

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2026

The Indian EXPRESS

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After nearly 2 decades, author Taslima Nasrin set for Kolkata return

Ravik Bhattacharya
Kolkata, July 14

ALMOST TWO decades after she was forced to leave Kolkata following protests against her writing, Bangladesh-born author Taslima Nasrin is set to appear in a public event in the city on August 1.

The programme at the city's Rabindra Sadan cultural centre is being organised by three organisations: Secular Mission, Paschimbonger Jonno (For West Bengal), and Human Rights



Author Taslima Nasrin

Beyond Frontiers. The organisers said Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari and author Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay were

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Bhojshala dispute: SC orders Friday prayers at alternative site

Bench declines to pass order restoring status quo, will examine dispute in detail

Express News Service
New Delhi, July 14

THE SUPREME Court declined to pass any order restoring status quo at the disputed Bhojshala-Kamal Maula mosque complex in Madhya Pradesh and directed that Muslim worshippers be provided an alternative space adjacent to the premises for Friday prayers until it examines the dispute in detail.

On May 15, the Madhya Pradesh High Court had held that



The Bhojshala-Kamal Maula mosque complex in MP

the complex has a religious character as a temple, following

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

TRUMP U-TURN: NO HORMUZ TRANSIT FEE, WANT TRADE, INVESTMENT DEALS INSTEAD

Another Indian killed as Iran hits UAE tankers in Hormuz

MEA summons Iran's deputy chief of mission, lodges protest

Shubhajit Roy
New Delhi, July 14

AS THE US and Iran stepped up attacks and battled for control over the Strait of Hormuz, two UAE-flagged oil tankers with Indian seafarers came under fire from Tehran on Tuesday, leaving one dead and 10 injured. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) summoned the Iranian Deputy Chief of Mission and lodged a strong protest.



A vessel at the Strait of Hormuz, as seen from Oman, Tuesday. REUTERS

(Reuters adds: US President Donald Trump stepped back from a proposal to charge a 20% transit fee to guard the strait, saying he would instead seek investment deals with Gulf states. US forces carried

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Dashboard to monitor seafarers, liaison officers for families, says Govt

Vikas Pathak
New Delhi, July 14

WITH ANOTHER Indian seafarer being killed in the US-Iran conflict, the Centre on Tuesday ordered a series of measures, including an operational dashboard to track every Indian on every vessel — regardless of the country it belongs to — and a dedicated liaison officer for every seafarer who is killed or injured, to act as the “single

point of contact” for the affected family.

The decisions were taken at an inter-ministerial meeting chaired by Sarbananda Sonowal, Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, soon after the fresh attacks on two oil tankers with Indian crew on Tuesday.

According to sources in the ministry, nine Indian seafarers have died, one is presumed

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Tough measures on table as Railways seeks to curb linen theft in AC coaches

Dheeraj Mishra
New Delhi, July 14

A DAY after *The Indian Express* reported that about 1.27 crore linen items were stolen from AC coaches of the Indian Railways over four years, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw directed officials to come up with a reform to curb such theft.

Turning to top Railway officials at a press conference Tuesday on Railways’ “52 reforms in 52 weeks” initiative, Vaishnaw referred to *The Indian Express*



The Indian Express report on linen theft published Monday

report and sought a timeline for the issue to be resolved. The officials responded by

seeking two months to formalise a way to fix the issue.

On Monday, *The Indian Express* reported that between January 2022, when bedroll services had fully resumed after the pandemic, and May 2026, at least 1.27 crore bedroll pieces were stolen from the AC coaches. A linen bedroll consists of two bedsheets, a blanket, a pillow, a pillow cover, and a face towel.

The report was based on Right to Information (RTI)

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Business as Usual
By EP UNNY

SATLUJ DIRECTOR: DO NOT ABDUCT KHALRA AGAIN... LET US TELL HIS STORY PAGE 8

Amid new US tariff plan, Govt prohibits import of goods made using forced labour

Ravi Dutta Mishra
New Delhi, July 14

THE COMMERCE and Industry Ministry on Tuesday prohibited the import of goods manufactured using forced labour, weeks after the United States Trade Representative (USTR) proposed 12.5 per cent tariffs on India linked to the issue.

The US had launched two Section 301 probes on India in March and subsequently proposed fresh tariffs on June 3 after the outcome of its first investigation found that India failed to “effectively enforce” a forced labour import prohibition, which had purportedly hurt US commerce. The outcome of the second investigation relating to excess capacity is yet to be released.

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), in an order dated July 13, has inserted a new paragraph in the Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) regarding “forced labour”, stating that the

E. EXPLAINED

Global benchmark

Experts say the notification on forced labour indicates India is tightening its domestic legal framework to match global benchmarks. The move could strengthen its position in trade negotiations and discussions on market access.

import of goods produced or manufactured, “wholly or in part”, through the use of forced labour is “prohibited”.

“The Central Government may, from time to time, specify, by notification, the goods whose import shall be prohibited under this paragraph, having regard to the findings of such enquiry or such other material as it may consider appropriate. The procedure for

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Happening today

● INDIA-UK FTA takes effect. It entails wide sectoral coverage and deep reduction in both tariff and non-tariff barriers.

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‘Counsel, you are on mute’

THE WORLD OF VIRTUAL COURTS
PAGE 9

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SCAN TO KNOW MORE



A videograb of the house in Bikaner's Loonkaransar

Gangster Godara's Bikaner house found demolished; probe on

Hamza Khan
Jaipur, July 14

A "SIGNIFICANT" portion of gangster Rohit Godara's ancestral home in Bikaner's Loonkaransar was demolished by "unknown persons", Rajasthan Police said on Tuesday.

No one was present at the house when the incident took place overnight, they said.

Loonkaransar Circle Officer (CO) Ranveer Singh told *The Indian Express* on Tuesday, "We were informed about the incident around 9 am today. The Station House Officer (SHO) himself went to the spot. It seemed that the demolition had been carried out with a JCB machine. A significant portion has been damaged."

According to Singh, local residents claimed they had "no knowledge" of how and when the action was carried out, because "the *dhanis* (hutments) are far away from each other". "They (locals) also said that the noise may have been drowned out by the noise of air coolers in the area." Police are analysing CCTV footage and other evidence to find and track the people behind the razing. Godara's parents, Sant Das and Gita, as well brother, Hanu-

man Swami, and Hanuman's wife and children, used to live in the house. However, none of them were there at the time of the demolition. Officials said Godara's parents and brother are lodged in jail in different extortion cases.

While Hanuman was arrested in an extortion case in Sri Ganganagar, his parents were allegedly involved in another case in Ratangarh in Churu. Godara is said to be absconding, allegedly in Azerbaijan now. Police said that Hanuman's wife had left the home around "10-12 days" ago with her children, asking neighbours to take care of the crops in their absence. "No report has been received yet. We will take further action once we get a report," Singh said.

Last week, Godara's name had figured in 'Operation Hard-ball' — the coordinated action against Indian crime syndicates by law enforcement from the US, Canada, and Europe, leading to the arrest of 24 people connected to crimes including Hardeep Singh Nijjar's assassination, as per the US Department of Justice (DOJ). Godara had been designated as the European leader of the "Lawrence Bishnoi enterprise", it said.

Paramedical student stabbed to death at Pilibhit Medical College

Express News Service
Lucknow, July 14

A 22-YEAR-OLD paramedical student was stabbed to death allegedly by a fellow student at the Pilibhit Medical College and Hospital on Tuesday morning.

Kashish Patel, a first-year student pursuing a Diploma in CT Scan Technology at the government medical college, was rushed to a hospital in Bareilly, where she succumbed to injuries. Police arrested the accused, Sagar Singh, 24, a student from X-ray technician course.

Police suspect the attack could be the fallout of a "one-sided relationship", though the exact motive is still being probed. "We are investigating whether the attack was premeditated," a police officer involved in the investigation said.

According to the police, Kashish was working in the CT scan room on Tuesday morning when Sagar came with a knife. "The two spoke briefly before an

argument broke out. Sagar then pulled out the knife and attacked her. Kashish tried to flee, but he chased her and stabbed her," said the officer.

A staff nurse, 32-year-old Nidhi Sehgal, who was present in the CT scan room, intervened to stop the assault and suffered a minor knife injury to her hand.

"After Kashish collapsed, Sagar tried to flee but was overpowered by hospital security and other staff before our team arrived," the officer added.

"Police have registered a murder case against Sagar. Both Sagar and Kashish were first-year paramedical students. Kashish was a resident of Bareilly, while Sagar hails from Kanpur," Superintendent of Police (Pilibhit) Sukirti Madhav said.

PTI adds: The principal of the medical college, Dr Sangeeta Aneja, said a three-member committee been constituted to look into sequence of events, security arrangements, and circumstances leading to attack.

Court sentences convict in 2020 IS-linked terror conspiracy to 7 yrs in jail

Express News Service
Bengaluru, July 14

A SPECIAL court in Bengaluru on Tuesday convicted and sentenced an Islamic State-linked terror conspiracy accused to seven years in prison after he pleaded guilty to all the charges brought against him.

Mohammed Haneef, 31, a resident of Bengaluru who was accused of being a member of the Al Hind module, was sentenced on eight counts of terrorism, one of conspiracy and one of illegal procurement of guns.

He is one the 20 accused named in the NIA chargesheet in the 2020 case of Islamic State terror plot, which emerged in 2019-2020 spanning the southern states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The Al Hind module allegedly radicalised youth at the instance of foreign handlers and notorious terror suspects, said the police.

"The offender/Accused No.9 (Haneef) is sentenced to undergo rigorous imprisonment for a period of seven (7) years and is liable to pay a fine of Rs.5,000/ for the offence

punishable under Section 17 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. In default of payment of the fine, he shall undergo rigorous imprisonment for a period of two months," the special court said.

Haneef, who originally hails from Mandya, pleaded guilty to charges of raising funds for terrorist activities, organising terrorist camps, recruitments, harboring terrorists, being a member of a terrorist group, under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1967.

In September 2025, Haneef had chosen to plead not guilty. He changed his mind earlier this year and told the special court that he wanted to plead 'guilty' to the charges. The special court accepted the guilty plea to convict and sentence Haneef.

"The substantial sentences imposed on the offender / Accused No.9 shall run concurrently. The period of detention undergone by the offender / Accused No.9 is in judicial custody shall be set off against term of imprisonment imposed, as provided under Section 428 of the CrPC," the special court ruled.

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

Another Indian killed

out waves of attacks for the third night in a row after Tehran said it had closed the strait, prompting Trump on Monday to reinstate a blockade of Iranian shipping and propose the fee.

But just a little under five hours before the fee had been due to come into effect, Trump said the strait was open to all shipping traffic except that of Iran. "Based on highly productive conversations with Middle East leadership, I have decided to replace the 20% United States reimbursement fee with trade and investment deals that the various Gulf states will be making into the United States," he said in a post on Truth Social.

Condemning Tuesday's attacks, India called for an immediate cessation of violence, particularly the targeting of commercial shipping and civilian infrastructure, and restoration of "free and unimpeded navigation and commerce through international waterways in the region".

The incident came days after an Indian seafarer went missing as a Cyprus-flagged ship transiting the Strait of Hormuz was targeted by Iran on Sunday. On

Tuesday, his family in Pune said his death had been confirmed.

"India is deeply concerned by the attacks on two vessels, MT Al Bahiyah and MT Mombasa, during their transit through the Strait of Hormuz today," the MEA said in a statement.

It said of the total 46 crew members on the two vessels, 30 were Indians. "Of the 12 Indian nationals onboard *MT Al Bahiyah*, one has tragically lost his life and another has been injured," the MEA said. "Of the 18 Indian nationals onboard *MT Mombasa*, nine have sustained injuries, including two who are reported to be seriously injured," it said.

(Agencies add: The defence ministry of the UAE said on social media that *MT Mombasa* and *MT Al Bahiyah* were "targeted by two Iranian cruise missiles while transiting the southern shipping lane of the Strait of Hormuz, within Omani territorial waters". Abu Dhabi National Oil Company's shipping arm ADNOC L&S said the vessels had sustained "significant damage".

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said that

two "offending" supertankers had been hit and disabled in the Strait of Hormuz after ignoring repeated warnings, turning off navigation systems and attempting to pass through what the Guards described as a mined route. The IRGC's statement did not name the vessels or say whether it was referring to the same tankers cited by the UAE Ministry of Defence.)

In its statement on Tuesday, the MEA said: "The Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of Iran in New Delhi was summoned this morning by the Ministry of External Affairs and a strong protest against these attacks was lodged with him."

"We strongly condemn these attacks and acts of violence targeting seafarers and disrupting free and safe navigation through international waterways like the Strait of Hormuz," it said.

On the situation in the Strait of Hormuz, MEA's official spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at the weekly briefing on Tuesday: "We are closely following the developments in West Asia. We continue to call for safe and unimpeded navigation and flow of commerce through the Strait of Hormuz. This is key for ensuring energy and economic security of people across the world."

turned," the official said.

Under the Railway Property (Unlawful Possession) Act, theft of railway towels, bedsheets or blankets is a non-bailable offence. In September 2015, the Railway Board had prescribed that linen distribution staff advise passengers to hand over used linen at least 30 minutes before disembarking. It also directed that a watch be kept on regular defaulters with suitable counselling, training and penalties.

Currently, the primary response to curb linen theft across divisions has been to counsel the bedroll attendants to remain vigilant, monitor linen closely, ensure prompt collection, and stay alert during duty hours.

tentially usable in future BTAs, that is arguably WTO-consistent," Sen said.

Former trade officer and head of think tank GTRI, Ajay Srivastava, said the measure will take effect in 30 days, adding that the order establishes a legal framework rather than an immediate import ban. Its effectiveness will depend on how the government conducts investigations, the evidence required to establish forced labour, and the products it ultimately targets, he said. "The US has launched Section 301 investigations covering about 60 economies, including India, and has proposed a 12.5% tariff on imports from India and most other countries under review. The EU and Pakistan are proposed to face a lower 10% tariff after introducing domestic measures to prohibit imports made with forced labour. Against this backdrop, India's notification signals that it is strengthening its domestic legal framework in line with international standards, a step that could strengthen its position in future trade negotiations and market-access discussions," he said.

According to GTRI, US authorities consider products such as cotton, textiles, solar-panel polysilicon, seafood, metals, batteries and electronics vulnerable to forced-labour risks, particularly when linked to China's Xinjiang region. Yet, the US and the EU continue to import many such products from China, underscoring the challenges of enforcing forced-labour rules.

Dashboard

dead, and seven have been injured since the start of the West Asia crisis. There have been 29 incidents of attacks on vessels carrying Indian seafarers -- four involving Indian-flagged vessels and the rest involving foreign-flagged vessels.

According to the ministry, each liaison officer will serve as "the single point of contact for families, coordinating medical updates, travel documentation, family assistance, repatriation, seafarers welfare fund support, outstanding wages, contractual entitlements and other compensations".

Sonowal also ordered real-time vessel-by-vessel monitoring and round-the-clock coordination by his ministry, in association with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Indian Navy, Directorate General of Shipping (DGS), Indian Missions in Iran and Oman, and other maritime stakeholders.

He directed the Secretary, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, and the Director General of Shipping to establish a comprehensive operational

dashboard to account for every Indian on every vessel, irrespective of their flags, operating in the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman.

The dashboard is aimed at providing real-time information on vessel position, ownership, cargo, crew strength, crew welfare, threat assessment, intended voyage, next port of call, and the availability of food, fuel, medicines and communication facilities.

Officials would work closely with Indian Missions in Iran, Oman, the United Arab Emirates and other affected countries in the region to obtain verified and real-time information regarding navigational safety, coastal state advisories, route status, port-of-refuge arrangements, hospitals, medical evacuation, repatriation procedures, management of mortal remains, and the status of ongoing investigations.

The meeting underlined that vessel movement through the affected region should only be undertaken after a fresh threat assessment, the professional judgement of the ship's Master, and close coordination with competent maritime authorities.

Sonowal told officials that

shipowners, vessel managers, and Recruitment and Placement Service Licence (RPSL) agencies employing Indian seafarers in the region should be immediately made to provide compliance reports and a confirmation that no Indian seafarer was being compelled to sail without adequate information, protection and support.

"The Government of India has communicated with all the multilateral forums of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and also with the representatives of the concerned flag administration involved in the multiple incidents that contravened international conventions and fundamental requirement of seafarers' security and safety, and protection of right of innocent passage for merchant vessels. We will continue to make every effort to ensure resolution of the issues and remain committed to all stakeholders in this trying and challenging time," Sonowal said.

Criticising the "irresponsible, unwarranted and uncalled for attacks" on cargo ships, he assured Indian seafarers and their families that the government was committed to assisting them at all costs.

Bhojshala dispute

which the Muslim appellants sought an interim stay and the restoration of status quo ante. On Tuesday, a three-judge bench, presided by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said it will fix the matter for final hearing after two or three weeks.

"Meanwhile... without prejudice to the rights of both sides, it is directed that a separate open space adjacent/ near the subject premises may be provided to the appellant and other members of the Muslim community for offering namaz on Friday between 1-3 pm," the bench, also comprising Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana, said.

"It shall be ensured that no disturbance is caused to both sides in the performance of religious rites. The arrangement shall be ad-hoc in nature and subject to the final outcome of the appeal," the bench said.

The bench also directed that "structural alterations" to the complex, "if proposed by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), will not be carried out without leave of this court".

During the hearing Tuesday, CJI Kant said, "These are very sensitive matters".

"What is happening inside Court No. 1 can unnecessarily create a wrong impression, a wrong message. We should be extremely careful in using any expressions... The state's helplessness in maintaining law and order has been noted. That's why we just thought whatever system is there, if we can list it after 10-15 days before a bench," he said.

As the appellants pressed for restoring the status quo, as it existed before the High Court judgment, the CJI said: "Please be over-cautious. Let us not pass any order that leads to the creation of tension and a law-and-order crisis at the spot. We are ready to hear the matter on a day-to-day basis... Resolve the issue finally... It's a matter where both sides, we will request, should have patience."

The medieval structure in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar has long been the subject of competing claims. While Hindus consider the ASI-protected complex as a temple dedicated

to Goddess Vagdevi, Muslims regard it as the Kamal Maula mosque. Under a 2003 arrangement, Hindus performed puja at the complex on Tuesdays and Muslims offered namaz on Fridays.

In 2024, the Madhya Pradesh High Court ordered an ASI survey of the complex, observing that its nature and character need to be "demystified and freed from the shackles of confusion". The ASI report stated that the "existing structure was made from the parts of earlier temples".

Appearing for the Muslim appellants, Senior Advocate A M Singhvi said the situation which prevailed before the High Court decision should continue. "India is a country with layers of history... If you go behind layers, there is no end. If it's eye for an eye, everybody will be blind. That's the rationale behind the 1991 (Places of Worship) Act. It makes an exemption for Ayodhya..." he said.

Singhvi said some of the disputed sites may have had a temple. "For instance, the Jain temple under Qutub Minar... As a Jain, I was taken there and shown something. But that is no reason to go back on layers of history till time starts... There is the larger public interest of 1991 Act to be preserved. Otherwise, there will be chaos in this country. There will be no end to it," he said.

Singhvi pointed out that there is an Allahabad High Court order, which said somebody must start a survey of the Taj Mahal. "This cango on endlessly," he submitted while arguing that the Madhya Pradesh High Court order "does a sleight of hand in interpreting the Act".

Singhvi said there is a continuous history of 700 years of daily namaz at the spot and also cited records, which name the mosque. He described the 2003 arrangement as an "excellent example of communal harmony."

Senior Advocate Huzefa Ahmadi, also appearing for the Muslim parties, said, "Today, we have been completely ousted. And it's completely unfair." Ahmadi contended that

the matter raised several questions, including reliance on ASI reports, and said that those who prepared were not even cross-examined.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who appeared for the Madhya Pradesh government, said that two months had passed since the High Court order and there are several administrative problems in restoring status quo.

"Several things have happened... Right now, your Lordships' suggestion that it may be heard at the earliest, we can assist on that. We have ensured that both communities keep calm... Once you come after two months and seek status quo ante, administrative problems come."

When one of the parties pointed out that the plea had been filed much earlier, the bench said no urgent hearing was sought on it. The CJI said the earlier interim arrangement was before the matter was decided by the High Court but now, rightly or wrongly, there is a judicial determination of the character of the place.

Ahmadi said, "We have been elbowed out, and we are sought to be presented with a fait accompli... In all fairness, is it proper to oust out one community, which has been there for many, many years?"

The CJI, too, stressed the importance of appealing without delay in such matters. "In some matters, even a day of delay can have serious consequences," he said. Justice Bagchi also pointed out that some of the directions in the Madhya Pradesh High Court judgment have already been given effect to.

Appearing for the Hindu parties, Senior Advocate Guru Krishnakumar opposed the prayer for restoring status quo ante in brief submissions.

The arguments also briefly touched upon the High Court's direction to the Central government to bring back the Goddess Saraswati idol from the London Museum.

Justice Bagchi said, "We do not want, as a constitutional court, to make any comment about all the artefacts in foreign museums of colonised countries, but at least one Indian court has issued a mandamus to the government to bring back an idol."

issue despite periodic demands from members of civil society, the BJP has sought to project her as a symbol of resistance against religious orthodoxy. The BJP has claimed that Nasrin's ordeal was the result of the "appeasement politics" of the Left and the TMC.

"The CPI(M) buckled under pressure from religious fundamentalists. They bowed their head to such forces and drove out Taslima Nasrin. Thereafter, Mamata Banerjee engaged in appeasement. Now the BJP government is here. The terror of fundamentalists has ended. Now there is freedom of speech for everyone. West Bengal is for everyone and the door is wide open," said BJP's Rajya Sabha MP Rahul Sinha.

Urban Development Minister Agnimitra Paul told reporters, "Under the leadership of CM Suvenud Adhikari, Taslima Nasrin is returning (to Kolkata). The government is helping her. This is a proud moment for us. I spoke to her this morning."

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West Bengal

CM MEETS UNION MINISTER SHIVRAJ CHOUHAN

Centre approves one lakh rural houses, allocates Rs 1,000-cr for 2400 km roads

CM: Have okayed 2.56 crore card holders under rural job scheme

Tanusree Bose
Kolkata, July 14

THE CENTRE has allocated Rs 1000 crore for laying 2400 km of rural roads in the state under the PM Gram Sadak Yojna and sanctioned the construction of one lakh houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana, Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari said on Tuesday.

The state has identified and approved 2.56 crore job card holders for 125 days of guaranteed work under the VB-G RAM G scheme and has received the Centre's in-principle nod to process and approve additional applications, he added.

Addressing a joint press conference after a meeting with Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan at the state secretariat Nabanna, Adhikari said, "The Centre has released funds for one lakh houses in Bengal under the PM Awaas Yojana. Rs 1000 crore have been allocated under the Gram Sadak Yojana for laying 2,400 kilometers of rural roads. The government is also working to secure the livelihood of marginalised people. In Bengal, 2.56 crore people have been identified under the 125-day work program, unskilled labour will get Rs 300, semi skilled Rs 450 and for skilled Rs 600."

Adhikari announced that four districts of Bengal, Darjeel-



CM Suwendu Adhikari with Health Minister Sharadwat Mukherjee at a plantation drive in Kolkata. PARTHA PAUL

ing, Alipurduar, Jhargram and Purulia, have been brought under the Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana, an umbrella agricultural mission designed to transform 100 underperforming districts in India.

"We now have the Centre's approval for setting up four agricultural training and research units across the state, including one in Chinsurah for rice and another in Malda for mangoes, and an upfront allocation of Rs 100 crores for them," Adhikari further said.

Meanwhile, Chouhan said that the Rural Welfare Ministry has sanctioned Rs 8,508 crore for West Bengal till March 31, 2027, under the rural job scheme VB-G RAM G. The total outlay will be over Rs 12,064 crore with contribution from

the state government.

Chouhan added that a collaborative effort from experts of the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) and state universities was being attempted to prepare an agricultural roadmap for the state, the first presentation of which was made at Tuesday's meeting.

"The project will lay out suggestions for choice of crops and their improved yield, taking into consideration the state's agro-climatic condition, nature of soil and other factors," Chouhan said.

"An MoU was signed to make Bengal the hub of seed development in the whole of eastern India," Chouhan said, while highlighting that seeds of two of the state's staple crops, jute and potato, are

being brought from outside.

Hitting out at the previous Mamata Banerjee-led TMC government, Chouhan said, "My heart ached, and my soul wept when I visited Bengal during the previous regime whose non-cooperation with the Centre had deprived the people of sanctioned benefits worth Rs 82,492 crore, the work for which had begun long before but never got completed. I am happy that under the Suwendu Adhikari govern-

ment, those obstacles have now been removed and Bengal's development process can now be fast-tracked."

Stressing women empowerment, Chouhan said, "For women self-help groups, a bank loan of Rs 235 crore and Rs 50 crore for other investments has been sanctioned."

If UP can, why can't we?: CM launches plantation drive, pitches for coconut

Tanusree Bose
Kolkata, July 14

CHIEF MINISTER Suwendu Adhikari on Tuesday set a target of planting 10 crore saplings this year to protect the state's environment, while citing the examples of Yogi Adityanath's Uttar Pradesh and Amit Shah's Lok Sabha constituency in Gujarat.

"If the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh can announce a target of planting 26 crore trees this monsoon, West Bengal is not as large a state as UP. So why can't we say that we will plant 10 crore trees this monsoon?" Adhikari asked, while launching 'Forest Week 2026' at Vanbitan in Salt Lake.

He also added that Union Home Minister Amit Shah has set a target of planting 1.2 crore trees in his Lok Sabha constituency this year.

To realise his green mission, CM Adhikari said the executives of the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) have promised to plant 10 lakh trees this year. He, however, pointed out that merely planting trees is not enough; proper maintenance is crucial.

"I was the chairman of the Haldia Development Authority. We used to monitor the planted trees for three years, which yielded a 50 per cent survival rate. If we planted a thousand trees, we could save about 500



Union Minister Shivraj Chouhan plants a sapling with CM Suwendu Adhikari on Tuesday. ANI

to 550 over three years. Therefore, simply planting trees won't do; everyone must take responsibility for their maintenance for at least 2 to 3 years," he said.

In the wake of the recent rise in lightning-related deaths in the state, the Chief Minister also advocated planting more coconut trees and has already issued directives to the State Pollution Control Board to this effect. According to Adhikari, the initiative is aimed at reducing the impact of lightning strikes and enhancing protection in vulnerable areas. The state government on June 5 set a target of planting 7.2 crore saplings this year, with a target of planting 7 lakh saplings for the launch day itself. However, actual figures revealed that 9 lakh saplings were planted on day one.

Supratim Sarkar moved out of CID as Suwendu transfers 28 IPS officers

Press Trust of India
Kolkata, July 14

THE BJP government on Tuesday carried out a sweeping reshuffle of the state's police leadership, transferring 28 IPS and five WBPS officers in a move that places several key officers at the centre of the administration's anti-corruption and law-and-order agenda while moving others from high-profile assignments.

The reshuffle saw Additional Director General (ADG), CID, Supratim Sarkar shifted as ADG, Telecommunications, with Director General of Correctional Services N R Babu taking over as the new Director General and Inspector General (DG & IGP), CID.

The changes come barely three months after the BJP assumed office and amid the government's repeated assertions that it intends to investigate alleged "institutional corruption" during the TMC regime.

Among the most significant appointments was that of ADG (North Bengal) K Jayraman, who was posted as Director of the Directorate of Economic Offences, the specialised wing expected to play a key role in probing financial irregularities.

Jayraman, a 1997-batch IPS officer known within the police establishment for his tough policing style, has recently been serving as member secretary of the Justice Biswajit Basu Commission constituted by the state government to inquire into alleged financial irregularities during TMC regime.

Officials said his posting to the Economic Offences wing signals the government's intent to strengthen investigations into financial crimes. Sarkar's transfer also carries institutional significance.



CID ADG Supratim Sarkar was named ADG Telecommunications

The former Kolkata Police Commissioner was removed from the city's top police post by the Election Commission ahead of this year's assembly elections as part of its routine exercise to ensure neutrality during the polls. His move to the Telecommunications wing is being viewed in police circles as a shift away from one of the state's most visible investigative positions.

Another officer whose posting drew attention was Praveen Kumar Tripathi, who was shifted from Inspector General of the Special Task Force (STF) to Inspector General, Home Guards. He had earlier held several key positions, including chief of Kolkata Police's Detective Department and police commissioner of Howrah and Barrackpore. Sudheer Kumar Neelakanthan was named the new IG, STF. Amit Kumar Rathod was appointed Commissioner of Bidhannagar Police, replacing Tripurari Atharv, who was moved as ADG, Traffic and Road Safety. The government also posted Anand Singh as ADG, Western Zone, replacing Vishal Garg, who was made ADG, Intelligence Branch. Pradeep Kumar Yadav was posted as Deputy Commissioner in Kolkata Cyber Wing. Bishop Sarkar was named Commanding Officer of Narayani Battalion in Cooch Behar.

Municipal recruitment scam: ED summons Madan Mitra's wife, sons

Press Trust of India
Kolkata, July 14

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate (ED) has summoned TMC MLA Madan Mitra's wife and his two sons for questioning next week in connection with its money laundering probe into the alleged municipal recruitment scam in West Bengal, a senior official said on Tuesday.

The summons were issued after the probe agency came across information linking the

family members to certain financial transactions under scrutiny in the case, he said.

"During the course of investigation, these financial transactions came to light in which the names of the MLA's wife and his two sons surfaced. They have been summoned next week to record their statements," the senior ED official told PTI.

"The probe is progressing on the basis of documentary and financial evidence. We are examining all persons whose

names have figured during the investigation. No conclusions should be drawn at this stage," he said.

The development comes weeks after the ED conducted simultaneous searches at multiple premises linked to Mitra in connection with the alleged recruitment scam.

In June, the probe agency had searched seven locations in Kolkata and its adjoining areas, including the Trinamool Congress legislator's residences in Bhawanipur and Kalighat.

Md Lahek Ali was held for inciting mob violence after Baruipur incident

Ravik Bhattacharya
Kolkata, July 14

POLICE ON Sunday night arrested 45-year-old CPI(M) leader Md Lahek Ali on charges of inciting mob violence and lynching that followed the alleged rape and murder of an 11-year-old girl in Baruipur earlier this month.

Ali, the CPI(M)'s former candidate from the Baruipur Paschim Assembly constituency and a private tutor by profession, has since become focus of a row, with Left alleging his arrest was politically motivated.

