuraji is our respected senior leader and I will definitely take his advice. He himself was posted as SP in the border zone during that period and hence has seen everything from close."

He added that his "only concern" was that his grandfather Beant Singh, the CM of Punjab who was assassinated by militants, was being implicated in the alleged disappearances. "Till he was alive, there was no police case against Khalraji and he was never questioned by police... My grandfather was assassinated on August 31, 1995, and Khalra was abducted on September 6, 1995, and later killed in October 1995. So where does his (Beant Singh's) role come in?"

Bittu reiterated that the figure of 25,000 disappearances was unfounded. "Verify the records from the NHRC website, and the data is not even 2,000."

Khalra's wife urges Akal Takht to form 'people's panel' on disappearances

Express News Service
Chandigarh, July 13

PARAMJIT KAUR Khalra, the widow of the late human rights activist Jaswant Singh Khalra, on Monday appealed to the Akal Takht to form a 'people's commission' to establish the actual number of people who went missing or were killed in alleged fake police encounters in the 1980s to 1990s, the period when militancy was at its peak in Punjab.

The appeal comes a day before the supreme temporal seat of the Sikhs will hold a special 'ardas' (prayers) for the victims whose cases were brought to light by Khalra, and seek justice for the affected families. The ardas is being held at Harike Pattan, where Khalra's body is believed to have been disposed of after his abduction and killing in 1995.

In a post on X in Punjabi, Paramjit Kaur urged Punjabis, the Sikh community, and human rights supporters to unite in the pursuit of truth and accountability.

Raising the Army action at Golden Temple in June 1984 and the anti-Sikh riots in November 1984, she said "the unidentified bodies...thousands of fake police encounters in the years that followed still demand accountability and justice".

"We respectfully request the Jathedar Sahib that a People's Commission be formed to bring forth the true count of people who went missing in Punjab during the 1980s and 1990s, the unidentified bodies, and those killed in fake police encounters," she said.

"Those bodies, whose identities were revealed through the martyrdom of Sardar (Jaswant Singh) Khalra, should be given their rightful place in the Central Sikh Museum (in Amritsar), as they deserve," she said and added that the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee should provide financial assistance to the victims' families.

In her appeal, she alleged that successive governments failed to deliver justice to victims' families and had instead protected some police officers accused of human rights violations. She named several former police officers and alleged that governments led by different political parties had extended patronage to them while victims' families continued to face legal and financial hardships.

Meanwhile, Union Minister Ravneet Singh Bittu said he supports the demand for an independent, impartial enquiry into the killings of innocent civilians, bus passengers, and police personnel.

Four 'juveniles' murder watchman, escape from observation home

Jayprakash S Naidu
Raipur, July 13

FOUR MEN, who were sent to an observation home a few years back when they were juveniles, allegedly murdered a watchman of the facility before escaping on scooters stolen from the staff in Chhattisgarh's Bilaspur district early on Monday.

The incident took place at around 2 am at the government-run juvenile observation home situated in Sarkanda area of Bilaspur. The 40-year-old deceased, Narendra Kumar Khande, a Bilaspur resident, was among the ten staffers at the facility which housed around 50 inmates brought there in criminal cases. Khande was the only watchman and there were no security guards, the police said.

A police official said that the incident was pre-planned. The four, all aged between 18 to 20 years, attacked Khande when the rest of the inmates were asleep. They first gagged his mouth with cloth and then tied his hands and legs. He was strangled to death, police said.

The four then picked up the keys of two staffers' scooters and fled. The four men also took the Digital Video Recorder (DVR) of the CCTV cameras. The matter came to light only at 8 am when other staffers woke up.

When asked how the accused, who are adults, were kept at a juvenile home, an official said, "When they were brought here, they were minors. They are kept here till the age of 21."

The mastermind in the case is said to be a 20-year-old man who was to turn 21 years old in a few months leading police to suspect he committed the crime deliberately to escape from the facility before he could be shifted. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Bilaspur, Rajnesh Singh said, "Three of the accused are residents of Raigarh district, while the fourth one hailed from Korba district. We have registered a case of murder and our teams have been dispatched to find them."

Luxury township plan in Goa: Villagers' protest completes 100 days, echo in Delhi

Pavneet Singh Chadha
Panaji, July 13

Residents and activists protest against the project in Panaji. EXPRESS

A GROUP of villagers and activists staged a protest in Panaji on Monday against a proposed real estate project, alleging that the luxury township project threatens the village's ecology, water security and agricultural heritage.

The protest marked the completion of 100 days of a sit-in by people of Karapur and Sarvan villages in North Goa's Bicholim taluka.

The villagers alleged that the township project, One Goa, promoted by realty developer, the House of Abhinandan Lodha, proposes to develop over 53 hectares of land, and the project's first phase includes construction of 1,388 luxury villa plots, a 5-star hotel and an artificial beach, converting agricultural and hilltop land into a luxury township. A delegation of villagers protested at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi, too.

The promoters of the project said all approvals for the project were in place and accused activists of trying to "politicise the issue".

The protesters, however, demanded the immediate suspension of all project activities and mega housing projects in the villages, a comprehensive and independent environmental impact assessment before any further development, and the protection of agricultural lands, groundwater recharge areas and ecologically sensitive hill ecosystems.

Norma Alvares, environmental lawyer, said, "The larger issue here is the protest of the villagers against real estate projects, which are coming up in their village, changing its demography, and bringing in... people with different objectives into a village and destroying its harmony."

"The main objective is that the villagers do not want a [real estate] project, which will lead to the destruction of their village. The project will take away their water resources... You are going to bring in a whole lot of people... 1,388 plots... luxury plots. It means a whole new township, without any environment clearance, without any oversight of the government... simply a project, which is approved under the now-discredited section 17 (2) and 39 A of the Town and Country Planning (TCP) Act," Alvares alleged.

A group of citizens and activists had filed a petition in the High Court of Bombay at Goa last year, questioning the approvals granted for the development project on 53.5 hectares of land, with the first phase comprising 1,388 plots for building constructions, and other structures such as clubhouse, gym, 5-star hotel, artificial beach, etc, "without any assessment of environmental impact and environment clearance".

The petition argued that the project involved "clear and unambiguous display of conflict of interest, colourable exercise of power and abuse of power" by the Town and Country Planning Department, in the approvals granted under section 17(2)/39A of the TCP Act. The matter is pending before the High Court.

A spokesperson for the House of Abhinandan Lodha, in a statement, said they were "open to dialogue", but alleged that there was an effort from activists to "politicise the issue rather than present the facts".

"We have consistently maintained that all the required approvals for our project are in place, and we are also open to dialogue with the villagers who are the real stakeholders. Despite this, certain activists have repeatedly attempted to politicise the issue, as every possible attempt to disrupt the progress, legally, of our project has failed. Since these efforts have not succeeded, they have now taken the matter to Delhi, reportedly with the backing of a political party," the statement said.

"We believe this approach is unnecessary and does not serve the interests of Goa. Instead of these activists pursuing personal political ambitions, their focus should be on the state's development and the long-term benefits that balanced and responsible development can bring to Goa's villages, local communities, and economy," it added.

Days after going on 'murder spree', POCSO accused found dead in Telangana village

Nikhila Henry
Hyderabad, July 13

A 35-YEAR-OLD man who allegedly killed six persons, including a teenage girl whom he was accused of stalking in Telangana's Ranga Reddy district, was found dead in a village about 25 km from his home.

The man, who had been booked in a POCSO case, on Friday night allegedly killed the 16-year-old girl he was accused of stalking, her mother and grandmother, as well as his own wife and two sons.

After the POCSO case was registered in May, the man had gone into hiding and applied for anticipatory bail, which was granted and he was released on personal bond in June.

Friday night's killings took place in a town and the man's native village, both of which are just a few kilometres away from Hyderabad. A manhunt had been underway to locate him, police said.

"His body was found near his uncle's place of residence. There was a poison or herbicide bottle next to the body. We have sent the bottle for sampling and have sent the body for postmortem," a senior police officer told *The Indian Express*.

A forensic report is expected soon, the officer said.

EXPRESS special

MP Police on their heels, woman of Kumbh fame, husband stay in hiding

Shaju Philip & Anand Mohan J
Thiruvananthapuram, Bhopal, July 13

Kerala HC vacates order granting couple protection after police said it could not locate the inter-faith couple

FOR THREE months now, the woman who courted fame during the 2025 Mahakumbh Mela held in Uttar Pradesh and her husband have lived in fear, moving from one city to another in Kerala chased by allegations regarding their inter-faith marriage.

The fear is closing in again with the interim bail given by the Kerala High Court to the husband, in a POCSO case in Madhya Pradesh, ending earlier this month. The Madhya Pradesh Police have been camping in Kerala to take the husband back with them.

Last week, the Kerala High Court also vacated its earlier order granting police protection to the couple, after police said it could not locate them. Dhanam Kannan, a film professional who has been helping the couple, told *The Indian Express*: "The couple had given my address to court, but they are afraid of staying there because of the Madhya Pradesh Police. We do not know where they have gone. Hence, the court vacated the protection order."

The case against the husband, 26, was filed by the woman's father, claiming that his daughter was a minor, and had been abducted. She has however produced documents showing she is 18. As she belongs to a tribal community, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) is also probing the matter.

In their plea to the High Court seeking police protection, the couple said she had got a call threatening her that while she had become "a star" during the Kumbh Mela, she had "got married to a Pakistani". "The caller threatened to shoot her."

Kannan said: "Apart from the Madhya Pradesh Police chasing him, hardline Hindutva groups in Kerala have also come out against the husband."

He said other colleagues besides him have been helping the two. "They do not stay in one place. They are not using mobile phones either... They are afraid that the Hindutva groups may hand them over to similar groups in Madhya Pradesh."

Following the spotlight on the woman at the Mahakumbh Mela, she had got some media offers, and it was for this that she came to Kerala in March, and met the 26-year-old.

As they expressed their desire to marry, her father filed a case and insisted she return with him to Madhya Pradesh. The couple sought asylum at a police station in Thiruvananthapuram and, after she refused to go with her father, the film crew stepped in to help them get married.

A senior Madhya Pradesh Police officer said the case was under investigation. "We are proceeding with our investigation and may also add additional Sections relating to forgery in the case. Our investigation has found that false documents were used to secure the marriage certificate."

Her parents have said that the birth certificate she submitted, showing her date of birth as January 1, 2008, and making her 18-plus, was the result of an error.

The father said he had submitted an application to "(the) Tehsildar requesting that an order be issued for the issuance of a revised birth certificate for his daughter, reflecting the accurate date of birth obtained from hospital records".

Sources said the NCST has also determined the woman to be a minor, with the hospital where she was born recording her date of birth as December 30, 2009. That made her age at the time of the wedding on March 11 at 16 years, 2 months and 12 days, the panel reportedly has found.

Sources said the NCST visited the temple where the marriage was solemnized, to verify the documents submitted by the couple, including their Aadhaar cards, besides an undertaking that they were adults and marrying of their own free will.

The NCST has reportedly recommended an FIR against the husband under Sections of kidnapping a woman to compel her to marry, fraudulent marriage, rape, cohabitation under false pretences, multiple Sections under the POCSO Act, as well as the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act.

19 IPS officers, 12,000 policemen: Rath Yatra in Puri and the lessons learnt from last year

Sujit Bisoyi
Bhubaneswar, July 13

Workers fix the dome and give final touches ahead of the Rath Yatra festival near Jagannath Temple in Puri. PTI

WITH LESSONS from last year's chaos during the Rath Yatra festival in Puri, the Odisha government has been leaving no stone unturned to implement an elaborate security and crowd-management plan for one of the country's largest religious gatherings.

Nearly 12,000 police personnel, 19 senior IPS officers and over 100 senior administrative officers have been deployed as Puri prepares to welcome lakhs of devotees from across the globe for the nine-day festival starting July 16. Nearly three million devotees from India and abroad are expected to visit Puri during the festival.

After the state government came under heavy criticism following a stampede-like situation outside the Gundicha Temple that left three devotees dead, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi directed all departments to ensure a faultless, safe and incident-free Rath Yatra through "proper coordination and seamless communication" among inter-departmental agencies.

According to tradition, Lord Jagannath, along with his siblings Lord Balabhadra and sister Devi Subhadra, embarks on a nine-day annual sojourn from the 12th-century Jagannath Temple to their birthplace — the Gundicha Temple — where they stay till the "Bahuda Yatra" (returning car festival), scheduled for July 24 this year. The deities board three huge decorated chariots before travelling around 3 km to the Gundicha Temple. Millions of devotees pull the chariots along the Bada Danda (Grand Road) in Puri.

Officials said top priority is being given to timely completion of rituals in view of the delay in pulling the chariots last year, when Lord Jagannath's chariot — Nandighosh — could barely move a few metres. The government also said adequate plans have been put in place for crowd control and devotees' safety.

Multiple evacuation corridors for the swift movement of devotees in emergencies, eight temporary hospitals with adequate staff, installation of nearly 500 CCTVs, and special measures for persons with disabilities, the elderly and women are among the steps taken for smooth crowd management.

At least 1,700 bio-toilets have been installed for devotees, with volunteers deployed to maintain cleanliness and sanitation. Other measures include at least 65 LED screens providing real-time information, while temporary mobile towers have been set up to improve connectivity.

Senior IPS officers have been assigned to oversee traffic regulation, cordon management, timely conduct of rituals and VVIP movement, while senior administrative officers have been deployed to oversee healthcare, sanitation and other arrangements.

As a committee probed last year's chaos and stampede-like situation, an official said the chief minister has directed officers in charge to maintain uninterrupted communication while enforcing the planned measures and ensure no communication gap arises.

Besides police personnel, including central forces deployed for crowd control, personnel from the Indian Navy and Coast Guard have also been roped in to ensure devotees' safety.

The Indian Railways has announced 300 special trains for this year's Rath Yatra to facilitate the movement of devotees.

• DEFENCE

In Mahendragiri, proof of India's growing prowess in shipbuilding

Amrita Nayak Dutta
New Delhi, July 13

THE INDIAN Navy on Saturday inducted the indigenously built advanced stealth frigate INS Mahendragiri into its Eastern Fleet at a ceremony in Visakhapatnam.

The commissioning marks the induction of the sixth indigenous stealth frigate from the Navy's Project 17A within one-and-a-half years.

What is INS Mahendragiri?

INS Mahendragiri is built with over 75% indigenous content and has a displacement of approximately 6,670 tonnes.

It is equipped with the BrahMos supersonic surface-to-surface missiles, a combination of multifunction radar and medium-range surface-to-air missiles that can detect and kill aerial threats at extended ranges. The warship is named after the Mahendragiri mountain range in the Eastern Ghats.

Since January 2025, six of the seven Project 17A frigates have been commissioned. The last of them, INS Vindhyagiri, is also expected to be commissioned this year. Project 17A frigates are versatile multi-mission platforms that can operate in the deep sea.

According to the Navy, the frigates reflect a generational leap in indigenous ship design, stealth, survivability, and combat capability.


INS Mahendragiri. PIB

What has driven the quick inductions?

From December 2024 to date, the Navy has commissioned 18 warships, showcasing India's growing prowess in indigenous shipbuilding. By the end of 2026, eight more ships are expected to be commissioned, according to the Navy.

The learnings from constructing the first four P17A ships have enabled compression of the construction timeline. Officials told *The Indian Express* that the progress is due to several factors at both the planning and execution stages. It is understood that the Navy received a considerable number of Acceptances of Necessity (AoNs), or clearances to procure platforms, from the Defence Acquisition Council.

The Navy then commenced design and construction processes on time for several projects, including Project 17A and Project 15 B ships (or Vishakhapatnam-class, the latest class of indigenous guided-missile stealth destroyers).

With multiple AoNs and timely contract signings, construction began as projected, leading to timely delivery and commissioning. Currently, 48 warships are under construction.

Additionally, plans are underway for constructing next-generation destroyers. A dedicated team from the Navy is involved throughout the entire process of constructing the ships. This enhances coordination and engagement between the Navy and the shipyard at all stages, including during the design and integration phases.

Another key factor is the continuous evolution of newer technologies and the modular construction of ships. The use of advanced simulation models during the design process allows for greater accuracy and multiple rounds of refinement. Public-private partnerships for major projects have also helped compress delivery timelines from 90 months to 72 months.

