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IN BRIEF



Centre 'playing with CM's life', says AAP

NEW DELHI
Senior AAP leader Sanjay Singh on Saturday alleged that the BJP-led Centre is "playing with the life" of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal by "keeping him in jail". » [Page 2](#)

Charges framed against Chawla in match-fixing row

NEW DELHI
A court in Delhi has framed charges of cheating and criminal conspiracy against four accused, including London-based bookie Sanjeev Chawla, in a 2000 cricket match-fixing scandal. » [Page 7](#)

MAGAZINE » 8 PAGES
CLASSIFIEDS » PAGE 5

INDIA bloc wins 10 of 13 seats in Assembly bypolls; BJP gets 2

Congress and Trinamool win four seats each; BJP in Hamirpur of Himachal Pradesh, Amarwara of Madhya Pradesh; AAP retains Jalandhar West; DMK wins in Vikravandi; Independent candidate beats RJD and JD(U) in Bihar's Rupauli seat

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

INDIA bloc parties won 10 out of 13 Assembly seats where bypolls were held, while the BJP managed to wrest only two, the Election Commission declared on Saturday. The results of the July 10 Assembly bypolls, which were held just over a month after the Lok Sabha election, were encouraging for the Opposition coalition, which had restricted the BJP to 240 seats in the Lok Sabha.

While the Congress and Trinamool Congress won four seats each, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), and an Independent won one seat each.

The best news for the Congress came from Himachal Pradesh, where it won two constituencies — Dehra and Nalagarh — while only Hamirpur went to the BJP. With this, the Congress has returned to its original strength of 40 MLAs in the State.

Poll triumph

Here is the list of winners of byelections in 13 Assembly constituencies in seven States

Constituency	State	Winner	Constituency	State	Winner
Raiganj	West Bengal	Trinamool	Dehra	Himachal Pradesh	Congress
Ranaghat Dakshin	West Bengal	Trinamool	Nalagarh	Himachal Pradesh	Congress
Bagda	West Bengal	Trinamool	Hamirpur	Himachal Pradesh	BJP
Manikitala	West Bengal	Trinamool	Amarwara	Madhya Pradesh	BJP
Manglaur	Uttarakhand	Congress	Vikravandi	Tamil Nadu	DMK
Badrinath	Uttarakhand	Congress	Jalandhar West	Punjab	AAP
			Rupauli	Bihar	Independent

There was also good news for the Congress in Uttarakhnd, with the party retaining the Badrinath seat. The sitting MLA from the seat Rajendra Singh Bhandari, who had defected to the ruling BJP, was defeated by the Congress's Lakhpat Singh Butola. Trying to project a larger



Clear mandate: Trinamool Congress supporters celebrate the party's victory in Ranaghat Dakshin constituency, PTI

political message in the Badrinath victory, Congress MP Manickam Tagore posted on X, saying, "Hate defeated & love won in Ayodhya in Lok Sabha... Again Hate defeated & love won in Badrinath today."

The party also wrested the Manglaur seat in Uttarakhand from the Bahujan Samaj Party; the bypoll was held after the death of sitting MLA Sarwat Karim Ansari.

In West Bengal, the Trinamool Congress continued to reign supreme, wresting three seats from BJP, namely Raiganj, Ranaghat Dakshin, and Bagda. In all three seats, BJP MLAs had switched sides.

CONTINUED ON
» [PAGE 7](#)
MORE REPORTS
» [PAGES 4, 8](#)

'SUSTAINABLE' SEAFOOD
Deep dive into India's culinary heritage
MAGAZINE » [PAGE 1](#)

Nobel laureate supports India's pursuit for a neutrino lab
SCIENCE » [PAGE 11](#)

90 killed and 300 injured in Israeli strike in Gaza Strip
WORLD » [PAGE 14](#)

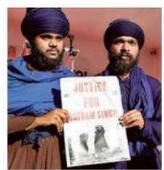
Italian police free 33 Indian farm workers from 'slavery'

Reuters
ROME

Italian police said on Saturday they had freed 33 Indian farm labourers from slave-like working conditions in the northern Verona Province and seized almost €500,000 (about \$4.5 crore) from their two alleged abusers.

Labour exploitation is in the spotlight in Italy following an accident in June in which an Indian fruit picker died after his arm was severed by machinery.

In the latest case, police said the alleged gangmasters, also from India, brought foreign nationals to Italy on seasonal work permits, asking them to pay €17,000 (about \$15 lakh)



Members of the Indian community in Italy seek justice for the Indian worker who died in an accident in June. AP

each and promising them a better future.

The migrants were given farm jobs, working seven days a week and 10-12 hours a day for just €4 (about \$360) per hour, which was entirely doctored from them until they settled all their debts, police said, describing their treatment as "slavery".