"This is political vendetta by the ruling party. After the incident, when police reached the spot, Lahek also went there. Videos clearly show that he was trying to pacify the crowd along with the police. Even before an investigation is complete, someone is being declared guilty. It appears the BJP is following the



Md Lahek Ali unsuccessfully contested 2021, 2026 Assembly polls from Baruipur Paschim seat.

TMC in this regard," CPI(M) Central Committee member Sujan Chakraborty said.

Where it began?

According to CPI(M) sources, Ali, a resident of Khodarbazar in Baruipur, became a party member in 2017. He later joined the Baruipur Paschim-1 Area Committee and was also associated with the party's youth wing, the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI). In 2025, he was inducted into the party's district committee.

Ali contested the 2021 and 2026 Assembly elections from Baruipur Paschim. He finished

third on both occasions.

Ali's election affidavit states that he and his wife have Rs 5,000 in cash. He declared ownership of a 217 sq ft non-agricultural plot valued at Rs 1 lakh and a two-wheeler worth Rs 84,000. His wife declared 25 grams of gold worth around Rs 4 lakh. Together, the couple reported bank deposits and cash totalling Rs 8.48 lakh. The affidavit also states that Ali has no criminal antecedents. He holds a Master's degree in Arts from Rabindra Bharati University.

The Congress too has criticised Ali's arrest. "We strongly condemn the arrest of CPI(M) leader Lahek Ali. People protesting against a rape and murder is a normal feature of a democracy. The police are trying to silence such voices by filing false cases. It shows BJP government is scared of protests. We demand his release," state Congress chief Shubhankar Sarkar said.

Arrest after CM visit

Ali's came days after Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari visited Baruipur on July 7, where he met police officers and the families of both the minor victim and the lynching victim.

"There are political people who instigated the arson. Those rejected in elections, or those whose tally has come down to one from zero, were behind the violence," Adhikari had said, in an apparent reference to Left.

He had also alleged that "anti-national elements and radical factions" were involved in the incident. "The police have identified around 200 people who instigated the violence for political reasons and cheap publicity. They have call records. The government will take action against them. They will not be spared," Adhikari had said.

At the inauguration of a police outpost on Saturday, Adhikari said, "I won't say Indrajit was lynched. He was killed after his name and identity were ascertained. People rejected in the elections are behind the incident. Radicals and ultra-Left elements may also be involved."

Ali has been booked under 27 provisions of BNS, including charges of murder, criminal conspiracy, unlawful assembly, damaging public property, along with provisions of Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, Maintenance of Public Order Act and the Indian Railways Act.

7 held, Rs 2 cr seized after police bust hawala racket

Tanusree Bose
Kolkata, July 14

SEVEN PEOPLE were arrested for allegedly running a hawala racket and over Rs 2 crore in cash was recovered after police raided an apartment in New Town, near Kolkata, Monday.

Acting on a tip, a joint team of the Bidhannagar police's cybercrime unit, the detective department, and the Technocity police conducted a raid at the flat. The operation began around 3pm and continued for nearly 12 hours, ending past midnight.

A senior officer said the accused had rented the flat seven months ago and had been staying there for six months. Locals in the area did not suspect anything amiss as the accused allegedly pretended the apartment was being used as a call-centre office.

The police also seized two vehicles resembling ATM cash vans, a scooter, multiple laptops, mobile phones, and other electronic devices. The arrested individuals were taken to Technocity police station for interrogation. Police sources said that they failed to explain the source of the money or provide valid documentation.

● INTERNAL CAPABILITIES BEING TESTED, TO BE IMPLEMENTED SOON

Kolkata Metro to go driverless: Green, Purple lines to operate 'unmanned' transits

Decision follows the footsteps of Delhi and Bengaluru Metro which run driverless trains on Magenta, Pink, Yellow lines

Sweetie Kumari
Kolkata, July 14

KOLKATA IS officially set to join the elite club of Indian cities operating driverless metro trains.

Following in the footsteps of Delhi and Bengaluru, the Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS) has cleared Kolkata Metro's Green Line (East-West Corridor) to run autonomous driverless operations, sources said. This line runs from Howrah Maidan to Salt Lake Sector

V. Similarly operations are also planned for the Purple Line in future.

While the approvals are in, a timeline is not yet clear. Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Metro CPRO S S Kanon said, "Internal capabilities are being tested; it will be implemented at the right time. Unmanned metros will run in both Purple and Green lines."

Driverless metro map

Kolkata isn't the first city to pull off this feat. The Delhi

Metro already runs driverless operations on the Magenta and Pink lines using Grade of Automation-4 (GoA-4) technology. This means the system is so advanced that no train attendants are required in the coaches. The Bengaluru Metro also runs unmanned operations on its Yellow Line.

What if something goes wrong?

There are some security concerns, as well: What happens if a passenger falls on



Centre has approved autonomous trains on both lines. FILE

E. EXPLAINED

Route and tech: How the system works

The high-tech, unmanned trains are dependent on cutting-edge signaling backbone: the CBTC (Communication-Based Train Control). The driverless trains can't operate without the CBTC, and among the two fully operational lines of Kolkata Metro, only the East-West Metro is equipped with the system.

the tracks, or the computer crashes? Unmanned lines feature multi-layer safety parameters. Glass security walls called platform screen doors (PSDs) are installed along all the platforms.

These doors are synced with the train's doors; they only open when a train is completely stationary, preventing anyone from falling onto the tracks.

Derailment detection

The front of the train is also equipped with highly sensitive optical sensors and physical bars. If even a small object is detected on the track ahead, the emergency brakes engage instantly.

Breakthrough on the Orange Line

Besides, a major traffic bottleneck has finally been resolved with the completion of the stalled work on Kolkata Metro's Line 6 (Orange Line). Engineers from Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL) have successfully laid the crucial girders over pillars 317 to 319 on the EM Bypass at Chingrighata.

This massive project had been deadlocked for nearly 18 months due to prolonged delays in securing traffic blocks on the busy bypass.

With the political and administrative hurdles cleared, the work has been finally completed.

HDFC BANK Registered Office: HDFC Bank House, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Panel (West), Mumbai - 400 013 and having one of its office as Retail Portfolio Management at HDFC Bank Ltd, 1st Floor, 1-Think Techno Campus, Kanjur Marg (East), Mumbai - 400042.

SALE INTIMATION AND NOTICE FOR SALE OF SECURITIES PLEDGED TO HDFC BANK LTD.

The below mentioned Borrowers of HDFC Bank Ltd. (the "Bank") are hereby notified regarding the sale of securities pledged to the Bank, for availing credit facilities in the nature of Loans/Overdraft Against Securities.

Due to persistent default by the Borrowers in making repayment of the outstanding dues as per agreed loans / facilities terms, the below loan / facilities accounts are in delinquent status or classified as NPA (Non-Performing Asset). The Bank has issued multiple notices / loan recall notice to these Borrowers, including the final sale notice on the below-mentioned date whereby, Bank had invoked the pledge and provided 7 days' time to the Borrower to repay the entire outstanding dues in the below accounts, failing which, Bank would be at liberty to sell the pledged securities without issuing further notice in this regard. The Borrowers have neglected and failed to make due repayments, therefore, Bank in exercise of its rights under the loan agreement as a pledgee has decided to sell / dispose off the Securities on or after **22nd July 2026** for recovering the dues owed by the Borrowers to the Bank. The Borrowers are hereby notified to treat this as a notice of sale in compliance of section 176 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872. The Borrowers are, also, notified that, if at any time, the value of the pledged securities falls further due to volatility in the stock market to create further deficiency in the margin requirement then Bank shall at its discretion sell the pledged security within one (1) calendar day, without any further notice in this regard. The Borrower(s) shall remain liable to the Bank for repayment of any remaining outstanding amount, post adjustment of the proceeds from sale of pledged securities.

Sr. No.	Loan Account Number	Borrower's Name	Outstanding Amount as on 12 th July 2026	Date of Sale Notice
1	XXXXXXXXXX0674	ROBIN KUMAR DE	4,715.42	13-07-2026
2	XXXXXXXXXX0080	NILMANI PAUL	1,80,344.03	13-07-2026
3	XXXXXXXXXX0105	KEYA BHATTACHARJEE	3,41,450.60	13-07-2026
4	XXXXXXXXXX8632	SARBAJIT BARICK	18,62,239.60	13-07-2026
5	XXXXXXXXXX0262	SWAPAN CHAKRABORTY	4,245.75	13-07-2026
6	XXXXXXXXXX0086	SATYANARAYAN DROLIA	2,08,638.67	13-07-2026
7	XXXXXXXXXX0019	DIPAK BISWAS	1,94,333.66	13-07-2026
8	XXXXXXXXXX0174	BAPPADITYA RAY CHAUDHURI	2,888.18	13-07-2026
9	XXXXXXXXXX8712	ARUP KUMAR RAY	2,020.00	13-07-2026
10	XXXXXXXXXX1199	CHITRA CHAKRAVERTY	85,265.77	13-07-2026
11	XXXXXXXXXX5055	GANESH CHOUDHARY	2,37,906.80	13-07-2026
12	XXXXXXXXXX9788	JAI PRAKASH PERIWAL	8,12,450.83	13-07-2026
13	XXXXXXXXXX3995	SUMAN AGARWAL	1,726.80	13-07-2026
14	XXXXXXXXXX4692	ASHOK KUMAR AGARWAL	956.42	13-07-2026
15	XXXXXXXXXX1872	TAPAN KUMAR MUKHOPADHYA	54,370.18	13-07-2026
16	XXXXXXXXXX3901	BARNALI LAHIRI	2,10,530.62	13-07-2026
17	XXXXXXXXXX3671	RUCHIKA KEJRIWAL	3,92,425.61	13-07-2026
18	XXXXXXXXXX9011	SWAGATA ROYCHOUDHURY	5,520.85	13-07-2026
19	XXXXXXXXXX8611	KOUSTABH DOLUI	5,519.99	13-07-2026
20	XXXXXXXXXX1238	BIJAY KISHAN CHANDAK	18,54,228.06	13-07-2026
21	XXXXXXXXXX8902	SANJOY SAHA	1,56,640.27	13-07-2026
22	XXXXXXXXXX7200	ANKIT KUMAR SINGH	3,21,279.01	13-07-2026
23	XXXXXXXXXX4360	RANJIT KUMAR SARKAR	8,31,095.09	04-07-2026
24	XXXXXXXXXX3176	PAMELI CHOWDHURY	2,74,979.00	13-07-2026
25	XXXXXXXXXX7920	DEBASIS BHATTACHARJEE	49,333.47	13-07-2026
26	XXXXXXXXXX7279	PUNAM KUMARI JAISWAL	3,27,893.00	13-07-2026
27	XXXXXXXXXX7039	ARIJIT ROY	16,508.90	13-07-2026
28	XXXXXXXXXX6921	SWAPAN KUMAR PAL	3,13,409.00	10-07-2026
29	XXXXXXXXXX7022	MD SHAKIL ANSARI	8,88,643.82	13-07-2026
30	XXXXXXXXXX6701	ISLAM ANSARI	7,883.56	13-07-2026
31	XXXXXXXXXX2780	PROSANTA MAJUMDER	1,91,984.54	13-07-2026
32	XXXXXXXXXX9622	GOUTAM KAR	3,264.98	13-07-2026
33	XXXXXXXXXX5132	SURJAKANTA DALAPATI	67,396.99	13-07-2026
34	XXXXXXXXXX4141	BASANTA PRASAD SAHA	10,05,523.97	13-07-2026
35	XXXXXXXXXX0439	SANDIP PAUL	1,38,983.51	13-07-2026
36	XXXXXXXXXX2531	SHYAMSUNDAR HALDAR	72,679.19	13-07-2026
37	XXXXXXXXXX1969	SUMAN JAIN	7,95,764.00	13-07-2026
38	XXXXXXXXXX8300	ASPEKHA LAHIRI	1,56,114.00	13-07-2026
39	XXXXXXXXXX8954	VIVEK KUMAR SHUKLA	10,06,157.95	09-07-2026
40	XXXXXXXXXX3154	TAPASH CHAKRABORTY	1,88,691.79	13-07-2026
41	XXXXXXXXXX6028	AMIT KUMAR SAHOO	3,30,173.66	09-07-2026
42	XXXXXXXXXX5118	SAURAV LOHA	1,88,504.25	13-07-2026
43	XXXXXXXXXX8253	SEKENDER ALI KHAN	1,773.12	13-07-2026
44	XXXXXXXXXX8857	ANANDA MOHAN MAITI	35,468.51	13-07-2026
45	XXXXXXXXXX4462	KALPANA SRIVASTAVA	19,37,525.02	13-07-2026
46	XXXXXXXXXX8907	AJIT KUMAR SINGH	63,319.19	13-07-2026
47	XXXXXXXXXX9322	AMITAVA SEN	74,871.82	13-07-2026
48	XXXXXXXXXX8382	RABINDRA NATH SHARMA	6,18,745.31	13-07-2026
49	XXXXXXXXXX4572	MONOMITA SINGHA	9,99,992.34	13-07-2026
50	XXXXXXXXXX4342	SURYAKANTA JAIN	13,97,138.65	09-07-2026
51	XXXXXXXXXX7797	ARUN KUMAR BISHWAKARMA	33,086.14	13-07-2026
52	XXXXXXXXXX2423	SOUMIK SARKAR	40,476.79	10-07-2026
53	XXXXXXXXXX1691	PARTHA PRATIM BANERJEE	1,98,507.10	13-07-2026
54	XXXXXXXXXX7072	TANMOY BOSE	2,74,837.47	13-07-2026
55	XXXXXXXXXX2372	KOUSHIK CHATTERJEE	80,691.31	13-07-2026
56	XXXXXXXXXX3381	PRADIPTA NAYEK	38,824.34	13-07-2026
57	XXXXXXXXXX2260	NANDAL BHANDARWAL	4,62,159.49	13-07-2026
58	XXXXXXXXXX3189	BENU GOPAL BAGRI	20,01,644.12	13-07-2026
59	XXXXXXXXXX7292	KETAKI ROY	3,99,502.94	13-07-2026
60	XXXXXXXXXX8846	SOMA BHAIKUMAR	9,77,321.22	13-07-2026
61	XXXXXXXXXX7800	SAMARENDRA NARAYAN BASAK	16,09,813.90	13-07-2026
62	XXXXXXXXXX4770	SEEMA SARAWAGI	3,31,939.80	13-07-2026
63	XXXXXXXXXX3181	MANIKANCHAN PAUL	2,70,230.06	13-07-2026
64	XXXXXXXXXX5983	SUDEEP SATYA GANGULY	2,90,231.99	13-07-2026
65	XXXXXXXXXX5742	TANISHA BASU	712.72	13-07-2026
66	XXXXXXXXXX8087	KAJAL DEY	1,491.42	13-07-2026
67	XXXXXXXXXX5298	PRANOV KUMAR SAHA	9,92,866.78	13-07-2026
68	XXXXXXXXXX8149	KARTICK PRASAD	767.82	09-07-2026
69	XXXXXXXXXX2762	SIMA MRIDHA	9,88,749.02	13-07-2026
70	XXXXXXXXXX1237	BIRENDRA NATH DAS	5,903.82	13-07-2026
71	XXXXXXXXXX4620	BIRENDRA NARAYAN BASAK	19,59,714.23	13-07-2026
72	XXXXXXXXXX6221	SHYAMALI BOSE	50,075.10	13-07-2026
73	XXXXXXXXXX4500	SOURMEN KUMAR MAITI	1,53,449.22	13-07-2026
74	XXXXXXXXXX4673	PRADIP BARUA	7,36,900.82	13-07-2026
75	XXXXXXXXXX6955	DEBABRATA MUKHERJEE	1,48,667.93	13-07-2026
76	XXXXXXXXXX1389	RAMA BHATTI	52,888.00	13-07-2026
77	XXXXXXXXXX1734	NANDINI BHATTACHARJEE	1,44,515.00	13-07-2026
78	XXXXXXXXXX6947	SUBHASIS CHAKRABORTY	1,00,279.42	09-07-2026
79	XXXXXXXXXX9933	AMIT SRIMAL	5,75,722.55	13-07-2026
80	XXXXXXXXXX6262	ANUSHA ROY	6,03,471.82	13-07-2026
81	XXXXXXXXXX3092	SUMAN DEY	9,61,426.26	13-07-2026
82	XXXXXXXXXX3062	KALYANI MANDAL	9,83,572.38	13-07-2026
83	XXXXXXXXXX4241	JAYANTA KUMAR MONDAL	8,32,612.40	13-07-2026
84	XXXXXXXXXX1004	PRATIK DEBNATH	60,382.86	13-07-2026
85	XXXXXXXXXX6402	GOUTAM DAS	2,109.82	13-07-2026
86	XXXXXXXXXX1769	SHAHID ALAM	1,23,559.58	13-07-2026
87	XXXXXXXXXX5655	PRAJUKTIE MITRA	1,94,670.82	13-07-2026
88	XXXXXXXXXX7124	JAYDEB PATRA	3,41,438.06	13-07-2026
89	XXXXXXXXXX7651	SREERUP BANERJEE	9,92,797.07	13-07-2026
90	XXXXXXXXXX7068	CHANDANA MUKHOPADHYAY	3,19,631.99	13-07-2026
91	XXXXXXXXXX0447	NIRAJ KUMAR GUPTA	19,78,918.60	13-07-2026
92	XXXXXXXXXX6802	SIB SANKAR BHATTACHARYA	9,13,796.82	03-07-2026
93	XXXXXXXXXX9029	ARJIT DAS	5,03,700.00	13-07-2026
94	XXXXXXXXXX8102	MUKESH KUMAR AGARWAL	90,954.82	13-07-2026
95	XXXXXXXXXX9842	MALLIKA AICH	32,364.82	13-07-2026
96	XXXXXXXXXX9349	BISWAJIT NARIKARY	1,85,599.00	13-07-2026
97	XXXXXXXXXX3841	POUSHALI SIL	15,03,927.82	09-07-2026
98	XXXXXXXXXX7166	AGNI KUMAR PAL	85,058.00	13-07-2026
99	XXXXXXXXXX6810	SHASHI KANTA GHOSH	22,866.82	13-07-2026
100	XXXXXXXXXX2539	PRASHANT THACKER	2,02,634.82	13-07-2026
101	XXXXXXXXXX3183	BAISAKHI MAJUMDER	98,71,768.18	13-07-2026
102	XXXXXXXXXX2483	JAYANTA BHATTACHARYA	1,452.92	13-07-2026
103	XXXXXXXXXX6931	TANIA ROY	1,339.82	13-07-2026
104	XXXXXXXXXX0079	DIPIKA RANI MISTRY	1,994.82	13-07-2026
105	XXXXXXXXXX4434	POOJA PAUL	2,013.82	08-07-2026
106	XXXXXXXXXX8758	AKASH BANSAL	4,23,874.53	13-07-2026
107	XXXXXXXXXX4439	SAMIR GHOSH	1,306.92	13-07-2026
108	XXXXXXXXXX4948	PURNIMA BERA	8,25,008.17	13-07-2026
109	XXXXXXXXXX6094	DIPTI DAS	2,04,623.51	03-07-2026
110	XXXXXXXXXX7144	HIMADRI SEKHAR BHATTACHARYA	11,70,336.82	08-07-2026
111	XXXXXXXXXX4321	CHITRADA KAMESHWARI	94,105.67	24-06-2026
112	XXXXXXXXXX0469	PALLAB GHOSH	14,27,835.39	08-07-2026
113	XXXXXXXXXX3729	BIDYABHUSIN SINGH	7,69,410.78	08-07-2026
114	XXXXXXXXXX0398	BASANTA KUMAR GHOSH	2,88,839.79	24-06-2026
115	XXXXXXXXXX8271	SWAGATA DAS	4,31,537.59	08-07-2026

DATE : 15.07.2026 | PLACE : WEST BENGAL | Sd/- HDFC BANK LTD.

Rajasthan Water Grid Corporation Limited
(Formerly known as "Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project Corporation Limited")
Sinchai Bhawan, JLN Marg, Jaipur 302017, Tel: 0141-2700669 Email: ceerpco@gmail.com

No.: 29903 Date: 10/07/2026

NIB no RWGCL/09/2026-27
Corrigendum - 02

Name of Work :- Procurement of Oracle Data Base, Oracle PRIMAVERA P6 EPPM Licenses, Technical Support (TS) of new PRIMAVERA Licenses, maintenance & Support services for software and PRIMAVERA software Training

Sr. No.	Reference / Clause No. Page Number Of Bid Document	As Read	Amended
1	Document Download End Date	16.07.2026 at 6:00 PM	23.07.2026 at 6:00 PM
2	Tender Submission End Date	16.07.2026 at 6:00 PM	23.07.2026 at 6:00 PM
3	Physical submission of Tender fee, Processing fee, and Bid Security in the Office of the MD RWGCL, Sinchai Bhawan Jaipur	17.07.2026 at 2:00 PM	24.07.2026 at 2:00 PM
4	Date of opening of Technical bid	17.07.2026 at 03:00 PM	24.07.2026 at 03:00 PM

Note:- All other terms and condition remain same.
NIB Code: ERP2627A0017
UBN No.: ERP2627SLO800017
Raj.Samwad/C/26/6869

Managing Director
RWGCL Jaipur

Karnataka Bank Ltd.
Your family Bank, Across India.

Asset Recovery Management Branch
Premises 07/1-0333, Plot No CBD 100/3
New Town, Kolkata- 700156
West Bengal

Phone: 033-22268580/83 Mob: 9654170177
Email : kolkata.arm@ktbkbank.bank.in
Website : www.karnatakabank.bank.in
CIN : L85110KA1924PLC001128

SALE NOTICE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 read with provision to rule 9(1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to public in general and in particular to Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged / charged to the secured Creditor, the Symbolic Possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Karnataka Bank Ltd, the Secured Creditor on **27.03.2019**, will be sold on "As is Where is", "As is What is" and "Whatever there is" on **01.08.2026**, for recovery of **Rs. 77,77,912.72** (Rupees Seventy Seven Lakhs Seventy Seven Thousand Nine Hundred Twelve and Paise Seventy Two Only) under **PS-Overdraft Account No. 5307000600000901**, along with future interest from **01.07.2026, Plus Costs**, due to the **Karnataka Bank Ltd, Memari Branch**, Ground Floor, Deshbandhu Pally, Ward 12, Near New Bus Stand, Memari, Purba Bardhaman, West Bengal- 713146, the Secured creditor from: **(1) Md Ismail**, represented by its proprietor- **MD Ismail (2) Md Ismail S/o Idu Mahammad (3) Mrs. Fatema Khatun W/o Md Ismail, all (1) (2) and (3) are addressed at: Hatpukur Pirtala, PO- Memari, Bardhamann- 713146** (West Bengal), being borrowers/ guarantors/ co - obligants.

The reserve price will be **Rs. 20,15,000.00** (Rupees Twenty Lakhs Fifteen Thousand only) and the earnest money deposit will be **Rs. 2,01,500.00** (Rupees Two Lakhs One Thousand Five Hundred Only).

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY:

All that part and parcel of the shed and building measuring 5.25 Cottah comprised in R.S. No. 1043, 1046, Khatian No. 8402, J.L. No. 152, Dag No. 2262, situated in Ward No. 6, Holding No. 43/2 located at Hatpukur, Pirtala, G. T. Road, P.O. & P.S. Memari, District- Burdwan- 713146, belonging to **MD Ismail**. Boundaries: East : Cold Storage, West: Passage, North: Residential House of Md Ismail, South: Bapi Lathe. (The borrower's / mortgagor's attention is invited to the provisions of Sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured asset).

(This Notice shall also serve as Notice under Sub Rule (1) of Rule (9) of Security Interest Enforcement Rules-2002 to the Borrower/Guarantors)

For detailed terms and conditions of sale, please refer to link in Karnataka Bank's Website i.e. www.karnatakabank.bank.in under the head "Mega Auction on 01.08.2026".

The E-auction will be conducted through portal <https://bankauctions.in/> on **01.08.2026 from 11:30 A.M to 12:30 P.M** with unlimited extension of 05 minutes. The intending bidder is required to register their name at <https://bankauctions.in/> and get the user Id and password free of cost and get online training on E-auction (tentatively on 31.07.2026) from M/s.4closure, 605A, 6th Floor, Maitrivanam, Ameerpet, Hyderabad-500038, Contact No.040-23836405, Mobile 814200809, E-mail:info@bankauctions.in.

Date: 14.07.2026 For Karnataka Bank Ltd
Place: Kharagpur Chief Manager & Authorised Officer

Karnataka Bank Ltd.
Your family Bank, Across India.

Asset Recovery Management Branch
Premises 07/1-0333, Plot No CBD 100/3
New Town, Kolkata- 700156
West Bengal

Phone: 033-22268580/83 Mob: 9654170177
Email : kolkata.arm@ktbkbank.bank.in
Website : www.karnatakabank.bank.in
CIN : L85110KA1924PLC001128

SALE NOTICE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 read with provision to rule 9(1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to public in general and in particular to Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged / charged to the secured Creditor, the Symbolic Possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Karnataka Bank Ltd, the Secured Creditor on **01.06.2024** will be sold on "As is Where is", "As is What is" and "Whatever there is" on **01.08.2026**, for recovery of **Rs. 85,35,863.38** (Rupees Eighty Five Lakhs Thirty Five Thousand Eight Hundred Sixty Three and Paise Thirty Eight Only) i.e. **1) Rs. 53,03,539.84** under **Term Loan Account No. 4367001600028401** along with future interest from **02.09.2025**, plus costs, **(2) Rs. 32,32,323.54** under **PS Term Loan Account No. 4367001800026701**, along with future interest from **02.09.2025**, plus costs, due to the **Karnataka Bank Ltd, Rash Behari Branch**, 4A, Ground Floor, J C Guha Sarani, Lake Place Kolkata - 700029 the Secured creditor from: **(1) Mr. Ranjit Roy S/o Phani Bhushan Roy (2) Mrs. Sathi Chakraborty W/o Ranjit Roy both (1) and (2) are residing at, Kayastha Hospital, Baruiapur, Hanharapore, Mallickpore, South 24 parganas, Beside Antora Hospital, West Bengal - 700145**, being borrowers/ guarantors/ co - obligants.

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY:

1) All that part and parcel of residential land and two storied residential building along with one mezzanine floor, admeasuring area of 1590 sqft situated at holding no: 645, Sadabrata Ghat Road within Baruiapur Municipality, Ward No: 08, Mouza No:31, RS No:71, Khatian no:7685 formerly 5131 Dag No:4718, Baruiapur District South 24 Parganas W.B., belonging to **Mr. Ranjit Roy**. Boundaries: East: By 12'-0" wide Road, West: By others Residential House, North: By 8 ft. wide common passage now Municipal Road, South: By Vacant Land of Mr. Samir Paul

The Reserve Price will be **Rs. 32,00,000** (Rupees Thirty Two Lakhs only) and the Earnest money to be deposited will be **Rs. 3,20,000.00** (Rupees Three Lakhs Twenty Thousand Only)

2) All that part and parcel of residential Land And Building Situated At Holding No:157, K K Bhattacharjee Road, Now 30 K K Bhattacharjee Road Within Rajpur-Sonarpur Municipality Ward No:18, Mouza -Harinabhi J.L No: 36, RS Khatian No:513, LR Khatian No:787, present Khatian No:3355, Dag No:850, ADRSO- Sonarpur, Kolkata-700148, District South 24 Parganas. The land area is 862 Sqft., ground floor building area is 455 Sqft, belonging to **Mr. Ranjit Roy**. Boundaries: East: By land of Dag No. 850(P) West: By land of Dag No. 850(P), North: By the land of Dag No. 850(P) South: By Kalikrishna Bhattacharya Road

The Reserve Price will be **Rs. 16,52,000.00** (Rupees Sixteen Lakhs Fifty Two Thousand only) and the Earnest money to be deposited will be **Rs. 1,65,200.00** (Rupees One Lakh Sixty Five Thousand Two Hundred Only)

(The borrower's / mortgagor's attention is invited to the provisions of Sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured asset).

(This Notice shall also serve as Notice under Sub Rule (1) of Rule (9) of Security Interest Enforcement Rules-2002 to the Borrower/Guarantors)

For detailed terms and conditions of sale, please refer to link in Karnataka Bank's Website i.e. www.karnatakabank.bank.in under the head "Mega Auction on 01.08.2026"

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Date: 14.07.2026 For Karnataka Bank Ltd
Place: Kolkata Chief Manager & Authorised Officer

SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
Follow us on @SCRRailwayIndia
Details of the Tender Notices of S.C.Railway can be seen on our website : www.scrindianrailways.gov.in

Open e-Tender Notice No. DRM/Works/SC/112-118/2026/OT, Dt. 10.07.2026

For and on behalf of President of India, the undersigned invites e-tender for the following works up to 14.00 hours on 07.08.2026

1. e-Tender No. : 112_CO_SC_26_OT
Name of the work : Secunderabad: Repairs fabrication and refixing of water hydrant steel stanchions between platforms at SC station.
Approx. Tender Value in : (₹) 74,76,406/- EMD : (₹) 1,49,600/-
Completion period in Months : 09



Fight, Forward

AFTER DEFEATING the TMC in West Bengal, BJP now seems to be picking up fights with smaller parties. State BJP chief Shamik Bhattacharya's recent remark that both Subhas Chandra Bose and his brother Sarat Chandra Bose had ignored Syama Prasad Mookerjee's request to raise their voice against torture of Hindus in Bangladesh has irked the All India Forward Bloc leadership. Bhattacharya had also termed the Forward Bloc leaders as "goons". Forward Bloc leaders alleged that BJP MLAs were trying to change the names of the roads named after Netaji. Finding no response from the state BJP leadership, Forward Bloc general secretary G Devrajjan has now written to BJP national president Nitin Nabin, warning against attempts to "diminish Netaji's legacy".

Bypoll Bid

NOT JUST a dedicated office, the BJP has listed a battery of star campaigners in its bid to retain Bihar's Bankipur seat, vacated by party chief Nitin Nabin following his nomination to the Rajya Sabha, in the July 30 bypoll. Nabin represented the Bankipur segment for four consecutive terms between 2010 and 2025. While Nabin is the top star campaigner, the others on the list include Union ministers Giriraj Singh and Nityanand Rai, Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary, among others. The names of Bhojpuri actor-singers Manoj Tiwari and Pawan Singh are also there.