• DEMOGRAPHY

More births, deaths being recorded: Benefits, gaps

Improved counting of births and deaths could transform demographic and public-health planning, but the system and data still raise questions

EXPERT EXPLAINS
Moradhvaj Dhakad
SCIENTIST, MARIE CURIE RESEARCH FELLOW AT MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE FOR DEMOGRAPHIC RESEARCH, GERMANY

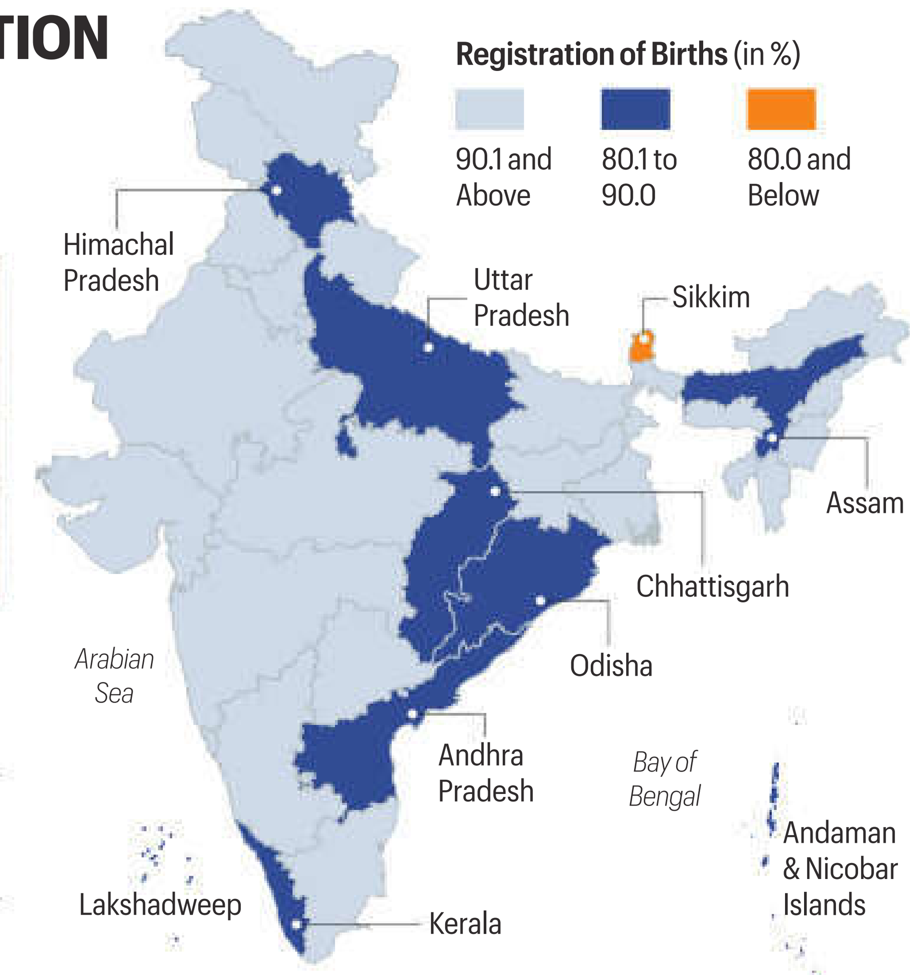
• LEVEL OF REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS, 2024

States in grey have at least 90.1% registration of births

STATES SUCH as Kerala, Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Goa achieved universal birth registration coverage by the early 2000s.

BUT DEATH registration coverage lagged. Only Goa, Mizoram, and Kerala achieved universal coverage by that period.

TODAY, MOST states have very high rates of registration of births.



INDIA OFFICIALLY recorded more than 99% of its estimated births and deaths in 2024, according to the latest official data released earlier this month. This marks a significant increase in coverage in around a decade.

Data on births, deaths and stillbirths are recorded under a continuous and compulsory mechanism known as the Civil Registration System (CRS). It serves as a foundational source of India's population data — how many people are being born, how many are dying, where these events are occurring, and so on — for the accurate estimation of mortality, fertility and sex ratio at birth.

India nearing universal registration signals movement towards building a system in which every birth and death can be counted, certified, and ultimately used to inform public policy.

What has the path to universal registration been like?

The CRS has been legally operational since 1970, though the coverage and completeness of reporting were historically poor. The system operates under the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969, which was amended in 2023. Births and deaths are ordinarily required to be reported within 21 days. In hospitals, the medical officer in charge or an authorised official is responsible for reporting such events. For events at home, responsibility generally lies with the head of the household or another prescribed informant.

Until 2000, India registered only 56% of births and 48% of deaths. By 2014, this figure rose to around 86.6% and 72.5%, respectively.

Registration coverage also varied considerably, both by rural-urban location and across states.

The latest CRS report, from the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India under the Home Ministry, shows coverage approaching 100%. In 2024, birth registration reached 99.1% and death registration reached 99.4%. Death registration has historically lagged behind birth registration, but it has since caught up rapidly. This marks a major shift for a country that historically had incomplete civil registration and relied heavily on surveys to estimate fertility and mortality.

The improvement is also visible across states. In 2024, 18 states and Union Territories achieved 100% birth registration, while 21 states and UTs achieved 100% death registration.

Why does the data matter?

A complete CRS is one of the most important sources of vital statistics. It is a crucial input for administrative use, assessing the impact of health and social policies, and understanding trends in fertility, mortality, and population change.

Timely registration of births and deaths can provide real-time information on demographic changes and population health. For example, during a health crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic, timely reporting of deaths was crucial for identifying high-risk areas and controlling the spread of the disease. CRS is also important for understanding seasonal mortality changes, driven by high temperatures and pollution.

Because of the CRS's historically poor coverage, India has traditionally depended heavily on the Census, the Sample Registration System (SRS), and household surveys for estimates. But the Census is conducted only once every 10 years, and sample surveys do not provide reliable annual estimates at the district level.

A complete CRS can support local planning under decentralised governance, since district and sub-district level data are far more useful for programme design than national or state-level estimates alone. Registrations also enable individuals to prove their identity from a legal standpoint.

> **Higher registration**
>
> The rapid rise in registration for births and deaths is likely due to a combination of factors.
>
> •
>
> Increasing incentives for documentation to avail welfare and other benefits may be among the key drivers.

What explains the shift in data?

The rapid rise in registration is likely due to a combination of factors.

For births, the increase in institutional deliveries in hospitals or health facilities, incentivised by post-delivery benefits, is an important driver — making the event more likely to be reported and registered. Birth certificates are also now necessary for school admission, identity documents, welfare benefits and other official purposes, strongly incentivising registration.

Similarly, death registration may have increased because more people are accessing formal healthcare, including through expanded health insurance and public health schemes. The expansion of schemes, particularly the PM-JAY, has increased coverage among poorer and vulnerable households. Families also require death certificates for pensions, insurance, inheritance, property transfer, bank accounts and other administrative processes.

Digitisation may have also played a role. The Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Act, 2023, marked an important step by the Government of India towards making civil registration more complete, timely, and accessible.

By making the birth certificate an essential document for education and enrolment for Aadhaar and voter ID, the amendment gives families a strong incentive to register every birth. However, much will depend on effective implementation, digital access, and consistent monitoring.

The state-level variations can be traced to differences in socioeconomic development, public awareness, institutional delivery, health-system access and administrative capacity. States are responsible for the registration machinery.

What gaps remain?

First, regional disparities remain a major concern.

Second, timely registration is a challenge. Many births and deaths are not registered within the prescribed 21-day period.

The most important gap concerns infant death registration. The report shows that 84.2% of registered infant deaths occurred in urban areas, compared with only 15.8% in rural areas. Since a large share of population still lives in rural areas, where early-age mortality is higher, this pattern may indicate under-registration of infant deaths.

Then there is the quality of information. Registering a death is not the same as recording a medically certified cause of death. Many deaths may still lack reliable medical certification, limiting the usefulness of CRS for disease and mortality analysis.

Finally, the completeness of death registration is itself estimated using SRS figures. However, previous studies have shown that the SRS undercounts both births and deaths, which may lead to an overestimation of CRS coverage.

Building on the progress thus far, the next stage of improvement must focus not only on coverage but also its quality — including timely registration, accurate records, and responsible use of digital data.

India could further consider a system for recording internal migration, which would strengthen administrative planning.

• LAW

With 4 new benches, how SC plans to clear oldest pending cases

Vineet Bhalla
New Delhi, July 13

TO TACKLE the mounting backlog of cases in the Supreme Court, Chief Justice of India Surya Kant has, in a significant move, created four special benches exclusively to hear the oldest pending civil and criminal matters. This marks a structured attempt to ensure the conclusion of decades-old disputes pending before the apex court.

The new roster

Two division benches, headed by Justices P K Mishra and S V N Bhatti and comprising two judges each, will focus solely on the oldest civil cases. Two other division benches, led by Justices Manoj Misra and Ujjal Bhuyan, will be dedicated solely to the oldest criminal matters.

These special benches will operate on "non-miscellaneous days", namely Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. In the Supreme Court's parlance, Mondays and Fridays are "miscellaneous days" reserved for fresh filings and preliminary hearings. The middle of the week is meant for "regular matters" that require detailed, lengthy arguments. By freeing these four benches from the regular burden of miscellaneous hearings, the court will be able to give uninterrupted judicial attention to its longest pending cases.

Scale of the backlog

Data from the National Judicial Data Grid reveals that the Supreme Court currently has 96,045 pending cases. Civil matters make up most of this burden, standing at 74,244 cases, while criminal matters account for the remaining 21,801.

Within this backlog, there are 24 civil cases and two criminal cases that have been pending before the court for over 30 years. The oldest civil case has been pending since 1986, while the oldest criminal case was registered in 1991.

Pendency paradox

This growing backlog presents a productivity paradox. Over the last five years, the Supreme Court has actually increased its rate of clearing cases, picking up markedly from the pandemic years — when courts operated at reduced functioning — to record its best-ever disposal figures. However, the overall pendency figure has continued to rise.

> **Waiting for decades**
>
> • About 525 pending civil cases and seven criminal cases were registered between 1996 and 2005.
>
> • The bulk of the older backlog lies in the 10– to 20–year bracket, at 7,993 civil cases and 1,585 criminal cases.

This is primarily because the rate of new case intake is outpacing the rate of disposal. With the court becoming more accessible to citizens nationwide through e-filing and virtual hearings, case intake has risen exponentially. In 2025 alone, the total number of cases filed reached an unprecedented 75,402.

Shift in strategy

Different Chief Justices have deployed varying strategies to unclog the docket over the last few years. Former CJI U U Lalit, during his short tenure in 2022, introduced a rigorous listing mechanism that carved out distinct time slots for fresh matters and long-pending regular hearings to ensure that old cases did not get buried under new filings.

Under his successor CJI D Y Chandrachud the court launched the SC-JUDI-CARE project to automate the classification of pending cases and group matters with similar legal issues so they could be heard together. He also constituted special benches for specific categories, such as death penalty references, and organised a Special Lok Adalat week to clear cases.

Following him, former CJI Sanjiv Khanna shifted the focus toward "admission matters" – fresh cases that often clog the system before they are even admitted for detailed arguments. For this, he temporarily halted the listing of older regular matters on Wednesdays and Thursdays. He also tasked the court's Centre for Research and Planning with identifying short, infructuous and old matters, successfully weeding out thousands of such cases.

However, during the subsequent tenure of former CJI B R Gavai, a massive surge in new filings pushed the total pendency past the 90,000 mark, despite the bench functioning at high capacity.

Upon taking office towards the end of November 2025, CJI Kant had said that reducing pendency and formulating a unified national policy for disposing of pending matters would be among his top priorities.

• HISTORY

Satluj row: What legal records reveal about Jaswant Singh Khalra's life & death

Divya Goyal
Ludhiana, July 13

ABOUT A week after *Satluj*, the biopic on Punjab human rights activist Jaswant Singh Khalra, was pulled off the OTT platform ZEE5 in India, it has also been taken down internationally.

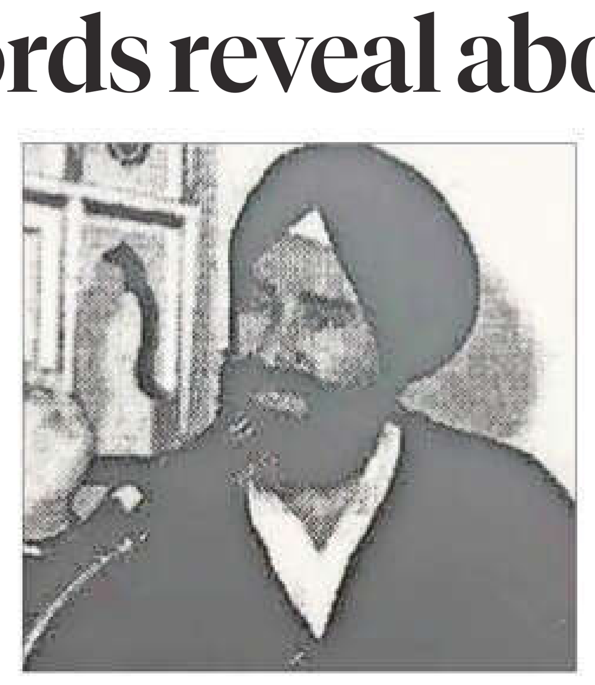
Khalra had been documenting disappearances and alleged mass cremations in Punjab during the militancy years. He was killed in 1995. Records of his case in the Central Board of Investigation (CBI) and the Supreme Court reveal the long fight his wife managed to throw light on his life's work and his death.

How Khalra's case reached Supreme Court: Soon after Khalra was picked up from his house in Amritsar on September 6, 1995, Gurcharan Singh Tohra, the then president of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and a senior leader of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), sent a telegram to Justice Kuldip Singh.

The telegram stated that Khalra, who was then the general secretary, Human Rights Wing, of SAD, was "kidnapped by the police." Treating the telegram as a habeas corpus petition, the Supreme Court issued notice to the Punjab home secretary, the director general of police (DGP), and SSP Amritsar.

Meanwhile, Khalra's wife Paramjit Kaur Khalra also filed a habeas corpus plea. According to the petition, Paramjit stated that her husband had been investigating "unclaimed dead bodies" and police excesses, and used to encourage families of victims to file writs in courts. She stated she "strongly believes that her husband was picked up at the instance of Ajit Singh Sandhu", then SSP Tarn Taran, who had "several such allegations pending against him."

The Amritsar Police said "Khalra was neither arrested nor wanted by us in any criminal case." SSP Sandhu claimed in the court on September 23, 1995 that he "never threatened Khalra". The SSP claimed he was on leave from September 5 to 11 for his daughter's wedding in Chandigarh.


Jaswant Singh Khalra. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Khalra's press note on mass illegal cremations: Thus, Paramjit Kaur Khalra sought a probe not only into her husband's disappearance, but also placed before the court Khalra's investigation of the alleged fake encounters and illegal cremations by the Punjab Police.

What became the basis for a CBI investigation was a press note issued by Khalra and his associate, Jaspal Singh Dhillon, on January 16, 1995.

Placed before the SC, the press note revealed: "It was learnt that police regularly brings bodies to municipality cremation grounds for cremation, declaring them as unclaimed... The only record available is through firewood receipts which were issued to dispose these bodies."

Landmark SC order: Clubbing Tohra's telegram and Paramjit's petition, the SC Bench of Justice Kuldip Singh and Justice S Saghir Ahmad, in a landmark order on November 15, 1995, appointed the CBI to investigate both Khalra's disappearance and the alleged extra-judicial killings in Punjab.

Excerpts from the order state: "Court cannot close its eyes to the contents of the press note...even if partially true it would be a gory tale of human rights violations."

CBI files report: On July 22, 1996, the Supreme Court acknowledged the CBI's 74-page findings, which said that "prima facie, it has been found that a total of 984 bodies were cremated as lavaris by the police in Tarn Taran police district." The CBI said in the court the probe was still ongoing.

'Worst crime against humanity': Meanwhile, the CBI on July 30, 1996, informed the apex court that it had decided to prosecute nine policemen, Ajit Singh Sandhu, SSP Tarn Taran; Ashok Kumar, DSP, Bhikhiwind; Jaspal Singh, DSP, Tarn Taran; Sub-inspector/SHO Satnam Singh (Jhabal police station); S-I Surinderpal Singh (Sirhali police station); SI Jasbir Singh (Manochacha police station); SI Rachpal Singh (Kang PS); ASI Amarjit Singh' and head constable Pirthipal Singh for Khalra's abduction.

However, Khalra's whereabouts remained unknown even a year after he was picked up.

In another landmark order on August 7, 1996, the Supreme Court said that Paramjit Kaur Khalra was undergoing the "worst crime against humanity."

"... Kidnapping of a person whose family is totally in dark about his whereabout — even about the fact where he is dead or alive — is the worst crime against humanity," said the court, while directing the Punjab government to pay interim relief of Rs 10 lakh to the family.

Khalra's murder confirmed only after 3 years: On March 2, 1998, Kuldip Singh Bachra, then special police officer attached with SHO Satnam Singh, told the CBI that Khalra was "murdered secretly and his body thrown into the canal near Harike (the river Sutlej) at midnight just after Diwali" in 1995. His body was never recovered. Bachra also said Khalra had been tortured in custody.

He also said he could not reveal these details earlier out of fear of then SSP Ajit Singh Sandhu, who allegedly died by suicide during the trial in 1997. Later, the CBI confirmed the date of Khalra's murder as October 27, 1995.

FULL VERSION
INDIANEXPRESS.COM/EXPLAINED

DECLARATION OF ACCUSED AS PROCLAIMED OFFENDER

(Under Sec.82(4) of Cr.P.C)

M.P. No.2/2026 in Spl.SC.No.241/2025

The Inspector of Police, Dharapuram All Women Police Station, Tiruppur District. Cr.No. 15/2024 ... Petitioner/Complainant

vs/

To, A1. Alangir, West Bengal. Now at Green Leap, Koko Company, Moolanur ...Accused

WHEREAS, complaint has been made before me that **A1. Alangir C/o. Abbas Baidya, West Bengal. Now at Green Leap, Koko Company, Moolanur** as suspected to have committed the offences punishable under section 5(l), 5(j)(ii) r/w 6, 7 r/w 8 of POCSO Act, 2012 and sec 351(2) of BNS, after returning of non bailable warrant of arrest and as the said **A1. Alangir C/o.Abbas Baidya,** cannot be found, and whereas, it has been shown to the satisfaction of this court that the said **A1. Alangir C/o.Abbas Baidya,** has absconded, to avoid the service of the said warrant. Thereafter, Proclamation was issued to appear and answer the said complaint on or before the **30th day of April 2026** which was also duly proclaimed by the police. In spite of the said proclamation, he did not turn up. Consequently, this Court, after making an inquiry, pronounced him a **"PROCLAIMED OFFENDER"** and made a declaration to that effect.