Some were asked to continue working for free to pay an additional €13,000 (about \$12 lakh) for a permanent work permit "which, in reality, would have never been given to them", the police statement said.

The alleged abusers were charged with crimes connected to slavery and labour exploitation, while the victims will be offered protection, work opportunities and legal residency papers, the police said.

Italy has growing labour shortages often filled via immigration, and has a migrant work visa system that has faced cases of fraud.

Indian man among 3 dead in Nepal twin bus accident

Press Trust of India
KATHMANDU

The body of a 40-year-old Indian national working in Nepal was among three corpses recovered by rescuers on Saturday from the wreckage of two buses that were swept by a mudslide into a rain-swollen river with more than 50 passengers on Friday.

The two buses carrying 54 passengers, including seven Indians, went missing in the Trishuli in the landslips in Chitwan district on Friday. Three people swam to safety later.

CONTINUED ON
» [PAGE 7](#)

Chance treasure discovery sparks frenzy

An 18th-century pot with gold and silver coins was found by labourers digging a rainwater pit in Kannur; as the news generated excitement, police cordoned off the site for possible excavations

C.P. Sajit
KANNUR

The chance discovery of a pot containing 18th-century gold and silver coins, and other period artefacts has suddenly elevated the profile of the sleepy village of Chengalal in Kannur district of Kerala.

Captivated by news of buried treasure, scores of people, possibly including fortune-seekers, are making a beeline for the leafy suburb dotted with rubber plantations.

The excitement generated by the news of the find has prompted the police to cordon off the



Hidden fortunes: The 18th-century gold and silver coins found in a pot at Chengalal in Kannur district of Kerala. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

spot for possible future excavations by the State Archaeology Department.

A group of local women labourers engaged in digging a rainwater harvesting pit for the Parappal Government School on Friday were the first to experience the

exhilaration of discovering the buried treasure.

The homemakers, all beneficiaries of the rural employment guarantee scheme, said they approached the "strange object" with trepidation.

Some feared sorcery and wondered if the pot contained dark magic artefacts. Others worried the orb-shaped object could be an unexploded crude bomb, often used to settle political scores in Kannur. Nevertheless, their fear turned into excitement when they discovered the pot held a fortune from the past.

CONTINUED ON
» [PAGE 7](#)

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IN BRIEF

Canal breach fixed, water supply in Dwarka to resume

The Munal Canal breach, which had caused flooding in north-west Delhi's Banawa area and impacted water supply in parts of the city, has been fixed, Water Minister Atishi said on Saturday. "The Dwarka water treatment plant will start operating from 4 p.m. and the water supply in Dwarka will resume from tonight," she added. The Minister said flood water has also been cleared from residential areas in Banawa and a health camp has been set up to provide medicines to the residents to prevent waterborne diseases.

Give teachers higher salary as per pay panel: HC to schools

The Delhi High Court has ordered over 40 private city schools to start paying salary to their staff as per recommendations of the 7th Central Pay Commission or be ready for government takeover. In its July 2 order, it asked the schools to specify "how and in what manner and time" they will be able to make the payments. "If the schools are unable to comply... this court shall be compelled to pass a direction to the DoE to take steps for taking over the schools," it said.

Amid row over tree felling, DDA says it planted 50,000 trees

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on Saturday said it has planted 50,000 trees and 5,50,000 shrubs in fiscal year 2024-25 so far across the city and is taking steps to ensure the saplings are nurtured sufficiently to achieve optimal survival. "Seized of its responsibility towards making Delhi green and maintaining a sustainable habitat, the DDA has been consistently undertaking plantation drives under the directions of Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena and direct supervision of Vice-Chairman Subhashish Panda," the DDA said in a statement.

AAP distributes plants Earlier in the day, Environment Minister Gopal Rai said the Delhi government organised a Vikas Sabha in Bijwasan Assembly constituency and distributed free saplings. The Minister said a target has been set to plant and distribute more

than 64 lakh saplings this year under a plantation campaign that started from July 11.

The DDA, the L-G and the Delhi government are currently under scrutiny by the Supreme Court over the felling of 1,100 trees in the protected Ridge area as well as 422 trees in the non-Ridge area. The SC is hearing a contempt petition against the DDA over "illegal" felling of trees in the Ridge.

Under the plantation campaign, Mr. Rai said distribution of plants will be done across Assembly constituencies of Delhi. Meanwhile, the Aam Aadmi Party attacked Mr. Saxena, who is the chairperson of DDA, for felling trees in the Ridge area and questioned the BJP's silence over the issue. AAP's Dilip Pandey said at a press meet that the Kejriwal government is trying to make Delhi pollution-free by increasing the green cover, but the BJP and the L-G are "illegally felling trees".