Late night meet with Fadnavis fuels buzz over NCP(SP)'s shift

Alok Deshpande
Mumbai, July 14

POLITICAL SPECULATION over Sharad Pawar's next move intensified late Tuesday after senior leaders from both factions of the NCP held a closed door meeting with Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, just days after NCP (SP) leaders indicated that a section of the party favours joining the NDA.

Sources informed *The Indian Express* that NCP (SP) state president Jayant Patil first met Sharad Pawar at his South Mumbai residence, Silver Oak, before heading to meet Fadnavis later in the evening. NCP leaders Sunil Tatkar and Praful Patel, too, held a meeting with CM Fadnavis in the night.

The meetings come against the backdrop of a rethink within the NCP (SP) over the party's political direction. Party sources told *The Indian Express* that at least half of its 10 MLAs favour joining the ruling NDA, arguing that remaining in the Opposition has made it difficult to secure development funds and administrative approvals for their constituencies.

Jayant Patil had recently conveyed this sentiment to party legislators, saying a significant section of the MLAs was inclined towards the NDA. Sharad Pawar, however, has so far remained silent on the issue and has not publicly indicated which way the party is headed.

Tuesday's meetings are the latest in a series of political developments that have kept the possibility of a realignment alive. They also come a day after the ruling NCP received a legal notice from former national secretary Sachchidanand Singh challenging the election of party president Sunetra Pawar.

Ladakh groups slam new hill councils: 'Maximum govt, minimum governance'

Deeptiman Tiwary
New Delhi, July 14

THE LADAKH administration's decision to create Autonomous Hill Development Councils (AHDs) in each of the Union Territory's seven districts is likely to face stiff opposition from civil society groups, with both the Apex Body, Leh (ABL) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) alleging it is aimed at diluting the powers of the proposed representative government for Ladakh under Article 371.

The administration Monday announced that AHDs would be constituted in the five new districts — Drass, Sham, Nubra, Changthang and Zaskar — of the UT. Currently, such councils exist only in Leh and Kargil.

Announcing the decision, Ladakh Chief Secretary Ashish Kundra said the move was in response to long-pending demands from residents of the new districts and would strengthen democratic decentralisation and grassroots governance. Kundra said that following recent discussions between leaders from Ladakh and the Centre, there was broad agreement that a UT-level representative body would be created under a customised framework under Article 371 of the Constitution, drawing from the best features of similar arrangements in other states.

According to the administration, the proposed body would exercise legislative, executive, fi-

Apex Body, Leh says move dilutes powers of representatives; Kargil Democratic Alliance questions timing, intent of move



ABL and KDA leaders following their May 22 meeting with senior MHA officials. They had objected to the proposal to establish a hill council in each district, it is learnt. FILE

nancial and administrative powers, with the framework currently under examination.

However, leaders spearheading the movement for constitutional safeguards in Ladakh said the creation of seven hill councils would weaken, rather than strengthen, representative governance. "This is a plan to dilute the powers of the proposed representative government that is going to take shape under Article 371. If all the powers are going to be given to the hill councils, what will the representative government do? Ladakh does not have such a big

population that you need so much decentralisation," ABL co-chairman Chherring Dorje Lakruk told *The Indian Express*.

The KDA echoed similar concerns, questioning both the timing and intent behind the decision. "This decision has been taken unilaterally. Neither KDA nor ABL has been consulted. Given the history of how things have panned out here, it makes us question the intent. I don't understand how seven hill councils will improve administration when the existing hill councils of Leh and Kargil are toothless at the moment.

These kinds of cosmetic administrative changes are not going to help us. This is a plan for maximum government and minimum governance," KDA co-chairman Sajjad Kargili said.

Reigniting old issue

The announcement also revives an issue that had surfaced during the Centre's ongoing negotiations with Ladakh's civil society groups over constitutional safeguards.

Sources familiar with the discussions said that after the creation of seven districts, the government had informed Ladakh representatives of its proposal to establish a hill council in each district. According to them, both the KDA and the ABL objected to the proposal during their May 22 meeting with senior Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) officials.

The proposal, sources said, was initially recorded in the Minutes of the Meeting (MoM). "Objecting to this and other issues, we refused to sign the MoM. Following this, another MoM was prepared from which this point was removed. We signed that MoM. Now the government has gone ahead and announced it without taking us into confidence," a senior leader from Ladakh said.

The move comes against the backdrop of prolonged negotiations between the Centre and the joint platform of the ABL and KDA over Ladakh's political future after it was carved out as a Union Territory in 2019 follow-

ing the abrogation of Article 370.

The two organisations have jointly been demanding constitutional safeguards, including statehood or a legislative framework under Article 371, protection over land and jobs, and enhanced political representation. Last year they submitted a draft framework to the MHA proposing a representative body with legislative and financial powers.

The latest disagreement also mirrors the distrust that has marked Centre-civil society engagement over the past year. When the Centre announced the creation of five new districts in April, the administration had argued that the reorganisation would improve governance in the geographically vast region by reducing travel distances for citizens, decentralising administration and generating employment through new administrative infrastructure.

The KDA, however, had alleged that the exercise altered the demographic balance by creating five Buddhist-majority districts and only two Muslim-majority districts, describing it as a move that risked fragmenting the political unity forged between Leh and Kargil over their common demands for constitutional safeguards. The creation of new hill councils is now set to become another contentious issue in the continuing negotiations between Ladakh's civil society groups and the Centre over the region's future political structure.

Passport a document to regulate departure of Indian citizens from country: MEA

Divya A
New Delhi, July 14

THE PASSPORT is a document issued by the government to "regulate the departure" of Indian citizens from the country and not a proof of citizenship, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Tuesday.

"An Indian passport is a document that, as per the Passports Act, 1967, is issued by the Government of India to regulate the departure from India of citizens of India," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on Tuesday in response to a question on the legal status of the passport during his weekly briefing. He said less than 8 per cent of Indian citizens currently hold the document.

Amid a raging debate last month on what document establishes citizenship in India in the wake of Special Intensive Revision (SIR) initiated by the Election Commission across the country, senior MEA officials had said that though a

passport is issued only to Indian citizens, it doesn't establish citizenship.

They had earlier described it as a travel document that identifies nationality but doesn't establish citizenship in response to a question whether the passport can be used as proof of citizenship for SIR of electoral rolls.

The remarks triggered sharp reactions from certain opposition parties, including the Congress, which said the government was laying the groundwork to arbitrarily deny citizenship rights to Indians with whom it disagrees.

Sources said citizenship is governed by the Citizenship Act of 1955, while the passport is issued as per the guidelines of the Passport Act, 1967. Citizenship is the domain of the Home Ministry, while the passport is issued by the External Affairs Ministry, they said, adding the passport does not independently prove or confer citizenship.

EC extends SIR in Andhra Pradesh, Haryana by 10 days

Express News Service
New Delhi, Chandigarh, Hyderabad, July 14

THE ELECTION Commission on Tuesday extended the schedule of the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in Haryana and Andhra Pradesh by 10 days, with electors' deadline for submitting enumeration forms now changed from July 14 to July 24 and the publication of the draft roll on July 31 instead of July 21.

As per the new schedule, the house-to-house visits by Booth Level Officers (BLOs) will continue till July 24. After that, the draft rolls will be published on July 31, and the claims and objections will be filed between July 31 and August 30. Notices for claims and objections are to be disposed of by September 28, and the final roll is to be published on October 3.

The EC announced the third phase of the SIR covering 16 states and three UTs on May 14. The enumeration phase in

Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana and Chandigarh started on June 5.

In Haryana, around 36 lakh voters are yet to be cleared, and enumeration forms are still awaited from nearly 2.88 lakh electors. The remaining over 33 lakh voters have been placed in the ASDD (Absent, Shifted, Duplicate or Dead) category.

Haryana Chief Electoral Officer A Sreenivas said enumeration forms have been received from around 1.70 crore electors (82.38% of the state's 2.06 crore registered voters) till 6 pm on Tuesday, and all the forms received have been digitised. "We requested the Election Commission because... We want to ensure that not even a single eligible elector is left out," Sreenivas said.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer Vivek Yadav also sought the extension of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise as 40 lakh enumeration forms (9%) are yet to be collected.

Fodder scam: SC refuses to cancel Lalu Prasad's bail

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Tuesday refused to interfere with a Jharkhand HC order granting bail to RJD chief Lalu Prasad in the Deoghar treasury fodder scam case and asked the HC to decide his appeal against conviction within six months.

"Upon hearing the learned counsels, we are not inclined to interfere with the order particularly since seven years have elapsed since then. The appeals are of 2018, and it will only be appropriate to request the high court to expedite the hearing," a bench of Justices MM Sundresh and PB Varale ordered, hearing the CBI's appeal challenging the HC order. The case relates to the fraudulent withdrawal of Rs 89.27 lakh from the district treasury between 1990 and 1994. ENS

'Committed to combat terror, organised crime': India on gangsters' indictment in Nijjar killing

Shubhajt Roy
New Delhi, July 14

IN ITS first remarks since the indictment of jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi and Canada's statement on pro-Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar's killing, India said on Tuesday that Delhi has consistently maintained that transnational organised crime "posed a serious threat". It also said that "India remains committed to working with our partners in combating terrorism and transnational organised crime..."

Responding to Canadian police's statement that there is "no evidence" to suggest that Indian government officials are involved, Delhi said that the remarks are consistent with the recently unsealed US indictment that attributes responsibility to the members of the Lawrence Bishnoi organised crime group.

Almost three years since Canadian PM Justin Trudeau dropped the bombshell allegation that Canadian security agencies have been actively pursuing credible allegations of a "potential link" between agents of the Government of India and the killing of Nijjar, the US last week charged jailed gangster Bishnoi and his aide Goldy Brar with ordering his assassination.

The latest twist in the case happened after an operation against three criminal gangs involved in a spate of transnational crimes. Named "Operation

Hardball', the coordinated action had law enforcement agencies from the US, Canada and Europe arrest 24 members of three Indian crime syndicates who are facing charges of targeted killings, shootings, extortion, and trafficking of narcotics across international borders, the US Department of Justice said.

In Ottawa, Deputy Commissioner Lisa Moreland of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) had told Canadian TV channel CBC News: "There is no evidence to suggest that through this organised crime syndicate investigation and the charges laid forward that Indian government officials would be charged or involved in this... nothing has come out to taint the Indian government."

On Tuesday, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "We have noted remarks by the RCMP Deputy Commissioner. These remarks are consistent with the recently unsealed US indictment that attributes responsibility to the members of the Lawrence Bishnoi organised crime group. India remains committed to working with our partners in combating terrorism and transnational organised crime through close law enforcement and security cooperation."

On the indictment of the Bishnoi gang, the MEA spokesperson said, "...Our agencies have worked closely together over the years, and this cooperation continues to deepen."

3-LANGUAGE POLICY

Come to us if dismissed, we can reinstate, SC assures teachers

Express News Service
New Delhi, July 14

LEARNING A language never goes waste, the Supreme Court said Tuesday as it sought to assure that it will protect teachers who may face action in case any problem arises with regard to implementation of the CBSE's three-language policy.

"Come to us... If dismissed, we can reinstate," said Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, presiding over a three-judge bench comprising Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohana.

The bench was hearing petitions challenging the CBSE's decision to implement the three-language policy from the current academic session.

Appearing for a petitioner, Senior Advocate Shyam Divan told the bench that as per the National Education Policy (NEP), the three-language policy was to be introduced from 2030 but CBSE had advanced it.

Senior Advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan said the policy treated English as a non-native language. Justice Bagchi said, "The notification is carrying ahead the constitutional goal of learning Hindi and other Indian languages. Nomenclature may require some relook... Question is can India consider English as indigenous Indian language. At one point Parsi was language of this court, but is it there in the 8th schedule?" The court fixed the matter for hearing on July 22.

EXPRESS special

Pre-poll masterstroke, post-poll burden: Ladki Bahin scheme's Maharashtra journey

Shubhangi Khapre
Mumbai, July 14

TWO YEARS back, the Mahayuti government in Maharashtra, then led by Eknath Shinde, announced the Ladki Bahin Yojana with an eye on the crucial women's votes ahead of the Assembly polls. Under this scheme, eligible women beneficiaries will be entitled to Rs 1,500 every month, deposited directly into their bank accounts.

The maths was clear: Of the 9.5 crore voters in Maharashtra, women accounted for 4.6 crore. About 2.46 crore women in the 21-65 years age group — over 50% of the total women voters — were eligible for the Ladki Bahin Yojana. Purse strings were loosened, and the NDA alliance reaped the dividends in the state polls, scoring a thumping victory against the Maha Vikas Agadhi, months after the Mahayuti setback in the Lok Sabha poll.

But populism comes with a price. At the time, the Mahayuti government was willing to overlook the Bill. Cut to July 2026: the Mahayuti government led by CM Devendra Fadnavis has dropped 92 lakh beneficiaries, citing non-eligibility. Currently, 1.51 crore women qualify for the Ladki Bahin Yojana — a 37% drop in beneficiaries. For the state government, it is a calcu-



During the 'Ladki Bahin Yojana' in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar. FILE

lated gamble. There are no polls on the horizon, and the ruling coalition faces no major crisis.

Some key questions, however, remain unanswered. Why did the government enforce the scheme without verification? And why were ineligible beneficiaries allowed for two years? Aditi Tatkar, the state's Women and Child Development Minister, said that verification of beneficiaries was "cumbersome" given the scope of the scheme. "The administration had also left it to the beneficiaries to conform to terms and conditions of the scheme," she said.

The explanation is hardly convincing, considering that farmers seeking loan waiver come under scrutiny by the state

administration before they get the benefit. So, it is no secret that the government did not want to downsize the populist scheme and antagonise women voters before all elections, including the local bodies and municipal

corporations, were over. Now that the BJP-led coalition has scored the poll points, the state government has turned to secure the coffers.

Assuring that the scheme is here to stay, CM Fadnavis has said, "There is no ambiguity that Ladki Bahin Yojana will continue." This commitment, however, is driven by political compulsion and the government is trying to reduce its bills by weeding out ineligible beneficiaries.

Right from its inception, the

{ DR MUSTAFA KAMAL • 1942-2026 }

Farooq Abdullah's brother, ex-minister who balanced politics with medical career, dies

Bashaarat Masood
Srinagar, July 14

SENIOR NATIONAL Conference leader and uncle of Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, Dr Mustafa Kamal, died on Tuesday evening in Srinagar. The 84-year-old was the younger brother of National Conference (NC) president and former chief minister Farooq Abdullah.

"My father's younger brother, Dr Mustafa Kamal, passed away earlier this evening at Paras Hospital in Srinagar. Uncle Mustafa had been unwell for some months but took a turn for the worse four days ago," CM Omar wrote on X. "He put up a brave fight, holding on against the odds. Doctors and staff treating him were amazing, but Allah called him for his final journey.



Dr Mustafa Kamal died in Srinagar on Tuesday evening

May Allah grant uncle Mustafa the highest place in Jannat."

Son of NC founder Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Kamal was a trained medical doctor. He started his political career in 1983 when he was, for the first time, elected as a member of the erstwhile J&K Legislative Council. Immediately after his election as MLC, he was inducted into the Cabinet by his older

brother and then CM, Farooq. After the Farooq government was toppled in 1984 and fresh polls were held in 1987, Kamal successfully contested on a NC ticket from the Tangmarg/Gulmarg Assembly seat. He returned to the Assembly from the constituency for a second consecutive term in 1996. During both these terms, he was inducted into Farooq's Cabinet.

Kamal, who lived in Tangmarg, continued to run his medical clinic even during his political career, earning goodwill from the people of the region. In 2002, Kamal lost the Assembly poll to the People's Democratic Party's Ghulam Hassan Mir. He has not won a poll since. He was an additional secretary in the NC at the time of his death. Kamal often landed in controversies over his statements. In 2019, the BJP de-

Over 1,000, mostly bureaucrats, apply for Ram Mandir CEO post

Maulshree Seth
Lucknow, July 14

OVER 1,000 people from across the country have applied for the post of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Ram Mandir, with retired bureaucrats dominating the list of applicants. Applications poured into the official email address of the selection committee within 24 hours of the recruitment notification being issued on Monday. The Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Teerth Kshetra constituted the three-member committee to identify a new CEO, who will oversee the day-to-day management of the temple trust, amid the ongoing controversy over the alleged theft of donations at the temple. With July 18 being the deadline for applications, the selection committee has decided to appoint a secretary to help them segregate the applications based on the eligibility

criteria decided by them. “Within a few hours of issuing the notification, we received around 750 applications on the first day. Given the response in less than 24 hours, we expect the number to run into thousands by the July 18 deadline. We, therefore, need a secretary to compile and scrutinise the applications based on the prescribed criteria,” a member of the selection committee told *The Indian Express*. He added that the committee will meet on July 19 to begin scrutinising the applications and schedule interviews. Sources said the secretary is likely to be a retired officer. Among those who have publicly confirmed applying is former IPS officer and social activist Amitabh Thakur (58). “Finding myself suitable under the criteria laid down by the Ram Janmbhoomi Trust for the post of CEO, I have submitted my application,” he said.



Given the high response of applications, the selection committee expect the number to run into thousands by July 18 deadline. FILE

Thakur, who has courted controversy in the past, was arrested by the Lucknow Police last year in connection with a case of alleged fraud to secure an industrial plot in Deoria district in 1999. The committee comprises retired Supreme Court Judge Justice Pramod Kohli, retired Lieutenant General Vishnu-

reside in Ayodhya. In a key eligibility condition, it said the applicant must be a “practising Hindu” with “devotion to Lord Ram” and should be proficient in both Hindi and English. Sources said the applications include a significant number of retired bureaucrats, some of whom have experience of working in managerial positions in religious places. After scrutiny, sources said candidates well suited to the role will be called for interviews or discussions. Considering the seniority of the candidates, the panel will be open to online interviews, if required, but a final call will be taken after the July 19 meeting. The Trust is also scheduled to meet on July 22 by which time the selection committee is expected to present its progress. The next meeting of the selection committee is likely to be in Delhi.

‘Criminal conspiracy’ behind errors in Odisha textbooks, senior bureaucrat held

Sujit Bisoyi
Bhubaneswar, July 14

THE CRIME Branch of the Odisha Police on Tuesday arrested Manoj Kumar Padhy, former director of the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), on charges of “criminal conspiracy” in connection with the errors seen in school textbooks for classes 1 to 8. Padhy, a senior Odisha Administrative Service (OAS) officer, had headed SCERT at the time the textbooks were prepared. SCERT is entrusted with the overall supervision, coordination, monitoring and approval of the textbook development process as per the National Education Policy-2020. The Crime Branch initiated its probe into the matter on Tuesday, a day after SCERT lodged a formal complaint about the alleged criminal conspiracy behind the large number of errors in the textbooks. The case was registered under various sections of the BNS, including criminal breach of trust, criminal conspiracy and framing incorrect official documents knowingly. Earlier, Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi also suspected a “larger conspiracy” behind the errors in the textbooks, and subsequently ordered for a Crime Branch probe. In a statement, the Crime Branch alleged that Padhy “dishonestly” failed to discharge the official duties entrusted to him and knowingly approved and forwarded print-ready



Arrested OAS officer Manoj Kumar Padhy

manuscripts for publication without ensuring verification of their factual, scientific, geographical, translation and pictorial contents amounting to criminal negligence. “Such acts and omissions resulted in the publication and distribution of erroneous textbooks, causing wrongful loss to the State Exchequer to the tune of approximately Rs 175 crore and corresponding injury to public interest,” read the statement. Crime Branch sources said more officials from SCERT are under the scanner, and teachers engaged in the preparation of textbooks would also be questioned. On June 26, the state government suspended Padhy, along with three assistant directors, over the errors, and initiated disciplinary action against six more assistant directors. As many as 1,678 errors were detected across 55 new SCERT textbooks for students in classes 1 to 8, including factual inaccuracies, grammatical errors, spelling mistakes and wrong references. The class 8 textbooks have the highest number of errors — 705.



Shaurya Vijay Yatra

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh launches the ‘Shaurya Vijay Yatra’ motorcycle expedition, from National War Memorial to Kargil War Memorial in Dras, Ladakh, honouring the Indian armed forces and former servicemen, in New Delhi, Tuesday. PRAVEEN KHANNA

PAHALGAM ATTACK

Non-bailable warrant against Hafiz Saeed paves way for trial in absentia

Arun Sharma
Jammu, July 14

THE SPECIAL NIA Court in Jammu has issued a non-bailable warrant against Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba chief Hafiz Saeed in the Pahalgam terror attack case. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) had sought an “open-dated non-bailable warrant” against Saeed, a resident of Sargodha in Pakistan’s Punjab province, in connection with the case. The warrant was issued by the Special Judge of the NIA Court on July 8, two days after the NIA filed a supplementary chargesheet against Saeed. “Arrest and custodial interrogation of the accused (Saeed) are necessary for a fair, complete and effective investigation. As

such, a non-bailable warrant of arrest is issued against him and is forwarded to the Deputy Inspector General (DIG), NIA Jammu, for execution in accordance with law,” the court said. The court’s order paves the way for the initiation of a trial against Saeed in absentia. In its supplementary chargesheet filed before the NIA court, the probe agency charged 76-year-old Saeed in both his personal capacity and as the chief of the proscribed Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) outfit and its proxy front, the Resistance Front (TRF). He has been booked under multiple provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. In the supplementary chargesheet, the NIA specifically

mentions Saeed’s role in planning and monitoring the terror attack, besides additional forensic evidence collected from the attack site. Saeed, who has been designated a global terrorist by India and the United States, is also considered the mastermind of the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks. Last year, on April 22, terrorists gunned down 25 tourists and a local man in the Baisaran valley in J&K’s Pahalgam. In the first chargesheet filed in the case in December last year, three terrorists directly involved in the attack were named, including Suleiman, a top Lashkar militant commander from Pakistan. The three were killed in a joint operation by the military, the J&K Police and the CRPF in July last year.

‘Do not abduct Khalra again... I want Centre to have a larger heart, let us tell his story’

THE DILJIT Dosanjh-starrer, *SatluJ*, has been mired in controversies — a long censorship battle, a silent OTT release, and an abrupt takedown. Based on the life of human rights activist Jaswant Singh Khalra, it released on ZEE5 on July 3, but was blocked in India within 48 hours, and later taken down worldwide. **JASPREET SINGH** spoke to the movie’s director, **HONEY TREHAN**, whose earlier works include the Netflix show *Raat Akeli Hai*. Excerpts:

It was a hush-hush release. Even the teasers came out after the release on ZEE5. What was behind the decision?

That was a decision taken by my producers and the platform, because every time we announced the release, we were pressured by the government and had to stall the release. So it was completely their call that let’s just release it without any promos. I got to know about the release a couple of days beforehand; the producers called and said ZEE5 wanted to release ‘Punjab ’95’ under another title. I had no issues with that. I just told them there should be no cuts at all. They agreed. I told them we also have the name *SatluJ* registered with us. Then we released it.

The movie was blocked in India within 48 hours, and later taken down from ZEE5 worldwide. What was your reaction?

I was heartbroken...The ban pushes you into a corner, and you’re forced to ask yourself...are we seriously living in a democratic country? You see, 31 years ago, Jaswant Singh Khalra was abducted and killed by the Punjab Police. Back then, the Centre (CBI) had played a great role in delivering him justice. Today, after 31 years, Khalra is being abducted again... All I ask of the Centre is that please have a big heart, please be kind towards us, and let us tell his story to the world. Do not abduct Khalra



HONEY TREHAN
DIRECTOR OF SATLUJ

again. I want the Centre to have a larger heart and give him the freedom... Let his story be told...

The government panel says the film might be misused by hostile elements, Pakistan or separatists...

Are there any grounds for this statement? On the contrary, my film has actually united Punjab. You go to Punjab and see, people are watching the movie together. They say my film is polarising society and dividing Hindus and Sikhs, but on the ground, the Hindus and Sikhs of Punjab are watching the movie together. It was not meant to provoke anybody. My film is a balm on the wounds of the people who suffered so much...

I don’t think there was any reason to ban it. People were peacefully watching my movie for the first 48 hours. But the government banned the movie... It’s been 10 days; everyone’s watching the film... What is more harmful for the law and order of this country? My film that has united people, or hate speeches by the politicians aimed at dividing us? Propaganda movies are also released... And even if you say my movie is a propaganda, then let it be released like you released other propaganda films. Why differentiate? One film can’t destroy our nation.

Some people say the film is one-sided.

If you believe my film is one-sided, then you have clearly not watched it fully... Because if you

watch it, you will hear the exchange between the characters Sugga (Suvinder Vicky) and the CBI cop, played by Arjun Rampal, where Sugga tells him “*hul-mari ek ek goli yaha hazaro goliyon ke badle chalti hai*” (Every single shot we fire is in response to a thousand gunshots here). Or the exchange between the characters of the Chief Minister and DGP Bitta, where Bitta tells him that without him, militancy wouldn’t have ended in Punjab. I am a filmmaker; I make my characters speak for themselves. If they can speak for the other side, “*mujhe dhol bajane ki kya zarurat hai?*” (Why do I need to blow their trumpet?) I also mention in the film that thousands of cops were killed in the proxy war. But nobody noticed. How can you say my movie is silent about the other side?

The number, 25,000 encounter deaths in Punjab, is exaggerated, some say.

My film is based on Khalra. He always said 25,000 encounters. His speeches are also available on the web. So I need to depict his truth. But for the sake of clarity and being a responsible citizen, I have still mentioned in the movie that it is an estimated figure. Wherever Diljit mentions it, he says “estimated 25,000 extra-judicial killings”.

Critics are also pointing out that you did not portray Khalra’s politics or his advocacy for the Khalistan movement. Why is that?

I read about him (Khalra) in great detail and I know of his politics too. But I was not making the film to scrutinise anyone’s personality... My focus was his human rights work. Does his politics negate that? No case was ever filed against Khalra. Even in the police testimonies, the cops say: “Khalra was such a nice man, why would we abduct him?” So the question is, if he was such a nice man and a law-abiding citizen, why was he abducted and killed by the police?

FULL INTERVIEW ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Akal Takht Jathedar announces memorial to Khalra on Sutlej

Kamaldeep Singh Brar
Amritsar, July 14

THE AKAL Takht on Tuesday announced to set up ‘Shaheedi’ memorial at Harike Pattan, on the banks of Sutlej, dedicated to human rights activist Jaswant Singh Khalra and the people whose bodies were disposed of as unclaimed during the period when Punjab was in the grip of militancy.

Takht’s Jathedar Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargaji made the announcement after performing a special ‘ardas’ (prayer) for the eternal peace of Khalra and the Sikh youths who were declared missing or became vic-

tims of alleged extrajudicial killings and denied proper rites.

“We gather at this spot where countless sons and daughters of Punjab were murdered and their bodies disposed into rivers... From this day onward, this place... will be known as ‘Shaheedi Pattan,’” said Gargaji.

Khalra was abducted from outside his Amritsar home on September 6, 1995, and killed by Punjab Police personnel soon after he exposed the alleged illegal cremations of at least 2,097 “unclaimed” bodies in Amritsar following suspected fake encounters during the militancy era. The Akal

Takht had announced the Ardas at Harike Pattan, where Khalra’s body is believed to have been disposed of.

A large number of people had gathered at the site. Among them were family members of several such people who went missing during the militancy period.

The ceremony featured the installation of the Guru Granth Sahib in a special Palki Sahib, recitation of Sri Sukhmani Sahib, and a Gurbani kirtan by Hazoori Ragis led by Bhai Simarpreet Singh of Sachkhand Sri Harmandir Sahib. The concluding ardas was personally performed by Gargaji.

‘Haven’t had airport drop in 5 months’: Goa’s motorcycle taxis are dying slow death

Pavneet Singh Chadha
Panaji, July 14

“THE BUSINESS is slow and waning,” says Raju ‘Datta’ Naik (73), as he moves his black-and-yellow motorcycle taxi to the front of the queue at the taxi stand in Panaji on Saturday evening. Naik, a native of North Goa’s Ribandar village, has been a “pilot” for more than four decades. Hailing from a farming family, he worked in canteens before learning to ride a motorcycle. In the early 1980s, when tourism began surging in Goa, he started offering rides to commuters on a Rajdoot motorcycle in Panaji. “A bhaktar (landlord) rented me the Rajdoot. I would pay him Rs 10 as the day’s rent, get the tank filled with petrol and pocket earnings from the rides. Those were simpler times, and this job was respectable and paid well,” he recalls. Naik is among the old guard of these riders, known in Goa as “pilots”. Now, making a living

with these iconic motorcycle taxis has become harder than ever. Naik waits for two hours on average between rides. “The last time I dropped someone off at the airport was five months ago. These buses and cabs did not exist earlier,” he said, pointing to the parking area of the bus stand in Panaji. Last week, Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant launched an app, ‘Mhaje Driver App’, for motorcycle taxis, which allows commuters to book motorcycle taxis registered with the Motorcycle Taxi Riders Association. The app aims to strengthen last-mile connectivity and allows commuters to book a ride digitally from anywhere in the state. At the launch event, Sawant said the number of traditional motorcycle taxi pilots has dwindled significantly due to the prevalence of rental bike services, adding that the government would stop issuing new licences for rental bike operations to protect the livelihoods of these “pilots”. Motorcycle taxis have been

operating in Goa for decades, dating back to the period of Portuguese rule. The word ‘pilot’ comes from the Portuguese ‘piloto’, meaning driver, and it was colloquially used to refer to the motorcycle taxi drivers. In 1981, the Motorcycle Taxi Riders Association was registered, and the state government amended the Motor Vehicles Act, paving the way for these pilots to get permits and operate under a legal framework. As Goa started gaining popularity in the global tourist map and with limited options for public transport, especially in the rural talukas, the motorcycle taxis soon became a ubiquitous part of the daily commute for locals and tourists in the coastal state. Avinash Naik (70), a motorcycle pilot, remembers ferrying tourists on the back of his Rajdoot and Yezdi motorcycles for sightseeing tours to the popular North Goa beaches. “Pilots had a lot of respect. People trusted us... and still do. We, along with the taxi drivers,



Avinash Naik (70), a motorcycle pilot. EXPRESS

were called the ambassadors of tourism. The tourists would give us generous tips, and we built friendships. It was a relationship of trust,” he says. Avinash was four years old when his father, a farmer, died. In his teenage years, he worked in printing, which paid little. A neighbour taught him to drive a motorcycle, and he “became a pilot” to make ends meet. “*Tab fursat nhi hota tha a season mein* (We were so busy dur-

ing the tourist season). Often, we skipped lunch. And now, we have to chase the commuters,” he says. Improvements in the inter-city public bus service network, increasing vehicle ownership among locals, the steady proliferation of rental bikes, and the rise of illegally operated private taxis over the past couple of decades have led to a decline in pilots’ earnings, with many forced out of the profession. Several pilots say they were

A member of the Goa Motorcycle Taxi Riders Association said the number of pilots registered with the association is around 1,500, while at least 500 are privately operating and are not part of the association. This represents a major dip from the 8,000 bike pilots operating in the state in 1999. Avinash Naik says he makes around Rs 400-500 per day on average, depending on the length of the trips. “Fuel costs are always increasing, and maintenance costs of the bike are also high. But government-notified fares have stayed constant for years. We are just surviving somehow. During the season from November to March, we get rides, but off-season, business is bleak,” he says. “Earlier, people would land at the airport and hire a taxi or take our services to go around. Now, anyone can just rent a scooter for Rs 400 a day and drive around. This rental model has killed our business,” Avinash adds.

not taken into confidence regarding the new app launched by the Chief Minister last week. “We do not want to get on the app. It is an aggregator, and it will drive us out of business in the long run. They will undercut us and charge commission. We have seen this happen in other states,” says Rajesh Tayad (32), who has been a motorcycle pilot for a decade. “Ours is a self-sustaining business. We are not making a lot of money, and whatever we earn goes into sustenance. But there is freedom... *Kisi ka nok-jhok nhi hai* (There is no interference). Once bike aggregators come in, the Goan identity will also be lost, and drivers from other states will be employed,” he said. The larger concern for the motorcycle pilots centres around one stark reality. “There is simply not enough demand. What will the app do?” asks Shabbir Shaikh (51) from Verem. Shaikh has been driving a motorcycle taxi for 20 years.