Dated this 30th day of June 2026.

Sessions Judge, Magalir Neethimandram, (Fast Track Mahila Court), Tiruppur.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Rehana Khatun D/o Ramjan Ali residing at Vill-Palladaha, Pump House, P.O. Kanchrapara, Dist. North 24 Parganas, W.B., PIN-743145 shall henceforth be known as Rehana Mondal D/o Late Ramjan Ali Mondal as declared before the First Class Judicial Magistrate, 1st Court, Barrackpore, Dist. North 24 Parganas, W.B. vide Affidavid No. 30AC260728 dated 09.07.2026. Rehana Khatun and Rehana Mondal both are same and identical person.

NOTICE

Notified that my client Delta Realtech, authorised signatory Mr. Bikash Agarwal s/o. Late Rajendra Kumar Agarwal, by Deed of Conveyances Being nos. 6763/26, 6762/26, 3633/26, 3631/26, 3632/26 & 6764/26 before A.D.S.R. Sonarpur, applied for mutation of schedule land before B.L.&L.R.O, Sonarpur, South 24 Parganas, in LR Dag 77, LR Khatian nos. 1238, 1239, R.S. Khatian 380, Mouza - Dingelpota, JL 69 & in LR Dag nos. 2975 in Mouza Bonhooghly, J.L. 65, under L.R. Khatian Nos. 10118 &10387 R.S. Khatian -4 Bonhooghly Gram Panchayet, purchasing from Subhash Chandra Naskar and Prabhas Chandra Naskar by General Power of Attorney of 2027/26 of Mr. Bikash Agarwal s/o. Late Rajendra Kumar Agarwal. Sunny Shaw Advocate Alipore Judges Court

NOTICE

I, Samsun necha Bibi W/O Abdul Rour Kazi by faith Muslim of Vill: Ber, PO: South Jagdishpur, PS:Dolahat, South 24 Parganas, West Bengal-743311, had purchased a land/property scheduled below from Power of Attorney holder Samsun necha Bibi W/O Abdul Rour Kazi, Vill: Ber, PO: South Jagdishpur, PS: Dolahat, South 24 Parganas, West Bengal-743399, Book No 1, Volume 1604-2021, Pages from 122214-122234, Being No 160402020 for the year 2021, dated 16.04.2021, D.S.R IV, 24 Pgs(S) vide Deed No: 8878/22, 9016/22, 2138/10, 2296/22, 9021/22, 9018/22, 8884/22, 8882/22, 8881/22, 8880/22, 8879/22, 8876/22, 8875/22, 2455/22, 2300/22, 2299/22, 9020/22, 9015/22, 9014/22, 8877/22, 8874/22. If anybody has any objection on mutation of said property/ land, please inform office of the BL& LRO, Block Maheshtala (TM) in writing or over e mail bllroatm@gmail.com within one month from the date of this advertisement. Land schedule at Mouza Paharpur, JL No - 06, RS Khatian - 212 LR Khatian-57 & 78, RS/LR Dag No-9 under PS-Metiabruj.

FORM NO. 14

[See Regulation 33(2)]

By Regd. A/D, Dasti failing which by Publication

OFFICE OF THE RECOVERY OFFICER - I/II DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL KOLKATA (DRT 2)

7th Floor, Jeevan Sudha Building, 42-C, Jawahar Lal Nehru Road, Kolkata-700071

DEMAND NOTICE

Notice under sections 25 to 28 of the Recovery of Debts & Bankruptcy Act, 1993 and rule 2 of second schedule to the Income Tax Act, 1961

TRC/346/2026 **16.06.2026**

CENTRAL BANK OF INDIA

Versus

SELECT SHOE HOUSE AND ORS.

To

(CD 1) Select Shoe House And Ors., Office at- Sodepur Road, P.O. Madhyamgram, Kolkata, North Twenty Four Parganas, West Bengal - 700130

(CD 2) Milon Kummar Mukherjee, S/o Late Gurudas Mukherjee, residing at- 140A, LIC Township, P.O. Madhyamgram, West Bengal, Kolkata - 700128

(CD 3) Mrs. Kaberi Mukherjee, W/o Sri Milon Kummar Mukherjee, residing at- 140A, LIC Township, P.O. Madhyamgram, West Bengal, Kolkata - 700128

This is to notify that as per the Recovery Certificate issued in pursuance of orders passed by the Presiding Officer, DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL KOLKATA (DRT 3) in an amount of **Rs. 26,14,779.00 (Rupees Twenty Six Lakh Fourteen Thousand Seven Hundred Seventy Nine Only)** along with pendentellite and future interest @ 15% Simple Interest Yearly w.e.f. **01.12.2008** till realization and costs of **Rs. 29,000/- (Rupees Twenty Nine Thousand Only)** has become due against you (Jointly and severally/ Fully/ Limited).

2. You are hereby directed to pay the above sum within 15 days of the receipts of the notice, failing which the recovery shall be made in accordance with the Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 and Rules there under.

3. You are hereby ordered to declare on an affidavit the particulars of yours assets on or before the next date of hearing.

4. You are hereby ordered to appear before the undersigned on **15.07.2026** at 10:30 a.m. for further proceedings.

5. In addition to the sum aforesaid, you will also be liable to pay:

(a) Such interests as is payable for the period commencing immediately after this notice of the certificate/ execution proceedings.

(b) All costs, charges and expenses incurred in respect of the service of this notice and warrants and other processes and all other proceedings taken for recovering the amount due.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Tribunal, on this date: **16.06.2026.**

sd/-

Recovery Officer

Debts Recovery Tribunal-II

Kolkata

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

CENTRAL RESERVE POLICE FORCE

Veer Balidani Head Constable Rasbihari Tiwari **12 BN** 14-7-1998

Veer Balidani Head Constable Kamal Kant Yadav **12 BN** 8-6-1952 To 14-7-1998

Veer Balidani Constable S. Ramesh **12 BN** 6-1-1961 To 14-7-1998

Veer Balidani Constable Rajashekhran **12 BN** 17-10-1973 To 14-7-1998

Veer Balidani Constable Prahlad Saini **12 BN** 30-12-1973 To 14-7-1998

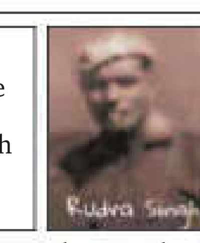
Veer Balidani Constable A.E. Mohandasan **12 BN** 3-5-1975 To 14-7-1998

Veer Balidani Constable C. D. Vijayan **12 BN** 26-6-1962 To 14-7-1998

Veer Balidani Constable Maninder Singh **12 BN** 7-5-1966 To 14-7-1998

DG and all Ranks of CRPF pay solemn tribute to eight bravehearts of 12 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice while bravely combating insurgents during an ambush in Manipur on 14 July 1998. CRPF salutes the bravehearts and pledges never to let their sacrifice go in vain.

Veer Balidani Head Constable Bishamber Singh **11 Bn**



Veer Balidani Constable/Driver Rudra Singh **11 Bn**

DG and all Ranks of CRPF pay solemn tribute to Head Constable Bishamber Singh and Constable/Driver Rudra Singh of 11 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice while bravely combating insurgents in Nagaland on 14 July 1971. CRPF salutes the bravehearts and pledges never to let their sacrifice go in vain.

Veer Balidani Constable Netra Bahadur **75 Bn** 31-12-1964 To 14-7-1991

DG and all Ranks of CRPF pay solemn tribute to Constable Netra Bahadur of 75 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice on 14 July 1991 after sustaining grievous injuries while bravely combating terrorists during a patrol in Tarn Taran, Punjab on 13 July 1991. CRPF salutes the braveheart and pledges never to let his sacrifice go in vain.

Veer Balidani Constable Manoj Kumar **98 Bn** 1-12-1969 To 14-7-1992

DG and all Ranks of CRPF pay solemn tribute to Constable Manoj Kumar of 98 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice after being grievously injured in a grenade attack by militants in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir on 14 July 1992. CRPF salutes the braveheart and pledges never to let his sacrifice go in vain.

Veer Balidani Constable Satyawan **74 Bn** 31-12-1978 To 14-7-2003

DG and all Ranks of CRPF pay solemn tribute to Constable Satyawan of 74 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice in a cowardly attack by militants in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir on 14 July 2003. CRPF salutes the braveheart and pledges never to let his sacrifice go in vain.

यूनियन बैंक Union Bank of India — [Rule - 8(1)] POSSESSION NOTICE (for Immovable Property)

ASSET RECOVERY BRANCH, KOLKATA

14/1B, Ezra Street, Kolkata - 700 001, Working at : Yamuna Bhavan 1st Floor, 55/58, Ezra Street, Kolkata - 700 001

Whereas:

The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of **Union Bank of India, Assets Recovery Branch**, 14/1B, Ezra Street, Kolkata - 700 001 presently working at Yamuna Bhavan, 1st Floor, 55/58, Ezra Street, Kolkata - 700 001 under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement Security Interest Act, 2002 (Act No. 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a **Demand Notice Dated 02.01.2024** calling upon the Borrower / Mortgager / Guarantor : **(1) M/s. Minati Enterprise, Proprietor : Mrs. Minati Mondal, (2) Mrs. Minati Mondal, (3) Mr. Ekadashi Mondal, (4) Mr. Bablu Mondal**, S/o. Mr. Ekadashi Mondal, **(5) Mr. Golak Mondal**, S/o. Mr. Ekadashi Mondal all residents and addressed at 53/2, Dakshin Para Road, Pujali, Budge Budge, Dist - South 24 Parganas, Kolkata - 700 138, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being **Rs. 54,24,751.09** (Rupees Fifty Four Lakhs Twenty Four Thousand Seven Hundred Fifty One and Paise Nine only) within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on this **09.07.2026**.

The Borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the **Union Bank of India, Asset Recovery Branch** for an amount **Rs. 54,24,751.09** (Rupees Fifty Four Lakhs Twenty Four Thousand Seven Hundred Fifty One and Paise Nine only) and interest thereon.

The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to the borrower to redeem the secured assets.

Description of immovable properties described herein below : All that Part and parcel of the property consisting of Land measuring 16 Decimal more or less and building standing thereon, lying and situated at Holding No. 53/2, Dakshin Para Road, Mouza - Pujali, J.L. No. 42, R.S. No. 22, Touzi No. 343, comprised in part of R.S. Dag No. 2926, L.R. Dag No. 3071 under L.R. Khatian No. 2469, 2470 & 2471, P.O. - Pujali within Pujali Municipality, Dist - South 24 Parganas, Pin - 700 138, **in the name of Mr. Ekadashi Mondal, Mr. Bablu Mondal & Mr. Golak Mondal. Property butted and bounded by :** On the North - By Land of Sri Sankar Mondal comprised in Part of R.S. Dag No. 2926, On the South - By Land of Sri Sankar Mondal comprised in Part of R.S. Dag No. 2926, On the East - By Pond of Santosh Kumar Sardar & others, On the West - By Dakshin Para Road.

Date : 09.07.2026 **Authorised Officer**

Place : Kolkata **Union Bank of India**

बैंक ऑफ़ बड़ौदा Bank of Baroda — Moore Avenue Branch

63, N. S. C Bose Road, Kolkata- 700 040

e_mail:MOOREA@bankofbaroda.bank.in

Appendix IV, [Rule 8(1)] POSSESSION NOTICE (for Immovable Property)

Whereas: The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of **Bank of Baroda** under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 issued a demand notice under Section 13(2) of the Act dated **04.03.2026** calling upon the borrower **Mr. Raju Ghosh of 4/83, Chanditala Lane, Regent Park, Kolkata, 700040** to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being **Rs.9,69,669.00 (Rupees Nine Lakh Sixty Nine Thousand Six Hundred Sixty Nine Only) as on 04.03.2026** together with further interest thereon at the contractual rate plus costs, charges and expenses till date of payment within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower/guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him / her under sub –section (4) of Section 13 of Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 on this **13TH day of July of the year 2026.**

The borrower/ guarantors in particular and public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any other dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Bank of Baroda, Alipore Branch for an amount of **Rs.9,69,669.00 (Rupees Nine Lakh Sixty Nine Thousand Six Hundred Sixty Nine Only)** and further interest thereon at the contractual rate plus costs, charges and expenses till date of payment.

The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Description of the Immovable Property

All that piece and parcel of land, including the structure (both present and future), admeasuring about 2 Cottah 14 Chattak 9 sq. ft., classified as Bastu, situated at Dist. South 24 Pargana, PS Regent Park, Mouza Chandpur, Pargana Khaspur, JL No. 23, Touzi No. 155, RS No. 41, Plot No. 1704, Khatian no. 593, Premises No.12/1E, Chanditala Lane, Ward No. 97 of Kolkata Municipal Corporation and **bounded as under: North**: Premises No. 12C, Chanditala Lane, **South**: About 16 ft. wide road, **East :** Premises No. 12/1C, Chanditala Lane, **West:** Playground

Date : 13.07.2026 **Authorised Officer**

Place: Kolkata **Bank of Baroda**

The Indian EXPRESS
~ FOUNDED BY ~
RAMNATH GOENKA
IN 1932
BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Omar is spot on, doesn't need Trump clickbait

IN 2023, in its ruling that upheld the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, the Supreme Court said, "the Solicitor General of India assured this Court of the Union's commitment made on the floor of the House that the Statehood of Jammu and Kashmir would be restored in the near future upon elections being held". The BJP has often touted the drop in the local drivers of insurgency and growth in tourism as evidence of the return of normalcy in "Naya Kashmir". The high voter turnout in the peaceful 2024 elections to the Union Territory's Assembly signalled trust in the democratic framework, broke a long political standstill. In this context, J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's frustration over the delay in the Centre delivering on its promise of statehood is entirely justified and appropriate.

However, Abdullah, who can be sharp and yet complex, could have framed it better. On Saturday, addressing a gathering of National Conference (NC) workers in Srinagar, he said: "Let BJP tell us whether we have to go to (US President Donald) Trump for statehood... and hold *dharna* outside the White House." Perhaps, it was a facetious remark, political clickbait. But "internationalisation" (read the US) is among the most knotty threads in the fraught history of Jammu and Kashmir. From the Truman White House pushing the formation of the United Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) in 1948, to US officers assisting armed forces in PoK during the Cold War, to the barely tacit backing of separatism by US State Department officials such as Robin Raphel in the early 1990s, for the better part of a century the US and UK have sought to play a dubious role in the region. Internationalisation of Kashmir has been — and remains — Pakistan's aim over the years.

Abdullah's invocation of Trump runs counter to the grain of his tenure as CM so far, which has located Kashmir, with its distinctive history, squarely within the negotiations in a federal polity. While underscoring the curtailed powers of the elected government, he chose not to take a confrontational stance towards the Lieutenant Governor's office. In the aftermath of the horrific attack in Pahalgam by Pakistan-backed terrorists, he delivered one of the most stirring speeches of his career in the Assembly, framing the Kashmir tragedy as one of the entire country, even as he backed the Union government's moves, political and diplomatic. Over the last two years, Abdullah has been at the forefront of crafting a new political language in Kashmir. This is his greatest strength as he rightly reiterates the demand for statehood. That's why there is a need to guard against loose statements that distract attention from it.

On SIR, listen to digital governance pioneer

THE GOVERNMENT and the Election Commission of India (ECI) need to carefully read criticisms of the latest round of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) by one of the country's digital governance pioneers. In an article in this newspaper, Ram Sewak Sharma — who, as the founder director of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), played a central role in building the infrastructure that governments now rely on for welfare delivery — amplified concerns voiced since the commencement of the SIR. The ECI has invited criticism for not balancing the legitimate imperative of updating the voter list — removing duplicate or deceased voters while ensuring that newly eligible citizens are enrolled — with the equally compelling obligation to avoid wrongful exclusion. Reports have pointed out that the burden of eligibility lies primarily, and unfairly, on the citizen. People are being asked to furnish proof of birth, residence and citizenship, when, as Sharma points out, the state itself has rarely been diligent enough to keep such records.

In Aadhaar, India has a technologically sophisticated framework for identity verification. However, as Sharma argues, by not regarding the document as credible address proof for the SIR, the state is failing to make meaningful use of a database — which also carries biometric details and proof of age — that it has created. The philosophy behind India's Digital Public Infrastructure has been to ask less, not more, of citizens. The SIR seems to be moving in the opposite direction — as Sharma writes, by "using a document-heavy method to solve a problem the country has already solved".

A procedure that carries the possibility of disenfranchisement demands the closest constitutional scrutiny. The government and the ECI, therefore, can ill afford to ignore the words of one who was part of the system not very long ago: "A republic that takes its duties seriously does not make its people prove again and again they belong." The Supreme Court — which pushed the ECI to be inclusive when the SIR process began but appeared less vigilant when the exercise was held in West Bengal — should urge the poll body to take note of Sharma's warning: "India has a DPI the world now studies. It would be perverse to declare that none of it can be trusted."

Nightingale falls silent, her song lives

PLAYBACK SINGER S Janaki, who died on July 11 in Mysuru at 88, was an artiste whose career spanned successive generations of composers. As musical preferences and styles evolved and technology underwent revolutions, Janaki, lovingly called the "Nightingale of South India", remained an enduring presence, singing over 40,000 songs in several languages for six decades. From composers like M S Viswanathan and K V Mahadevan to Ilaiyaraaja, Bappi Lahiri and A R Rahman, Janaki adapted to the changes with ease.