Centre 'playing with CM's life by keeping him in jail', says AAP; old rhetoric: BJP

AAP Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh says CM lost over 8 kg of body weight since arrest by ED; Delhi BJP chief Sachdeva says Kejriwal never sought treatment while out on bail during LS poll

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh on Saturday alleged that the BJP-led Centre is "playing with the life" of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal by "keeping him in jail" despite severe weight loss and fluctuations in his blood sugar levels.

Delhi BJP president Vinendra Sachdeva junked the charge, calling it the "same old rhetoric" AAP uses whenever it sees chances for bail to the CM, arrested by Central probe agencies in cases linked to the now-withdrawn 2021-22 Delhi excise policy.

There was no comment on the issue from officials of Tihar Jail, where the Chief Minister is currently lodged.

Mr. Kejriwal was granted interim bail on Friday by the Supreme Court in a money laundering case registered by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) with regard to the alleged excise policy scam.

However, he will have to remain in jail till the Delhi High Court decides on his bail plea in another related case filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

The CBI had arrested the Chile Minister on June 26, a day after the High Court stayed the statutory bail granted to him by the trial court in the ED case.

'Health concerns' Mr. Singh told reporters that the Chief Minister's body weight has dropped to 61.5 kg from 70 kg since March 21, when he was arrested by the ED. "A conspiracy is being hatched by the BJP and its Centre to keep him in jail, harass him and make him suffer from the most serious disease," he alleged.



AAP Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh addressing reporters at the party headquarters in New Delhi on Saturday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

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"A conspiracy is being hatched by the BJP and its Centre to keep him in jail, harass him and make him suffer from the most serious disease," he alleged.

"Losing 8.5 kg of body weight and not knowing the reason for it is a symptom of many serious diseases," Mr. Singh said, adding that the CM is also facing fluctuations in sugar levels.

He alleged that when the BJP-led Centre saw that Mr. Kejriwal was likely to get relief from the Supreme Court, they directed the CBI to arrest him in a "false case".

"Kejriwal will get bail soon in the CBI case as well. We will then respond to this harassment by the BJP," Mr. Singh added.

Reacting to it, Mr. Sachdeva said the Rajya Sabha MP should remember that when the Chief Minister was granted 21-day bail by the Supreme Court to campaign in the Lok Sabha poll, he "never went for any treatment". He said the CM during the Lok Sabha election had asked voters if they wanted to see him out of jail but people "rejected" his call as AAP lost the election in Delhi.

Not opting out of CUET; classes from August 16: DU V-C

Ashna Butani
NEW DELHI

Delhi University (DU) Vice-Chancellor Yogesh Singh on Saturday said they are not considering opting out of the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) regime, amid growing concerns about the delay in the declaration of results.

Mr. Singh also said the university will start holding classes from August 16, which he said is a tentative date assuming that there will be a three-week delay in the declaration of results.

The unified exam for admissions to Central universities is conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA), which is facing criticism over the delay in the CUET-UG results, a qualifying test for admission to undergraduate courses.

Several professors at the university's Academic Council meeting on Friday had demanded to opt out of the testing system.

A note by the Democratic Teachers' Front (DTF) said the NTA has declared a retest for CUET-UG from July 15 to 19. "With the inordinate delay in the CUET-UG results, admissions are nowhere in sight," it said.



The delay in results has led to the demand to opt out of the CUET. FILE PHOTO

It said the CUET replaced a "time-tested system" and the DU administration's "hurried decision to opt for CUET without regard to the concerns raised by teachers has resulted in total chaos and delay in admissions".

In response, the Vice-Chancellor said, "Even if the university conducts its own exam, we would face a similar set of challenges."

'Following UGC norms' Meanwhile, a university official said institutes cannot opt out of the CUET as they follow the University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines. "There are some delays, but we will wait for the results and begin the admission process soon," he said.

DDA defers demolition drive in Majnu ka Tila

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on Saturday postponed its demolition drive on the Yamuna floodplains near the gurdwara at Majnu ka Tila, an area where several Hindu refugee families from Pakistan have been living for over a decade now. The authority did not give the reason for deferring the drive undertaken to comply with the orders of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) and Delhi High Court, sources said.

Recently, some refugee families living in the area were granted citizenship under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019. The DDA had in a notice on Thursday asked the resi-

The DDA did not give any reason for deferring the drive undertaken following the orders of the HC and the NGT

dents to vacate their homes by Friday. It added that the affected families can put up at shelter homes run by the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board for now. Dharameer Solanki, a refugee from Pakistan, said the demolition team did not reach his area but conducted the drive near Civil Lines. "We have been asked to vacate our premises but we haven't moved out yet," he said. The structures that were built on land belonging to the Land and Development Office, a police officer said.