“Why would someone pay Rs 100 when the bus is charging Rs 10 for the same route? And the bus leaves every 10 minutes from here. Unless it is an emergency, and one has to cover the distance in a short time. The buses are now covering internal lanes, in hinterland areas too,” he explains. “The locals now rely on pilots largely for emergencies — a visit to the hospital, or late-night travelling... and for shorter rides to the offices during the peak hours. The rides are fewer and farther between,” Shaikh says. Suresh Verekar (58), another motorcycle pilot, says the government’s subsidy to purchase new motorcycles helps, “but if the profession has to survive, the illegally-run bike services need to be shut down and the licences of rental bike services need to be revoked.” Many said their children don’t want to join the traditional profession. “But I will do it till my body and spirit allow,” declares Avinash Naik.

‘Counsel, you are on mute’

THE WORLD OF VIRTUAL COURTS

●A YouTube video of the Supreme Court’s *suo motu* hearing into the R G Kar rape-murder case has been viewed 3.64 lakh times since it was uploaded in August 2024 — a number far beyond what could ever have been accommodated inside a single courtroom.

●Last year, a senior advocate logged into a virtual hearing of the Gujarat High Court, beer mug in hand, phone to his ear. The video went viral within hours, and the bench called the conduct “outrageous”.

●In 2022, then Gujarat High Court Chief Justice Aravind Kumar saw Inspector A M Rathod sipping from a cola can during a virtual hearing and directed him to distribute 100 such cans among bar association members or face disciplinary proceedings.

FOR DECADES, India’s judicial system was built around physical files, crowded courtrooms and colonial-era systems. That began changing around six years ago as courtrooms adopted virtual hearings, turning what was a pandemic necessity into a key part of India’s justice delivery system.

Virtual hearings have not only made it easier for litigants to follow their cases but also for lawyers to practise across cities and for citizens to access court proceedings. In the process, they have opened courtrooms to unprecedented scrutiny and transparency, changing how justice is observed and understood.

In February 2026, Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal told Lok Sabha that as of December 31, 2025, High Courts and district courts across the country had conducted 393 crore cases via video conferencing. E-filing (cases filed digitally) crossed 1.03 crore and 29 virtual courts processed over 94.5 lakh challans, collecting more than Rs 973 crore — figures the minister cited as evidence to say that digitisation of courts has kept the system moving even as courts struggle with case pendency (five crore and counting).

‘People like to come to court’

Fifteen years before courtrooms moved online, the judiciary had begun an overhaul. In 2005, the Supreme Court’s e-committee proposed a blueprint for digitising court administration.

When the project was rolled out in 2007, the focus was on basic digital infrastructure. District and taluka courts were equipped with computers, server rooms and local area networks. Courts adopted Case Information Software, a national case management platform that digitised filing, case records and court administration. Millions of pending cases were entered into electronic databases.

Then, in 2010, came a turning point. India’s first district-level paperless e-court was inaugurated at Karkardooma in Delhi. It was an ambitious shift: touchscreens on the judge’s dais, LCD monitors for viewing digitised records, e-filing to reduce paperwork and facilities for video-linked testimony from jails, forensic laboratories and government hospitals.

Retired Justice Talwant Singh, then the nodal officer overseeing the initiative, recalls, “People were laughing at us... They said, nobody will go for it. Why has so much money been spent? People like to come to court.”

Till 2020, virtual hearings remained an exception. Then, Covid hit, followed by the lockdown. Courts shut almost overnight. And all of a sudden, the question was not whether to go online, but how fast.

The Delhi High Court made the move first. Within 10 days, Justice Talwant Singh conducted what became the country’s first Covid-era virtual hearing on WhatsApp.

The case was a high-stakes anti-suit injunction action against an emergency arbitration in Singapore. A senior counsel appeared from London, and others from across India. “Within two or three weeks, it became normal to hold hearings through VC (video calling),” says Justice Talwant.

Eventually, the Delhi HC moved to Cisco Webex under a proper licensing arrangement and extended it to the district courts.

‘The camera catches all of it’

Confined to a coffee plantation in Coorg during the lockdown, Senior Advocate Sajjan Poovayya appeared before courts across the country. “There would be eight or ten screens,” he recalls. Each screen connected him to a different courtroom.

In the initial days, Poovayya remembers how accidental muting or unmuting, frozen screens and lawyers unfamiliar with virtual appearances became a running joke. “Counsel, you are on mute” became the era’s most repeated phrase.

Senior Advocate Menaka Guruswamy recalls that at first, some senior lawyers underestimated how much a webcam can reveal. “Some didn’t realise that you could be seen very clearly,” she laughs. “If you are a little dishevelled, it captures all of it.”

There were other hurdles. In September 2021, advocate Pratul Pratap Singh, who practises in the Supreme Court, was to speak before a bench, but realised that he could not intervene even after correctly logging in. His senior eventually had to physically go to the court. “I could not unmute,” he recalls.

The pandemic derailed the best of plans. But this was also the time India’s courtrooms got on to

a new track, starting virtual hearings. Despite the chaotic start — patchy networks, and frozen screens and

mute buttons — e-courts are now a key part of India’s justice delivery system, write

AMAAL SHEIKH & SOHINI GHOSH



ILLUSTRATION: SUVAJIT DEY

● VIRTUAL COURTS: KEY NUMBERS



*Data as of December 31, 2025, as provided in Parliament in Feb 2026

Under the virtual system, those whose names do not appear with a designated item number are treated as viewers and cannot unmute and make interventions.

Years later, the system continues to be hobbled by some of these technical challenges.

Often, the virtual system does not keep pace with what’s happening. “It has happened quite a number of times that the judge has gone from case number 10 to 15, and the number on the display board has not been updated by the court staff, and it is still at 7,” says advocate Advait Tamhankar, a criminal lawyer practising in the Bombay High court. “When we go to the court and say we missed the hearing, they say that there’s no proof that we were online,” Tamhankar says.

In a more sobering episode, a person appearing without a lawyer before a Supreme Court bench was muted by a moderator unfamiliar with the proceedings, just as the bench began dictating a 10-minute order. For at least eight minutes, the man kept speaking, unheard, “even pleading with folded hands,” unaware he’d been cut off, remembers Pratul Pratap Singh.

Delhi ahead of the rest

Advocate Abhinav Sekhri, a criminal lawyer who practises primarily in the Capital, says that during Covid, “in most other states, at best you could have this facility at the High Court level, whereas in Delhi, the focus was on onboarding the trial courts”.

By the end of 2021, he says, virtual hearings had become routine in most of Delhi’s courts. The contrast was stark with Mumbai, where, well into the pandemic, many trial courts remained largely offline and where, advocate Tamhankar says, lawyers still find themselves moving between video conferencing platforms.

Gujarat had been experimenting with live streaming of court proceedings on and off since 2020, when Covid struck. The Gujarat High Court formally went live on YouTube in July 2021 — a first across the country. By February 2023, Gujarat district courts were also live on YouTube.

Since 2022, the Supreme Court has been live-streaming key Constitutional bench hearings on YouTube. Gauhati, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Orissa High Courts are also live on YouTube.

However, vast differences remain in the adoption of digital infrastructure. In Karnataka, district courts have followed the High Court and embraced technology with surprising flexibility, says Poovayya.

Telangana falls on the other side of the spectrum. “District courts in our state... not much,” says advocate Asad Hussain, a Hyderabad-based advocate.

Data submitted by the Ministry of Law and Justice to the Rajya Sabha in February 2026 underscores that while district courts under the Allahabad High Court had digitised nearly 169 crore pages of records by December 2025, Madhya Pradesh had digitised 66 crore pages, and Punjab & Haryana 62 crore pages. In contrast, Calcutta’s district courts and Nagaland reported no digitised district court records.

‘I speak freely online’

Guruswamy says live streaming and virtual access have fundamentally altered the relationship between courts and the public, “democratising the practice of law”. Technically, courts have been open to everyone for decades, but most litigants had never heard their lawyers argue, and students outside major cities had rarely witnessed constitutional litigation. “Now, students come up and say they watched the arguments on YouTube before they joined law school,” says Guruswamy.

For lawyers, virtual hearings have cleared logistical obstacles.

Hussain says that earlier, lawyers appearing outside their home jurisdictions often depended on local counsel, clerks and other arrangements, but now, “with a Microsoft Word document, a PDF viewer and a laptop, you are good to go,” he says.

For litigants and clients, the information gap has narrowed. “Clients can see exactly what happened,” Hussain says, explaining that they do not have to rely on the lawyer’s version of events.

That visibility has changed behaviour on all sides. Poovayya credits “a greater number of eyes” with bringing “a level of maturity” to court hearings.

For decades, Pratul says, “what happened inside stayed inside.” Today, a stray observation travels far beyond the courtroom, he says, pointing to CJI Surya Kant’s widely discussed “cockroach” remark.

Poovayya says his work now comes with a different tool kit. He began practising decades ago, when lawyers worked with typewriters, carbon copies and stacks of papers that had to be physically transported between courts. “As the most junior lawyer, you got the last carbon copy, and it was barely legible,” he says.

Today, his chambers have moved almost entirely to digital files, following what he calls a “zero paper policy”. “Now, I have multiple copies of these files on my handheld device that moves with me,” he says.

Also, research on a case happens amid arguments now. Juniors search for points and upload material directly into shared digital files. “Sometimes, in the middle of an argument, my files are getting updated as I speak,” Poovayya says.

Younger lawyers have adapted to the changes more easily. “Six briefs of a thousand pages you can’t carry to court. iPads and laptops have taken care of that,” advocate Tamhankar says.

For Delhi-based Maryam Junaid, who graduated from law school in 2024, virtual appearances are less intimidating. “Because I know nobody is watching me, I can just speak freely.”

For litigants, virtual courts have eliminated the costs of going to courts. Pratul, who is from Badaun in Uttar Pradesh, says this has encouraged more litigants to pursue remedies before higher forums.

Yet, many still believe that something is lost when advocacy moves entirely online. As Guruswamy wonders, “What happens to the introspective quality of a courtroom when everything is being broadcast? There is that element of persuasion in a physical courtroom — nothing can substitute it,” Guruswamy adds.

Pratul says that in a physical courtroom, “if judges are talking among themselves while you are arguing, even hearing one word can tell you what concerns them.”

Some judges say that in a physical court, it is easier for them to understand the issue, ask back-and-forth questions, and understand body language.

Hearings are especially difficult when government lawyers appear virtually... They have to submit status reports or records, and often, this is done across the bench. For judges, tallying the online documents becomes difficult,” says a Delhi HC judge.

Individual judges can also lay out the manner and mode of conducting proceedings. For example, in Delhi HC, Justice C Hari Shankar has specified, “Presence of Advocates’ parties who appear virtually would not be marked if their camera is switched off.” Justice Girish Kathpalia has requested all those appearing virtually to “maintain proper decorum”. The Chief Justice’s court, too, has similar standing instructions.

What often tests the patience of judges are unmuted conversations seeping in mid-hearing, cross-communication, lawyers appearing from vehicles or without neckbands, and patchy Internet.

Earlier this year, a court clip from the Gujarat High Court went viral when, mid-argument, a lawyer was heard instructing, presumably his colleague, on the phone, “Tell them my father has had a heart attack and his surgery is going on — I can’t be present.” A brief pause later, he adds, “Let the court order whatever it wants, I will get it changed from the Supreme Court.”

For Poovayya, though, provided the technology works well, virtual hearings can sometimes offer lawyers a clearer view of a judge’s reactions. “Body language, mannerisms and thought process of a judge are often visualised in closer quarters,” he says.

Hussain recalls deliberately joining a hearing in a politically sensitive matter virtually, as the lawyers and counsel frequently spoke over one another. “If the bench wanted to hear our submissions, everyone else had to be quiet because we were the ones appearing online,” he says.

A reality check

The virtual infrastructure has worked with relatively little friction inside jails. The e-Mulakat system allows lawyers and family members to schedule video meetings with undertrial prisoners without physically queuing at a gate.

“No hassles,” Tamhankar says. “You don’t have to physically go to the jail, stand in line, fill out the form, and argue with the jail staff who are absolutely uncooperative. All this is avoided. You sit in your office and, before court hours, talk to the prisoner.”

The next frontier that lawyers are approaching is evidence recording. Sekri describes a recent case where his client in Chennai travelled to a court facility to give a statement to a judge in Madhya Pradesh via a video link. “It was fascinating,” says Sekri. “But these are few and far.”

But for every digital stride, there is a reality check. India’s first district-level paperless e-court, in Delhi’s Karkardooma Court Complex, is a case in point, offering a glimpse into both the promise and fragility of judicial digitisation. Of the two LCD screens installed in 2010 to view digitised records, neither functions. The server crashed in 2016 and has not been restored since. The system, even today, continues to run on a 2G connection.

**The Indian EXPRESS**

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BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Between Iran blackmail and Trump bullying

WEST ASIA has once again descended into open conflict. For a third consecutive day, the United States launched strikes on Iran, and Tehran targeted US allies and commercial tankers, even as oil prices climbed to their highest level in a month. The June 14 Memorandum of Understanding, which established a ceasefire while allowing 60 days for negotiations on a broader settlement — almost half of which have gone by — has effectively collapsed. Days after Ali Khamenei's funeral, Iran has once again closed the Strait of Hormuz, while President Donald Trump has reinstated the US blockade. The rest of the world finds itself caught between Iran's dangerous blackmail and the Trump administration's perilous unilateralism.

President Trump's now-revoked plan of a 20 per cent fee on cargo transiting the Strait of Hormuz flagrantly contradicts repeated assurances of senior members of his own administration, including Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, that no country can levy tolls or fees on an international waterway under international law. Such a charge would more than double the cost of shipping oil through the Strait. Arguably, Trump's threat also underscores the paucity of Washington's options in dealing with an Iranian regime unwilling to relinquish its chokehold over Hormuz. In retrospect, the US-Iran MoU's ambiguity over control of the Strait was far from being an oversight — it reflected irreconcilable positions that have set off the second major burst of violence since it was sealed. Tehran appears convinced that control over the Strait is the last and most potent card it has left to play, and is therefore determined to prevent the emergence of alternative routes that could erode that leverage. Its strategy of deterring ships from using US-coordinated alternatives will only sabotage the trust that is needed for a durable end to the hostilities.

Iran and the US do not need to become friends. They do, however, need to establish a minimum framework for engagement that does not crumble with every tug or pull. The consequences of failing to create such a baseline are regional and global: Civilians and seafarers continue to pay with their lives — one Indian crew member has been killed and one is missing after Iranian cruise missiles struck their tankers — while repeated disruptions to the Strait threaten energy supplies and global economic stability. No ceasefire can survive if the players slide back into belligerence and brinkmanship quite so easily.

Rising inflation complicates RBI's choice

RETAIL INFLATION has continued to edge upwards, according to the latest data, driven, in part, by the food, transportation and restaurant segments. CPI inflation stood at 4.38 per cent in June, up from 3.93 per cent the month before. This brings inflation in the quarter to 3.9 per cent. While this is marginally lower than the central bank's most recent projection of 4.2 per cent — this is also the last inflation reading before the August meeting of the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee — the MPC's decision isn't likely to be as straightforward as it may seem.

Disaggregated data shows that food inflation rose to 5.32 per cent, up from 4.78 per cent the month before, with ginger, tomato and raisin witnessing high inflation. But the outlook for food prices remains unclear. The cumulative rainfall in the current monsoon season from June 1 has been 19.3 per cent below normal. This has had an impact on kharif sowing, with overall acreage down 16 per cent from last year. The sowing window is closing. And as El Niño strengthens, the situation is uncertain, complicating matters for the MPC. Alongside the rise in food prices, the sharp increase in inflation in the transport segment reflects the petrol and diesel price hikes — June witnessed the full impact of the mid-May price hikes — while the increase in food and energy prices is finding its way to the restaurant category. Some analysts expect the pass through of higher input and fuel prices into prices of other non-food items to exert further upward pressure, even if gradually.

In its last meeting, the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee had maintained status quo on both rates and stance. While crude oil prices have fallen off the highs thereafter, renewed hostilities in West Asia have complicated matters — over the last five days, Brent crude oil has edged up 7.5 per cent. Much will depend on how MPC members view the external and internal risks to growth and inflation. Global central banks have already begun to react. In its June meeting, the European Central Bank had raised interest rates. Its next decision will be announced next week. The US Fed is also scheduled to hold its meeting later this month. Their decisions will indicate the direction of monetary policy in developed economies.

The mystery of life on Earth is sweet

SUGAR, IT has become a cliché to say, is the new tobacco. There are certainly parallels between the two products — both were linchpins of colonial expansion, are addictive health hazards and their harms were long hidden by big business. But sugar isn't just a delicious villain, a dietary decadence, or an indulgence. Before it became the chief cause of obesity, it was a building block of life. Sugars are essential components of DNA and RNA, building blocks of cells and the primary source of energy, even in the simplest and earliest life forms. Till recently, though, their origins on Earth were a mystery.

A research paper published in *Nature Astronomy* earlier this week strengthens the case that life on Earth was made possible by travellers from space. Researchers used two powerful radio telescopes to study the Milky Way's Interstellar Medium — all the dust and molecules outside of solar systems — and detected four-carbon sugars. The saccharine deep-space travellers likely hitched a ride to this planet on asteroids that crashed onto the surface, and became the fuel for the spark of life.

In some ways, there is a delightful irony to the interstellar origins of sugar. Too many people, too often, are weighed down — sometimes literally — by the calories in their sweet treats, by the creeping numbers on an annual blood test. To know, in some small way, that the dietary villain of the 21st century is an unsung alien hero at the root of all life, floating through space, without weight, is comforting. And, perhaps, the odd dessert can now be seen not just as indulgence but homage to all that sugar has given this planet.



RAJA MANDALA
BY C RAJA MOHAN

BARELY A week after Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was laid to rest in Mashhad, Iran and the United States are trading blows again. The collapse of the ceasefire and the intensification of military hostilities in the Gulf is a reminder that the “third republic” now emerging in Tehran is being forged in the crucible of war and peace with America.

Iran's internal rearrangement after Khamenei cannot be separated from its prolonged conflict with the US. The nature and terms of engagement with Washington have become the principal fault lines in the struggle to shape the new political order in Iran. The Indian foreign policy community must come to terms with post-Khamenei Iran entering a period of internal restructuring and external reorientation, with important consequences for India's interests in the Middle East and beyond. It must also pay more attention to the internal debates in Iran on the nation's future.

For nearly four decades, Khamenei stood at the apex of a state that combined clerical authority with the expanding power of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The transition to a new order was bound to be contested. The American-Israeli military campaigns of 2025 and 2026, culminating in

Khamenei's assassination earlier this year, compressed what might have been a gradual political transition into an abrupt one.

The swift elevation of Mojtaba Khamenei as Supreme Leader has not resolved the deeper questions surrounding the succession. There is intense jockeying among the different factions constituting the Iranian establishment. As the anti-government demonstrations at the turn of this year have shown, there is also a serious questioning of the political legitimacy of the Islamic Republic.

What distinguishes Iran's transition is that it is unfolding in a state of conflict and engagement with the US. The nuclear question, sanctions relief, Gulf security, navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, and Iran's regional role are all now in play. Every choice the new Iranian leadership makes about escalation or restraint is also a choice about the internal balance of power — and every internal realignment reshapes Iran's capacity to make war or peace with Washington.

To see where post-Khamenei Iran might be heading, it is useful to view the Islamic Republic's evolution in two distinct phases. The first republic emerged from the 1979 revolution under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. It was defined by revolutionary mobilisation, the Iran-Iraq War, and the transformation of a broad anti-monarchical movement into a state dominated by the clergy. Institutions were built around the doctrine of *velayat-e-faqih* that places ultimate authority in the hands of the religious figure.

The second republic belonged to Khamenei. He inherited a country devastated by the eight-

For realists, the question is about the nature and degree of change in Iran. Iran's relationship with America sits at the heart of the unfinished debate on the organising principles of the third republic

One deletion and cascading civil disabilities



JOHN BRITTAS

SIR was conceived as an electoral exercise to improve the accuracy of electoral rolls. It was never intended to become a parallel mechanism for regulating passports, licences, welfare benefits or other civil rights

WHEN A nation turns alien to one of its own, it does so not with conquest but with the quiet stroke of a pen. R Rajagopal, former editor of *The Telegraph*, watched his name vanish from West Bengal's electoral rolls in a routine revision, stripping him of his vote and stalling his passport.

The furore over the denial of his passport (which he eventually received), and the remarks by Bombay High Court judge Madhav Jamdar affirming the fundamental right to protest, have brought in some fresh air. Yet the warning remains. The state that begins by forgetting its people on paper can end by making them strangers in their own land.

Every constitutional democracy must revise its electoral rolls. Every sovereign nation must verify the credentials of those to whom it issues passports. Every statute has its own purpose, every authority its own jurisdiction and every administrative process its own legal consequences. What should concern us is when the consequence of one statutory process begins to migrate into different legal domains, producing disabilities that Parliament never contemplated and the governing statute never authorised.

The Constitution deliberately fragments public power. That is one of liberty's most effective safeguards. The Passport Authority administers the Passports Act. The Election Commission administers the Representation of the People Act. Citizenship is governed by the Citizenship Act. Income tax authorities administer fiscal legislation. Each functions within defined legislative boundaries. The rule of law depends as much upon this institutional separation as upon judicial review itself. The concern arises when the boundaries begin to dissolve.

The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) was conceived as an electoral exercise to improve the accuracy of electoral rolls. It was never intended to become a parallel mechanism for regulating passports, licences, welfare benefits or other civil rights. Whether the SIR has been properly conducted or whether individual deletions are justified are questions that belong to electoral law and, where necessary, to constitutional adjudication. The constitutional concern here arises when

the consequences of an electoral exercise begin to migrate into statutory fields for which Parliament has prescribed entirely different legal frameworks. Suppose electoral exclusion starts affecting passport renewal. Tomorrow it may influence professional licences, public employment, banking, taxation, education, welfare entitlements or even the right to file a writ petition before the Supreme Court (SC) — not because Parliament has legislated such consequences, but because one administrative authority begins relying upon another's conclusions without independently applying the statute it administers.

Administrative law has long resisted this. SC's decision in *Maneka Gandhi* transformed passport administration by insisting that restrictions on personal liberty must satisfy standards of fairness, reasonableness and due process. The judgment constitutionalised administrative discretion itself. Public authorities may no longer act mechanically. They must independently apply the law governing them. If deletion from the electoral roll becomes sufficient to deny passport renewal, an electoral exercise acquires consequences never contemplated by the Passports Act. The issue then becomes a question of constitutional method.

The danger, therefore, is not that one journalist may temporarily remain without a passport. The greater danger is the emergence of what may be called a “cascade of civil disabilities” where the consequence of one administrative process travels across multiple statutory regimes until a single determination begins to shape rights.

That is why the present controversy deserves attention far beyond the immediate facts. It is not fundamentally about passports. It is about preserving the constitutional discipline that every public authority must remain faithful to the statute it administers, every restriction upon liberty must have legislative authority, and every citizen is entitled to have his rights determined by law, not by the unintended spillover of administrative decisions.

(with inputs from Aneesh Babu)

Brittas is a CPI(M) Rajya Sabha MP



GOWD KIRAN KUMAR

The experience of the Socio-Economic and Caste Census, 2011 is a cautionary example. The use of an open column resulted in over 46 lakh different caste entries, largely due to spelling variations, sub-castes and inconsistent reporting

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Goa Bandh called by Marathi-language protagonists ended peacefully. Even as former CM Shashikala Kakodkar was arrested along with her supporters outside the Assembly, Chief Minister Pratapsingh Rane warned that miscreants indulging in arson would be shot

India, Bangladesh to talk it out

INDIA AND Bangladesh took note of mutual differences and resolved to sort out the outstanding issues by approaching them in a spirit of mutual understanding. The resolve was expressed in the speeches of President Zail Singh and the visiting Bangladesh President, Lt-Gen HM Ershad, at a banquet in New Delhi. Earlier, the Bangladesh leader had an hour-long meeting with Prime Minister, Rajiv

durable accommodation.

That Iran was negotiating with Washington within weeks after the assassination of the Supreme Leader and that talks were going on over the last weekend even amid the mounting military tensions show the difficulty of abandoning the engagement with America. They also show how hard it is to generate an Iranian internal consensus on the engagement with the United States.

Within Iran, hardliners want revenge — in the form of “death to Trump” for the killing of late Khamenei and the continuation of the war against America. Moderates defend the negotiations with the US by calling them a different form of war. Pragmatists argue that a permanent confrontation with America is bankrupting Iran and is unsustainable. The factional lines of the third republic are being drawn around this divide — over the nature, sequence, and the terms of engagement with the US. Beyond the establishment are those that demand an end to the Islamic Republic.

The Islamic Republic was born in revolt against America, and consolidated under Khamenei through resistance to Washington. Tehran is now in the throes of deciding whether its third incarnation of the Islamic Republic can be built on an accommodation with America. The resolution of that issue, in whatever form, will shape the geopolitics of the region and generate new imperatives for India's Middle East policy.

The writer is contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express. He is distinguished professor at the Motwani Jadeja Institute of American Studies, and Korea Foundation Chair on Asian Geopolitics at the Council on Strategic and Defence Research, Delhi

In Census, caste category must not be open-ended

RECENT NEWS reports indicate that the rehearsal for the second phase of Census 2027 includes an “open column” for recording caste. While the government has clarified that the final methodology will be decided after evaluating feedback from the test exercise, experience from previous surveys suggests that relying solely on an open-text response without a standardised coding framework can undermine the objective of caste enumeration.

The experience of the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC), 2011 is a cautionary example. The use of an open column resulted in over 46 lakh different caste entries, largely due to spelling variations, regional names, sub-castes, synonyms, and inconsistent reporting. As a result, the data could not be effectively classified or officially released for policy purposes. This stands in contrast to earlier and more structured exercises. The 1931 Census recorded approximately 4,147 castes, while the Anthropological Survey of India identified around 6,325 castes in 1951. More recently, states that adopted a standardised coding methodology have shown that accurate enumeration is feasible and reliable.

The Bihar Caste Survey (2023) identified 209 castes, including 112 in the recognised state list of Extremely Backward Classes, 30 under OBCs, 22 SCs, 32 STs, seven Upper Castes, and two Other Related Castes. The Telangana Socio-Economic, Educational, Employment, Political and Caste Survey, 2024 identified 242 castes: 133 Backward Classes, 59 Scheduled Castes, 32 Scheduled Tribes, and 18 Other Castes. Both relied on officially recognised caste lists and assigned standardised codes to each caste, ensuring consistency and minimising duplication.

As the Union government finalises the methodology for Census 2027, it must constitute an expert committee to determine the authoritative source for caste coding. The committee should examine what the framework should be based on: State-wise lists of SCs, STs, and OBCs; the central list of OBCs maintained by the National Commission for Backward Classes; the caste database maintained by the Anthropological Survey of India; or a harmonised national master list integrating these while accommodating state-specific variations. The identification of Upper Castes also requires a clear framework. Since EWS certificates are issued to persons belonging to communities not included in the SC, ST, or OBC categories, the government already has an administrative basis for identifying such communities. This can be refined and incorporated into the Census coding methodology. An open column should remain available only to capture genuine omissions, new caste names, or regional variations.

A well-designed caste census is not merely about counting communities; it is about generating accurate data to identify deprivation, measure inequality, and formulate targeted policies for communities that remain socially and educationally backward. The success of Census 2027 will depend on the government's ability to classify every recorded caste through a transparent, standardised, and nationally accepted coding system.

The writer is national president, All India OBC Students Association

40 YEARS AGO

July 15, 1986



Apparent truce in Punjab

TERRORISTS ARE understood to have decided to observe a month-long “truce” in Punjab. The decision is believed to have been conveyed by the terrorist groups to the ruling as well as breakaway Akali leaderships through intermediaries. During June alone, terrorists had killed 117 persons in a spirit of mutual understanding. The resolve was expressed in the speeches of President Zail Singh and the visiting Bangladesh President, Lt-Gen HM Ershad, at a banquet in New Delhi. Earlier, the Bangladesh leader had an hour-long meeting with Prime Minister, Rajiv

Total bandh immobilises Goa

A WATER pipeline was dynamited, markets and educational institutions remained closed and traffic came to a standstill as the one-day

India, Bangladesh to talk it out

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Five killed in Ahmedabad

FIVE PERSONS were stabbed to death in Ahmedabad city, raising the toll in the current violence in the state to 58 in the last six days. Unconfirmed reports said at least 13 persons were killed in stabbings during the day. Two persons were stabbed to death in the Ambawadi locality and two on Satellite Road in Jodhpur Tekra. One person was knifed to death in the Bhudarpura area.