Growing up in Pallapatla village in Andhra Pradesh, Janaki religiously listened to Lata Mangeshkar's early songs on the family radio and tried to sing like her. With no formal training, she'd belt them out during intervals of plays organised by her uncle, a theatre artist. During one such performance, she caught the attention of filmmaker B R Panthulu and music director T G Lingappa, who, impressed by her bright soprano voice, invited her to Chennai, where she recorded her first song for the Tamil film *Vidhiyin Vilayattu* (1957). Despite being a Telugu speaker, her songs in Malayalam, Tamil and Kannada featured impeccable pronunciation. She'd study how words were spoken in daily life, understand their meaning and rehearse to align the edges.

Janaki won four National Awards among numerous state honours. But she declined the Padma Bhushan, saying the recognition had come too late. The decision drew attention, especially because she demanded a Bharat Ratna, too, overshadowing an otherwise principled stand. For more than six decades, Janaki gave life to the songs she sang, filling many a day and night with their light.

Why policy needs to focus on gender wealth inequality

BINA AGARWAL

THE WORLD Inequality Report (WIR) 2026 was published in June by the World Inequality Lab, Paris School of Economics. The UN report 'Counting What Counts' was released in May. The first focuses on inequality head on. The second does so in part. Both pay some attention to gender inequality. But how? By focusing entirely on women's unequal position in the labour market. Dare we ask: What about wealth inequality? Neither report mentions women and wealth, although the WIR spends many ungendered chapters on household wealth inequality. So, what are these reports implying? That wealth is only for men while women are merely labour?

The vast body of academic research on women's economic status over the decades has focussed mainly on one thing: Women's situation in the labour market. This persistent mismeasurement of women's economic status by ignoring gender inequality in wealth and assets in numerous papers, reports and policy briefs makes the main source of gendered economic inequality in much of the world invisible and ignored in policy. Work by feminist economists does not entirely escape this bias.

Why is measuring gendered inequality in wealth so important? Not just to correct serious conceptual flaws in measuring gender inequality, but also because wealth/asset ownership (a) affects women's and children's well-being in ways that employment alone does not; (b) impacts productivity and economic growth; and (c) is key to most sources of decent work and earnings. Consider each.

First, a vast body of global empirical evidence over three decades (1994-2024), starting from that cited in my 1994 book, *A Field of One's Own*, till today, shows that in the Global South if the mother owns assets, child survival, health and education outcomes are likely to be significantly better than if only the father owns assets. Gender matters beyond class. Owning immovable assets also hugely reduces women's risk of domestic violence and of poverty in case of marital breakdown.

Second, several studies, including those collated by the Food and Agriculture Organisation, show that if women have access to a productive asset like farmland and related inputs, it can greatly increase farm productivity and a country's agricultural growth rates. Third, for vast numbers of women, especially in the Global South, owning productive assets is essential for viable livelihoods since women are employed largely in the informal sector and especially in agriculture.

In India, for instance, in the Periodic Labour Force Survey 2023-24, two aspects stand out. One, some 86 per cent of all women workers and 91 per cent of rural women workers are informally employed. About 77 per cent of the latter work in agriculture. Two, 73 per cent of rural women workers are "self-employed", mostly as unpaid workers on family farms or in small business enterprises, including street vending. Hence, barely a quarter of rural women workers (and a third of all women workers) are in wage employment (regular or casual). For the rest, asset ownership is key to viable earnings: For example, land for farming, carts or stalls for street vending, and so on.

However, as diverse data sources (NFHS, ICRISAT, IHDS) consistently show, Indian women own land in only 12-16 per cent of rural landowning households, even though many are *de facto* farmers as mainly men out-migrate to non-farm jobs. For these women farmers, owning land, farm tools, and other assets is complementary to their ability to work and earn. The same argument applies to small businesses.

Yet, both the WIR and UN reports use average hourly earnings as the primary measure of women's economic status, ignoring their wealth/asset status, and hence greatly undercount economic gender inequalities. Also, by conflating women's "unpaid" work with domestic work hours, they fail to capture women's unpaid productive work on family farms and businesses.

Third, using the ratio of female to male hourly earnings as a measure of gender inequality, as done by both reports, is problematic. Most people don't earn by the "hour". Returns from self-employment, in particular, cannot be converted easily into "hourly" earnings. How would you measure, say, the hourly earnings of a farmer, shopkeeper, or vegetable vendor who rarely record hours worked? At the very least, the measure should be female/male annual earnings.

> For reducing global wealth inequality, policies to tackle gender wealth inequality are as essential as policies to tackle household wealth inequality

Fourth, the WIR attributes women's lower (than male) employment rates globally to inadequate access to affordable childcare, transport, family leave, and hiring discrimination, again ignoring asset ownership. The impact of lower pay for women on their wealth accumulation is mentioned in passing, but as the Paris Lab has itself established, the main contributor to wealth inequality is inheritance, not earnings.

A common excuse for not measuring gender inequality in wealth is lack of data. This elides the issue. First, there is existing data on some indicators: For instance, in the Global North, pension-wealth data are available by gender in many countries, as is gender information on the richest 1 per cent. In the Global South, gendered data on land owned are available for a growing number of countries (FAO and World Bank). Second, the World Inequality Lab (Paris) actively mines data and has successfully persuaded many governments to collect/share wealth data. Even with incomplete data, some gender estimates are possible. Equally important is acknowledging that labour market analysis barely touches the surface of economic inequality by gender.

Moreover, for reducing global wealth inequality, policies to tackle gender wealth inequality are as essential as policies to tackle household wealth inequality. But the two sets of policies cannot be identical, since the former also need to grapple with intra-household inequalities.

Ignoring gender gaps in wealth and focusing only on women's labour implies that the authors of the two reports, all progressive thinkers, are fine with a world where only men yield capital while women sell their labour. Even Marx (despite his limited gender analysis) would feel uncomfortable with that scenario in the 21st century.

The writer is professor of Development Economics and Environment, GDI, University of Manchester; and former director, Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi

Ramamurti Rajaraman and the journey back home

ASHUTOSH BHARDWAJ

IN 1963, a young Indian confronted a dilemma that few would face today. Ramamurti Rajaraman had just obtained his doctorate in nuclear theory from Cornell University, his supervisor being the future Nobel laureate Hans Bethe, a major figure in the Manhattan Project. In those days of armament, Rajaraman, just 24, was a prize catch for America. But he wanted to return home and devote himself to social service.

With his first death anniversary on July 12, it is an occasion to reflect on how much India has changed since then. Born in 1939 in Coimbatore, Rajaraman shifted to Delhi with his parents. His father, Dr B Ramamurti, taught Mathematics before joining the founding team of the Central Statistical Organisation.

Around that time, Tamils had begun arriving in Delhi for jobs in the British bureaucracy. But they were worried about how to inculcate the Tamil ethos in their children. Thus, the Delhi Tamil Education Association founded what were popularly known as Madrasi Schools.

Next to the school on Mandir Marg was the Hindu Mahasabha's office. Stories of a certain Nathuram Godse who once conducted target practice with a gun on the office premises were part of the school lore. The actor Hema Malini was his junior; among his classmates was Shyamala Gopalan, who later migrated to the US and gave birth to the future US Vice President Kamala Harris.

Rajaraman also went to America, but his heart lay elsewhere. He returned to India in 1963 and visited C Rajagopalachari for guidance. He didn't know the fellow Tamilian, but in those days people often sought the counsel of respected elders. Rajaji was also the grandfather of his closest friend, fellow Stephanian and future philosopher Ramchandra Gandhi. The old man advised him to leave politics to others — the country needs you in Physics, he said.

Six decades later when Rajaraman narrated the incident to me, he still regretted having followed Rajaji's advice: "I really wanted to do social service."

Rajaraman stayed back in India but could barely focus on Physics. Unable to lend any meaning to his life, the young man returned to Cornell before joining the Institute of Advanced Study at Princeton following the invitation of its director Robert Oppenheimer.

Home continued to haunt him. He came back in 1969 and began teaching at Delhi University. This time, he took an even bolder step. He returned his Green Card. "I knew if I had it, I'd keep visiting."

Teaching now became his way of giving back to society. He taught at several Indian institutions over the next decades and became a major voice committed to nuclear safety.

I met him while writing Ramchandra Gandhi's biography. They remained lifelong friends until Gandhi's death in 2007. In December 1958, when Rajaraman was leaving for Cornell, Gandhi gifted him a handwritten notebook of Kierkegaard's quotations. The stapled pages contained a letter in which Gandhi recalled his friend's "unerring honesty", and underlined that "because of him and in spite of myself I discovered that to seek honesty" "is the law of life even if it involved death."

Rajaraman changed cities and continents, lost numerous belongings, but the notebook, yellowed and brittle, remained with him.

> Home continued to haunt him. He came back in 1969 and began teaching at Delhi University. This time, he took an even bolder step. He returned his Green Card

I met Rajaraman in his final years. Even after being diagnosed with Parkinson's, he continued to be agile, continued to visit his JNU office, where he was professor emeritus.

I missed the news of his passing last year, having lost my father just weeks before. Much later, I came across tributes to a great teacher who resolved the complex problems of quantum and theoretical Physics.

And then, one conversation returned to me. He was reminiscing about his philosopher friend when I posed to him a question that had been simmering in me for long — Was Albert Einstein a scientist or a philosopher as well?

Rajaraman was emphatic: "Einstein only dealt with physical phenomena that can be measured. Anything that can't be measured he was not interested in. He was deep, reflective, but not a philosopher."

That distinction Rajaraman reserved for his friend.

Bhardwaj is a writer

Acting East in an uncertain Indo-Pacific

N MANOHARAN

SOUMYADEEPA MOULIK

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi's recent visit to Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand is significant for India's Act East Policy. India's foreign policy witnessed a strategic shift when he declared at the 12th ASEAN-India Summit (2014): "Externally, India's 'Look East Policy' has become 'Act East Policy'." The change, however, went beyond nomenclature, reflecting the new realpolitik underlying India's approach to the east. The objective of the Act East Policy is to promote economic cooperation, strengthen cultural ties and develop strategic relationships with countries in the Indo-Pacific. The engagement was to be at both bilateral and multilateral levels.

India has historical linkages to East Asia, especially in the domains of culture and trade. It was officially revived through the Look East Policy (1991), focusing mainly on Southeast Asia and on the economic sector. Geographically, it extended beyond Southeast Asia to include the wider Asia-Pacific. In the words of Prime Minister Modi himself, "For too long, India and the United States have looked at each other across Europe and the Atlantic. When I look towards the East, I see the western shores of the United States." The sectoral scope went beyond economics to include issues of security, culture and connectivity. Both hard and soft power aspects of foreign policy were incorporated.

New Delhi wished to correct the "historic neglect" of the Asia-Pacific region and was willing "to shoulder greater global responsibilities". This confident foreign policy stance was well received by the countries of the region and beyond. The United States, for instance, expected "India to be a partner and net provider of security in the Indian Ocean and beyond". The emergence of the Indo-Pacific as a new geopolitical concept and the revival of the Quad among four democracies reflected these broader strategic shifts. Although the US is weaning away "Indo" from the Indo-Pacific, the reality of hyphenation cannot be ignored in the long run, particularly in light of China's increasing assertiveness. Several non-conventional threats like IUU fishing, piracy, trafficking in drugs, humans and arms, illegal migration, and natural disasters also necessitated collective action. India's SAGAR, IPOI and MAHASAGAR initiatives must be seen in this milieu.

> Although the Trump administration is weaning away 'Indo' from the Indo-Pacific, the ground reality of hyphenation cannot be ignored in the long run, particularly in light of China's increasing assertiveness

The policy is not without its challenges. India has of late been confronted with political instability in its neighbourhood: Pakistan, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. India also confronts inconsistencies in the positions of extra-regional powers like the United States. The Act East Policy should also not look overly strategic, upsetting overall regional stability. The lack of adequate infrastructure in Northeast India to offer as a gateway to East Asia is another hurdle. Despite all this, the Act East Policy has enhanced partnerships with ASEAN, positioning India as a responsible maritime power, strengthening cooperation with like-minded democracies, and giving voice to the concerns of small island nations. Tehyi Hsieh's observation seems particularly apt today: "The West can teach the East how to get a living, but the East must eventually be asked to show the West how to live."

The writers are respectively director and research affiliate, Centre for East Asian Studies, Christ University, Bengaluru

40 YEARS AGO
July 14, 1986

Five more killed in Gujarat

AT LEAST four persons were burnt alive in three separate incidents in Ahmedabad as violence continued unabated on the fifth day. One of the three persons injured in the police firing late on Saturday night in Dhanasuthar-ni-Pole on Relief Road died. One man was fatally stabbed in Baroda, bringing the death toll in the city to three. With this, the total figure of deaths recorded in the state rose to 54.

MiG-29 deal finalised

INDIA HAS finalised a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Soviet Union for the purchase of futuristic MiG-29 fighter aircraft. India will thus become the first country outside the Soviet Union to acquire this latest fighter in the Soviet air force inventory.

Not much headway in Colombo

A TULF delegation comprising A Amirthalingam, Sivasithamparam, Sampanthan, Anandasangari, Yogeswaran and Neelan Tiruchelvam, met President Jayewardene at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall. Associated with the President were the National Security Minister, Lalith Athulathmudali, and the Education and Youth Affairs Minister, Ranil Wickremasinghe. According to informed sources, in the two-and-a-half-hour meeting the TULF had with the President, they had discussed the provincial council's proposals clause by clause.

Police apathetic to massacres

THE WRIT of the government just does not hold good in the so-called Naxalite-infested areas of Jehanabad and its surrounding areas in Gaya district for the simple reason that the police are not free to act as to take the necessary action in a law-and-order crisis. The gory killings in Kansara village of Gaya district and the heinous massacre in Arwal in Nalanda district — the two places are about 20 km apart in different but contiguous districts — is an example of the situation the police find themselves in when the government tries to take sides based on caste.

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

Ro Khanna got the VIP version of what West Bank Palestinians face every day

—*Haaretz, Israel*

Demolition of an institution has begun, due process can wait

DESHKAAL

BY YOGENDRA YADAV

ILLUSTRATION: C R SASIKUMAR

BULLDOZER JUSTICE reaches academia. That could be the headline for an *Indian Express* report last week ('Think tank CSDS likely to face funding cuts from Centre', *IE*, July 10) on the government's move to cut its grant to the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), which amounts to 90 per cent of the institution's salary bill. No doubt, this is a demolition exercise.

As in bulldozer justice, the modus operandi involves turning the rule of law upside down. Criminal justice follows a prescribed sequence: An incident leads to evidence, evidence to suspicion, suspicion to trial and the trial leads to indictment and punishment. Here the process begins with public indictment of a culprit identified in advance. Pretext and paperwork follow to manufacture justification for the punishment pre-decided, if not already delivered. An exemplary punishment that echoes deep and wide.

The CSDS has been to Indian social science what the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) or the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) is to the world of Indian sciences. Founded in 1963 by Rajni Kothari, the faculty roll of CSDS reads like the Who's Who of the first two generations of Indian social scientists, barring economists. Excluding the present faculty, the list includes Ashis Nandy, D L Sheth, Ramashray Roy, Gopal Krishna, Bashiruddin Ahmed, Giri Deshingkar, Sudhir Kakar, Shiv Visvanathan, Harsh Sethi, Suresh Sharma, D R Nagaraj, V B Singh, Rajeev Bhargava, Shail Mayaram, Aditya Nigam and Abhay Dube. Add to this list scholars who have been a part of the extended family of CSDS — Sukhmoy Chakravarty, T N Madan, Deepak Nayyar, J P S Uberoi, Manoranjan Mohanty, Patricia Uberoi and Suhas Palshikar — and you know why CSDS has been at the centre of Indian and global debates on politics, society and culture. A special issue of *Seminar* magazine (November 2012), titled "The CSDS Experience" captures something of the story of this extraordinary institution. (Full disclosure: The present author served on the CSDS faculty for two decades, before leaving it in 2013 and formally resigning in 2016.)

On the face of it, the CSDS is a rather odd target for demolition. During the days of ideological Cold War, the CSDS was known as a non-Marxist, if not anti-Marxist, school of thought. The scholars at the Centre were among the first ones to articulate the agenda for decolonisation of the social sciences. The Centre was also the pioneer in advancing social sciences in Indian languages. A far cry from the deracinated, westernised, leftist intellectuals the present regime loves to hate. Unlike the Emergency, when the CSDS did serve as a node for resistance to the authoritarian regime, the institution has kept a low political profile since 2014. The Lokniti programme, its research initiative that carries out electoral and political surveys, has maintained a scrupulous record of political non-partisanship and has given up election forecasting. On balance, its election surveys over the last decade have overestimated, not underestimated, the BJP's electoral performance.

The reason for choosing CSDS for the present assault is thus hard to fathom. Here is my guess: The three-decade old Lokniti programme is arguably the only trustworthy political barometer in the country that continues to adhere to scientific protocols of survey and transparent reporting, a barometer that cannot be "adjusted" to suit the demands of the rulers. This is one thing authoritarian regimes do not like, especially when they face allegations of electoral malpractices amidst rising public disquiet. Or, maybe, as in the case of Centre for Policy Research (CPR) earlier, the prestige of CSDS makes it the perfect example to send a message to an entire community of academics and intellectuals: Nobody is safe if CPR and CSDS can be targeted.