Ram Temple was built on faith. It can only be honoured through accountability



YASHOVARDHAN JHA AZAD

THE GREATEST theft at Ayodhya was not of money. It was a matter of trust. The Ram Mandir Trust is called a “trust” for a reason. The first duty of the trustees was not to manage property but to protect the faith reposed in them by millions. That is why the alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya is unlike any other financial scam. Millions of Indians donated voluntarily. Some offered a day’s wages, others jewellery, pension savings or family heirlooms. They donated because they believed they were participating in a historic civilisational moment. They believed every rupee would be used in the service of Maryada Purushottam Ram, who symbolises truth, justice and integrity.

The handling of the affair, therefore, raises more disturbing questions than the alleged theft itself. Ironically, the first question concerns the very institution entrusted with safeguarding the devotees’ offerings. When serious allegations of large-scale financial irregularities emerge and preliminary inquiries point to systemic failures, the obvious question is whether the governing body itself should remain unchanged while investigations are underway. The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust was constituted with the approval of the Union government. Its general secretary and trustee have resigned. But if its systems failed comprehensively, then why was the trust itself not suspended or dismissed, once investigations began? This is not about presuming guilt but preserving institutional credibility.

The second question relates to the role of the senior bureaucrats associated with the trust. Civil servants are trained to associate accountability with responsibility. If senior officers had positions in an institution handling enormous public donations, what precisely was their oversight role? Were they only there to exude power, or also to ensure financial discipline?



ILLUSTRATION: C.R SASIKUMAR

Public institutions cannot operate on the principle that authority resides at the top, but accountability stops at the bottom. Two trust members have resigned. What about the bureaucrats on the trust?

The third concern is the investigative approach adopted from the beginning. Every investigator knows that time is the greatest enemy in financial crime. Electronic records can be altered, CCTV images overwritten, digital trails erased, assets transferred, and witnesses influenced. Yet, the initial response was shockingly unprofessional. Instead of immediately lodging an FIR and preserving every possible piece of evidence, the process began with administrative mechanisms.

Hence, many questions remain unanswered. Could evidence have been better preserved? Were banking records, digital devices and financial transactions secured immediately?

The fourth issue concerns the nature of the investigation itself. An SIT can be an effective mechanism, but only if it is equipped with the expertise the case demands. Allegations involving substantial public donations, complex financial transactions and extensive documentary evidence require far more than an administrative inquiry. They call for specialists in financial

forensics, cyber investigations, accounting, procurement, banking records and digital evidence, working alongside experienced investigators and legal experts. The objective must be not merely to establish the facts but to build a case that can withstand judicial scrutiny. When public faith and large sums of money are at stake, the investigation should be entrusted to the most competent multidisciplinary team available.

The fifth concern is institutional independence. The SIT’s findings reportedly moved through senior administrative channels, including functionaries associated with the trust. That inevitably creates a public perception of an inquiry moving within the same administrative loop whose functioning itself is under scrutiny. Justice must not merely be done; it must also be seen to be done. In matters involving public faith, visible independence becomes as important as legal correctness.

The sixth issue is the astonishing proposal floated by a retired bureaucrat that the solution lies in appointing yet another bureaucrat as chief executive officer. This reflects the thinking that has weakened governance across many public institutions. The question is not whether the CEO should be a bureaucrat or someone from the private sector. The question is

whether the appointment process identifies the best professional available through an open, transparent and merit-based search. Managing one of the world’s most important religious institutions demands expertise in finance, audit, procurement, compliance, technology, risk management and institutional governance. Replacing one bureaucratic layer with another without first fixing accountability merely treats the symptom while ignoring the disease.

The seventh issue is transparency. The money belonged to the devotees, hence they have a legitimate moral claim to know how the investigation is progressing. What safeguards have already been introduced? What systemic failures have been identified? Without compromising the probe, periodic public briefings will strengthen people’s confidence.

Finally, this episode compels the government and opposition parties to revisit the larger question of the relationship between governments and religious institutions.

The state has a legitimate interest in ensuring that institutions receiving enormous public donations function honestly and lawfully. But bureaucratic supervision must never become a substitute for professional governance of temples, mosques, churches, or gurdwaras, which handle hundreds or thousands of crores. That requires professionally selected executives, independent boards, mandatory forensic audits, transparent procurement, digital accounting, conflict-of-interest declarations, whistleblower protection and periodic public disclosure of audited accounts.

The Ram Temple was never intended to be merely a magnificent structure of stone. It was meant to represent the ideals of the man whose name it bears — truth, duty, sacrifice, integrity and justice. That faith of millions now must be honoured, not with new promises, committees or with cosmetic administrative rearrangements, but with the full force of an independent, professional and transparent investigation. Because this was never about stolen money only, but also about stolen faith.

The writer is a retired IPS officer who has served as central information commissioner, secretary, security, GOI; and special director, Intelligence Bureau

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SIR grievances

ONE WISHES that Ram Sewak Sharma’s perspective on the ECI’s highly flawed SIR had come earlier (‘On SIR, listen to digital governance pioneer’, *IE*, July 14), as it may have strengthened the voices critical of the exercise and given ammunition to the petitioners’ case before the Supreme Court. Millions have been disproportionately burdened by a document-heavy process, with many losing their right to vote.

Kamal Laddha, Bengaluru

Legendary chapter

S JANAKI’S death closes a chapter that began in 1957 with her debut Tamil song for *Vidhiyin Vilayattu* and stretched across six decades of shifting musical tastes (‘Night-ingle falls silent, her song lives’, *IE*, July 14). Songs such as ‘Singara Velane Deva’ and ‘Senthooru Poove’ still capture what made her early career soar: A natural soprano, untouched by formal training and sharpened instead by hours spent mimicking Lata Mangeshkar on the radio and performing at her uncle’s theatre shows. Institutions preserving film music history should now digitise and catalogue her vast repertoire before it fades from public access.

A. Myilsami, Coimbatore

Statehood question

IF RESTORING statehood to Jammu and Kashmir is essential for democratic representation (‘Omar is spot on, doesn’t need Trump clickbait’, *IE*, July 14), the same constitutional principle should extend to Ladakh. Its people have consistently sought stronger constitutional safeguards, and Sonam Wangchuk’s hunger strike has once again drawn national attention to their aspirations. A democracy should not wait for prolonged protests or fasts to respond to legitimate demands. Equal constitutional dignity, meaningful representation, and responsive governance for both Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh must remain the Centre’s priority.

Harsh Pawaria, Rohtak



E P UNNY

WHEN DAVID Low died in 1963 in England, obituary writers lamented that the world had lost its best cartoonist, some wondering whether there would be anyone remotely like him anytime soon. Low was arguably cartooning’s first global star. His fame went beyond the UK, the US and Europe to British colonies, across the English-reading Commonwealth nations. There was a vast cartoon readership that missed Low. They didn’t have to wait for long for a worthy successor. In just about a year after Low’s death, Patrick Oliphant emerged in the US.

Like Low, a New Zealander who stormed Fleet Street, Oliphant was a migrant from neighbouring Australia. The 29-year-old left home on a Friday in 1964 and arrived in the US to start work at *The Denver Post* the next Monday. He was picked from a long list of 50 American applicants. American newspaper editors were looking beyond the national borders for the best in the business. This is what the British editors did when the art practice peaked there. At least two young Indian cartoonists found work in London in the 1950s, Abu Abraham and Rajinder Puri.

Post World War II, the global capital of cartooning shifted across the Atlantic from London to Washington, even as the media space was being increas-

Adieu, Pat Oliphant, who skewered presidents

ingly invaded by television. From 1 per cent in the late 1940s, 90 per cent of American homes had a TV set by 1960. Newsrooms knew the best way to compete with the moving image was visually, and a stinging visual was even better. Oliphant fit the bill.

Oliphant cartooned the Cold War as mercilessly as Low did the World War. The task was tougher because unlike Low’s targets — foreign leaders like Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Joseph Stalin and Francisco Franco — Oliphant had to pick on duly elected American presidents, from Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon to the two Bushes and Barack Obama. Looking back, one shudders to think that he was a fault-finding migrant in the host country — he became a naturalised American citizen only in 1979. This is unthinkable in these Trumpian times. If you are a cartoon watcher, you won’t rate the world’s most seasoned democracy at 250 kindly.

The Washington Post lost its Pulitzer-winning cartoonist Ann Telnaes last year. Back then, in the last century, even the wildest of US presidents would grin and bear a widely syndicated celebrity cartoonist with a Pulitzer under his belt. Oliphant had won his in 1967 for the iconic Vietnam War cartoon depicting Ho Chi Minh carrying a dead Viet Cong

soldier wondering, “They won’t get us to the Conference table... will they?”

In another three years, Oliphant got the perfect presidential target to unleash his savage cartooning. Richard Nixon came to power and the rest was cartooning history, not just in the US, but the world over. Nixon won worldwide attention as the most notorious American president with the Watergate scandal of 1973 and 1974. Enough for Abu Abraham to honour his exit in this paper with a stunningly deadpan drawing of the White House with a plaque that read: “Richard Milhous Nixon (1969-1974) lied here.”

It was a perfect minimalist foil to a richly detailed Oliphant cartoon done a year back when Pablo Picasso died. At the breakfast table with the first lady, the president glances at the artist’s obit in the morning paper and is visibly relieved, “Thank God he wasn’t a cartoonist.” The entire frame was a cubist rendering that pushed every element in it, including the human forms, to extreme distortion. The caricatured couple was readily recognisable, flat and fractured, as Picasso would have drawn them at his cubist best.

A lesser cartoonist couldn’t have conceived it and a lesser artist couldn’t have executed it.

The writer is chief political cartoonist, The Indian Express. ep.unny@expressindia.com

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PUSHPA PATHAK

THE SUPREME Court’s June 19 judgment on the fundamental right to walk highlighted “the violation of the right to walk on demarcated footpaths”. The ruling draws our attention to another serious violation of footpaths and roadsides: Using them as free parking spaces for motorised vehicles.

Nowhere is this more contested than in residential and mixed land-use neighbourhoods. On June 18, a 77-year-old died after being pushed to the ground during a heated argument over open-space parking with his 30-year-old neighbour in Noida. On January 13, an argument over parking in Jashoda Colony, Vadodara resulted in the brutal killing

of a visitor. These stories of violent disputes force us to stop and wonder: How is the challenge to be handled? What if cities legalised parking on public land for a price? Would it reduce conflicts?

The underlying cause is the growth in car ownership in India’s urban areas, particularly in the metropolises, and shrinking of free parking spaces. It also comes from a strong sense of entitlement to the public space in front of one’s house.

A few states and cities have adopted policy frameworks that specifically address residential parking. For instance, Comprehensive Policy on Traffic, Road Safety, Encroachment and Cattle Menace for Ahmedabad City (2026) stipulates that no development permission shall be granted without a pre-building use parking compliance. The Odisha Comprehensive State

Parking Policy (2026) includes provisions for residential parking permits. Maharashtra’s “No Parking, No Car” policy (2025) requires residents of large urban centres to present proof of an authorised parking space for registration of new vehicles. Bengaluru’s Management and Maintenance of Parking Rules, 2018, later integrated into Parking Policy 2.0 (2021), mandates paid on-street parking across the city, including in front of your house, and proof of parking for new vehicle registrations. The Delhi Maintenance and

Paid parking systems can help reclaim footpaths, reduce congestion, improve emergency access, and create disincentives for families to own multiple cars

Management of Parking Rules, 2017 proposed a system for on-street paid parking in residential areas that included double the normal parking charge for spillover from stilt parking. It was supported by the Supreme Court but full citywide enforcement is far from being achieved. However, the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989 do not require proof of an ensured parking space as a precondition for registering a new car anywhere in India.

Expert opinion is clearly against free parking on public land. Proponents of David Harvey’s “Right to the City” approach argue that free or subsidised parking on roads represents elite capture of valuable public land by a car-owning minority and that it creates severe inequality. Donald Shoup, urban planning professor at UCLA, in his book *Parking and the City*, argues that free over-

supply of parking increases excessive car use, congestion and housing costs, and that appropriately priced parking can lead to more efficient, equitable, and sustainable cities.

Indian cities facing rapid motorisation and limited street space have no option but to move toward regulated, priced, and permit-based residential parking. Paid parking systems can help reclaim footpaths, reduce congestion, improve emergency access, and create disincentives for families to own multiple cars. Additionally, parking fees can provide a stable source of revenue for urban local bodies, which can be reinvested in improving public goods such as transport, pedestrian infrastructure, green areas and neighbourhood amenities.

The writer is a senior fellow at the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi. Views are personal

Tourism can unlock India’s journey to a new milestone



PUNEET CHHATWAL

INDIA’S TOURISM and hospitality sector is emerging as one of the key contributors to the nation’s economic growth story with a GDP share of about 7 per cent. It is a catalyst for employment generation with every direct job creating multiple indirect jobs, accounting for over 9 per cent of total jobs in India. In addition, it drives entrepreneurship, infrastructure development and foreign exchange earnings, and positions India’s soft power on the global stage.

As India aspires to become one of the world’s leading tourism economies, the opportunity lies beyond attracting visitors to unlocking the economic value of its natural, cultural and spiritual assets. India’s tourism wealth is a strategic asset capable of generating broad-based economic growth.

India’s hospitality sector has moved decisively beyond post-pandemic recovery. Occupancy levels across major markets have consistently remained strong, average room rates have surpassed pre-pandemic levels and demand continues to be buoyant. This has enhanced investor confidence and strengthened the industry’s ability to invest in capacity-building, innovation and guest experiences. The sector’s growing attractiveness is reflected in rising participation from institutional funds, family offices, listed hotel companies and developers. While institutional investment has grown, it remains below the levels seen in more mature hospitality markets. This presents a significant opportunity.

A defining characteristic of India’s current tourism growth cycle is the emergence of a more distributed demand landscape. For decades, much of the hospitality industry’s performance was concentrated in a handful of metropolitan cities and established destinations. Today, growth is increasingly driven by Tier-II and Tier-III cities, creating a more diversified and resilient ecosystem. Infrastructure development is reinforcing this transformation. The expansion of regional airports, improvements in road networks and the development of economic and industrial corridors are fundamentally reshaping tourism flows. Every new airport, highway, convention facility or transport link has the potential to unlock new destinations, stimulate local investment,



ILLUSTRATION: TANUSHRI MITRA

and create hospitality demand. Airport-centric development is emerging as a significant driver of hotel growth, supported by business travel, transit stays, meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions. Tourism and infrastructure are becoming increasingly interdependent, each amplifying the impact of the other.

Realising the potential of tourism requires greater alignment between infrastructure, investment, policy and destination development. Hospitality development should therefore be integrated into broader economic planning, ensuring that investments in airports, highways and urban infrastructure are complemented by destination readiness, accommodation capacity and visitor experiences. Policy support will play a critical role in unlocking the \$3-trillion travel and tourism opportunity.

The Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH), the apex body representing India’s tourism and hospitality sector, has called for a time-bound action agenda to position India as a global tourism powerhouse. Key priorities include granting industry status to tourism across all states, which will improve access to capital and reduce financing costs. The government should fast-track the development of 50 tourism destinations on mission mode, supported by clear implementation timelines. Simultaneously, India needs a dedicated global tourism promotion campaign under a strong Brand Bharat initiative with sustained funding. A more liberal visa regime, including expanded e-visa access and simplified entry procedures, can significantly boost inbound tourism. Investment in tourism infrastructure ranging from last-mile connectivity to wayside amenities and digital infrastructure will further elevate visitor experience. Rationalising taxation to align with global benchmarks and creating a single-window clearance will encourage greater private sector participation.

As India charts its path toward becoming a leading tourism destination, the challenge is no longer proving the sector’s potential, it is harnessing it at scale. The multiplier effect of tourism ensures that economic benefits extend well beyond hotels and travel companies, reaching communities across urban and rural India. Few sectors have the ability to create such broad-based prosperity while simultaneously showcasing a nation’s heritage, diversity and identity. That is the true essence of “Incredible India, Invaluable Economics” — recognising tourism as a powerful pathway to national growth, prosperity and global influence.

The writer is chairman, Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality

India’s biggest parking problem is that it’s free

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Parking Policy (2026) includes provisions for residential parking permits. Maharashtra’s “No Parking, No Car” policy (2025) requires residents of large urban centres to present proof of an authorised parking space for registration of new vehicles. Bengaluru’s Management and Maintenance of Parking Rules, 2018, later integrated into Parking Policy 2.0 (2021), mandates paid on-street parking across the city, including in front of your house, and proof of parking for new vehicle registrations. The Delhi Maintenance and

Paid parking systems can help reclaim footpaths, reduce congestion, improve emergency access, and create disincentives for families to own multiple cars

Management of Parking Rules, 2017 proposed a system for on-street paid parking in residential areas that included double the normal parking charge for spillover from stilt parking. It was supported by the Supreme Court but full citywide enforcement is far from being achieved. However, the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989 do not require proof of an ensured parking space as a precondition for registering a new car anywhere in India.

Expert opinion is clearly against free parking on public land. Proponents of David Harvey’s “Right to the City” approach argue that free or subsidised parking on roads represents elite capture of valuable public land by a car-owning minority and that it creates severe inequality. Donald Shoup, urban planning professor at UCLA, in his book *Parking and the City*, argues that free over-

supply of parking increases excessive car use, congestion and housing costs, and that appropriately priced parking can lead to more efficient, equitable, and sustainable cities.

Indian cities facing rapid motorisation and limited street space have no option but to move toward regulated, priced, and permit-based residential parking. Paid parking systems can help reclaim footpaths, reduce congestion, improve emergency access, and create disincentives for families to own multiple cars. Additionally, parking fees can provide a stable source of revenue for urban local bodies, which can be reinvested in improving public goods such as transport, pedestrian infrastructure, green areas and neighbourhood amenities.

The writer is a senior fellow at the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi. Views are personal

U.S. PRESIDENT SAYS HE TOOK DECISION BASED ON CONVERSATIONS WITH WEST ASIA LEADERS

Trump steps back from Hormuz fee plan in favour of Gulf investment deals

No details given of what Gulf states have committed to

Reuters
Cairo, Dubai, Washington, July 14

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump stepped back from a proposal to charge a 20% transit fee to guard the vital Strait of Hormuz waterway as part of the conflict with Iran, saying on Tuesday he would instead seek investment deals with Gulf states.

US forces had carried out waves of attacks for the third night in a row after Tehran said it had closed the strait, prompting Trump on Monday to reinstate a blockade of Iranian shipping and propose the fee.

But just a little under five hours before the fee had been due to come into effect at 2000 GMT, Trump said the strait was open to all shipping traffic except that of Iran.

“Based on highly productive conversations with Middle East leadership, I have decided to replace the 20% United States Reimbursement Fee with Trade and Investment Deals that the various Gulf States will be making into the United States,” he said in a post on Truth Social.

On Monday, Trump told the “Hugh Hewitt Show” that Iran would be hit “very hard tonight, and we’re going to hit them hard



Pro-government demonstrators wave Iranian and religious flags in a gathering commemorating the late Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei at a square in Tehran. FILE

tomorrow. And there’s not a damn thing they can do about it”. The governor’s office of Iran’s Qeshm Island, on Strait of Hormuz, said it was hit by a US projectile around 7 pm n Tuesday, Iranian state media reported.

Meanwhile, a US projectile exploded near a water and electricity facility on Iran’s Kish Island, the country’s semi-official Tasnim news agency said. State media also reported an explosion heard in Andimeshk in southern Khuzestan province.

Iran had earlier hit back by attacking a US Army base in Jordan with ballistic missiles while Bahrain, which hosts a US naval base, said it had fended off an

Iranian aerial attack.

Jordan said it had shot down four ballistic missiles and explosions were heard in Manama, Bahrain’s capital.

In the early evening, Kuwait said its armed forces were engaging with “hostile” aerial targets, and the state news agency said sirens had sounded in the country. The worsening attacks had increased doubts that a memorandum of understanding signed last month would lead to a permanent halt in war.

The UN shipping agency said it opposed any fees for straits used in international navigation and that there was no legal basis for introducing man-

datory tolls on strait transits.

Germany’s Hapag-Lloyd, the world’s fifth-largest container shipping company, said it would be “fundamentally wrong”.

Trump said later on Tuesday that he did not like the concept of a fee for using the strait and said countries had called him to say they wanted to invest in the US instead of being charged a fee. It was not immediately clear what Gulf states had agreed to, if anything.

Trump did not mention any commitments by them, saying only in his post: “Investments will be MASSIVE but, at the same time, extraordinarily good for them, and their future.”

Israel, Lebanon hold talks to implement framework peace deal

Reuters
Beirut, Rome, July 14

LEBANON AND Israel resumed talks on Tuesday in the Italian capital, with Beirut hoping for progress towards securing an Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon under a US-brokered deal, although expectations for swift progress were low.

US-led diplomacy has emerged since Hezbollah and Israel returned to war on March 2 amid the wider regional conflict, moving forward despite strong objections from the Iran-backed group, which believes only Iranian pressure on Washington can secure an end to the war and Israeli withdrawal.

Iran had demanded an end to the war in Lebanon as part of its interim deal with Washington signed last month, but the agreement has been shaken over the last week by renewed US-Iranian hostilities in the Gulf region.

Israel’s military is occupying what it describes as a “buffer zone” about 10 km (6 miles) into Lebanon along the entire length of the Israeli border. Israeli officials say the zone is necessary to protect northern Israeli com-

munities from attacks launched by Hezbollah.

A meeting in Washington on June 26 produced an agreement that called for an end to the Lebanon conflict, the disarmament of militant groups - an apparent reference to Hezbollah - as well as the deployment of Lebanese troops to the south and the progressive withdrawal of Israeli forces.

Lebanese and Israeli officials will meet at the US embassy in Rome on Tuesday and Wednesday to set out how to implement the framework deal, Lebanese officials told Reuters. One of the officials said moving the talks to Rome would make it easier for both countries’ delegations to consult their governments for guidance as they negotiated.

Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said on Monday that Italy had offered to host the talks to continue work towards a genuine ceasefire in Lebanon.

“We are also very pleased that Rome can serve as the venue for these meetings. In this way, our capital becomes a capital of peace,” Tajani said ahead of a European Union meeting in Brussels on Monday.

Israel’s secret bid to turn Ahmadinejad into Iran’s next leader

Mark Mazzetti, Julian E Barnes, Farnaz Fassihi & Ronen Bergman
July 14

IN EARLY 2024, the rector of a university in Budapest, Hungary, received a startling request from a senior Hungarian government official.

The official told rector Gergely Deli that Ludovika University of Public Service should hold a climate change conference and invite an unlikely guest: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the widely reviled former president of Iran.

Even more surprising was the reason. The official said the conference would serve as a front for Ahmadinejad to hold secret discussions in Budapest with Israeli intelligence operatives, despite his long-standing hostility toward Israel.

Deli knew the invitation could tarnish both his reputation and that of the university. But, he said, he believed he might be helping save lives.

“You have two enemies, and if these enemies want to talk with each other, then it’s best to do what you can to make them

talk,” he said. Ahmadinejad’s 2024 visit to the university and another the following year were part of a yearslong Israeli effort to groom him as an intelligence asset who, when the time came, could be installed as Iran’s new leader, according to US and Iranian officials familiar with the operation.

Recruiting Ahmadinejad became such a priority that Israel’s then-spy chief, David Barnea, travelled to Budapest in 2024 to meet him personally, according to former US officials. Soon after-



Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

ward, they said, Mossad notified the CIA it had established contact with him.

In recent years, according to US officials, Israel secretly paid Ahmadinejad for housing and

travel, while Israeli operatives met him abroad several times, including during his Budapest visits. The effort culminated in late February this year, during the first days of the US-Israeli war on Iran, with an operation to relocate former leader, who had been living under strict surveillance in Tehran. The plan failed.

On February 28, an Israeli airstrike hit Ahmadinejad’s compound, targeting his bodyguards’ building and armored vehicle. Afterward, according to four senior Iranian officials, a black Peugeot arrived and whisked him away.

US and Iranian officials said Mossad operatives drove Ahmadinejad to a safe house in Iran. But he became disillusioned with the Israeli plan and later left under unclear circumstances.

He reappeared on July 6 at Ayatollah Ali Khamenei’s funeral. Four senior Iranian officials said he is now under house arrest by the Revolutionary Guard’s intelligence wing.

Israeli officials have not commented publicly about the plan to install Ahmadinejad as Iran’s leader, which was part of a broader attempt to topple the government in Tehran. NYT

Congo launches trial of experimental drug for rare Ebola strain

Reuters
July 14

RESEARCHERS IN the Democratic Republic of Congo said on Tuesday they have started enrolling participants in a trial testing Gilead Sciences’ experimental antiviral obeldesivir as a post-exposure treatment for the ongoing Bundibugyo Ebola outbreak in Congo and Uganda.

Congo’s National Institute for Biomedical Research and France’s ANRS Emerging Infectious Diseases, with support from humanitarian aid groups, Alliance for International Medical Action (ALIMA) and Medecins Sans Frontieres, are leading the trial in Ituri province, the epicentre of the outbreak, the agencies said in a statement.

The trial is designed to assess whether post-exposure treatment can reduce the risk of developing Ebola infection after contact with the virus.

The study aims to enroll about 1,000 people aged 12 years and older, who had high-risk exposure to a confirmed Ebola case within the previous five days but have not developed symptoms.

Participants will be monitored daily for 21 days, with a final follow-up at 42 days. Obeldesivir has shown activity against filoviruses, including the Bundibugyo Ebola virus, in pre-clinical studies.

Gilead said it has donated 2,400 bottles of obeldesivir and 2,000 vials of remdesivir to support the trial.

Meloni suffers setback as Italy rejects reform of election law

Rome: Italy’s parliament on Tuesday rejected a key aspect of voting rules reforms proposed by Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni’s party, dealing her a significant setback ahead of general elections due next year.

The lower house is debating an electoral reform that would introduce a fully proportional voting system with a seat bonus for the winning coalition.

In a secret ballot, lawmakers rejected a proposal by Meloni’s Brothers of Italy party to reintroduce preference voting for candidates on party lists.

Meloni’s main coalition partners, the League and Forza Italia, had said they would support the measure, but was defeated 188-187, indicating part of majority defected. REUTERS

Ukraine downs 5 Russian ballistic missiles, eyes stronger air defence

Associated Press
Kyiv, July 14

UKRAINE’S AIR force said Tuesday it intercepted five ballistic missiles launched by Russia in a raft of overnight attacks, although other missiles and drones got through and hit warehouses and a school in the capital of Kyiv.

It was the first time in almost two weeks that Ukraine said it had downed Russian ballistic missiles, which are harder to stop than drones or cruise missiles and have pummeled the country in Moscow’s 4-year-old full-scale invasion.

Ukrainian air defenses likely used the US-made Patriot surface-to-air guided missile system that is the most effective way of countering ballistic missiles, but ammunition for it



French President Emmanuel Macron with Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky after the Bastille Day military parade in Paris, on Tuesday. AP

has been in short supply amid the Iran war.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is in Paris this week to change that, announcing his country is joining

with nine other nations to form a coalition that will build a shared ballistic missile shield for Europe. On Monday, he said Ukraine and its partners could jointly develop a mass-produced, low-cost system in the next 12 months.

Zelenskyy on Tuesday attended France’s annual Bastille Day celebrations, receiving an ovation from European leaders. His country’s troops got the loudest cheers of the day from crowds watching along the Champs Elysees.

Tuesday’s attack in Kyiv caused fires at two warehouses and also damaged a school, Mayor Vitali Klitschko said.

The Russian Defence Ministry said in a statement it targeted military manufacturing facilities that produce long-range missiles and drones.

• BRIEFLY

UNITED STATES

Buffett cuts Gates Foundation donations over ties with Epstein



Warren Buffett, chairman and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway. FILE

WARREN BUFFETT confirmed he has stopped donating money to the Gates Foundation, following revelations about interactions between the Microsoft co-founder and philanthropist Bill Gates and the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. Buffett said on Tuesday he is donating about \$6 billion of Berkshire Hathaway stock to four family foundations overseen by his daughter Susie and sons Howard and Peter. He also said he will donate his remaining Berkshire shares “one way or the other” to the four foundations. REUTERS

BELGIUM

Construction site fire in Brussels leaves many dead

SEVERAL PEOPLE have died in a fire at a construction site in Brussels on Tuesday, with a search for six missing persons ongoing, local authorities said. An unspecified number of bodies had been found in one of two elevators at the large renovation project on the central Place de Brouckere where a fire broke out early Tuesday, a spokesman for local labour inspection service said. REUTERS

MEXICO

US faces criminal complaints over migrant deaths

MEXICO HAS begun filing criminal complaints with state prosecutors in the United States over deaths of its citizens in US immigration custody and during enforcement operations, the foreign ministry said on Tuesday. Mexico’s government has sent cease-and-desist letters to US detention centres where Mexican nationals have died, the ministry added. REUTERS

• NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

PAKISTAN

Heavy rain triggers roof collapse, kills 11

ELEVEN PEOPLE were killed overnight when heavy rain caused the roof of a mud-brick house to collapse in northwest Pakistan, police and rescue officials said Tuesday. The accident occurred in Kohat district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, according to Bilal Faizi of the provincial emergency service. Rescuers recovered 11 bodies, mostly women and children, and handed them over to relatives for burial, Faizi said. AP

SRI LANKA

Prison clash toll rises to 32 as two jail officials die

TWO MORE officials from the riot-hit Negombo jail in Sri Lanka have succumbed to their injuries, bringing the overall death toll to 32, prison spokesman CI Gajayanayake said Tuesday. The number of prison officials killed has now gone up to 10, while at least 22 inmates died and another 20 remain hospitalised. On July 5 and 6, violent clashes erupted in the Negombo jail following a narcotics dispute among rival groups of inmates. PTI

Trump hosts Iraq’s new PM Ali al-Zaidi at White House

Associated Press
Washington, July 14

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump welcomed Iraq’s new prime minister to the White House on Tuesday after strongly backing the political neophyte in his bid for office.

Ali al-Zaidi, a businessman with no political background, emerged as a consensus candidate in Iraq after months of deadlock over the premiership following last year’s parliamentary elections.

When al-Zaidi was formally installed as prime minister-designate in April, Trump said in a social media post that it was the “beginning of a tremendous new chapter between our Nations - Prosperity, Stability, and Success like never seen before.”

But Trump’s interest and involvement in the next leadership in Iraq began long before that statement.

Iraq’s dominant parliamentary bloc, the Coordination



President Donald Trump with Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi in the Oval Office on Tuesday. AP

Framework, a coalition of Shiite parties allied with Iran, initially said it would back former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, whom the Trump administration views as too close to Tehran.

The Republican president publicly announced his opposition to al-Maliki and threatened to cut off aid to Iraq if he was appointed, adding that “if we are not there to help, Iraq has ZERO chance of Success, Prosperity, or Freedom.”

• MENON WILL ‘CONDUCT SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY DEMONSTRATIONS AIMED AT ADVANCING HUMAN SPACE EXPLORATION AND BENEFITING LIFE ON EARTH’, ACCORDING TO NASA

NASA astronaut Anil Menon embarks on 8-month International Space Station mission

Sagar Kulkarni
Washington, July 14

NASA ASTRONAUT Anil Menon and two Russian cosmonauts on Tuesday lifted off on-board a Soyuz MS-29 spacecraft from Kazakhstan on an eight-month mission to the International Space Station.

The Roscosmos spacecraft carrying Menon and Russian cosmonauts Pyotr Dubrov and Anna Kikina lifted off from the Baikonur cosmodrome at 8:17 pm IST. After a two-orbit, three-hour trip to the station, the spacecraft will automatically dock at 11:56 pm IST to the Prichal module.

This marks Menon’s first

spaceflight and the second flight for the Russian cosmonauts, according to NASA. Menon’s family members, including astronaut wife Anna Wilhelm, and NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman, were at the Baikonur cosmodrome for the spacecraft.

Once aboard, the trio will join NASA astronauts Jessica Meir, Jack Hathaway, and Chris Williams, European Space Agency astronaut Sophie Adenot, and Roscosmos cosmonauts Sergey Kud-Sverchikov, Sergei Mikaev, and Andrey Fedyaev.

Menon, Dubrov and Kikina’s mission will last about eight months, and they are scheduled to return to Earth in April 2027. Menon will “conduct scien-

tific research and technology demonstrations aimed at advancing human space exploration and benefiting life on Earth,” according to NASA.

Yelena Remizova, head of Russia’s agency for international humanitarian cooperation Rosstrudnichestvo, earlier told state-run TASS news agency the rocket will carry with it drawings made by Indian schoolchildren.

“These are the works of the winners of the ‘First Forever’ competition, dedicated to the 65th anniversary of flight of the first Earth astronaut, Yuri Gagarin, and cooperation between Russia and India in the field of space exploration,” she said.



(L-R) NASA astronaut Anil Menon and Roscosmos cosmonauts Pyotr Dubrov and Anna Kikina during a send-off ceremony at the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, on Tuesday. REUTERS

Born in Minneapolis to Ukrainian and Indian immigrants, Menon is an emergency

medicine physician and a US Space Force colonel.

Menon’s father, K P Shanka-

ran Menon, hails from Ottapalam in Kerala’s Palakkad district. His mother, Elizabeth, is an immigrant from Ukraine to America. Menon, 49, has also spent a year in India as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar to study and support Polio vaccination initiatives.

During his stint with the US Air Force, he served on the frontlines in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom and also worked for the Himalayan Rescue Association, caring for climbers on Mount Everest.

He began his career at NASA as a flight surgeon in 2014 and worked with astronauts living and working on the International Space Station.

MOSPI RELEASES NEW MONTHLY INDEX OF SERVICES PRODUCTION DATA ON TRIAL BASIS

Hotels, eateries clock 35% growth, rlys subdued: New services data

Siddharth Upasani
New Delhi, July 14

HOTELS AND restaurants are comfortably the fastest-growing segment of the country's services sector, expanding by more than 35% year-on-year on average in 2025-26 as well as in the first month of 2026-27, according to new data released on Tuesday by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).

The 'accommodation and food' sub-sector is one of 19 — covering approximately 60% of the services sector — which together make up the Index of Services Production (ISP), released for the first time on Tuesday on an experimental basis. Since the data is still at a trial stage, no overall services sector growth number was provided by MoSPI.

However, DK Srivastava, EY India's Chief Policy Advisor, estimated the overall growth at 20.8% in April.

Of the 19 sub-sectors, all but two grew on a year-on-year basis in April, with 14 posting double-digit growth rates. In 2025-26, all but one sub-sector had grown, with output of 12 rising by 10% or more.

The release of the trial ISP data is the latest addition to India's official statistics. It is the services counterpart of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP),

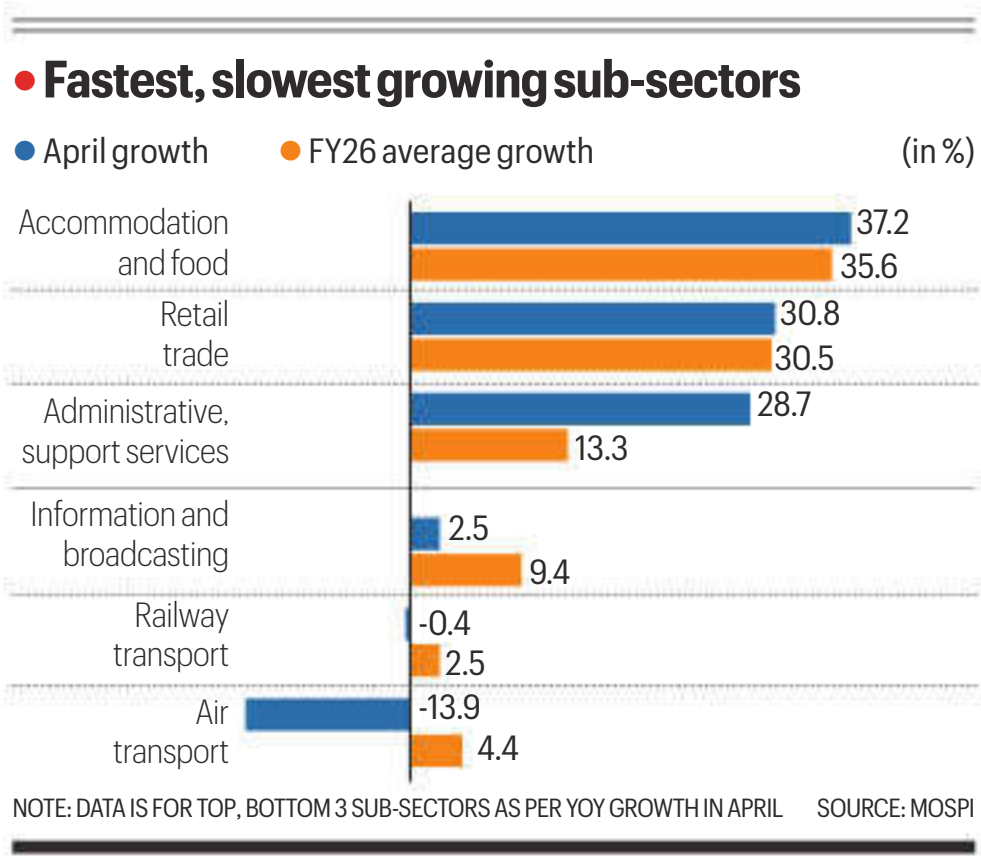
which measures the change in the output of India's industrial sectors: manufacturing, mining and quarrying, electricity and gas supply, and 'water supply, sewerage & waste management'.

The ISP fills a key gap in India's official statistics; until now, there was no official monthly measure of the services sector's performance, with private sector firm S&P Global's services Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) being the only one.

Services are the biggest contributor to India's economy, making up more than half of it for the last decade and a half or so. Industry, meanwhile, makes up less than a third of the Gross Value Added (GVA).

Measuring production of services is notoriously difficult. As Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran said: "A car leaving a factory can be counted, a tonne of cement can be weighed. But a consultation, software release, a train journey, a loan sanction — these are all produced and consumed at the same moment; there is nothing to weigh or put in a warehouse. Therefore, every statistical system in the world, not just in India, was built first for the factory".

The ISP is not directly compiled as the output of the services produced by various companies; instead, Goods and Services Tax (GST) and admin-



istrative data for sub-sectors like air and railway transport and banking are used. Sub-sectors for which data is available in value terms are 'deflated' by the appropriate price measure, be it Wholesale Price Index or Consumer Price Index, to arrive at the output.

Speaking at the release of the ISP figures, MoSPI Secretary Saurabh Garg said a key feature of the new data series is that its compilation does not place additional compliance burden on companies to respond to a MoSPI questionnaire or survey as it is calculated entirely through data that is already available.

He cautioned that since the ISP is not a measure of GVA — released every quarter with GDP data — it may or may not move in the same direction as GVA growth.

Meanwhile, Nageswaran noted that the use of GST as a key source of data for the statistics ministry shows how a tax reform "has quietly become an information system."

While the 'accommodation and food' sub-sector has grown rapidly, railway and air transport struggled. After growing by 2.5% on average last year, railway transportation services shrunk by 0.4% in April. Air transport saw 4.4% average monthly

growth in 2025-26 but a 13.9% contraction in April. The fall in the air transport index in April came amid the disruption caused by the West Asia war, which led to airlines raising fares on account of higher fuel costs.

The other sub-sectors of the ISP — which has a base year of 2024-25 — are: wholesale trade, retail trade, repair services, road transport, water transport, warehousing and support activities for transportation, postal and courier, telecommunications, information and broadcasting, banking, insurance, real estate, IT and computer related services, 'professional, scientific & technical services including R&D', administrative and support services, and arts, entertainment and recreation.

Health and education are two key segments not covered by the ISP as they are exempt from GST. However, MoSPI officials said the ministry is working on using administrative data to compile the index for health, education, and ownership of dwellings. Once this exercise is concluded, the overall ISP will cover 80% of the services sector.

Core government activity — such as public administration, defence, the Reserve Bank of India — non-market activities, and the informal sector are also excluded from the ISP. These account for roughly 30% of the services sector.

FCNR(B) scheme: Inflows cool after netting \$10 bn

George Mathew
Mumbai, July 14

THE RESERVE Bank of India's (RBI) special FCNR(B) deposit mobilisation scheme has helped banks garner close to \$10 billion so far, but the pace of inflows has somewhat moderated after an initial surge. While collections had accelerated after the RBI clarified that banks could extend loans against FCNR(B) deposits, the momentum, which has since eased as rising funding costs have made further mobilisation less attractive, is expected to pick up in the coming months, banking officials said.

Several obstacles have come up even as banks tried to increase deposits from overseas Indians. The most significant challenge is the 25-40 basis point increase in the cost of raising dollar funds and rise in bond yields in the US and Europe amid the continuing West Asia conflict following the RBI's June 23 clarification, which enabled leveraged deposit formats. "There's doubt whether the estimated \$50-70 billion flow will materialise in the wake of tight conditions but flows will pick up when funding cost and bond yields come down," said a banking source.

On Tuesday, the rupee, which had recovered to the 94 level against the dollar after the RBI introduced the new FCNR scheme, fell by 58 paise to 96.20. Dilip Parmar, Senior Research Analyst, HDFC Secur-

RBI Governor meets bank CEOs

Mumbai: RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra on Tuesday asked banks to leverage advanced technologies, including AI, to expand their reach, improve operational efficiency, reduce costs and enhance customer experience, while ensuring robust cybersecurity, strong internal controls and safeguards against fraud and data misuse.

In his interaction with MDs and CEOs of banks, Governor said the banking sector has witnessed broad-based growth and

urged the banks to continue to meet the needs of all segments and sections of the economy with renewed vigour and prudence. He also stressed the need to cultivate a passion for excellence in customer service by placing customers at the heart of banking operations.

Other matters discussed included CKYCR, early detection of FCIN, adoption and/or popularisation of MuleHunter, CBDC, ULI, account aggregator, FX retail and retail-direct. **ENS**

ities, said the Indian rupee underperformed against its Asian peers, tumbling to its weakest level in a month on Tuesday. Surging crude oil prices — driven by escalating geopolitical tensions — heavily weighed on the local currency. "Additionally, rising global bond yields may dampen expected inflows into the FCNR(B) scheme, piling further pressure on the rupee," he said.

On Monday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman interacted with MDs and CEOs of banks and asked them for enhanced NRI outreach to sustain the mobilisation momentum.

Banks are facing external funding pressures, including high bond yields and interest rates abroad, that are increasing the cost and complexity of raising foreign currency re-

sources, they said.

On June 5, the RBI announced the special dispensation that allows banks to mobilise fresh three- to five-year FCNR(B) deposits until September 2026. It also permitted them to swap these deposits with the RBI at a concessional rate, effectively covering the entire hedging cost.

By absorbing the hedging burden, the RBI has made FCNR(B) deposits a more attractive source of overseas funding for lenders. Experts then said the steps announced may attract an additional \$50 billion to \$70 billion in foreign capital into Indian markets, provided the banks offer the right interest rates after considering the hedging costs.

FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

RBI plans easier rules for bank stake acquisition

ENS Economic Bureau
Mumbai, July 14

THE RESERVE Bank of India (RBI) has proposed to grant a one-time approval for future acquisitions of major shareholding in a bank to eligible mutual funds, insurance companies and pension funds if their stakes fall below 5%.

Once such approval is granted, these institutions will not need to seek RBI approval every time they re-acquire a stake of up to 10%, provided they continue to comply with all regulatory conditions and the approval has not been revoked, the RBI said in the draft Reserve Bank of India (Commercial Banks — Acquisition and Holding of Shares or Voting Rights) Amendment Directions, 2026.

Under the existing 2025 Master Direction, if an institution's holding falls below 5% and it later wishes to increase it again to a major shareholding, they must seek fresh RBI approval.

This requirement ensured continuous monitoring, and also resulted in repeated regulatory approvals for large institutional investors.

The objective of this revision is apparently to simplify the approval process for institutional investors while maintaining regulatory oversight over ownership in the banking sector.

To qualify for this facility, the investor must be registered with the appropriate regulator — SEBI for mutual funds, IRDAI for insurance companies or PFRDA for pension funds. The institution should not belong to the promoter group or group entities of the concerned banking company, it said. **FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM**

Food price surge pushes WPI inflation to nearly 10% in Jun

Siddharth Upasani
New Delhi, July 14

WHOLESALE INFLATION in India almost hit double-digit territory in June, rising to 9.87%, as a sharp acceleration in food price increases more than cancelled out cooling fuel pressures, with economists warning that inflation is becoming "more generalised than before".

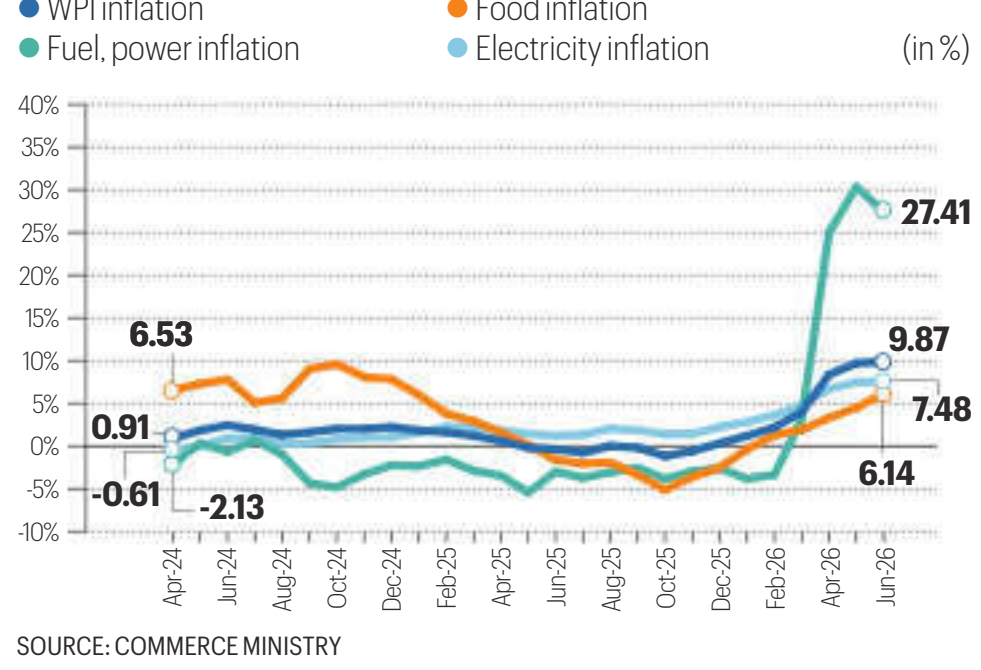
Data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Tuesday showed inflation measured by the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) in June unexpectedly rose from 9.68% in May to the highest level in the current series that goes back to April 2024. This is the second print under the revised WPI series, which has 2022-23 as the base year and incorporates new calculation methods, and a greater number of items, among other changes.

"...since November onwards...the inflation rate (has) drifted from a low negative deflation to this high level in June. Quite clearly the days of low inflation are over," said Madan Sabnavis, Bank of Baroda's Chief Economist.

The WPI inflation data comes a day after the statistics ministry data showed household inflation rose to 4.38% in June — the most in one-and-a-half years — on the back of a continued rise in food prices, as deficient rains and the impact of the retail fuel price hikes hit consumers' pockets.

Tuesday's data showed wholesale food inflation jumped to 6.14% in June from 4.49% in May, driven by huge month-on-month price increases for the likes of drumstick (46%), capsicum (38%), tomato (33%), and onion (26%).

Wholesale fuel inflation eases, food keeps rising



June output PPI inflation at 9.57%

New Delhi: The commerce ministry on Tuesday also released the Producer Price Index (PPI) data. As per this new index, which was first released last month, output PPI inflation rose to 9.57% in June from 9.38% in May. The June output PPI inflation figure is also the highest so far, with data starting from April 2024.

Month-on-month, the output PPI was up 0.3% in June from May, although the index for manufacturing was down 0.3%. Meanwhile, the trial input PPI for manufacturing was up a sharp 2.1% month-on-month, indicating profit margins are under pressure. **ENS**

Among meats, the price of beef and buffalo meat was up 21% in June compared to May, while eggs were 11% costlier.

The month-on-month increase in the price indices of goods 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.

"Food prices have been on an increasing trend since November and reached a 17-month high at 5.5% in June 2026, due to

the base and El Nino effect," said Megha Arora, Director at India Ratings & Research, referring to food articles inflation rising to 5.49% last month.

Meanwhile, 'fuel and power' inflation eased to 27.41% from 30.33% in May. Aastha Gudwani and Amruta Ghare of Barclays estimate that this decline "shaved off 41 bps from headline (inflation), partly offsetting the impact of the increase in food inflation".

FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

IDBI sale back on track as Fairfax, Emirates up bids

Prasanta Sahu
New Delhi, July 14

THE GOVERNMENT has received revised financial bids from Canada's Fairfax Financial Holdings and Dubai-based Emirates NBD for the strategic sale of IDBI Bank, with the long-delayed process now likely to be concluded within a month, a senior government official said.

The revised offers are being evaluated. On Monday, a series of high-level meetings reviewed the progress of the sale. Sources said the Core Group of Secretaries on Disinvestment, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary, met to deliberate on the bids and other issues relating to the proposed transaction.

Separately, the Inter-Ministerial Group overseeing the strategic disinvestment of IDBI Bank also met under the co-chairmanship of Financial Services Secretary Sanjay Lohiya

and Department of Investment and Public Asset Management Secretary Arunish Chawla.

Investors cheered the development. IDBI Bank shares rose more than 5% intraday to Rs 88.40 on the BSE on Tuesday, taking the stock's gain over the past month to nearly 16%.

The strategic sale was put on hold in early March after the financial bids received from the two contenders — Fairfax and Emirates NBD — fell short of the government's reserve price. Although four bidders had been shortlisted, only the two submitted binding financial offers on February 6.

Following the pause, the government explored ways to revive the process, including recalibrating the reserve price and adopting a valuation methodology that better reflected the bank's intrinsic worth instead of relying primarily on prevailing market prices. **FE**

MARKETS

Sensex	NIFTY	Gold	US Dollar
77054.94	24,052.05	₹1,41,882	₹96.20
-561.46	-158.95	Silver	Oil
-0.72%	-0.66%	₹2,19,975	\$76.28

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 13, 2026

कार्यालय बीकानेर विकास प्राधिकरण, बीकानेर
Near Collector Office, Bikaner (Rajasthan) Fax : 91-151-2226012, Phone : 91-151-2226012, 91-151-2226013
E-Mail Address: uitbikaner@yahoo.co.in Web Site : urban.rajasthan.gov.in/uitbikaner

क्रमांक :- 3028 दिनांक :- 10/07/2026

ई - बिड सूचना 08/2026-27

बीकानेर विकास प्राधिकरण, बीकानेर की ओर से अधिल भारतीय स्तर, प्राधिकरण एवं राजकीय विभागों में नियमानुसार उपयुक्त श्रेणी में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से सिविल कार्य हेतु मुहरबंद निविदा आमन्त्रित की जाती है। इन कार्य की अनुमानित लागत, निविदा बेचे जाने प्राप्त करने व खोलने की दिनांक एवं निविदा शर्तों आदि सम्पूर्ण विवरण वेबसाइट www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in, www.sppp.rajasthan.gov.in & <https://lsq.rajasthan.gov.in/bda> पर देखा जा सकता है।

UBN No. :- BID2627WS0800030 - 00045 राज.सादा/सी/26/6866 अतिरिक्त अधिकृत

BRIEFLY

Net direct tax collection grows 16% to Rs 6.51 L cr

New Delhi: The net direct tax collection grew 16.40% to over Rs 6.51 lakh crore till July 13 this fiscal, driven by higher corporate tax mop-up, government data showed on Tuesday. The net corporate tax collection rose 22% to Rs 2.40 lakh crore, and mop-up from net non-corporate tax (NCT), which includes taxes paid by individuals, HUFs, and firms, grew about 12% to over Rs 3.84 lakh crore till July 13. PTI

MoSPI secretary Garg gets 1-year extension

New Delhi: The Centre has extended the tenure of Statistics and Programme Implementation Secretary Saurabh Garg by one more year, till July 2027, according to a Personnel Ministry order. Garg is a 1991 batch Indian Administrative Service (retired) officer from the Odisha cadre. The officer will also discharge the functions of secretary to the National Statistical Commission. PTI

CBAM'S 2027 DEADLINE NEARS India, UK discuss carbon tax issue: Comm secy

New Delhi: India and the United Kingdom (UK) are engaged in discussions on Britain's carbon tax regulation, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal said on Tuesday. In December 2023, the UK government announced that it would implement its Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) starting in 2027.

According to economic think tank GTRI, India's exports worth \$775 million to the UK may be impacted due to Britain's decision to introduce a carbon tax on products, like iron and steel, aluminium, fertiliser and cement, from 2027.

"CBAM is a regulation which is under work. It has yet not come to fruition. Both sides are engaged in discussing CBAM regulation," Agarwal told reporters here.

The UK, after the European Union (EU), will be the second economy to implement CBAM. PTI

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, BARIPADA
E-Mail ID : serwcebaripada@gmail.com | Ph-No-06792-261343/261344

25001/730/2627

"C" Procurement Notice for Building Work
Identification No.- Online Tender- Building N.C.B. No.421 for 2026-27

Letter No. 3605 Date. 06.07.26

1. Name of the work	: Construction of Building Works in the District of Mayurbhanj		
2. Total No. of works	: 02 Nos. (Two)		
3. Estimated Cost	: Rs. 125.07 Lakh to Rs. 204.05 Lakh (approximately)		
4. Eligible Class of Contractor	: As Per Annexure		
5. Period of Completion	: As Per Annexure		
6. Other details	:		

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender On-line for bidding	Last Date & Time of seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Tender in O/O C.C.E.R.W. Circle, Baripada	Technical Bid	Financial Bid
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Baripada	Building On-line N.C.B. No.421	From 11.00 A.M. To 5.00 P.M.	Up to 1.00 P.M.	11.00 A.M.	Will be intimated later	

● Further details can be seen from the website: www.tendersodisha.gov.in
● Any Corrigendum/ Addendum will be displayed in the above e-tender website only.

Sd/-
Chief Construction Engineer,
R.W. Circle, Baripada.

OIPR- 25001/25181/1/26-27/0003

The bids will be received through electronic tendering mode only. The details regarding participation in the e-tendering process can be obtained by logging on to KPTCL website <https://kptcl.karnataka.gov.in> with hyperlink "E Procurement KPTCL" or <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> on or after **22.07.2026 @ 15:00hrs for the works mentioned at SI.No. (1) to (7)**, and on or after **24.07.2026 for the works mentioned at SI.No. (8) to (10). Last date & time for receipt of Bids and any extension of Due date for Bid submission will be intimated in the KPP Portal.** Any details required in this regard can also be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office hours.

Tenders invited vide this office tender notification no. **CEE/T&P/SE-2/2026-27/3345-58 dated 07.07.2026** (for works under SI No. 2 and 3 and **CEE/T&P/SE-2/2026-27/3155-84 dated 30.06.2026** (for work under SI No.17) for establishing sub-stations with associated lines are withdrawn due to technical reason.

All Corrigendum/Addendums shall be noticed by the bidders before the last date of submission of the Bids.

Sd/- Chief Engineer, (Electy.),
Tendering & Procurement, KPTCL,
9th Floor, Indhana Bhavana, A.R.Circle, Bengaluru-560 009.

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If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

• POLICY

In Ravidassias’ Census demand, the role of history, poll arithmetic

Anju Agnihotri Chaba

Jalandhar, July 14

THOUSANDS OF members of the Ravidassia community gathered in Punjab’s Phagwara on Sunday for a religious programme and to renew calls for a longstanding demand: the creation of a separate ‘Ravidassia religion’ category in the Census.

The Akhil Bharatiya Ravidassia Dharam Sangathan organised the programme that was attended by Sant Nir-anjan Das, who heads the Dera Sachkhand Ballan — the largest religious institution of the Ravidassia community.

The gathering resulted in a letter addressed to the President, the Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister. It reopens a debate that has existed since 2010, when members of the community declared themselves as practising a separate faith. The demand also holds political significance, with Punjab set to go to the polls next year.

Who are the Ravidassias?

Guru Ravidas, a mystic poet-saint of the Bhakti Movement from the 15th and 16th centuries, created the concept of *Begampura* — an egalitarian society and a spiritual vision of a city without sorrow, fear or discrimination. His followers, the Ravidassias, are a Dalit community of whom the bulk — nearly 12 lakh — live in the Doaba region of Punjab. Perhaps the most influential organisation within the community, the Dera Sachkhand Ballan was founded in the early 20th century by Baba Sant Pipal Das. Once closely connected with Sikhism, the dera severed these decades-old ties in 2010 and formally declared a Ravidassia religion.

An incident in May 2009 was one of the triggers behind this assertion. Attackers stormed a Ravidassia congregation in Vienna, Austria, leading to the killing of Sant Ramanand, a senior spiritual leader of Dera Sachkhand Ballan. Several devotees were injured. The incident triggered protests across Punjab and became a watershed moment for the community to rally around a shared identity. Beginning 2010, the dera started replacing the Guru Granth Sahib with its own Granth, Amritbani, carrying 200 hymns of Guru Ravidas, in Ravidassia temples and gurdwaras.

What is the demand and its place in Punjab politics?

The community argues that while Ravidassia has evolved into a distinct religious identity with its own places of worship, scripture, symbols and religious practices, there is no dedicated option for followers to record this identity during the Census. The demand letter cited fundamental rights guaranteeing freedom of religion to support their arguments.

Community leaders say an official Census category would also provide an accurate picture of the size and geographical spread of the faith. Punjab has India’s largest concentration of Ravidassias in India and around 32% of the state’s population comprises Dalits. Dr Kamal Sampla, Akhil Bharatiya Ravidassia Dharam Sangathan, said: “According to the 2011 Census, the combined Ravidassia and Ad Dharmi (another Dalit-led movement seeking separate recognition) in Punjab stood at around 30.95 lakh, accounting for over 11% of the state’s population then.”

The community’s numerical and political strength has even influenced election scheduling. The Election Commission postponed the 2022 Punjab polls after several parties pointed out that lakhs of devotees travel to Varanasi for an annual dera-organised pilgrimage during the period mentioned in the original schedule.

Earlier this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited a dera in Punjab on the birth anniversary of Guru Ravidas and renamed the airport in Adampur after him.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

- Punjab has India’s largest concentration of Ravidassias and around 32% of the state’s population comprises Dalits.
- In 2022, state election polling was rescheduled in view of it coinciding with a pilgrimage of the Ravidassias.

• LEGAL

Challenges to HC’s Bhojshala order: Scope of powers, ASI survey

Amaal Sheikh

New Delhi, July 14

THE SUPREME Court on Tuesday declined to pass any order for restoring the status quo at the disputed Bhojshala-Kamal Maula mosque complex in Dhar, Madhya Pradesh. It directed that Muslim worshippers be provided an adjacent alternative space for Friday prayers until the court examines the dispute in detail.

The Madhya Pradesh High Court’s judgment in May held that the site’s religious character is that of a temple dedicated to Goddess Vagdevi (Saraswati). It is now being challenged on several grounds.

On site’s character and title

The principal challenge is that the HC “impermissibly delved into highly contentious and complex questions of fact, historical evidence, and archaeological interpretations to determine the ‘original’ character of the monument,” and that such “detailed examination... is beyond the scope of summary proceedings in writ jurisdiction and should have been relegated to a civil court.”

The petitioners argue that although the court repeatedly stated it was not deciding

• GLOBAL

Why Trump backtracked on 20% Hormuz fee plan



SUKALP SHARMA

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump has reversed course on his plan to charge a 20% fee to facilitate the safe passage of commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz.

“Based on highly productive conversations with Middle East leadership, I have decided to replace the 20% United States Reimbursement Fee with Trade and Investment Deals that the various Gulf States will be making into the United States...” he posted on Truth Social, his social media platform, on Tuesday. This came just a day after Trump had announced the 20% fee, sparking scepticism among experts and analysts, given the lack of clarity on how the proposed fee would be implemented — or even calculated.

It is not clear yet why Trump backtracked, and that too this fast. Going by his own statement, the other Gulf states, who are major energy exporters and depend heavily on the strait, might have played a role. Also, the move’s potential impact on global energy and shipping sectors, and Washington’s traditional stance on navigational freedom could have weighed on the US.

The questions over the plan

There were questions about the viability of implementation as well as the legality of any such move under international law and conventions. There was also a big question mark over whether the US would indeed be able to guarantee the safety and security of commercial vessels in the region. So far, its response to Iranian strikes on vessels has been retaliatory, with an evident lack of pre-emptive measures.

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) said that it opposes fees on ships passing through international waterways. “We have always been consistent on our stance on fees – IMO stands firmly against charging fees for passage through straits

• POLICY

Contested routes through Strait of Hormuz

After the interim US-Iran pact, some vessels have been transiting through two routes: one near the Omani coast and another ‘authorised’ by Iran in its waters. Iran, however, has attacked vessels not using the route authorised by it.



used for international navigation. There is no legal basis through which to introduce mandatory tolls simply to transit through a strait,” an IMO spokesperson was quoted as saying.