Once the target was selected, a provocation had to be discovered. The trigger was trivial, bordering on the ridiculous. On August 17, 2025, Professor Sanjay Kumar posted data around an unusual decline and increase in the number of electors in four assembly constituencies in Maharashtra on his personal X account. The calculation was wrong. Within 48 hours, he deleted the post and apologised for the error. Mind you, the posts were a bland presentation of data with no political interpretation or insinuation. The data did not fit into the Opposition's narrative of "vote chori". This was not institutional reporting of a research project. In any case, this was a trivial error, immediately rectified. The other supposed provocation was also a non-issue. A few days earlier, the CSDS had published the findings of an opinion poll on the SIR and reported a decline in the level of popular trust in the Election Commission. There was no error nor any element of surprise in this data that was hardly noticed. The BJP's ecosystem smartly conflated the two and pounced upon the CSDS. The troll army was afire, as were the *darbari* channels, demanding exemplary punishment.

> As in bulldozer justice, the formal justification is an act of post-facto creativity. Once the target, the punishment and the excuse were fixed, the ICSSR appointed a committee to prepare grounds for what had already been decided

Official indictment closely followed the troll army's insinuation. On August 19, the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), the official body through which grants to all social science institutions like CSDS are funnelled, took to X, saying it was taking "serious cognizance of the data manipulation by CSDS and its attempt to create a narrative with the intention of undermining the sanctity of the Election Commission of India. This is a gross violation of the Grant-in-Aid rules of ICSSR". The verdict had been delivered before the trial began.

Then came the paperwork. As in bulldozer justice, the formal justification is an act of post-facto creativity. Once the target, the punishment and the excuse were fixed, the ICSSR appointed a committee to prepare grounds for what had already been decided and carried out. As reported in *The Indian Express*, the committee has indicted the CSDS for everything other than what the ICSSR had accused it of. Apparently, the proposed punishment is now not for "data manipulation" but for the age-old charges that can be used to implicate anyone in the sarkari system: Fine print of appointment rules, payment or non-payment of allowances to employees, conduct of meetings and recording of minutes, and so on. This is especially odd since all these questions had been raised earlier by the ICSSR and already settled to its own satisfaction.

The committee's report is not yet released. But the ICSSR had stopped the CSDS grant with immediate effect. For the last one year, the institution has been struggling to pay salaries for the entire faculty, most of whom do not work on elections. The worst victims are the non-academic staff, who have nothing to do with all this.

Who cares for collateral damage? Demolition has begun. The trial can wait.

The writer is member, Swaraj India, and national convenor, Bharat Jodo Abhiyaan. Views are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Series whitewash

TEAM INDIA'S abject refusal to learn from the anatomy of its disaster during its just-concluded T20 encounters against Ireland and England culminated in one of its most humiliating defeats, much to the discomfiture of cricket lovers both home and abroad ('India;s one-gear approach behind batting collapses', *IE*, July 13). Perhaps their respective team managements not only observed India's shortcomings keenly but also devised astute game plans to take full advantage of the Indian batters' inability to negotiate short-pitched deliveries, which led to such an outcome.

Kumar Gupt, via email

THE INDIAN men's cricket team's disappointing performances in Ireland and England have again exposed the weaknesses in our overseas cricket ('India's one-gear approach behind batting collapses', *IE*, July 13). It would be unfair to hold the players responsible. The national selectors and the BCCI must share responsibility for this embarrassment. Indian cricketers are groomed on flat, slow pitches and smaller grounds that favour high-scoring batting. Many players develop the habit of clearing the boundary with ease.

Deepanshu Srivastava, Pune

Fragile law and order

THE UNFORTUNATE incident of the mob lynching of an innocent man following a heinous crime against a child reflects the fragile law-and-order situation in the state ('In Bengal, a crime, the mob and state abdication', *IE*, July 11). Those who justify encounters must realise that when a state fails to prevent heinous crimes and provide timely justice, it often attempts to placate public anger and subdue grievances through extra-judicial methods. There is little bravado in this and much inequality, as we see influential TMC leaders finding respite by switching sides, while petty and less influential offenders are subjected to public humiliation.

Madhusree Guha, Kolkata

Parliament, not fate, must shape road safety

SHUBHAM KUMAR

EVERY THREE minutes, someone in India dies a preventable death on the road. Two official bodies counted those deaths in 2024 and arrived at three different numbers.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways reported 1.77 lakh deaths. The National Crime Records Bureau's "Accidental Deaths and Suicides" report recorded 1.75 lakh road accident deaths, compiled from police records of accidental deaths through a separate administrative pipeline. The same NCRB's "Crime in India" report, which records deaths due to negligence relating to road accidents, shows that 1.81 lakh people lost their lives in road crashes. Two agencies, three methodologies, nearly 6,000 lives of unexplained variance.

This gap is not a data problem. India records more road deaths than any other country, despite having a far smaller share of global vehicles. In *S. Rajaseekaran v. Union of India* (2014), the Supreme Court recorded the full dimensions of the problem. Four working groups had studied what the Court called the four Es of road safety: Engineering, enforcement, education and emergency care. The findings across all four were alarming. Highway maintenance was receiving only 35 to 40 percent of estimated funding. Salvageable patients were dying because ambulances were inadequate, trauma centres absent, and police stations arguing over jurisdiction instead of rushing people to hospitals. Laws on enforcement existed on paper but were rarely applied with consistency.

What gave the Court's intervention its constitutional force was a prior recognition: That road accidents are not random misfortunes. Every crash, traced to its cause, is the product of human failure, and therefore preventable. The resignation to fate, the Court said, has never been the accepted philosophy of human life. It is precisely this understanding that ties road safety to Article 21. If these deaths are preventable, tolerating a governance structure that allows them to continue is a constitutional failure.

> If road accident deaths are preventable, tolerating a governance structure that allows them to continue is a constitutional failure

Part of why the problem persists is constitutional. Roads, police, public health and vehicle regulation are divided across the Union List, State List and Concurrent List in ways that ensure no single institution owns prevention. A crash on a highway simultaneously touches at least seven constitutional entries, and not one of them assigns clear responsibility for preventing the next crash. National highways belong to the Centre; State roads and police belong to states; motor vehicles sit in the Concurrent List; public health is a state subject. Jurisdictional fragmentation is not incidental to this failure. It is the design. The institutional response to this fragmentation has been a succession of committees, advisories and proposed boards.

The reform path is constitutional, and it has a precedent.

When tax revenues fragmented across the same three constitutional lists became unworkable, Parliament did not create another advisory committee. It passed the 101st Constitutional Amendment Act and created the GST Council. Road safety authority is fragmented across those same constitutional lists in precisely the same way. A Road Safety Coordination Council built on that model, where Centre and states jointly set standards for road design, vehicle fitness, emergency care and fatality reporting, would give this problem the institutional weight it requires.

Amending the Seventh Schedule to bring roads and traffic more firmly within Parliament's legislative reach would complete that foundation. It would close the constitutional gaps that every advisory body falls through. Below that structural layer, Parliament needs to mandate District Road Safety Committees by statute with defined powers and real consequences for states that ignore them.

Parliament has acted before when a structure failed too many people for too long. Roads have been failing people for longer. Courts have stepped in on road safety repeatedly because executive and legislative institutions have not built durable accountability. That step-in can only go so far.

The writer is a constitutional lawyer and leads policy advocacy at Crashfree India. Views are personal

The problem is, the regional party does not hold

VANDITA MISHRA

PRASHANT KISHOR will contest a bypoll in Bihar, in a bid to claim political space, months after his new party failed to wrest a foothold in the assembly election. In West Bengal, following its electoral drubbing, Mamata Banerjee's TMC is coming apart at the seams. In UP, where the countdown has begun for next year's election, the ruling BJP's internal wrangles make more news than the Samajwadi Party, which remains frozen in public perception since it lost power circa 2017. Chandrababu Naidu's son and working president of TDP, Nara Lokesh, describes "Namo" in Andhra Pradesh as Naidu plus Modi, the once larger-than-state regional player unresistingly subsumed in Modi's cult of personality.

These images are of recent vintage — regional parties/leaders with long careers laid low, even Jan Suraaj, the newcomer with a clean slate, encountering the same disbelief. They are part of a larger phenomenon of our time. The regional party seems to be crumpling in the face of the BJP's predatory politics, backed by its "one nation" thesis, drive towards uniformity and use of fear and favour to skew the playing field.

But regional parties have also conspired in their own weakening and in a larger undoing of the gains made on federalism for nearly two decades from the mid-1980s. Congress was in decline, even as the 1984 mandate in the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination briefly masked it, and the BJP was a long way away from becoming the dominant party. Several regional parties climbed onto the national stage when the Centre was not "strong" through the 1990s. The processes of economic liberalisation were also, arguably, encouraging a decentralisation of the polity.

The ungainly reversal of that process in a diverse polity, which is now framed in the implosion of regional parties, has been long in the making. At one level, it has been made possible by the steady hollowing out of political parties organisationally.

As political scientist KK Kailash has underlined, the "mass party model", which meant the primacy of one face of the party over the other — the "party on the ground" over the "party in public office" — has become outdated. It was a product of its time, when, before Independence and immediately after it, parties were seen as "vehicles of movements attempting to extend the franchise to a broader section of society". Subsequently, the "party in public office" took command, the "party on the ground" became subservient to it.

This has meant "a high degree of centralisation, which revolves around a single leader or a leadership elite; a focus on holding public office and winning elections, where voters matter more than supporters...". It has also meant a growing reliance on government and bureaucracy to push its agenda on one end, and on the other, dependence on professional agencies for designing campaign strategy.

This inattention to organisational strengthening led to the TMC ceding vital decision-making space to IPAC, the political consultancy. It is contributing, in turn, to the stream of TMC old-timers abandoning the party.

The national parties are also affected by this corrosion. But the inability of the regional parties to withstand it is more vivid. Their platforms were smaller to begin with — even those that have had links to large movements and causes, like the DMK or the RJD. But it is not just impersonal processes, the problem also lies in regional parties' own abdications that have come to haunt them in their confrontation with the BJP.

Travelling through UP recently was to be struck by how much the Akhilesh Yadav-led SP, more than nine years out of power, is still a prisoner of its past image. Akhilesh is still widely seen as the leader circumscribed by family, the SP as the Muslim-Yadav party that, in power, presides over lawlessness. The SP can blame these frozen perceptions on the BJP's propaganda. But it must also ask why its efforts to chip away at that image are dismissed by so many so easily.

These are extraordinary times, when the BJP cramps spaces for opposition politics. But like other regional parties, the SP has not been able to summon, in response, an extraordinary politics. It has fallen short even on a politics that is ordinary. It has not put forth a new political or economic model. On the ground, its proclaimed shift from M-Y (Muslim-Yadav) to PDA (*pichhda*/backward, Dalit/SC, *alpsankhyak*/minority) politics is seen as a variant of an old, exclusionary caste arithmetic. This, against an opponent that outmanoeuvres it by a wider social engineering at one level, and by claiming "*sabka saath*...", on the other. The BJP's social coalition excludes Muslims, but the SP dare not point to that exclusion because of its own timidity — its past record of uneven-handed politics undercuts its credibility.

The inability to fight the BJP on terms not set by the BJP, apart from the incapacity to climb out of the trap of a politics of family, one caste-one community, is common to the regional parties that are seen to be fading or hastening to the side of the BJP.

For now, even as cracks in BJP dominance begin showing, the parties that could have benefited from the opening up of political spaces are unfortunately not up to it.

The writer is national opinion editor, The Indian Express. vandita.mishra@expressindia.com

The burden only Messi can bear

ARAV SHAH

HOW DIFFICULT could it be to explain how I felt about Lionel Messi and why no other athlete came close to evoking the same degree of distress or elation? Despite this great aplomb with which I began writing, my thoughts drifted to what the word "athlete" really meant. The dictionary revealed a definition centred on organised competition and physical capability. Yet something was missing. The effortless superiority Messi's biomechanics afforded him failed to justify the fervour born in the wake of his movements on the pitch. It was not until the 79th minute of *Argentina vs Egypt* that Cristian Romero's goal sowed the seeds of my Eureka moment, and Enzo Fernández's stoppage-time goal brought my Archimedean breakthrough. Messi's greatest skill has been to concentrate the pressure and responsibility of performing onto his diminutive shoulders, freeing up space for his teammates to play the game as they'd like. It is his mere presence on the pitch that allows his teammates to play with a freedom from consequence. In the past, no one wanted to be the reason for the greatest player in the world to fail. After Messi's 2008 Olympic gold, the Argentine football team lived through a decade of defeat. Messi himself bore the brunt of constant criticism that he could perform only at club level and that perhaps he wasn't Argentine enough.

Prior to manager Lionel Scaloni's appointment, a stagnation had settled in. The team effectively reduced its purpose to simply getting the ball to Messi. Every pass in the midfield became an act of anxious deterrence, forcing the ball into a suffocating thicket of defenders where Messi was marooned. The 2021 Copa América and 2022 World Cup wins obliterated this trust deficit. Scaloni successfully cocooned Messi in a system where the midfield operated smoothly regardless of his presence. Subsequently, Messi's movements accentuated those of his teammates while allowing them to flourish. The 2022 World Cup win also lifted the weight of legacy from both Messi and the nation's soul. Winning that trophy eradicated the threat of devastating loss. As behavioural psychology tells us, the fear of loss is more powerful than the pleasure of gain.

> By commanding that overwhelming focus, he has vacuumed the structural and emotional stress completely out of the final third

Snapping back to the present, Messi's performance resembles that of a black hole. Receiving the ball with ease, his runs collapse the spaces between his opposition's lines, drawing defensive structures inwards. By commanding that overwhelming focus, Messi has absorbed the structural and emotional stress completely out of the final third. He has created a physical and mental sanctuary for his teammates, visible in the precise cross Lautaro Martínez calmly delivered to Enzo Fernández, who surged into the box to score the 3-2 winner.

The dictionaries that so clinically define an "athlete" by physical capability and organised competition will always fail to capture what Messi has become in 2026. He is no longer just a footballing marvel but also a psychological shield. By absorbing the gravity of an entire sport onto his bulletproof legacy, he has granted his teammates the safety to play football as it ought to be played, entirely free from the fear of making mistakes.

The writer is a correspondent with The Indian Express. arav.shah@expressindia.com

CPI INFLATION AVERAGED 3.9% IN APRIL-JUNE, LOWER THAN THE RBI'S FORECAST OF 4.2%

Fuel, weak rains push inflation in June above 4% after 16 months

Siddharth Upasani
New Delhi, July 13

PRICES FOR Indian households rose 4.38% in June — the most in one-and-a-half years — on the back of a continued rise in food prices. According to data released Monday by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), food inflation in the country rose to 5.32% last month from 4.78% in May, amid deficient rains. Meanwhile, the impact of the government's fuel price hikes was visible too.

The data for June bore the full brunt of the multiple increases in retail fuel prices announced in May, with personal transport inflation rising to 7.35% in June from 3.06% in May, while that for goods was largely steady — albeit elevated — at 7.7%. In May, it was 7.63%.

Inflation for the 'restaurant and accommodation services' category, which has risen sharply due to more expensive commercial LPG, continued to move north in June. Having stood at 2.9% in March and 5.75% in May, it rose further to 6.9% in June as eateries raised prices. According to Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist at Bank of Baroda, restaurant inflation is unlikely to decline even when the energy situation normalises.

At 4.38%, the June headline inflation rate, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), is higher than May's 3.93%. Inflation, which is the year-on-year change in prices, has now risen every month in 2026. The last time it was higher was in December 2024, when it stood at 5.22%. However, that figure is as per the old CPI series which had 2012 as the base year.

The new series, data for which begins from January this year, has 2024 as the base year for prices and incorporates new methods to calculate certain components of the inflation rate as well as new data sources.

While the old and new data series are not strictly comparable, this is the first time since January 2025 that consumer prices have risen by more than 4%, which is the RBI's medium term target. As per the central bank's legal mandate, it must target a 4% inflation rate in a band of 2-6%. CPI inflation averaged 3.9% in April-June as against the RBI's latest forecast of 4.2%.

Food, fuel prices

The Consumer Food Price Index (CFPI) rose 1.7% last month compared to May as against a 1% month-on-month rise in overall prices. Transport inflation, meanwhile, rose sharply to 4.31% in June from 1.75% in May, with the index for the transport category rising 2.6% month-on-month (m-o-m).

The m-o-m increase in the price indices of any category of goods and services is indicative of the momentum in prices. This is a better indicator of how prices are moving as opposed to the inflation rate, which measures prices compared to last year.

In the wake of a sharp increase in global energy prices and supply disruptions due to the war in West Asia, pump prices of petrol and diesel were increased four times starting mid-May. As such, the June CPI data reflects the full impact of the fuel price hikes on inflation.

"The risk of further fuel-price increases has diminished as oil prices have retreated from their recent highs, although a rapid reversal also looks unlikely given the fragile US-Iran peace process," Alexandra Hermann Prasad, Lead Economist at Oxford Economics, said.