The initial announcement was also surprising because the US has traditionally called for freedom of navigation in international waterways and has strongly opposed Iran’s moves to charge tolls from vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz, which usually accounted for a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) flows before the war broke out. By calling for a fee, Trump potentially handed Iran an opportunity to argue for its own tolls.

“The U.S.A. 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,” Trump posted on his Truth Social platform on Monday.

In his social media post, Trump did not

• POLICY

Control of Hormuz

Behind this flip-flop by Trump is a battle between Iran and the US to effectively control the Strait of Hormuz.

The interim pact between the US and Iran, which was signed on June 17, promised to open the strait. Since mid-June, vessel movements through the strait have risen meaningfully, even crossing 90 on June 24, with the average being between 40 and 50 on most days, industry data shows.

But these were still lower than the pre-war levels of up to 140 daily transits. With the renewed flare-up in tensions over the maritime chokepoint, vessel transits through the critical trade artery have crashed to the lowest in nearly a month, to levels seen before the US-Iran MoU.

The Strait of Hormuz was free for navigation prior to the war that began late February, but since then, Iran has been claiming sovereignty over parts of the narrow waterway between the country and Oman.

Unlike man-made shipping waterways like the Suez Canal and the Panama Canal, straits are natural waterways. There is generally no transit charge for crossing them, as per the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), although some countries do charge fees for services provided to vessels for crossing a few of these waterways. Although neither Iran nor the US have ratified the UNCLOS, it is widely accepted as international law.

Since last week, Iranian forces have targeted vessels for sailing outside the shipping lanes authorised by Tehran. The US has been responding by striking Iranian military targets, and Tehran has in turn been targeting US assets in other West Asian countries. Moreover, Iran announced over the weekend that it was closing the strait to

The U-turn

Going by Trump’s own statement, the Gulf states, who are major energy exporters and depend heavily on the strait, might have played a role in the U-turn.

- The move’s potential impact on global energy and shipping sectors could also have been a factor.

• POLICY

How it could have hit India

The US president’s plan, had it been implemented, would have been concerning for large oil and gas importers like India.

If a barrel of oil is priced at \$75, a 20% fee on it would have inflated its landed price in India by \$15 to well over \$90 per barrel, as the final price paid by the importer includes the cost of freight and insurance, and not just the price of the commodity.

And the West Asia conflict had already led to higher war-risk insurance premiums and freight charges for vessels in the region.

A 20% fee on the value of the cargo would be exorbitant, according to industry experts, given that the actual shipping cost is usually notably lower.

As India imports 1.8-2 billion barrels of crude oil a year, every \$1-per-barrel increase in oil prices bumps up the country’s oil import bill by up to \$2 billion on an annualised basis. Assuming that 30% of India’s oil imports would still come via the Strait of Hormuz, the 20% fee at an oil price of \$75 per barrel would alone have translated to \$9 billion on an annualised basis of additional cost for oil alone — not to mention LNG, LPG, fertilisers, and industrial inputs.

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Origins of legal dispute

- The dispute arose from a 2003 Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) order that allowed Hindu worship on Tuesdays and during Basant Panchami, and Muslim prayers on Fridays.
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the 9th or 10th century, temple-style pillars and inscriptions referring to “Sharada Sadan”, the HC held that the disputed area of the Bhojshala Complex and Kamal Maula Mosque was that of a temple.

The petitioners do not dispute the survey’s findings, but argue that the report was treated as conclusive without being tested via cross-examination and that it was read selectively. The plea says the report recorded Arabic and Persian inscriptions, material associated with Islamic use of the structure and the continued official nomenclature “Bhojshala and Kamal Maula Mosque”.

• POLICY

On interpretation of law

The petitioners also challenge the HC’s interpretation of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, which preserves the religious character of places of worship as they existed in August 1947.

The HC held that Bhojshala fell within the exemption contained in Section 4(3)(a) because it is a protected monument governed by the 1958 Act. It further held that an official 1935 notification issued by the princely state of Dhar, recognising the structure as a mosque, could not prevail.

However, the petitioners argue that the

• POLICY

Is India driving the revival?

Yes. Since December 2023, India have played five Women’s Tests, winning four and losing one. They have beaten Australia by eight wickets at home, South Africa by 10 wickets and England again by 270 runs at Lord’s to maintain their unbeaten run in the longest format in the country. Those results have coincided with the BCCI’s expansion of domestic multi-day cricket, giving Indian players far greater exposure to the red-ball game than those in most other countries.

Before retiring after the Lord’s Test, former England captain Heather Knight stressed the need for more Tests. “I’d love to see some domestic red-ball cricket. It doesn’t necessarily have to be a full part of the calendar, but I do think it would help us develop as better white-ball cricketers as well.”

• POLICY

Is there actually public demand?

For the biggest occasions, yes. The Lord’s Test attracted an aggregate attendance of 37,846, the highest ever for a women’s Test. The challenge is financial rather than emotional.

Boards in New Zealand and South Africa operate on far smaller budgets than the BCCI. Without dedicated broadcast deals or commercial partners, staging home Tests often results in losses, making white-ball

• POLICY

What would make women’s Tests sustainable?

Three major changes could transform the format. First, the ICC could introduce a Women’s World Test Championship or a points-based competition for all series to provide context. Second, expanding matches from four to five days would reduce the likelihood of draws and allow contests to develop naturally. Third, the ICC and wealthier boards could create funding pools to subsidise hosting costs, ensuring smaller nations are not discouraged from staging Tests.

• POLICY

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detail how his proposed 20% fee would be calculated. Would it be 20% of the total cost of the cargo on board the ship, or 20% of the cost incurred by American forces to facilitate safe passage, or some other computation? If the fee would have been on the total value of the cargo, the cost of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz would have shot up, which would have notably increased the landed price of the commodity being transported.

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The petitioners do not dispute the survey’s findings, but argue that the report was treated as conclusive without being tested via cross-examination and that it was read selectively. The plea says the report recorded Arabic and Persian inscriptions, material associated with Islamic use of the structure and the continued official nomenclature “Bhojshala and Kamal Maula Mosque”.

• POLICY

The US President’s plans to charge a fee for safe passage sparked scepticism, given the lack of clarity on how it would be implemented — or even calculated

commercial vessels, and Trump announced Monday that the US was reinstating its naval blockade in the region.

Had Trump’s plan taken effect, it would have effectively forced shipping players to pick a side. They would have had to work with either the US or Iran to transit the strait, which would have also meant that they would have been at risk of being targeted by the other.

During the war, Iran actively regulated the flow of vessels through the strait. Following the June MoU with the US, it continued to insist that vessels should cross the strait only through the routings designated by it, and that too after seeking its permission. Tehran also planned to impose a service fee for transits, but at a later date.

The US has been encouraging vessels to use the strait’s waters hugging Oman’s coastline as an alternative to Tehran-designated lanes. The differences in the MoU’s interpretation and the vagueness in its terms have emerged as the flashpoints.

• POLICY

Control of Hormuz

Behind this flip-flop by Trump is a battle between Iran and the US to effectively control the Strait of Hormuz.

The interim pact between the US and Iran, which was signed on June 17, promised to open the strait. Since mid-June, vessel movements through the strait have risen meaningfully, even crossing 90 on June 24, with the average being between 40 and 50 on most days, industry data shows.

But these were still lower than the pre-war levels of up to 140 daily transits. With the renewed flare-up in tensions over the maritime chokepoint, vessel transits through the critical trade artery have crashed to the lowest in nearly a month, to levels seen before the US-Iran MoU.

The Strait of Hormuz was free for navigation prior to the war that began late February, but since then, Iran has been claiming sovereignty over parts of the narrow waterway between the country and Oman.

Unlike man-made shipping waterways like the Suez Canal and the Panama Canal, straits are natural waterways. There is generally no transit charge for crossing them, as per the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), although some countries do charge fees for services provided to vessels for crossing a few of these waterways. Although neither Iran nor the US have ratified the UNCLOS, it is widely accepted as international law.

Since last week, Iranian forces have targeted vessels for sailing outside the shipping lanes authorised by Tehran. The US has been responding by striking Iranian military targets, and Tehran has in turn been targeting US assets in other West Asian countries. Moreover, Iran announced over the weekend that it was closing the strait to

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• POLICY

On interpretation of law

The petitioners also challenge the HC’s interpretation of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, which preserves the religious character of places of worship as they existed in August 1947.

The HC held that Bhojshala fell within the exemption contained in Section 4(3)(a) because it is a protected monument governed by the 1958 Act. It further held that an official 1935 notification issued by the princely state of Dhar, recognising the structure as a mosque, could not prevail.

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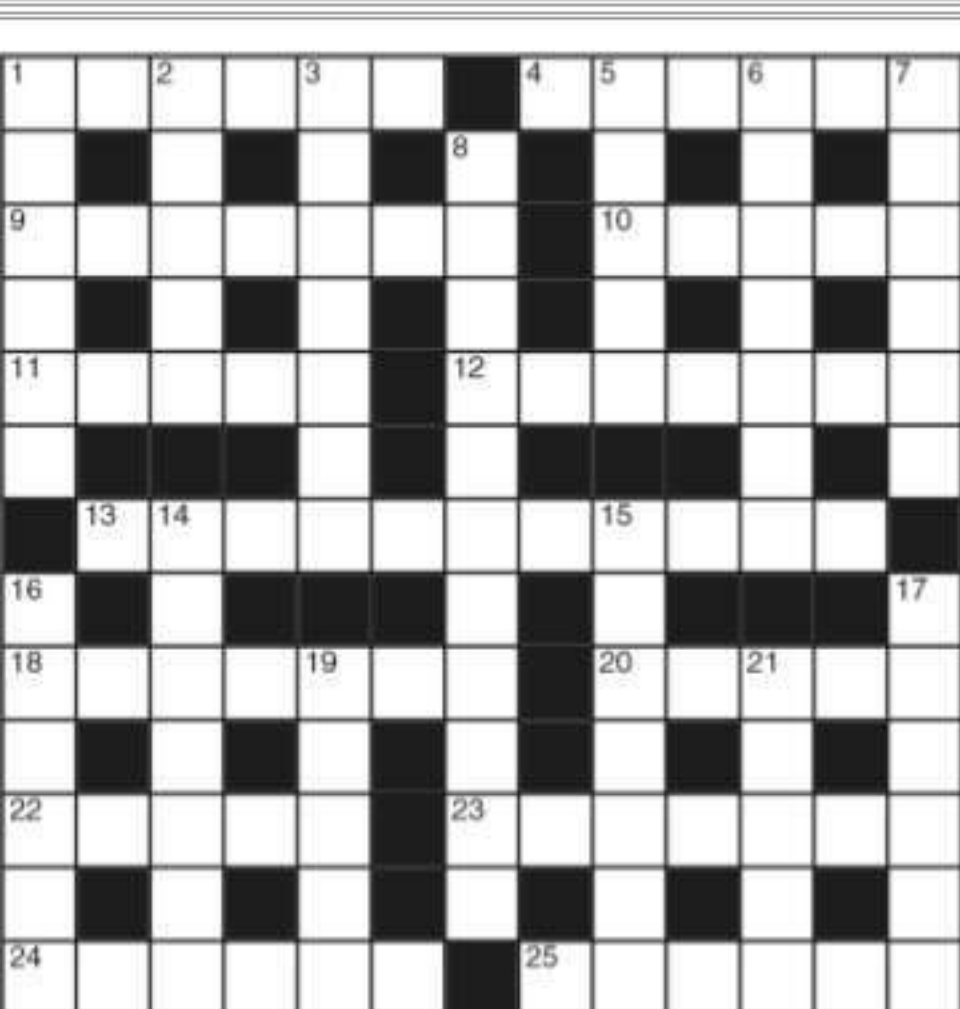
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CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
1 The wig may give authority (6)
4 Emblem on a famous Swiss bank (6)
9 Raise the spirits of tot in depression (7)
10 A number get a bad omen having fatal results (5)
11 Best at the barbecue? (5)
12 Anxiety for a business organisation (7)
13 Brought into force? (11)
18 Collar the boy - he's a hoodlum (7)
20 Deduce it's a finer organisation (5)
22 Rectangular area of Nepal? (5)
23 Glowered as flat-bottomed boat came in first (7)
24 Such things happen even on the way back (6)
25 The raffia-weaving business (6)
- DOWN**
1 In we go for a duck (6)
2 Unsuitable camouflage paint (5)
3 Ugly house I'd convert (7)
5 It flies a welcome in the British fleet (5)
6 What letter-writers often claim to be (7)
7 Old man cracks a nut (6)
8 A case of mixed dates (11)
14 Aggressive action taken by those insulted (7)
15 Put two and two together (4,3)
16 Ice-cold (6)
17 Revolutionary painting put up by dealer (6)
19 Piece of land is on lease (5)
21 Come a cropper with a Spanish composer (5)

SOLUTIONS CROSSWORD 6040 **ACROSS:** 1 Off-load, 5 Toque, 8 Forget oneself, 9 Raise, 10 Satanic, 11 Honest, 12 Drifts, 15 Sits out, 17 Views, 19 Admission free, 20 Eases, 21 Guessed **DOWN:** 1 Offer, 2 Foreign stamps, 3 Oneness, 4 Drowsy, 5 Theft, 6 Queen of hearts, 7 Effects, 11 Hostage, 13 Revenue, 14 String, 16 Oasis, 18 Speed

JUMBLD 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.

My friends are my _____. - Emily Dickinson (6)

RUVEE

●●●●●●

HAKES

●●●●●●

ASSTUT

●●●●●●

AEHHLT

●●●●●●

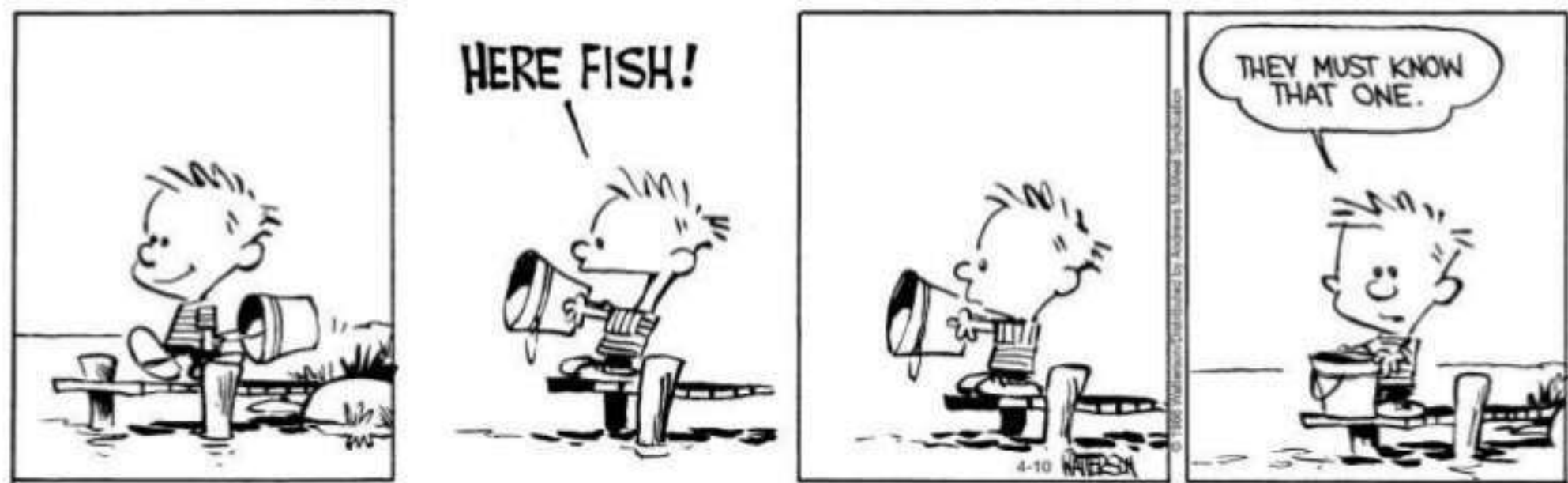
SOLUTIONS: Ruvée, Shake, Status, Health

ANSWER: My friends are my estate. - Emily Dickinson

OVER THE HEDGE



CALVIN & HOBBS



MARVIN



DIFFICULTY LEVEL 2s 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.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL

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

SUDOKU 6380

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

SOLUTION SUDOKU 6379

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

ROYAL STARS

ARIES (MAR 21 - APR 20): An unusual idea or event might take you into an entirely new headspace today. You might entertain the notion of a new kind of future for yourself than you had previously thought. Tonight: Socialise.

TAURUS (APR 21 - MAY 21): You are certainly aware of the value of wealth in practical terms. However, today you might receive a new interpretation of the energy of wealth and what is possible to achieve, for yourself or for others. Tonight: Relax at home.

GEMINI (MAY 22 - JUNE 21): Something might occur today that makes you deeply appreciate a friend or a group to which you might belong. Tonight: Discussions.

CANCER (JUNE 22 - JULY 23): Today you might be admired for taking a stand on a certain issue or speaking up about something that is important to you. What you do will reveal a level of compassion and understanding that might inspire someone else. Tonight: Check your belongings.

LEO (JULY 24 - AUG 23): Some kind of subtle shift might take place that prompts you to think about a different future for yourself, or perhaps a different path. Whatever it is, it's heartening. Tonight: You're powerful.

VIRGO (AUG 24 - SEP 23): With Venus in your sign, you are gracious and diplomatic, which is a good thing, because someone in authority might do something that catches you off guard. Ironically, that might open your eyes to a new way of doing things. Tonight: Enjoy privacy.

LIBRA (SEP 24 - OCT 23): People admire you right now. In an unexpected way, something related to travel, further education, medicine or the law might catch you off guard and open new worlds for you. Tonight: Be friendly.

SCORPIO (OCT 24 - NOV 23): Be aware that people notice you today. Perhaps this is because something unexpected benefits you — an inheritance, a bonus or a gift. Tonight: You're admired.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV 24 - DEC 22): Listen to the ideas of partners, spouses and close friends, because they might be the source of something that can lead to a positive shift in your life. It could be a deeper understanding or appreciation of what you have and who you are. Tonight: Explore.

CAPRICORN (DEC 23 - JAN 20): Something related to your health, your job or even a pet might have the power to inspire you to consider something in a new light. You might not be content with old goals, because suddenly, new insights promise a refreshing level of consciousness. Tonight: Check your finances.

AQUARIUS (JAN 21 - FEB 19): You might feel more inspired by romance or something related to kids that lifts you to a new level of appreciation and ambition. It's as if you are suddenly seeing new possibilities or appreciating things in a new way. Tonight: Cooperate.

PISCES (FEB 20 - MAR 20): Your appreciation of the value of home and family might take on a new level of meaning today. You might suddenly grasp that it is more important than you thought. Tonight: Get organised.

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

BORDER SECURITY FORCE

Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawans on their Balidan Diwas.

 SUB INSPECTOR MILKHI RAM 33 BN BSF 15.05.1947 – 15.07.1994	 CONSTABLE NARENDER PAL, PMG, SENA MEDAL 69 BN BSF 09.05.1963 – 15.07.1997	 LANCE NAIK SHIV DAYAL SINGH 33 BN BSF 05.10.1954 – 15.07.1994	 CONSTABLE FAYAZ AHMED WANI 145 BN BSF 10.03.1976 – 15.07.2005
 NAIK JASHI RAM 78 BN BSF 02.03.1954 – 15.07.1992	 CONSTABLE AJAIBEER SINGH 145 BN BSF 05.07.1973 – 15.07.1996	 CONSTABLE DEVI DUTT PANDEY 145 BN BSF 15.07.1972 – 15.07.1996	 CONSTABLE LOKENDRA SINGH 114 BN BSF 27.04.1972 – 15.07.2018
 CONSTABLE MUKHTIYAR SINGH 114 BN BSF 20.01.1980 – 15.07.2018	 CONSTABLE SANJAY KUMAR, PPMG 172 BN BSF 08.02.1969 – 15.07.1992	 CONSTABLE NASIRUDDIN AHMED 54 BN BSF 06.01.1984 – 15.07.2022	

CENTRAL RESERVE POLICE FORCE

 Veer Balidani Sub Inspector Kameshwar Rai 12 Bn 20-1-1950 To 15-7-1999	 Veer Balidani Lance Naik P. K. Singh 12 Bn 1-1-1967 To 15-7-1999	 Veer Balidani Constable P. K. Sharma 12 Bn 18-3-1970 To 15-7-1999
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DG and all Ranks of CRPF pay solemn tribute to Sub Inspector Kameshwar Rai, Lance Naik P. K. Singh, and Constable P. K. Sharma of 12 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice while bravely combating insurgents during an ambush in Manipur on 15 July 1999. CRPF salutes the bravehearts and pledges never to let their sacrifice go in vain.

 Veer Balidani Constable/Driver Mohd. Salim 60 Bn 15-5-1958 To 15-7-1990	DG and all Ranks of CRPF pay solemn tribute to Constable/Driver Mohd. Salim of 60 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice in a grenade attack by militants in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir on 15 July 1990. CRPF salutes the braveheart and pledges never to let his sacrifice go in vain.
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GMDC GUJARAT MINERAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LIMITED
(A Government of Gujarat Enterprise)
CIN: L14100GJ1963SGC001206

Registered Office: Khanji Bhavan, Near Gujarat University Ground, 132 Ft Ring Road, Vastrapur, Ahmedabad -380052, Gujarat, India Telephone: 27913200 / 3501 Email Id: cs.co@gmdcltd.com Website: www.gmdcltd.com

NOTICE (FOR ATTENTION OF EQUITY SHAREHOLDERS OF THE COMPANY)

TRANSFER OF EQUITY SHARES TO INVESTOR EDUCATION AND PROTECTION FUND ("IEPF") AUTHORITY

This Notice is published in pursuance to the provisions of the Companies Act, 2013 ("the Act") read alongwith the Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (Accounting, Audit, Transfer and Refund) Rules, 2016 as amended or modified and various circulars issued thereto from time to time ("the Rules") notified by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

Provisions of Section 124(6) of the Act read with IEPF Rules, inter alia provides to transfer such shares, in respect of which dividend has not been paid or claimed by the shareholders for seven consecutive years or more to the Investor Education and Protection Fund ("IEPF") Authority, set up by the Central Government.

As per the IEPF Rules, shares held in physical form are liable to be transferred to IEPF Account, by issuing duplicate share certificates and upon issue of such duplicate share certificates, the original share certificate(s) which stand registered in your name will be deemed cancelled and non-negotiable.

Notice is hereby given to all the concerned shareholders to claim the unpaid/ unclaimed dividend amount(s) for the year 2018-2019 and their shares by making an application to the Company's RTA: M/s. MCS Share Transfer Agent Limited on or before **November 05, 2026**, so that the shares are not transferred to the IEPF Authority. In case the Company does not receive any communication from the concerned shareholders on or before **November 05, 2026**, the Company shall, with a view of complying with the requirements set out in the rules, transfer the shares to the IEPF Authority by the due date and as per procedure stipulated in the IEPF Rules.

Notice is further given that in accordance with the provisions of IEPF Rules, individual notices are being sent to the respective shareholders whose shares are liable to be transferred to IEPF, whose addresses are available with the Company's RTA. The Company has uploaded the details of such shareholders and shares due for transfer to IEPF on its website at <https://www.gmdcltd.com/investors/transfer-of-shares-to-iefp/>.

It may be noted that no claim shall lie against the Company or its RTA in respect of individual amount, shares and other benefits accruing thereon, so transferred to IEPF Authority. The amount and shares transferred to IEPF Authority, including all benefits accruing on such shares, if any, can be claimed back from the IEPF Authority after following the procedure prescribed under the IEPF Rules or by visiting website of IEPF Authority i.e. www.iefp.gov.in.

For any clarification on the subject matter, you may contact the undersigned by sending an e-mail at cs.co@gmdcltd.com or contact the Company's RTA: **M/S. MCS SHARE TRANSFER AGENT LIMITED**
101, Shatdal Complex, 1st floor, Opp: Bata Show Room, Ashram Road, Ahmedabad-380 009. Email: mcsstaahd@gmail.com; Tel. No.: 079-26580461, 0462.0463

For Gujarat Mineral Development Corporation Limited
Joel Evans
Company Secretary

Place: Ahmedabad
Date: July 13, 2026

ANDHRA PRADESH CAPITAL REGION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Rayapudi, Amaravati-522237, Andhra Pradesh.
NIT No. 21/MAU61-ADMINSTG(OTH)/12/2026 Dt: 14/07/2026

E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

Name of Work: APCRDA - Request for Proposal (RFP) for Selection of Consultant to Provide Comprehensive Multi-layered Third-Party Quality Assurance & Quality Control Services for infrastructure and construction works of development in Amaravati Capital City, Andhra Pradesh, India.

The bid can be downloaded on AP e-procurement portal from 15.07.2026 to 05.08.2026 up to 14.00 Hrs. Due date for submission of bid is 05.08.2026 up to 15.00 Hrs. Technical bid opening 05.08.2026 @16.00 Hrs. For further details Please refer to: www.approcurement.gov.in and www.crda.ap.gov.in.

Sd/- Commissioner, APCRDA, Amaravati

COEP TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY
Shivajinagar, Pune - 411 005
(A Unitary Technological University of Govt. of Maharashtra)
Ph - 020-25507000 / 09 Website- www.coeptech.ac.in

Walk-in Interviews For Recruitment of Assistant Professor on 11 Months, Contractual Basis.

COEP Technological University Pune invites applications from dynamic, eligible and qualified candidates with passion towards research and academics to work as **Assistant Professor on 11 Months, Contractual Basis, non-vacational, dying post in Civil Engineering (Planning); Manufacturing Engineering & Industrial Management; Master of Business Administration (Business Analytics);** purely on temporary basis, to engage academic load for AY: 2026-27 in various Engineering and Science disciplines.

Please visit University website (www.coeptech.ac.in/career) for requirements, qualifications, experience, salary and other details under "Careers" tab. Reservation policy will be followed as per the norms. All interested candidates are requested to visit the COEP Technological University website for further details and submit an **online application form** with applicable application fees on or before **20.07.2026**

Walk-in Interviews : Wednesday, 22.07.2026
The candidates shall report at 10.00 a.m. to the respective departments.

Sd/- Registrar,
COEP Technological University Pune

Date : 15/07/2026

Tender Notice (GEM/2026/B/7779941)

INSTITUTE OF SEISMOLOGICAL RESEARCH
Knowledge Corridor, Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India 382426
www.isr.gujarat.gov.in Phone: 079-66739009

GeM Online tenders are invited from reputed OEM/Indian suppliers for the supply of **Fume Exhaust System with Scrubber or Fume Hood with Scrubber (Q3)** The Custom bid may be downloaded from GeM portal or www.isr.gujarat.gov.in.

Sd/
Director General
INF-873-2026-27

BENGALURU SOUTH CITY CORPORATION
Office of the Deputy Chief Engineer,
2nd Floor, 9th Main Road, Jayanagara South
2nd block, Bengaluru-560 111

No: DCE/BSCC/TEND/02/2026-27/Corr-2 Date: 14-07-2026

CORRIGENDUM-2

Name of the Work: 1) Annual Maintenance and Desilting of Storm Water Drains in Jayanagara Assembly Constituency for one year. 2) Annual Maintenance and Desilting of Storm Water Drains in Padmanabhanagara Sub Division Assembly Constituency for one year. 3) Annual Maintenance and Desilting of Storm Water Drains in Banashankari Sub Division Assembly Constituency for one year. 4) Annual Maintenance and Desilting of Storm Water Drains in BTM Layout Assembly Constituency for one year. 5) Annual Maintenance and Desilting of Storm Water Drains in Kasavanahalli ward of Mahadevapura Assembly Constituency for one year.

Ref: Tender Notification No: DCE/BSCC/TEND/02/2026-27, Date: 03-07-2026. **Adverting to the above, following Corrigendum to the above tender work is issued.**

Calender of Events to be Read as: 1) Last Date & Time for receipt of Tenders : **20.07.2026 upto 4:00 p.m.** 2) Opening of Technical bid: **22.07.2026 upto 4:30 p.m.** 3) Opening of Financial bid : After the approval of Technical Evaluation.

All the other terms & conditions are remaining unchanged.

Sd/- Deputy Chief Engineer, BSCC.

EASTERN RAILWAY

e-Tender Notice No. MC_WC_Highpressurejet_CP_26, dated : 06.07.2026. Sr. Divisional Mechanical Engineer, Eastern Railway, Sealdah, Room No. 42, 1st Floor, DRM Building, Kalzer Street, Kolkata - 700014 invites sealed Open Tenders on "Single Packet System" in prescribed tender forms from reputed contractors with adequate experience and financial capability for the under mentioned work.

Name/Description of Work: (i) Supply, installation & commissioning of high-pressure watering pipeline for new extension of pit line no. 4 & the remaining extended portion of pit nos. 1, 2, 3. (ii) Supply, installation & commissioning of compressed air pipeline (300 mtrs). **Tender value:** Rs. 60,06,194.10, **Earnest Money :** Rs. 1,20,100/-. **Tender Document Cost :** Rs. 5,000/-. **Contract Period :** 06 months. **Bidding Start Date:** 14.07.2026, **Date and time of closing of tender:** 28.07.2026 at 11.00 hrs. **Date and time of tender opening:** 28.07.2026 at 11.00 hrs. Tender document including e-tender notice and eligibility criteria of the work may be seen and downloaded from www.ireps.gov.in (Website URL). No manual offer will be accepted.

SDAH-133/2026-27

Tender Notices are also available at Website www.ee.indianrailways.gov.in/www.ireps.gov.in

Follow us at : [@EasternRailway](https://www.facebook.com/easternrailwayheadquarter)

I arrive at a conclusion not an assumption.

Inform your opinion with detailed analysis.

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The Indian Express. For the Indian Intelligent.

● IS FIFA FAVOURING ARGENTINA?

A look at 4 talking points

1 MESSI'S CHALLENGE ON AISSA MANDI

Argentina vs Algeria

LIONEL MESSI caught Algeria captain Aissa Mandi with a late challenge in the first match. Algeria felt it was worthy of a red card, but not only did Messi avoid a booking, he also went on to score a hat-trick. **CONCLUSION:** This was a controversial decision, as replays made it obvious that Messi had caught Mandi with his studs.

2 MOSTAFA ZICO'S CANCELLED GOAL

Argentina vs Egypt

MOSTAFA ZICO scored in the 58th minute. But after review, French referee Francois Letexier chalked the goal off for a foul that happened at the other end of the pitch. Marwan Attia stepped on Lisandro Martinez's foot, which led to the Egypt counter-attack, and eventually, the goal.

WHAT DOES THE RULE SAY?

VAR is provisioned to review the phase of play that resulted in the goal, and vet for any infringements which might have been overlooked. Since Attia's foul was the point of origin of the Egyptian attack, the foul was looked at. **CONCLUSION:** This remains the tournament's most debatable decision. Not because Attia's foul was particularly contentious, but because it occurred roughly 85 metres from goal and around 13 seconds before Zico scored.

3 MOHAMED SALAH'S PENALTY APPEAL

Argentina vs Egypt

EGYPT FELT aggrieved once again in stoppage time. Mohamed Salah went down inside the penalty area after a challenge from Julián Álvarez, but Letexier immediately waved away the appeals. VAR conducted a routine check and upheld the on-field decision. **CONCLUSION:** Replays revealed that the contact was minimal, and not worthy of a penalty. The referee, hence, cannot be faulted for this decision.

4 BREEL EMBOLO'S RED CARD

Argentina vs Switzerland

BREEL EMBOLO threw himself to the ground with enough conviction to convince referee João Pinheiro that he was shoved by Leandro Paredes. Pinheiro duly booked Paredes, but then VAR recommended on-field review. Replays showed no contact between Embolo and Paredes, insinuating the Swiss striker had simulated the dive. Pinheiro then rescinded Paredes' yellow card and brandished one at Embolo instead, for whom, it was the second booking, resulting in a red card.

WHAT DOES THE RULE SAY?

ON THIS occasion, the IFAB's 'mistaken identity' rule was applied. According to the law, a VAR team can review instances where a referee has penalised the wrong player for the offence in question. After review, the referee is provisioned to rescind the wrongful yellow, and penalise the actual perpetrator instead. **CONCLUSION:** There is room for debate about the necessity of the rule, but none regarding its application. Referee Pinheiro had only followed the rulebook.

SHUVADITYA BOSE

OPPONENTS' ENVY, GAFFERS' GRIPE



World champions Argentina (left) struggled against 10-man Switzerland; Thomas Tuchel was unhappy with England's performance against Norway. AP

Creaking Argentina, squeaking England

SET FOR A SCRAP



Sandip G
Atlanta, July 14

Unlike smooth-sailing France and Spain, the other two semi-finalists have weathered storms, survived scares and relied on force of personalities to come this far

● Midfield Battle

Neither side has a perfectly settled engine room. Imbalances reek in both camps, be it the Argentines' weariness from late comebacks or England's form, fitness concerns



LEANDRO PAREDES



RODRIGO DE PAUL



DECLAN RICE



EBERECHI EZE

FATIGUE HAS crippled Leandro Paredes and Rodrigo de Paul, both in their early 30s. Running the runs for Lionel Messi in two games decided by extra time has eventually caught up with them. Paredes did not last the game against Switzerland, and when he was substituted, Argentina lost their control in the midfield, and were fortunate that they enjoyed numerical superiority.

ENGLAND MIDFIELD is a superlative product, younger, quicker, stronger and technically sturdier. But the talisman **Declan Rice** is fighting his fitness; **Eberechi Eze**, reduced to cameos, has not recreated the same flourish as he had in his Arsenal days; Elliot Anderson, for all his diligence, lacks the all-action-hero verve of Rice.

and a last-gasp comeback against Egypt. Individuals have seized the moments. Harry Kane against Congo, Bellingham versus Norway; Lionel Messi in almost every game, Julian Alvarez with a pearly against Switzerland.

Imbalances reek in mid-field and flanks. Argentina's midfield has looked weary. Fatigue has crippled Leandro Paredes and Rodrigo de Paul, both in their early 30s. Running the runs for Messi in two games decided by extra time has eventually caught up with them. Paredes did not last the game against Switzerland, and when he was substituted, Argentina lost their control in the midfield, and were fortunate that they enjoyed numerical superiority. Head-to-head, England midfield is a superlative product, younger, quicker, stronger and technically sturdier. But the talisman Declan Rice is fighting his fitness; Eberechi Eze, reduced to cameos, has not recreated the same flourish as he had in his

For all of England's marginal superiority in midfield, defence, physicality and height, Argentina have a shorthand solution for all their woes: Lionel Messi

Arsenal days; Elliot Anderson, for all his diligence, lacks the all-action-hero verve of Rice.

A peak Rice and Bukayo Saka would have been a different story and could have run Argentina's weary midfield ragged. Alexis Mac Allister and Enzo Fernandez are not exactly fierce ball shielders and prone to being dispossessed under pressure and in swift transitions, which Bellingham and Co could orchestrate. Out of possession, Mac Allister and Fernandez can sometimes be a burden. But both have a knack of scoring goals from improbable situations.

If the game boils down to durability and physicality, England would lick their lips in excitement. The caution: Argentina with their doggedness have worn down far superior physical teams.

Concerns on the wings

The right wing bothers both sides. England have a right-side concern. Winger Noni Madueke has pace, but lacks incisiveness, and has a tendency to lose the ball under pressure. His link-up between the right-back is dodgy, compounded by England's injury concerns. If Reece James, reduced to substitute shifts, starts and could sustain his intensity, England could be quicker and stronger on that side. But Ezri Konsa, while aerially superior, can be ponderous at times.

Argentina's counterparts, Nahuel Molina and Gonzalo Montiel tend to run out of steam in less than an hour. Both Egypt and Switzerland exploited their susceptibility.

England chase not just a trophy, but a release from tragedy



David Beckham's sending off against Argentina in the 1998 World Cup was followed by England's Round of 16 elimination. REUTERS

Sandip G
Atlanta, July 14

THE MISSING piece, Harry Kane muttered the words with a forced smile. He was talking in the mixed zone, after defeating Norway, about England's quest to be crowned World Champions. Then the memories rolled in, his eyes shirked away from the cameras and wandered aimlessly.

If he had shut his eyes, he would have relived the worst moment of his life again. The silence of the Al Bayt Stadium when he blazed his penalty in against France in last edition's quarterfinal. In the press conference, he confided he will "probably remember it for the rest of my life."

In the next four years, he had detailed about how he had harnessed the bitterness from the episode to fuel him. But heartbreaks wouldn't forsake England. Two defeats in the Euro finals followed.

There is an English tragedy in most World Cups they have featured in since lifting the trophy in 1966. The Hand of God, Tears of Gazza; the David Beckham Brain-Fade; the Ronaldinho Worldie; the Harry Howler; the Wayne Rooney Petulance, the Frank Lampard Line-trimmer. Those are haunting memories trapped in the nation's collective consciousness, waiting for a release.

So much so that a new version is sought, a fresh revelation is brought. Some teammates of Paul Gascoigne believe he acted selfishly, after copping a yellow card in the semi-final against Germany (1990) that ruled him out of the final if England qualified. He was so anguished that he refused to take the penalty in the shootout that England lost and was detached from the game since receiving the yellow card in the 100th minute.

Sensing his fragility, his manager Bobby Robson told him: "Look, I know you can't play in the final but what you can do is make sure all the other lads can. Just concentrate on that." But he was so devastated, or self-absorbed, he couldn't see beyond his misfortune. The nation fell in love with him, and he fell in love with the bottle.

A sense of fatalism, thus, looms every time England are in a knockout fixture, an

eerie feeling that someone would end the night as a tragic hero, or a slice of irreversible misfortune would shatter them. But often they have let themselves down too, in tactics, mentality, and discipline.

No superstars

But Thomas Tuchel's batch arrived without that baggage, leaving behind an array of riches back home. There are no superstars in the group, just stars. Even their most decorated player Kane is not deified as Beckham or Lampard or Steven Gerrard. Jude Bellingham, the pin-up boy and a Real Madrid galactic, has not yet acquired the aura of Rooney. Perhaps, it has helped that the superstar culture had waned, or that both of them play club football outside the country.

In the course of the tournament, they have exuded a steeliness and flexibility the preceding brigades had not, a streak of doggedness to force their way, to find a solution, and to win the game, even if they hadn't functioned at their optimal capacity.

The red card to Jarrell Quansah against Mexico seemed one of those classic freeing points. They flapped momentarily, shipped a goal, but produced a stirring rear-guard that reflected their doggedness, their endurance and the resolve to win.

Maybe, the fight came from the pain. This generation, more than any, knows the pain of losing finals. Six starters against Norway had started against Spain in the Euro finals two years ago; eight of them were in the squad that lost to Italy in 2021. John Stones, Jordan Pickford and Kane would remember the agony of Moscow.

"There's going to be moments where it doesn't quite go your way. But that motivated me to get better. For the team as well, we have suffered heartbreaks together," Kane said. There would be no better match to unburden the past than against Argentina in a semifinal. The curse that began with Diego Maradona's men could end with defeating Messi, denying him a final and title defence. It could make the Hand of God feel more tolerable, and all the tragedies more sufferable.

● SONG THAT GETS MESSI TO DANCE

Muchachos vs Wonderwall in battle of anthems, with Falklands looming large

Sandip G
Atlanta, July 14

A SCHOOLTEACHER in Buenos Aires, Fernando Romero, was cooking breakfast when the lines gushed out of his mind: "I was born in Argentina, land of Diego and Lionel. Of the kids from Malvinas, which I will never forget." He set the lyrics to the background score of a popular song Muchachos, composed by reggae and punk nine-piece band La Mosca Tsé-Tsé at the stroke of the century.

What Argentines refer to as Islas Malvinas and claim sovereignty over, are the Falkland Islands - a self-governing British Overseas Territory now, but also the cause of the 10-week war in 1982.

Little did Romero then know that, in December 2020, a week after Maradona's death, his song would become his country's sporting anthem, rendered passionately by the fans in stadia, players in the locker room and by

masses in the streets.

Romero was not the first one to adapt the song which meant "Boys, we will get drunk"; several adaptations could be heard during club games in most stadia around Buenos Aires. But this became the most iconic one, and the band, disbanded several years ago, reunited to re-record the song with Romero's lyrics.

He wanted to sing during a World Cup qualifier between Argentina and Bolivia inside Estadio Monumental in Buenos Aires. But he couldn't procure tickets. He and his friends started singing the song outside the arena, which a local television crew captured and the original band members happened to watch and later re-recorded.

National recognition

The band won the equivalent of a national award and Romero was invited to sing this song to an audience that included Lionel Messi. His

only regret, he told Argentina media outlet EFE, he could not take a picture with Messi.

In the streets, people stop him and thank him. "They've told me that I did more for them with the song than the last 40 years of democracy," he told EFE. For this edition he tweaked the chorus again to suit the context.

"I want to win the third one, I want to be a world champion again." Messi, though prefers his original one penned for the 2022 World Cup. The song still resonates with the fans, and most of them have internalised the lines, and hum it in public spaces.

In fan zones, parks, supermarkets and airports, flooded with Argentinians for the semi-final against England on Wednesday, fans have the song on the tip of their tongues. In the corner of Atlanta airport, Lorenzo Alberto was watching a reel his friend had sent him from Argentina's round-of-16 bout against



Argentine fans have the Muchachos on the tip of their tongues. AP

Egypt a few days ago in the city. He was waiting for his flight to Kansas for the quarterfinal. He briskly took his earphones out and said: "You should watch this without the earphones, and you feel you are in the stands again." He then recited almost the full chorus of Muchachos.

He explained its connection among the fans: "It fills us

with energy and belief. It's something of an identity," he said, raising the volume, to the ire of a security guard's piercing glance. He doesn't stop, and she doesn't care. "Even if you are the only man in the stadium, or if I happen to be amidst non-Argentina fans, I will sing it. Even if it's the English fans," he says.

But the reference of the

Falklands War, or Malvinas War as the Argentines say, wooed controversy after videos of Argentina footballers singing Muchachos in the dressing room. The victory over Switzerland ensured a contest between football's bitterest rivalry for the first time in a competitive game since 2005. But the FIFA decided not to impose any sanction, even though they insist on taking stringent action against "political expression within stadiums."

Behind the lyrics

Forty four years have passed since the war that cost 9,000 lives, for the archipelago in South Atlantic. The angst might have faded, but old timers still nurse it. Says John Byers, from Birmingham, who has watched every World Cup since 1994, from the stands: "What happened to the war? They captured it and we took it back a few days later. The people were happy and it was

totally needless intrusion. It's like how Argentina has always defeated us. By cheating!"

"It must have happened long ago, but not forgotten. We can't keep politics away from this game," he adds.

Politicians have fanned up the rivalry, too. Ministers of both nations exchanged verbal ammunition. After the semifinal run-in was finalised, Argentina's foreign minister Pablo Quirno claimed the 2013 referendum in the Falklands "was artificially implanted by the occupying power." As much as 99.8% of the population said they were happy with British governance. But Quirno wrote in *La Nacion*: "Time does not transform an illegitimate occupation into sovereignty. Nor will it divide the territorial unity of the Argentine Republic," he wrote.

Downing Street promptly retorted on Monday. "The UK's position is clear. The islanders have repeatedly expressed their wish to remain

a British overseas territory, and their right to self-determination is paramount," the Prime Minister's spokesperson said in a statement.

Often vilified as provocateurs, Argentina's fans are desperate to shake off the image. "We are not for anything violent. We will celebrate, but we won't hurt, though the atmosphere could be tense," says Marco Allan, who has flown in with son Benjamin.

Social media is also replete with sections of Argentina fans cheekily appropriating a Spanish Wonderwall.

But it is the Muchachos, he says, that would drown out any other noise in the arena, where 30,000 English fans are expected to be in the audience, armed with their song. "It's time we avenged for the Hand of God, maybe we should pay them back in the same coin," says Byers. A place in the final awaits the winner, but it's that well-worn cliché. The match is more than just a game.

Sindhu sails into Japan Open second round; SatChi pull out



PV Sindhu defeated Wong Ling Ching in straight games. FILE

Press Trust of India New Delhi, July 14

SATWIKSAIRAJ RAN-KIREDDY’S recurring shoulder problem forced him and Chirag Shetty to retire from their Japan Open opener even as P V Sindhu eased into the women’s singles second round with a straight-game win over Malaysia’s Wong Ling Ching here on Tuesday.

The world No.4 Indian pair, who ended a two-year title drought by winning the Singapore Open but had to withdraw from Indonesia Open last month, retired after losing the opening game 19-21 to Denmark’s Daniel Lundgaard and Mads Vestergaard.

Chief doubles coach Tan Kim Her said the Indian duo will be skipping the China Open next week and focus on rehabilitation to get back to shape for the home World Championships in August.

"It still needs some time to recover. We have at least four weeks to get back in shape ahead of World Championships," Tan said.

Compact performance

Two-time Olympic-medallist Sindhu, who is currently world no. 10, produced a compact performance to notch up a 21-14 21-11 win over 37th-ranked Wong Ling Ching of Malaysia in the opening round of the BWF Super 750 event.

India’s Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto too advanced to the second round after defeating Scotland’s Alexander Dunn and Julie Macpherson 21-16, 21-14 in their mixed doubles opener. However, Rohan Kapoor and Ruthvika Shivani Gadde bowed out in the opening round after losing 11-21, 10-21 to top seeds Feng Yan Zhe and Huang Dong Ping of China.

One day for the captain

Skipper scores 80 before retiring, leaving Axar & Washington to seal 6-wicket win

Venkata Krishna B Chennai, July 14

FOR THE first time on this UK trip, India tasted victory. The format was different and so were the personnel, but none illustrated better than Jasprit Bumrah what they had been lacking in the T20Is.

In the presence of the pace spearhead, Prasidh Krishna appeared a different bowler before the batting unit led by skipper Shubman Gill pulled off a convincing six-wicket win on a testing Edgbaston surface. Securing the win was Axar Patel’s (4/62 and 57 not out) all-round efforts, which should do a world of good to his confidence that appeared to have taken a few blows off late.

That the team got the job done despite Rohit Sharma (11) and Virat Kohli (5) hardly contributing would give them confidence as all through this UK summer they have struggled to get used to the conditions. Setting up the chase of 259 was Gill, who until he retired hurt with cramps for 80 off 75 deliveries, appeared the best batsman on show. He adjusted wonderfully to a surface where the extra bounce troubled everyone. That he found the confidence to walk down the pitch showed how assured he was.

After the two senior pros departed, Gill forged a 101-run stand with his deputy Shreyas Iyer off 103 deliveries that tilted the game in India’s favour. Once the captain departed, there was a brief stutter with Iyer running himself out and KL Rahul dragging one back onto the stumps. But Washington Sundar and Axar, picked over frontline spinner Kuldeep Yadav, completed the job with grinding knocks that adapted to the situation. Axar wasn’t at his best with the ball, as he struggled for rhythm in the middle, but his unbeaten half-century showed why India value him.

Gill’s innings was a reminder that there could still be a place for him in T20Is, particularly when India are scheduled



Shubman Gill scored 80 from 75 balls before returning to the pavilion due to cramps. CREIMAS

Gill’s innings was a reminder that there could still be a place for him in T20Is, particularly when India are scheduled to play most of their series overseas.

to play most of their series overseas. His numbers in the IPL support his case. There is still some work to be done, particularly with regards to the make-up of this batting line-up, but unlike the T20s where India prefer a left-right combination at all points, in ODIs they seem to prefer the ones who will get the job done.

Like his predecessor Rohit, he led the charge, before Iyer settled himself as England hesitated to use leg-spinner Adil Rashid. They eventually turned to him, but didn’t get joy.

Bumrah returns

It was with the ball that India found plenty of encouraging signs. Not ready to compromise on depth in batting or bowling, India had three all-rounders – Axar, Washington and Shivam Dube. It meant there was no space for Kuldeep, whose absence was felt in the second half of England’s innings after the pacers had

run through the top and middle order.

Winning the toss and batting first, England innings was a roller-coaster. From 60 for no loss, they were reduced to 80/5 in the space of 26 deliveries by Bumrah, Prasidh Krishna and Gurnoor Brar. It would eventually become 107/6 by the 22nd over before England found Joe Root (76 not out) and Liam Dawson (68) stopped the slide and put the hosts in a situation from where they could post a total beyond India’s reach. But a late collapse, from 250/7 to 258 all out with Root left stranded with 13 deliveries remaining in the innings, dented their chances.

On a pitch that had some juice, playing his first ODI since the 2023 World Cup final, Bumrah was in his element straight-away having Ben Duckett in all sorts of problems. The pace and movement through the air and off the pitch repeatedly tested the left-hander, and Prasidh at the other end was equally tough to negate with his extra bounce.

It was only when Brar came on in the eighth over that England broke the shackles, but that was only for four overs before India broke through.

In his third over, Brar removed both openers – the extra bounce being the common factor. Bumrah then began his second spell by having Harry

Brook nick one to first slip before Prasidh removed Jos Buttler and Sam Curran to expansive shots.

Combination rethink

India went for the kill, but once the pitch eased down and Dube dropped a regulation catch offered by Root off his own bowling, the tide changed. Perhaps, India need a rethink of their combination that opens a spot for Kuldeep.

To make up for batting depth, they have been pinning their hopes on Harshit Rana, but his fitness remains a major concern. Returning to the team after a long lay-off, he didn’t even last the entire T20 leg, returning home with a hamstring injury. It means they are short of pacers who can be handy with the bat. Hence, they were forced to play both Washington and Axar, two spinners who may have to play a restricting role rather than looking for wickets. The left-arm spinner had four wickets to show on the day, but most of them were lower-order batters.

BRIEF SCORES: England 258 all out in 47.5 overs (Liam Dawson 68, Joe Root 76 not out; Axar Patel 4/62, Prasidh Krishna 2/50) lost to India 262/4 in 45.2 overs (Shubman Gill 80 retired hurt, Axar Patel 57 not out, Washington Sundar 52 not out; Josh Tongue 1/50).

Rohit’s opening template has gone and so has the certainty

Venkata Krishna B Chennai, July 14

THERE IS something Rohit Sharma needs more than runs at the moment. It is the assurance that his place is safe for now as far as the plans for the 2027 World Cup are concerned.

Since announcing his retirement from Test cricket ahead of the Australia tour last October, Rohit’s string of scores in ODIs before the IPL read: 8, 73, 121*, 57, 14, 75, 26, 24 and 11 against South Africa and New Zealand.

This season, which began with a cloud of uncertainty around his future darker than ever, he had returns of 16, 48 and 79 against Afghanistan.

On Tuesday, at Edgbaston, he was dismissed for 11 off 21 deliveries.

More than the runs, the noticeable change is that the attacking template which set the tone at the 2023 World Cup has quietly disappeared. It was Rohit who, back in 2022, gauged the trend in white-ball cricket and laid a blueprint that India followed through to the T20 World Cup. The plan was simple: go on the offence from the word go.

Stunning assaults

At the 2023 Asia Cup and World Cup, he ensured games were taken control of by India in the batting powerplay, his stunning assaults making the job easier for the rest to follow.

Even at the 2025 Champions Trophy, on challenging conditions in Dubai, he would not go back on the template. All of this was possible because, as captain, he knew his spot was secured. In the event of failure, there was nothing to worry about.

But times have clearly changed. The same freedom has not been visible in Rohit’s batting of late. In its place is a batsman who needs runs next to his name, runs that would keep him not just in discussion but hard to ignore.

What it has caused is a different version of Rohit, one who appears to be reverting to his old formula of starting watchfully before shifting gears rapidly as he prolongs his stay in the middle. It is what brought him three double centuries in the format and a string of daddy hundreds, including in England and Australia.

That formula was so captivating that Virat Kohli, who had built his own successful ODI



Rohit Sharma tried to hit a lofted cover drive but ended up losing his wicket for 11 runs from 21 balls at Edgbaston. CREIMAS



Virat Kohli scored 5 runs before falling to Jofra Archer. CREIMAS

template, replicated it against South Africa and New Zealand. For a batsman who had been conservative at the start and rarely went aerial, he began to play bold, charge at the pacers, and take a full-blooded swing. All of it happened regularly when he walked in during the powerplay, and once the first powerplay was done, he milked runs effortlessly. It was a clear sign of a template being embraced by everyone.

No man’s land

Instead, the two are in no man’s land as far as their World Cup futures are concerned, Rohit more so.

Chasing 259 for their first win of the tour on a challenging Edgbaston pitch, his knock was filled with caution. Perhaps the extra bounce the seamers extracted all day made him play

On Tuesday, at Edgbaston, he was dismissed for 11 off 21 deliveries. More than the runs, the noticeable change is that the attacking template which set the tone at the 2023 World Cup has quietly disappeared

with restraint. But when Shubman Gill showed intent at the other end, one wondered what the Rohit of 2023 would have done. He preferred to take risks. He did not hesitate to charge at the bowlers. Here, instead, Rohit appeared tentative, played a couple of false shots, before falling while charging the medium pace of Sam Curran.

And then came Kohli. Of late he has looked intent on attack, and the urgency with which he pulled Archer, so quick on the seamer’s pace that it raced away to fine leg, suggested the same. A battle loomed.

Kohli, perhaps anticipating the short ball, went deep in his crease. Archer responded with a sucker punch, full, shaping in, thudding into the pads. Archer appealed. The umpire’s finger went up as Nasser Hussain said: "Kohli comes, Kohli goes." The task of finishing it was left to Gill and the middle order.

As for Rohit, he had walked off mouthing to himself, bat swinging through the line of where the ball had been, showing himself how he should have played it.

{ WORLD CUP }

The dichotomy of Tuchel: A fantastic coach but difficult person to work with

Sriram Veera Mumbai, July 14

"YEAH, WELL, whatever."

Jude Bellingham had just scored both of England’s goals in a 2-1 extra-time win over Norway. It sent the team into the World Cup semi-final, the first goal standing despite Norwegian protests it struck an overhead camera cable in the build-up. Thomas Tuchel (pronounce: Toe-mazs Too-kh-uhl) in the post-match interview, called the win "lucky" and the performance "sloppy." Told what his manager had said, Bellingham didn’t dress it up. "Maybe he doesn’t know what it’s like to play in those kind of conditions against Erling Haaland, Odegaard, Nusa, Sorloth," he said.

It wasn’t the first time. Tuchel had already apologised once for describing Bellingham’s on-field behaviour as "repulsive." "If he smiles, he wins everyone," he’d said. "But sometimes you see the rage, the hunger and the fire and it comes out in a way that can be a bit repulsive, for example, for my mother when she sits in front of the TV," calling him, in the same breath, "a special boy."

The German coach later said he’d used the word "unintentionally," in his second language. Months on, substituted while visibly furious, Bellingham got the answer he’s had before: "That’s the decision, and he has to accept the decision," Tuchel said. "We will not change our decision just because someone waves their arms."



England head coach Thomas Tuchel (L). AP

Borussia Dortmund’s chief executive, Hans-Joachim Watzke, who worked with Tuchel for two years, summarised him in eight words: "A fantastic coach but a difficult person."

Down but not out

Dortmund sacked Tuchel in 2017, days after he won the German Cup, once Marcel Schmelzer and Marco Reus distanced themselves from his decision to leave Nuri Sahin out of the squad. The trophy didn’t save him. Neither, later, did a Champions League title at Chelsea, where, per journalist Simon Phillips, around 70 per cent of the squad wanted out.

Tuchel was in his mid-twenties when a knee injury ended his playing career at SSV Ulm in 1998. Out of football and needing money, he pursued an MBA and took a job at a Stuttgart bar, collecting glasses, then mixing

cocktails. He might have stayed there, if his old Ulm coach, Ralf Rangnick hadn’t tracked down where he’d ended up and offered him a youth-coaching job. Tuchel was reluctant, until, mid-shift at the bar, he heard Ulm had just been promoted to the Bundesliga. "I always wanted to get to the Bundesliga, and now they are living my dream," he told *Die Zeit*. He left work shortly afterward.

By 2000 he coached Stuttgart’s youth teams. In 2004, his under-19 side beat VfL Bochum to the German championship. It changed nothing. Stuttgart still didn’t renew Tuchel’s contract afterward. He moved to Augsburg’s under-19s, and by 2009, Mainz 05 hired him as head coach. Dortmund, PSG, Chelsea, Bayern Munich followed.

England hired him on an 18-month contract that ran only to this World Cup, since extended

Tuchel has said England suits him better than home ever did. At this World Cup, he left out Palmer, Foden, Maguire and Trent, prioritising tactical shape

through Euro 2028. Philipp Lahm, wrote in *The Athletic* that wherever Tuchel has worked, "at some point there always seems to be tension. It’s never down to tactics, but rather to interpersonal relationships."

Tuchel has said England suits him better than home ever did. "I feel that we are very critical of each other in Germany," he said, "especially with players and coaches." At this World Cup, he left out Cole Palmer, Phil Foden, Harry Maguire and, again, Trent Alexander-Arnold, prioritising tactical shape over reputation. Tuchel’s explanation: "We are trying to select and build the best possible team, which is not necessarily selecting and collecting the 26 most talented players. Teams win championships."

Bellingham has moved past Saturday’s exchange, saying simply that "all of the players have put in a very tough shift." England are in the semi-final regardless. Whether the tension between the two men resolves, or repeats, as Lahm suggested it always does, is the question this tournament will answer.

Mihir Vasavda Mumbai, July 14

JORGE LUIS Borges, the Argentine writer, once dismissed football with disdain, saying it was popular because 'stupidity is popular.' It was perhaps the most futile act of resistance in Argentine cultural history. Buenos Aires simply carried on loving football. It argued over it in cafes, lived through it on Sundays and organised entire neighbourhoods around it. As football writer Jonathan Wilson notes in *Angels with Dirty Faces*, football became the city’s common language, discussing the seriousness of politics and the intimacy of family.

London’s relationship with the game is no less profound, only expressed differently. If Buenos Aires made football the subject of endless conversation, London made it part of the city’s fabric. Every weekend, the Underground is taken over by the supporters, each line heading towards a different corner of the English capital, where clubs have come to embody neighbourhoods and traditions.

One city debates football as an idea; the other lives it through institutions that have shaped the modern game. Which is why England against Argentina has always been about more than history. Behind the familiar prism of war, politics and Diego Maradona lies another, richer contest – between two great football cultures, represented by their capitals.

London and Buenos Aires



A Lionel Messi mural in Argentina’s capital Buenos Aires. AP

have each shaped football in their own image. One built the structures of the modern game. The other gave it a language of imagination, identity and romance. London likes to think it is where modern football grew up. It is difficult to argue otherwise. The Football Association codified the game’s laws in England. Professional leagues flourished there.

Depending on promotion and relegation, London routinely has around a dozen professional clubs across England’s top divisions. Football here became part of civic life. Boroughs found identities in clubs. Saturdays were organised around fixtures. The game acquired structure, rituals and institutions.

Humanising football

If London institutionalised football, Buenos Aires humanised it. The Argentine capital is home to more than 35 professional clubs, an astonishing concentration that has made the city

arguably the world’s greatest football metropolis. Around a third of Argentina’s professional clubs are based there.

The city’s football map is almost indistinguishable from its street map. La Boca belongs to Boca Juniors. Nunez belongs to River Plate. Almagro has San Lorenzo. La Paternal has Argentinos Juniors. And so on. Almost every barrio has a club to call its own, and with it a fiercely guarded identity handed down through generations.

The irony, too, is hard to miss. Argentina learnt football from Britain. Railway engineers, dock workers, merchants and teachers carried the game across the Atlantic in the late 19th century. Many of the earliest clubs bore unmistakably British names, and for a while football remained largely an expatriate pastime. Then Buenos Aires made it its own. Wilson argues that somewhere between the railways and the *potreros* – the vacant neighbourhood lots

where children played without coaches or perfectly manicured pitches – the game stopped being English and became unmistakably Argentine.

The *potrero* occupies an almost mythical place in Argentina’s football imagination. Uneven surfaces, broken fences and makeshift goals rewarded ingenuity over instruction. Children learnt football because the ground demanded it, close control because the ball rarely bounced true, and deception because the quickest way past bigger opponents was with a feint rather than force.

From those neighbourhood pitches emerged *la nuestra* – "our way" – a football philosophy that prized imagination, improvisation and technique over rigid systems. As Eduardo Galeano notes in *Football in Sun and Shadow*, "On the playing fields of Buenos Aires, a style came into being... players created their own language in tiny space where they chose to retain and possess the ball rather than kick it, as if their feet were hands braiding leather together."

That is what makes Wednesday’s semifinal so compelling. Beyond merely the weight of old scores or famous goals, it is the meeting of two capitals that have shaped football.

One is home to pubs where every borough has its club. The other is home to cafés where every conversation eventually returns to football. One exported the game. The other exported its romance. And perhaps that is the rivalry’s richest story of all.