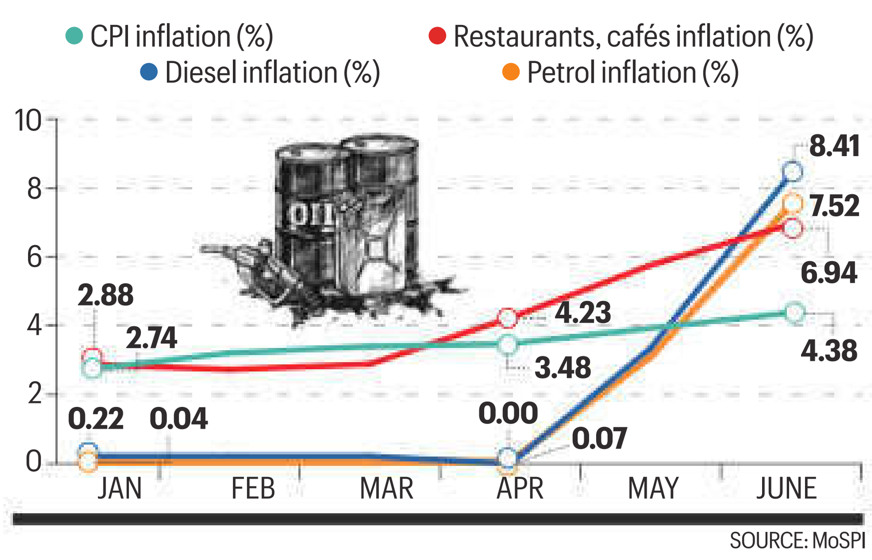
On the food front, these items contributed 185 bps to the headline inflation rate of 4.38%, said Dipti Deshpande, Principal Economist at Crisil, as a fading favourable base effect and high temperatures took their toll. As per latest data, the all-India rainfall deficit narrowed to 18% as on July 12 from 43% on June 28.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist at ICRA, noted that India usually gets around 32% of its entire season rainfall in July and 29% in August. Additionally, around 55% of the total area sown in the kharif season is typically covered in July. "Consequently, adequate rainfall during July-August remains crucial to support sowing and output and contain inflationary pressures in the ongoing fiscal," Nayar said.

According to Prasad of Oxford Economics, the June inflation data "reinforces the RBI's intention to remain on hold in August". Megha Arora, Director at India Ratings & Research, noted that inflation may rise further to 4.9% in July, with geopolitical tensions and El Nino conditions remaining upside risks.

FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

• DINING OUT KEEPS GETTING COSTLIER, FUEL PRICE HIKE HITS INFLATION



SOURCE: MoSPI

A HANDFUL OF AI STOCKS DOMINATE TAIEX & KOSPI

How overleveraged retail debt crippled South Korea's markets as AI fears deepen

Akash Mandal
Mumbai, July 13

THE SOUTH Korean market, once the best performer so far this year among equity markets, crashed 9% again on Monday and is down 27% over the past three weeks as panic regarding the AI rally being overstretched deepens.

The rising debt among retail investors in the country has also amplified this problem at a time when foreign investors are already selling heavily.

However, Taiwan, which is another AI-dominated market, has been much more resilient so far during this meltdown. The country's benchmark TAIEX index is down just around 2.3% in the preceding three weeks.

Both the TAIEX and South Korea's Kospi index are dominated by a handful of AI stocks — Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix make up 54-60% of the Kospi, while TSMC has around 40% weight on the TAIEX. So, why has there been a divergence in the performance of both markets?

Rising debt among retail investors

The South Korean market faces structural issues of its own, with retail investors being sucked out of money due to rising debt to absorb the massive selling by foreign investors since the start of 2026.

US-based leveraged products, which double the gains and losses of retail investors, started gaining popularity in the post-Covid era, which led to billions of dollars of Korean money flying to the US.

To counter this, the South Korean regulators launched domestic single-stock leveraged products late in May. Because the financial regulators allowed companies making up over 10% of the market to be traded using these products to protect investor safety, these products were reduced to only two underlying stocks — SK Hynix and Samsung.

These domestic leveraged products gained popularity instantly, leading to retail investors either borrowing heavily from brokerages to buy more stocks or overusing specific "ultra-short term" options provided by brokers, which allow investors to buy stocks by paying only a small portion upfront.

This led to margin debt for retail investors in the country swelling to a record high of $39 billion in May, according to a report by ValueTheMarkets. Leveraged stock investments by retail investors reached the limits set by local broking firms, said a *Reuters* report from June 10.

"The Kospi is now down 22% from its peak reached on June 19, while the 16 single-stock leveraged ETFs linked to Hynix or Samsung Electronics listed in Korea in late May are down 30% from their peak in asset terms on June 25, as is to a much lesser extent margin debt," according to a report by Jefferies from last week.

Thus, while foreign selling has intensified, with FPIs dumping nearly $13 billion-worth of South Korean equities in June as concerns regarding the AI rally deepened, retail investors have run out of money to absorb the shocks.

On Thursday, the market saw over $100 million of retail stock positions being automatically liquidated by brokers as accounts ran out of cash, according to a report by *Seoul Economic Daily*.

The crisis has seen the Nigerian stock market, up around 68% so far this year in dollar terms, surpass South Korea's 66% gain in dollar terms, according to a *Bloomberg* report from last week.

While the "hyper-speculative" and risky leveraged products are wildly popular among South Korean retail investors, Taiwanese investors have instead preferred passive options such as high-dividend ETFs, which provide monthly or quarterly payouts, making such investors stick to their investments even during temporary crises.

However, many experts remain constructive on AI stocks despite the correction. While AI stocks, especially those in South Korea, have seen "healthy" corrections from peaks, these stocks will remain the go-to option for investors as long as the "AI arms race" continues, the Jefferies report noted.

Christian Mueller-Glissmann, Managing Director for portfolio strategy and asset allocation at Goldman Sachs, said last week that while AI stocks faced a "cyclical" selloff worsened by overleveraged retail positions, the overall AI trend remains structurally intact and is expected to drive equities going ahead.

• RETAIL ROUT

• While foreign selling has intensified, with FPIs dumping nearly $13 billion-worth of South Korean equities in June, retail investors have run out of money to absorb the shocks

• 'Hyper-speculative' and risky leveraged products are wildly popular among South Korean retail investors while Taiwanese investors have instead preferred passive options such as high-dividend ETFs

Aditya Birla Renewables to acquire Shell's Solenergi Power for Rs 17,200 cr

George Mathew
Mumbai, July 13

ADITYA BIRLA Renewables Ltd (ABREn), a subsidiary of Aditya Birla Group-controlled Grasim Industries Ltd, has signed an agreement to acquire 100% of Solenergi Power Pvt Ltd from Shell Overseas Investment B.V., a wholly owned subsidiary of Shell Plc. Solenergi Power owns the Sprng Energy group of companies. The transaction is valued at an enterprise value of Rs 17,200 crore ($1.8 billion).

The Birla buyout is among the largest acquisitions in the country's renewable energy sector both by value and scale.

"The equity consideration payable to the seller will be determined after adjusting for debt, cash, and other items as specified in the transaction documents," the Birla group said. The acquisition is proposed to be funded through a mix of debt and equity infusion from Grasim and funds managed by Global Infrastructure Partners — a part of Blackrock.

This transaction adds a contracted portfolio of 5 GWp capacity (3.3 GWp of operational capacity and 1.7 GWp of under construction capacity) along with a strong connectivity and development pipeline, it said.

The Birla buyout is among the largest acquisitions in the country's renewable energy sector both by value and scale

The acquisition significantly accelerates ABREn's renewable energy growth ambitions by combining its strong presence in the Commercial & Industrial (C&I) segment with Sprng Energy's complementary utility-scale platform, the group said.

Solenergi Power is an investment holding company incorporated in Mauritius that serves as a direct shareholder in the Indian renewable energy platform Sprng Energy.

In August 2022, Shell completed the 100% acquisition of Solenergi Power from the British private equity firm Actis. The deal, valued at $1.55 billion, granted Shell full control of the Sprng Energy group.

"Over a long arc of time, the Aditya Birla Group has built businesses at global scale that have contributed to India's long-term growth, be it in building materials, metals, financial services, or retail. We view India's energy transition through the same lens. At its core, this is about strengthening our nation's energy future, enhancing industrial competitiveness, and creating the foundations for sustained economic growth," Kumar Mangalam Birla, Chairman, Aditya Birla Group, said.

"This agreement reflects Shell's continued focus on adjusting the portfolio in our power business," said Machteld de Haan, President, Downstream, Renewables and Energy Solutions at Shell. "We are high-grading our power portfolio and recycling capital in service of our asset-backed trading strategy outlined in Capital Markets Day 2025. This is another step in building a more focused, competitive and resilient business while improving returns year on year towards 2030."

"Together, we will have a diversified portfolio and a deep development pipeline that puts us on course to scale to 20 GWp+ in the coming years. More importantly, it positions us to participate meaningfully in one of the largest energy transformations underway anywhere in the world," Birla said.

FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Sitharaman meets PSB chiefs, calls for wider NRI outreach

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman interacts with Bank MDs, CEOs on FCNR(B), ECB and OFCB swap initiatives in New Delhi. X/@FINMININDIA

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, July 13

FINANCE MINISTER Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday asked banks to enhance outreach to Non Resident Indians (NRIs) for greater mobilisation of foreign currency deposits.

Chairing a review meeting with CEOs of public sector banks (PSBs) and financial institutions on the Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank), or FCNR(B) deposits, External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs) and Overseas Foreign Currency Borrowings (OFCBs) swap initiatives, Sitharaman appreciated the encouraging and enthusiastic institutional response.

She called upon banks to further intensify outreach to the NRI diaspora, introduce innovative deposit products and sustain the momentum of mobilisation during the remaining period of the schemes, the finance ministry said in a statement.

During the meeting, CEOs informed that banks are offering attractive returns on FCNR(B) deposits, including on five-year deposits, supported by the suspension of the interest rate ceiling on fresh FCNR(B) deposits under the scheme.

Bank CEOs to meet RBI Governor today

Mumbai/New Delhi: The heads of private and public sector banks will meet RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra on Tuesday to chalk out a roadmap for boosting inflows into the special foreign currency non-resident (FCNR(B)) deposit scheme and address operational hurdles that may be constraining forex mobilisation.

The CEOs of private sector banks will meet the Governor in the morning, followed by chiefs of state-owned banks in the afternoon. Apart from FCNR(B) deposits, the discussions are also expected to cover deposit mobilisation, credit growth and other banking issues. **FE**

Trade deficit widens to $30.4 bn in Jun

New Delhi: India's merchandise trade deficit widened to $30.43 billion in June as exports fell faster than imports, weighed down by shipping disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz linked to the West Asia conflict.

Exporters' bodies have flagged concerns over global demand softness, particularly from Western markets, as a drag on growth in outbound shipments.

Economists had expected India's trade deficit to widen to $26.63 billion in June, according to a *Reuters* poll, compared with a deficit of $28.21 billion in May.

The country's merchandise exports fell to $40.41 billion in June from $45.2 billion in the previous month while imports declined to $70.84 billion from $73.41 billion in May, data released on Monday showed.

Aditi Nayar, chief economist at ICRA, said the merchandise trade deficit widened by over 50% from a year earlier as elevated commodity prices pushed up the import bill. **REUTERS**

HCLTech reports Q1 profit at Rs 4,624 crore, beats estimates

Poulomi Chatterjee
Bengaluru, July 13

HCL TECHNOLOGIES on Monday reported a better-than-expected performance for the June quarter, with consolidated net profit rising 3% sequentially to Rs 4,624 crore, ahead of *Bloomberg* consensus estimates. The company also posted its highest-ever first-quarter net new bookings of $2.4 billion.

The IT services major retained its FY27 revenue growth guidance of 1-4% and the margin guidance of 17.5-18.5%, in constant currency terms. The firm also announced its entry into the full-stack AI market with a proposed investment of up to Rs 3,500 crore to build AI data centres with the potential to scale to 50 MW of capacity.

The investment will be made through a new subsidiary and its step-down subsidiaries, HCL-Tech said. The FY27 guidance reflects only organic growth and excludes any contribution from acquisitions, including the recently concluded $240-million Jaspersoft deal. **FE**

• BRIEFLY

Advanced AI models high on priority: IT secy

New Delhi: Getting access to Mythos and other advanced frontier models is high on the government's priority, and while talks and processes for the same are on, alternate artificial intelligence (AI) models are also being leveraged for now to track and fix vulnerabilities, IT Secretary S Krishnan said on Monday. Mythos has been able to "lay bare" vulnerabilities that existed in the original code of widely-used software programmes but were often left unresolved because they were considered low priority, too costly to fix, or had simply gone undetected, he noted. **PTI**

SEBI tightens ethics rules for its employees

Mumbai: The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has imposed a two-year cooling-off period for former officials, barring them from representing clients before it in investigations, settlement proceedings and applications for fundraising or regulatory approvals, according to a government notification. The regulator also extended investment restrictions to employees' family members, the notification, published on Saturday, said. **REUTERS**

New services output index debuts today

New Delhi: The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) will release on Tuesday a new index to measure the change in output of the services sector, which makes up for nearly half of India's GDP and generates substantial employment. The Index of Services Production (ISP) will be released on a trial basis, providing data on the growth in output of the 19 sub-sectors of the services economy. The new index will have 2024-25 as the base year and will be released with a lag of 60 days from the end of the reference month. **FE**

Jio Platforms names new CEO ahead of IPO

New Delhi: Jio Platforms has replaced Kiran Thomas as chief executive officer (CEO) with Pankaj Pawar ahead of its planned initial public offering (IPO), according to the firm's draft IPO papers. The draft papers, submitted to capital markets regulator SEBI in June, mentioned that Thomas resigned as CEO on March 23, with Pawar taking charge the following day, March 24. Pawar, 53, also serves as managing director of Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd. An email seeking comment from Jio elicited no response. **PTI**

US N-fuel firm counters BARC's safety concerns over thorium fuel

Pratyush Deep
New Delhi, July 13

CHICAGO-BASED nuclear fuel company Clean Core Thorium Energy (CCTE) has refuted concerns over the use of its advanced nuclear fuel, ANEEL, in existing pressurised heavy water reactors (PHWRs), claiming that the thorium-based fuel improves key reactor safety characteristics and can be deployed without requiring modifications to reactor designs or control systems.

In a paper published in the journal *Nuclear Engineering and Design*, researchers from Clean Core, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Toronto-based Innovative Nuclear Solutions, and San Diego-based Structural Integrity Associates challenged the findings of an earlier study by scientists at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC). The BARC paper had argued that deploying ANEEL in India's existing PHWR fleet would require reactor redesigns and could increase safety risks under accident conditions.

The paper also claimed the advanced nuclear fuel has the potential to generate around six times more energy than conventional natural uranium fuel.

CCTE, only the second American company to have secured an export licence from the US Department of Energy to sell nuclear technology to India in nearly two decades, has developed this patented thorium-based fuel called ANEEL (Advanced Nuclear Energy for Enriched Life) that combines thorium with high-assay low-enriched uranium (HALEU) for use in PHWRs.

As per the company, ANEEL can be deployed in India's PHWR fleet, which accounts for the majority of the country's operational nuclear reactors.

In December 2024, state-owned NTPC Ltd and CCTE had announced a strategic partnership to explore the development and deployment of ANEEL for existing nuclear stations in India, subject to regulatory clearances. Apart from exploring development and deployment of ANEEL fuel in India, NTPC and CCTE intend to collaborate for exploring the possible indigenisation of its manufacturing with local supply chain development, establishing supply chain for HALEU, and supply of Uranium to India with sovereign guarantee.

In January, a paper published in the journal Current Science authored by scientists at the BARC had flagged concerns about using ANEEL fuel in the country's existing PHWRs. It concluded that thorium-HALEU fuel was "far from a drop-in option" and that existing reactors were unsuitable without substantial changes.

The CCTE paper, however, refuted this and described ANEEL as a "plug-and-play" replacement for natural uranium fuel bundles, saying it retains the same external dimensions and geometry as conventional fuel and modifications are limited to internal pin geometry and fuel composition.

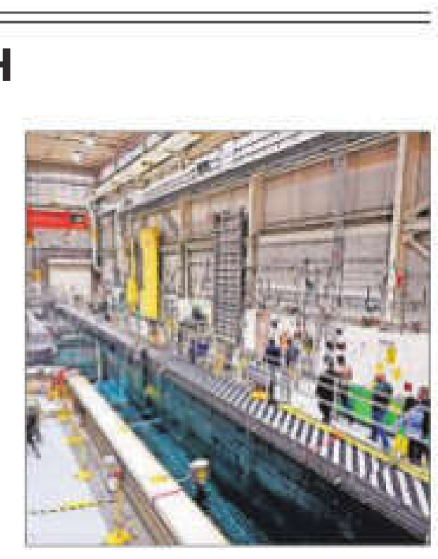
FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

• THORIUM FUEL PUSH

THE BARC paper had argued that deploying ANEEL in India's existing PHWR fleet will require reactor redesigns and could increase safety risks under accident conditions

CCTE HAS developed the patented thorium-based fuel called ANEEL that combines thorium with high-assay low-enriched uranium for use in PHWRs

ANEEL CAN be deployed in India's PHWR fleet, which accounts for the majority of the country's operational nuclear reactors, as per the company



• MARKETS

Sensex	NIFTY	Gold ▼	US Dollar ▲
77,616.40	24,211.00	₹1,42,188	₹95.62
47.01	4.10	Silver ▼	Oil ▼
0.06%	0.02%	₹2,18,722	$73.23

NOTE: GOLD, SILVER RATES AS PER INDIA BULLION AND JEWELLERS ASSOCIATION DATA GOLD PER 10G, SILVER PER 1 KG; CRUDE OIL (INDIAN BASKET) AS OF JULY 10, 2026

Dutch referee removed from WC officials panel dies

DUTCH REFEREE Rob Dieperink has died at the age of 38, two months after he was dropped from the panel of match officials for the 2026 World Cup following a police case in Britain that was later dropped. No cause of death has been revealed. "We are shocked and deeply saddened by the passing of Rob Dieperink. With Rob, we lose a highly valued referee, but above all a kind and dedicated colleague," the Dutch football association said in a statement. Dieperink had been selected as part of the video assistant referee (VAR) panel at the World Cup, but was removed in May after he had been arrested the previous month by Metropolitan Police. The case was dropped due to a lack of evidence. "It saddens me greatly that I have been wrongly accused," Dieperink said in an interview with *De Telegraaf*. REUTERS

Slaven Bilic was the head coach of Croatia 14 years ago. AP

Bilic returns as Croatia coach after Dalic's exit

SLAVEN BILIC is back as coach of Croatia after the team's most successful coach Zlatko Dalic left following the World Cup. Bilic returns to a job he left 14 years ago, after six years in charge, with experience of coaching in the Premier League. "I am genuinely happy to start this challenge and I feel fully prepared for it — as a more mature and experienced coach than in 2006, yet with the same motivation and desire to see Croatia stay powerful, bold, and successful," Bilic said in a statement. He takes over a team which exited the World Cup amid a blizzard of recriminations. Its last-gasp equalizer was ruled offside over the lightest of touches detected by a sensor in the ball, resulting in a 2-1 loss to Portugal in the round of 32. That ended nine years in charge for Dalic, who led Croatia to their only World Cup final in 2018, a loss to France, and then third place in 2022. AP

THAT FAR POST CURLER

Yamal's words cut as deep as his goals

Lamine Yamal (top) scored a goal against France in the Euro 2024 semi-final similar to that of Julian Alvarez's (below) against Switzerland on Sunday. AP

In a tournament where long-range strikes have redefined the game, the semi-final revives the night France cannot forget

EXPRESS AT WORLD CUP

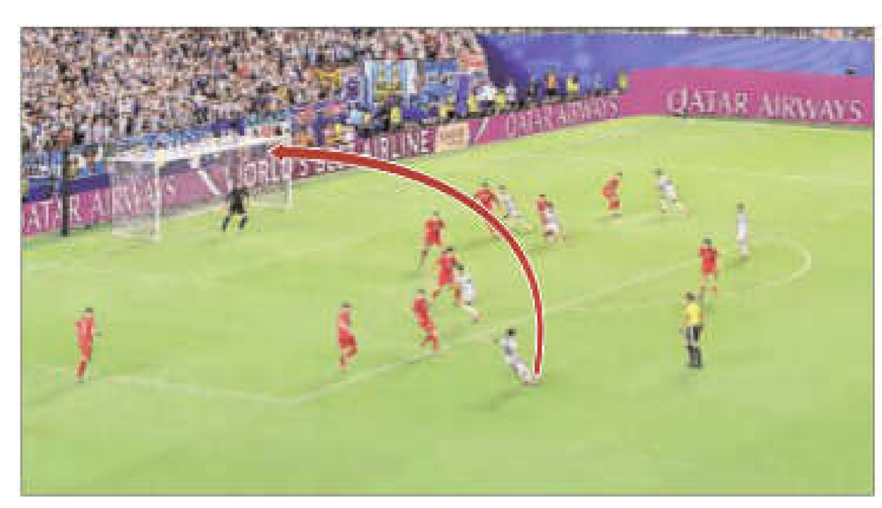
Sandip G
New York, July 13

LAMINE YAMAL's words are like his goals. The strikes open up unseen angles, unthought spaces, and unforeseen dimensions. The words slit open old wounds. With one sentence after the Belgium victory, "If anyone should be afraid it should be them, we knocked them out of the Euros," he slashed open a night France wanted to forget. Everything: the score, the scar, the star, the goal, the flaw.

It was the night that built the legend of Yamal. The goal that advertised his infinite potential and announced the postcode of his town Rocafonda to the world. He has yet to set the World Cup stage on fire, but the memory clings on. Thirty yards from goal, he careened inside and ferried the ball to the top corner off the far post, leaving the audience, teammates and the French in equal parts shocked and marvelling.

The pattern could recur with semifinal-defining consequences. Yamal's recovery from injury has been so staggered that he has not hit the high notes of the Euros, but France's left side remains his hunting ground, their sinister vulnerability, their historical undoing. Lucas Digne, who replaced Theo Hernandez at left-back, is susceptible to lapses, prone to abandoning his post for attacking pastures, and slow to retreat when play turns quickly. The midfielder behind him would have nightmares recalling the goal's buildup, when Yamal left his marker grasping vapour with a nudge of the outside of his boot. France simply wilted thereafter.

Such a goal would be a fitting tribute to a World Cup semifinal where strikes from outside the box, cutting inwards, curling away, have become vogue again. Both Messi and Mbappe have pummelled two apiece; Morocco's Ismael Saibari, Egypt's Emam Ashour, Cape Verde's Sidny Lopes Cabral have all beaten goalkeepers with longrangers. Thirty-eight goals have been wrought from outside the area; the corresponding number in Qatar was twelve. There were all sorts, curlers, dippers, flat and ferocious thunderbolts. And then there is the Julian Alvarez clanger: a wickedly unstoppable blend of power, curl and drop that foxed the Swiss backline and goalkeeper Gregor Kobel with divine mastery.



Outside-the-box curler — Goal of the WC

E. HIT FROM the instep, and curling away from the goalkeeper, Julian Alvarez's goal against Switzerland and Lamine Yamal's Euro 2024 goal against France carry a significant degree of difficulty — both in the execution of a moving ball, and how tough the curling attempt is to stop for the goalkeeper. Thirty-eight goals have been scored from outside the box at the 2026 World Cup.

From the moment the ball left Alvarez's right instep, Kobel knew its design, that it would arc into the top corner. He could only pray it missed the target, that it bent more than it should, or didn't curve at all, or plunged straight into him. There were so many variables, so little he could do, but watch the ball pierce the narrow space between his palms and the post. Alvarez joked afterwards that he was plainly fortunate. But he has composed such goals before, with frightening aerial theatrics and the air of a man who expects them to go in.

Long-rangers are sometimes brushed off as gambles, the goal as freak occurrence. But to shoot from distance and hit the intended target requires mastery. It is a moving ball, unlike a free kick, defenders are not chained to a white line, bodies are shifting all around, and through that chaos the striker must conceive not the perfect path but the most workable route. Alvarez struck his with inevitability. Watch the perfection of his follow-through, which ended with his right foot and left arm perpendicular to the rest of his body. Few goals are struck with such technique.

It may be a direct response to low blocks and packed penalty areas. One-touch passing inside the box becomes fruitless against eleven men behind the ball; tap-ins and nudges improbable avenues in a crowded goalmouth. Outside the box there is relatively more space, more time to sketch a destination. Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta made the point last season, when open-play conversion rates from distance climbed to 4.9 per cent from a low of three per cent in 2019. "The more density there is inside the box, the more difficult it is to score in open play, so you have to find other ways." He reached for a parallel with basketball's rediscovered love of the three-pointer. "It happened in basketball, going from twos to threes," he said.

VAR's intense scrutiny of penalty-box contact has played its part too. And there are those who implicate the ball itself, Trionda. "It arrives faster and swerves more than expected," former England goalkeeper Joe Hart has said. But it is strictly not for imposters. For that reason it remains an outlier, and an elusive art. The semifinal's fate could hinge on it.

Both sides carry distance-shooting threats in abundance, Mbappe and Ousmane Dembele for France; Baena, Cubarsi and Yamal for Spain. But the French full-backs, Jules Kounde and Lucas Digne, look weathered against their Spanish counterparts Marc Cucurella and Pedro Porro, who are quicker and more aggressive in the press. The angles are there for the taking.

None of them, though, not even Mbappe, carry the particular thrill of Yamal pedalling the rubbery sphere to the top corner. France would remember. And if they had forgotten, Yamal's words have remembered the wound. Whether it fuels them or finishes them, the semifinal will answer.

INFRARED SAUNAS TO SHOCKWAVE THERAPY: INNOVATIVE WAYS OF RECOVERY AFTER GAMES

France carry mobile cryotherapy units, while England set up infrared sauna chambers. With short turnaround times between matches, 'recovery' is key for all teams. Spain have two abbreviations that cover their tech, while Argentina have a 150-point chart for each player before their skills take over.

England: Infrared saunas

They look like a photographer's red-lit dark room. Though what's developing inside these wooden cabins that are set up for England, are cells - more precisely, mitochondria. Infrared saunas are the 2026 edition's hippest recovery rooms - enclosed wooden chambers with red light panels that quicken muscle recovery. Infrared light goes deep through skin, joints and tissues to soothe muscles, reduce soreness, and speed up recovery. It increases blood flow and supply of oxygen and nutrients to tired muscles as the light acts like a spark plug to mitochondria, draining out fatigue.

According to Sunlighten Infrared, these saunas directly warm the body at lower, more comfortable, temperatures. A remote, like those that regulate A/Cs, controls settings like far, mid, and near infrared in rooms that Eberechi Eze calls his central nervous system hack.

Spain: Shockwave therapy

While England footballers sit in red light rooms, Spain's pros rely on micro-electric shocks and magnetic waves.

Spain has been an early adopter of advanced therapies like EMTT (Extracorporeal Magneto Transduction Therapy) and NESA (Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation). EMTT involves sending quick magnetic wave signals - it's described as a speed battery charger - through the body, and helps in blocking pain signals, and accelerates tissue repair. The magnetic fields infiltrate the body and quicken tissue regeneration, explains VennHealthcare.

NESA sees electric micro-current impulses that urge the nervous system to kickstart the process of blunting pain and reducing inflammation. The European champions have dedicated years of research before the therapies were put into implementation.

France: Mobile cryotherapy units

While Kylian Mbappe's Les Bleus have their own infrared rooms installed back at their facility in Clairefontaine, what's tagging them is mobile cryotherapy units. The cryotherapy chamber dips to between -90°C and -150°C and uses short term exposure (two to three minutes) to liquid nitrogen vapour. First, the cold numbs the pain like an anaesthetic. Blood vessels shrink, so flow to the injured areas halts. Gushing stops as inflammation is controlled. Once they leave the cryo chambers, the vessels expand and fresh blood rushes into muscles to reduce soreness.

Argentina: Rest & then 150-point task challenge

Head coach Lionel Scaloni pointed out that fixture congestion had become an opponent in itself for his team. The lament also saw backroom staff monitor Messi & Co's recovery tough as they are the ninth-oldest team in the tournament. MundoAmerica.com reported that each player has to complete a recovery card with 150 points every week, earned by completing tasks, each with a specific score: 14 minutes of cycling for 40 points, five of foam rolling for 10, while cold baths and massages get 30, similar to 4 minutes of upper-body strength training. The goal is for all of them to have 150 points on their card.

SHIVANI NAIK

FIFA open to 64-team World Cup in 2030

Express News Service
New Delhi, July 13

Gianni Infantino is pushing for 2 consecutive expansions. AP

AFTER THE success of the 48-team World Cup, FIFA boss Gianni Infantino has already raised expansion talks, wanting to go up to 64 teams as early as the 2030 World Cup. The Swiss lawyer said the tournament should be "for the whole world."

"These are all issues that we will be examining after the World Cup," Infantino told Swiss broadcaster Blue Sport.

Infantino emphasised the importance of the World Cup being open to as many nations as possible, and not just teams from Europe and South America. "Every nation should be allowed to dream of participating in the World Cup," he added

After the surprise performance of island nation Cape Verde it is hard to ignore the rise in quality among smaller countries. "You can see that the quality of the teams is extremely high, and it's getting higher and higher, all over the world.".

Infantino said expanding the edition would give more such countries hope and, "If you don't give smaller countries a chance to participate in the World Cup, they'll lack the incentive to keep improving."

Infantino deemed the first 48-team World Cup a "huge success," pointing to the fact that nine out of ten African teams successfully advanced to the knockout rounds, though only two, Morocco and Egypt, progressed to the round of 16. Morocco was once again the African nation that went furthest, the quarter-finals, but met the same fate as 2022 as they got eliminated by France.

He cited the smaller number of African nations in 2022 as an added incentive to expand. "At the last World Cup, there were only five teams from Africa," he said. "That just goes to show how important it is to include all teams – to give them this opportunity to participate."

The 2030 World Cup will be primarily co-hosted by Morocco, Portugal, and Spain. To mark the tournament's centenary, the three opening matches are scheduled to take place in Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay, honoring Uruguay as the host of the inaugural competition in 1930.

MORE VAR, MORE CHAOS

Is this the most high-tech, worst refereed World Cup?

Mihir Vasavda
Mumbai, July 13

THE BEST referees, as the old saying goes, are the ones nobody remembers. They let the game breathe, keep the contest flowing and, by the final whistle, have quietly faded into the background.

This World Cup, the most high-tech of all, has unfolded very differently.

Barely a match has passed without the officials becoming as much a talking point as the football itself. The latest came in England's quarterfinal, where a bizarre sequence preceded the equaliser. Norway argued the ball had clipped an overhead support cable before dropping back into play. To the naked eye, the trajectory appeared to change. Television replays seemed to suggest a deflection. Yet, FIFA's ball sensor registered no spike, leading officials to conclude there had been no contact.

It was the kind of surreal debate that has come to define this tournament. Instead of discussing England's movement or Norway's defending, the conversation centred on cables, sensors and technology.

Refereeing controversies are hardly unique to this World Cup. The 2002 tournament remains scarred by the decisions that went South Korea's way against Italy and Spain. Graham Poll's extraordinary three-yellow-card error in 2006 is part of World Cup folklore. Frank Lampard's disallowed goal against Germany in 2010 helped usher in goal-line technology. Even Qatar 2022 had Antonio Mateu Lahoz's chaotic quarterfinal between Argentina and the Netherlands.

The difference is that those tournaments are remembered for a handful of infamous incidents. This one has felt like a conveyor belt.

There have been contentious penalties, disputed handballs, inconsistent VAR interventions and baffling offside calls. Similar challenges have produced different outcomes from one match to the next. Coaches and players have complained not merely about individual mistakes but about the absence of a consistent threshold for intervention.

Even the refereeing philosophy has appeared to lurch from one extreme to another. Some matches have been allowed to flow with a remarkably light touch, physical contests where officials seemed determined not to interrupt the spectacle. Others have resembled stop-start affairs, with soft fouls, lengthy VAR reviews and frequent interventions breaking any rhythm. The inconsistency has often proved more frustrating than the decisions themselves because teams have struggled to understand where the line actually is.

Switzerland's Breel Embolo was sent off during the quarter-final against Argentina after receiving two yellow cards. REUTERS

The irony is difficult to miss. This is the most technologically advanced World Cup in history. Semi-automated offside, enhanced VAR systems and new detection technologies were introduced to reduce controversy. Instead, they have often created fresh arguments. Fans are no longer debating whether officials saw an incident. They are questioning why technology reached one conclusion while the images appeared to suggest another.

Then there is the issue of governance.

FIFA's decision to suspend Folarin Balogun's semi-final suspension after his red card, while simultaneously insisting the referee's decision remained correct, only deepened the sense of confusion. Whatever the legal justification, the message appeared contradictory: the officials were right, the disciplinary process was right, but the punishment would not stand. That did little to strengthen confidence in the integrity of the decisions.

"It turns out that more rules and more layers of review and tech create even more opportunities for manipulation."

GARRY KASPAROV, FORMER CHESS WORLD CHAMPION

Perhaps, the clearest indication of how much faith has eroded is the conversation beyond the touchline. Every major Argentina match has been followed by a torrent of posts alleging favourable treatment. That argument gained momentum when Breel Embolo was sent off in Sunday's quarterfinal, after the VAR's intervention, minutes after Switzerland scored the equaliser.

Whether those claims stand up to scrutiny is almost beside the point. When every contentious decision involving one team is instantly viewed through the lens of bias rather than human error, trust in the officiating has already been lost.

As Garry Kasparov noted in his Washington Post column, "It turns out that more rules and more layers of review and tech create even more opportunities for manipulation. Machines measuring offsides seemingly by a millimeter and ball sensors that apparently can detect hair (if only Croatian hair) do not solve the transparency problem. Who decides what to review, and when? Who makes the final decision?"

To add to Kasparov's list of questions: Is this the worst-officiated World Cup?

That's a difficult claim to prove. Every generation believes the mistakes of its era are the worst, and football's biggest tournament has never been free of refereeing controversy.

But this may be the first World Cup where controversy has become cumulative. Every fresh incident is viewed through the prism of the last one. Every decision begins with a presumption of doubt.

The old adage says the best referees are the ones nobody notices. At this World Cup, they have been impossible to ignore. And that, more than any individual mistake, may be the tournament's most enduring officiating legacy.

INTO HISTORY BOOKS

At Lord's, India take honours

Sneh Rana picks up four wickets as Harman & Co seal 270-run win against England

Shankar Narayan
Mumbai, July 13

SNEH RANA was not part of India's Women's T20 World Cup squad. Even when Shreyanka Patil was ruled out through injury, the selectors looked elsewhere. On Monday at Lord's, Rana had the final word.

With Sophie Ecclestone mounting a stubborn resistance that threatened to prolong India's wait, Rana floated one up outside off. Ecclestone lunged forward to smother the spin, but the ball dipped late, gripped and burst through the gap between bat and pad before crashing into the stumps.

If cricket grounds are made of memories, Lord's is haunted by legends - mostly men, all in white. Forty years after their first Test tour of England, Indian women tore up the script.

Just two weeks after the heartbreak against Australia on this same ground, India stormed back and found redemption. Beating England by 270 runs, Harmanpreet Kaur's team didn't just win their first Test at Lord's — they rewrote history books. This was India's third Test win on English soil, and their most iconic. Their first came at Taunton in 2006, their second at Wormsley in 2014. Lord's, the most famous address in cricket, became the stage where India completed a journey that had begun nearly four decades earlier.

Before this Test, India's women had played nine matches in England since that first tour in 1986, winning two and drawing seven. They had competed against some of the strongest sides in the world, produced memorable performances and come close on several occasions. The victory was not built around one individual. It was a reflection of a team that found a different hero whenever the match demanded one.

Kranti Gaud announced herself on one of cricket's grandest stages. The young pacer showed remarkable composure, repeatedly challenging England's batters with movement, accuracy and discipline, finishing with seven wickets. Yastika Bhatia produced the knock that changed the direction of the match. She combined patience with aggression to score a magnificent 113, and her century was pivotal to India posting a daunting score for England to chase in the second innings. Smriti Mandhana once again underlined her importance with twin half-centuries, while Deepti Sharma's first-innings fifty steadied India after a wobble to ensure they reached a score they could compete with.

The contributions around them were just as important. Rana contributed with bat and ball, while Sayali Satghare backed up her impressive Perth performance against Australia earlier in the year with another assured bowling display at Lord's. Harmanpreet Kaur's fifty in the first innings and her bowling changes in both innings, held India together.

When Monday began, India needed four wickets to complete a historic victory. England, however, was not ready to surrender, and the lower-order made India work for every breakthrough. Rana provided the first breakthrough. Amy Jones had fought hard and reached 54, but a pull shot that could have brought valuable runs instead found Shafali Verma at mid-wicket.

Harmanpreet continued to rotate her bowlers, trusting every option at her disposal. The decision soon paid off when Deepti produced a moment of magic against Issy Wong. Tossing the ball up, she drew Wong forward before beating the outside edge and crashing into the off stump. She was not finished. She produced another moment of brilliance to dismiss Lauren Bell, ripping one through the gap between bat and pad and hitting the top of the off stump.

For Harmanpreet and Mandhana, the only players part of the Wormsley win in 2014, Lord's became another landmark. For the younger players, it became a memory they will carry forever. India's women did not just win a Test match at Lord's. They claimed their place in its history. Forty years after beginning their journey in England, they conquered the Home of Cricket.

BRIEF SCORES: India 285 and 341/7 declared beat **England** 170 and 186 all out in 62.5 overs (Amy Jones 54; Sneh Rana 4/42) by 270 runs

Indian players celebrate after beating England in the first women's Test played at Lord's. CREIMAS

Kranti's 7-for, Yastika's ton prove hard work pays off

Shankar Narayan
Mumbai, July 13

WHEN KRANTI Gaud picked up her phone after the second day's play at Lord's, she wasn't calling home to talk about the five wickets she had just taken.

Instead, she turned the camera towards the honours board.

Thousands of kilometres away, in Ghuwara, a small nagar panchayat in Madhya Pradesh's Chhatarpur district, her father Munna Singh watched. His daughter, who had once asked him to let her give up studies and pursue cricket, had just earned a place on one of the game's most sacred walls. "It was a very happy moment for our family," Munna told *The Indian Express*. "Everyone at home was so happy."

Kranti returned figures of 5/37 in the first innings, including the prized wicket of England captain Nat Sciver-Brunt. She added 2/54 in the second to finish with match figures of 7/91 and the Player of the Match award, while Yastika Bhatia's 113 made her the first woman to score a Test hundred at Lord's. Together with Smriti Mandhana's twin fifties, the performances powered India to a 270-run victory.

The scoreboard will remember the wickets and runs. It won't tell you what came before them. "I never imagined that one day she would have her name on the honours board at Lord's," Munna said. "When she said she wanted to play cricket, our whole family agreed. We stood behind her. We hoped she would achieve something, and today she has."

For a former police constable raising six children, it was a leap of faith. Kranti began with tennis-ball cricket in the police quarters before coach Rajiv Bilthare spotted her talent. Soon, others took notice. "People used to tell us she had the talent and that no one could stop her," Munna recalled. "Wherever she played, she made a name for herself. We kept believing that one day she would play for India."


Kranti Gaud took seven English wickets in the match. CREIMAS

In just over 12 months as an international cricketer, Kranti has won the ODI World Cup and helped script one of India's greatest overseas Test victories.

Munna credits the senior players for helping her settle in the Indian dressing room. "Harmanpreet Kaur has supported her a lot," he said, "as has Deepti Sharma. All the senior players have encouraged her."

If Kranti's story gathered pace quickly, Yastika's was interrupted time and again. For former India wicketkeeper Kiran More, who has worked with the left-hander since 2021, the hundred at Lord's carried the weight of every setback that had come before it. "What she has gone through in the last three years..." More said, pausing to reflect on a run of injuries that included ankle, calf, wrist and knee setbacks. "She was very upset. She kept asking, 'Why did this happen to me?'"

The toughest blow came last September, when a serious knee injury forced several months of rehabilitation and ruled her out of the ODI World Cup and the 2026 WPL. "I always told her, 'Keep believing in yourself. This is part of life and part of every sportsperson's career. You have to make a comeback.'"

The comeback was built away from the cameras, in rehabilitation sessions, lonely days and the hope that hard work would be rewarded. "The way she batted, her determination... this Test match proved she is mentally very strong," More said. "To come back and fight like this is not easy."

When the century arrived on Sunday, the raw emotion took over. Yastika took her helmet off, showed her bat to all parts of the ground, and knelt down on the historic Lord's turf, and kissed the grass. More began working with Yastika after former India batter and coach WV Raman recommended the left-hander to him. "Raman deserves a lot of credit," More said. "He recommended her to me. That's how she came to work with me. He saw something in her very early."

"I never thought about it (about her scoring a hundred at Lord's)," he admitted. "But as a coach, you always believe in the person you are coaching." "She keeps things very simple," he said. "She is very disciplined in her work ethic, her fitness, her sleeping habits. Work ethic always saves you. I always told her that if she kept working hard, one day it would be her day."

At Lord's, it was.

England still has lessons only Rohit and Virat can teach

Venkata Krishna B
Chennai, July 13

WHEN INDIA'S young T20 batters arrived in Birmingham after a horror fortnight in England, they had two teammates in the dressing room who had lived through exactly this kind of struggle before, Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma. Both know, better than most in that squad, that no batsman comes through an England tour unscathed, whatever the format.

Kohli still winces at how James Anderson worked him over in 2014, ball after ball shaped away, an entire series spent chasing a line he couldn't leave alone.

Rohit has spent years trying to forget a shot at Southampton, tea approaching, when he went after Moeen Ali and picked out the fielder at mid-on. He would not get another chance to bat in a Test in England until the World Test Championship final in 2021, seven years later. Kohli's redemption came sooner, in 2018, a different batsman by the time he returned, one who had rebuilt his game specifically for these conditions.

Both are now in the last stretch of their careers, ODIs the only format either still plays for India. Rohit is 39, Kohli 37, and neither selectors nor coaching staff have offered any assurance they are part of the 2027 World Cup plans. It remains a series-by-series arrangement. A year after they stepped away from T20Is, both took leave of the Test side too. Since then, they have made the case for themselves in the only format that remains, repeatedly, through performance rather than reputation.

The numbers carry more weight than the sentiment, and the T20 fortnight made them newly relevant. In ODIs, the format both will retire from as undisputed GOATs, conditions have never troubled them the way Tests once did. Since Rohit was installed as an opener by MS Dhoni in 2013, he has scored 1,426 runs in 27 ODI innings in England, at an average of 64.9, seven centuries, and a strike rate of 90.78, barely two points below his career mark. Kohli has managed 1,349 runs in 33 innings at 51.88, striking at 91.21. Of his 54 international centuries, only one has come in England. Set beside their Test records in the country, spottier, harder-won, the ODI numbers are the clearer proof of what both have built here.

What the numbers describe is a method: knowing when to slow down. English seam conditions keep bowlers in the game longer than most sides are used to, and neither batsman has ever tried to hit through that. Both have simply become more compact, willing to wait, trusting that the bad ball will still arrive.

It is precisely what India's newer batting group has struggled to do, adapt the tempo to the pitch rather than import the tempo they already have. Flash and power carry a T20 side; they do less for a batsman facing a Dukes ball moving off the seam in the 30th over.

Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma will return to action on Tuesday when the ODI series against England gets underway. CREIMAS

The pull shot is where this shows most clearly. Julian Wood, the power-hitting coach who has worked across franchise T20 leagues, has pointed to Rohit's technique as the example to follow in these conditions: "He gets his hands up very high, gets in good positions, extends his hands through the ball... he gets on top of the ball." It is control, not force, precisely the adjustment India's younger batters have struggled to make against the short ball this England tour.

No quick fix

The ODI series will not fix a side still finding its balance. Picking batting depth means fewer specialist bowlers; fielding six bowling options pushes the tail down to No. 8. There is no clean solution available to the team management here. But before any of that gets resolved, there is something Kohli and Rohit are positioned to pass on that the scorecard won't show, the discipline of batting in gears.

Rohit, in his last months as captain, was struck by how little his younger teammates understood about looking after the ball in Test cricket. Kohli, during one of his rare Vijay Hazare Trophy appearances, hid his annoyance when a fielder made a basic error of standing too square to a bowler operating around the stumps, walked from mid-on to correct him, showing him the angles himself rather than letting it go. Small corrections, delivered without ceremony, the kind that only come from having made the same mistakes once.

The ODI side is not as green as the T20 group, but the gaps are still there. Yashasvi Jaiswal, left out of this tour, still struggles to pace an innings. Ishan Kishan needs to show he can shift gears depending on the situation. Shreyas Iyer is still chasing consistency. None of it is a crisis. All of it needs a hand in the middle to fix.

Until their futures are decided, Rohit and Kohli have this much to give: batting on seaming pitches, riding the bounce, pacing an innings, milking the attack when boundaries aren't there. It is the one part of their game that has not faded, and the dressing room still needs it.

Had a chat with Kohli about players for 2027 ODI WC: Gill

Express News Service
Mumbai, July 13

WITH A little over a year left for the 2027 ODI World Cup, team combinations are in the process of being shaped and India skipper Shubman Gill has had discussions with Virat Kohli on the players they would need to succeed in southern Africa.

On Monday, Gill stressed on the importance of having Kohli and fellow veteran Rohit Sharma around in the 50-over format, saying that the former captains remained "integral" to the team and their performances in different conditions spoke for themselves.

Gill, who has taken over the Test and ODI captaincy fairly recently, said he has had a chat with Kohli about the road ahead. The 26-year-old said they spoke about identifying players who could fit the bill leading into next year's World Cup. "The conversation was regarding the combination - what combination could be best for us, which players we feel could fit the team right now but could help us in the future, which bowlers, all-rounders and spinners. We were talking about that," Gill said.

The skipper said both veterans still had a lot to offer to the team. "I think Virat bhai and Rohit bhai have been the backbone of the Indian batting line-up for the past decade. They remain a very integral part of our team. The experience and skill they bring is obviously very valuable. We have seen what they have done over the past decade in different conditions, consistently and on different occasions," Gill said.

The ODI series comes immediately after a 0-2 T20I series defeat in Ireland and the subsequent 0-4 thrashing at the hands of England. The absence of Hardik Pandya, Nitish Kumar Reddy and Harshit Rana has left India without a seam-bowling all-rounder. Gill said it was "unfortunate" that India did not have their services at a time when they wanted to give them game time.

• BRIEFLY

Stephen Fleming joined CSK back in 2008. CREIMAS

Chennai Super Kings part ways with coach Fleming after 16 seasons

AFTER 16 seasons as head coach, Stephen Fleming and Chennai Super Kings parted ways mutually on Monday. Ever since the franchise did not make the IPL Playoffs for a third consecutive season this year, the New Zealander's future as head coach had become uncertain, with the management weighing its options. And after a review conducted alongside the ongoing Major League Cricket, where CSK's sister franchise Texas Super Kings finished bottom, it is understood that this led to the decision to seek a new coach. Although the name of Hemang Badani has emerged as a possible successor, Viswanathan said the franchise hasn't started the process yet. "We have just finished this process, and we will start exploring the next options. We have not decided on any particular name yet," he said. VENKATA KRISHNA B

CWG organisers reject Indian athlete's entry

PARA SWIMMER Tejas Nandakumar will not compete in the Glasgow Commonwealth Games, starting on July 23, as his entry has been rejected by the organisers due to a classification issue. The 20-year-old's was in the list of competitors issued by the government last week. He was to compete in the men's 50m freestyle S7 event in Glasgow and his slot was earlier accepted by the organisers. PTI

Satwik-Chirag to lead India's campaign

FRESH FROM ending a two-year title drought and returning after a brief injury layoff, doubles stars Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will spearhead India's campaign at the Japan Open Super 750 badminton tournament beginning in Tokyo on Tuesday. PTI

■ WIMBLEDON

How Sinner out-served a faster, harder-hitting Zverev

Bhuvan Gupta
New Delhi, July 13

IN THEORY, Alexander Zverev should have been the happier man walking off Centre Court on Sunday. He out-aced Sinner 17 to 15 and landed 80 per cent of his first serves to Sinner's 66. He lost anyway, 6-7(7), 7-6(2), 6-3, 6-4.

The difference wasn't power, it was what each man did with the points that followed. Sinner won 80 per cent of points on his first serve to Zverev's 71, and 65 per cent on his second to Zverev's 61. He also out-returned Zverev, 43 return points to 34. Whenever the match needed deciding, Sinner had more ways to decide it.

That efficiency has been rebuilt from close to nothing. Two years ago this would have sounded absurd. At the 2025 US Open final, also against Carlos Alcaraz, Sinner's first serve landed just 48 per cent of the time. He lost. Days later, leaked practice footage showed him back on court working on the shot that had failed him under exactly that pressure. He won his next tournament.

The rebuild started in 2022, under Riccardo Piatti, with a platform serve, feet planted wide, the racket arm arriving from well behind the body. First-serve percentage sat below 60. When Piatti gave way to Simone Vagnozzi, the serve was the first thing he wanted to fix. Jim Courier remembers cornering him at the 2022 Miami Open to ask the plan. "The serve, it's got a hitch in it," Vagnozzi told him. "We've got to get rid of the hitch and smooth it out. I want the toss more in front so he can be more offensive."

By mid-2023, Vagnozzi and Darren Cahill had switched Sinner to a pinpoint stance, back foot drawn up to meet the front at contact, modelled on John Isner, a six-foot-ten American who serves nothing like Sinner otherwise plays. It made no obvious sense on paper. It took years to show in the numbers: gains in 2023, more in 2024, and by 2026, a first-serve percentage above 65 with roughly 80 per cent of those points won.

Paolo Bertolucci, the former Italian Davis Cup player who has watched the rebuild unfold in *Gazzetta dello Sport*, has pointed to smaller, recent adjustments beneath the mechanical one, the toss brought closer to the body, the right elbow held further back while loading. Together, he has written, they turned the serve from a shot Sinner had to protect into one that protects him.


Jannik Sinner won 80 per cent of points on his first serve. AP

"You cannot attack Jannik Sinner's first serve," Djokovic said after his own straight-sets semi-final defeat, in which he lost only five points behind it. "You can try to read it, block it, get it back and play."

Asked to explain the shift, he didn't stop at mechanics. "It's become an incredible weapon in the last two years. Very unpredictable, great variety, great balance. He is using his height extremely well."

The scale of it becomes clear against history. Sinner is the first Wimbledon champion since Federer in 2003 to win without losing a single service game across the semi-final and final. Across both matches, he faced exactly two break points, one against Djokovic, one against Zverev, and saved both.

Changing motion

Sinner's own account, offered after beating Jan-Lennard Struff in the quarter-final, was plainer: he and his team changed the motion, the toss, the timing, "many things," not chasing pace so much as learning "the right serve at the right moment."

That composure had a specific test on Sunday. Two hours forty-two minutes in, locked at 3-3 in the third set, Zverev earned his first break point of the match, thirty-one straight holds between them to that point. He didn't get to use it. Sinner played a drop shot, Zverev pushed off to chase it, and slipped, hyperextending the same knee he'd injured two years earlier. Sinner helped him up. Play resumed, but something had changed. "I was struggling to push off on the serve," Zverev said afterward. "My serve speed went down... the fall didn't help me in the third set." Two games later, serving with a compromised push-off, he was broken for the first time all match. Sinner served out the set. In the fourth, Sinner created three break points in a single, gripping seventh game, at one point scrambling to the turf to keep a rally alive, converting the third, an in-form Zverev cracking under sustained pressure this time, not misfortune. Sinner faced one break point in the entire final, and saved it.

Carlos Alcaraz, sidelined all season by a wrist injury, is still to come back to a tour where the one man who might have beaten this version of Sinner hasn't had the chance to yet.

R.N.I. No. WBENG/2005/20789 Vol. XXII No.98 Printed by V.Srinivasan and Published by V.Srinivasan on behalf of The Indian Express (P) Ltd and Printed at Saraswati Print Factory Pvt.Ltd, 789, Chowbhaga (West), Kolkata -700105 and Published at The Indian Express (P) Ltd JL No.29 & 30, N.H.-6, Mouza - Prasastha & Ankurhati, P.O. - Salap, P.S.-Domjur, Howrah - 711 409. Ph: (033)66043800 Fax: (033) 66043825 & 66043847. Chairman of the Board : Viveck Goenka, Chief Editor : Raj Kamal Jha, Editor : Unni Rajen Shanker, Editor (Kolkata): Rakesh Sinha* (*Responsible for selection of news under the PRP Act)