Dissenting DU professors say Hindu Studies syllabus focuses on 'Brahmanical texts'

Ashna Butani
NEW DELHI

As the amended syllabus for Delhi University's MA in Hindu Studies got a nod from the Academic Council on Friday, a section of teachers said the syllabus focuses on "orthodox Brahmanical texts", leaving no room for criticism and important texts by thinkers such as Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, and Daya Krishna.

The Centre for Hindu Studies, established last year, started its first MA batch in November 2023. Until now, the Centre was teaching Hindu Studies as per the University Grants Commission-National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) syllabus. Prema Malhotra, Joint Director of the Centre, said,

"We were following the UGC-NET syllabus so far. But since it is a two-year MA course, more papers needed to be added. A committee was formed to draft the new papers."

'Passed unanimously' Nine teachers wrote in their dissent note that the "Brahmanical texts" were "prominently featured" while "heterodox texts" have been inserted only in a tokenistic manner.

It added that other Indic traditions such as Sramanism, Charvaka, Jainism, Buddhism, and tribal traditions were not included in the syllabus. Ms. Malhotra said there was, however, no dissent in the Academic Council meeting and it was passed unanimously. "Moreover,

after the course was drafted, it went through multiple rounds of suggestions such as in the governing body meeting, which comprised several scholars and experts, and the Standing Committee for Academic Matters meeting... we had incorporated all these suggestions," she said.

The amended syllabus includes proposed electives such as 'An Introduction to Vedic Literature', 'Upanishad Parichaya', 'Dharma and Religion', 'Bhagavad Gita for Humanity', and 'Hindu Thinkers'. The paper on 'Hindu Thinkers' includes thinkers such as Ramanujacharya, Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekanand, Sri Aurobindo, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. The statement by the

dissenting teachers said that works of renowned scholars such as Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya and Daya Krishna have not been included.

"Further, Ambedkar's important work on Hinduism - Riddles in Hinduism - is conspicuous by its absence," added the statement.

Professor Maya John, one of the dissenting members, said, "The reading list represents only a certain tradition of scholarship on Hinduism, while heterodox positions such as Marxist, feminist, Periyarist, Ambedkarite etc., are sadly absent... The readings are not as expansive, and a critical component is missing. So, it would not provide scholars with the perspective that they need."

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4	GEM/2024/B/5131361	Operation & Maintenance Of Lifts (Elevators) - Complete System - IT Park - Jabalpur
5	GEM/2024/B/5131475	Operation & Maintenance Of Lifts (Elevators) - Complete System - IT Park - Gwalior

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3	MPSEDC/P&A/2024/568	Annual Maintenance Contract for Civil, Plumbing and Sanitary Work of Common area of IT Park campus & MPSEDC Buildings at Jabalpur (M.P.)
4	MPSEDC/P&A/2024/567	RFP For Annual Maintenance Contract for Civil, Plumbing and Sanitary Work of Buildings and Common area of IT Park campus Sinhasa & Electronics Complex, Pardeshpura Indore (M.P.)

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States

Maharashtra public security Bill will outlaw dissent, say activists

Several sections of the proposed law tabled by *Mahayuti* govt. to 'curb Naxalism' violate human rights or are vague in definition, says Teesta Setalvad; journalistic fraternity says it can criminalise reportage on inequalities, people's protests

Ateeg Shaikh
MUMBAI

At least seven sections of the Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill, 2024 tabled by the *Mahayuti* government in the Assembly on July 11 are vague, bypass courts or give overriding powers to the State machinery, which is beyond its aim of curbing Naxalism, according to activists and members of civil society.

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Law and Judiciary Devendra Fadnis had justified the introduction of the Bill saying that Naxalism is not limited to remote areas and has reached the cities through frontal organisations.

The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 and the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act, 1999 are in force in the State, but the government has said existing laws are ineffective to curb these organisations in urban areas.

The Assembly's monsoon session concluded on July 12 without passing the Bill and the government has not yet issued a formal statement on whether it will be introduced.

Members of civil society are of the view that the proposed law, which has

'Draconian law'

Activists claim the Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill loosely defines 'unlawful activity', and will be prone to 'malicious misuse' by the police

Section	Offence
Section 8 (1)	Up to three-year jail term, ₹3 lakh fine for members of 'unlawful organisations'
Section 8 (2)	Up to two-year jail term, ₹2 lakh fine for contributing to or harbouring any member of 'unlawful organisations'
Section 8 (3)	Up to three-year jail term, ₹3 lakh fine for managing or assisting the management of 'unlawful organisations'
Section 8 (4)	Up to seven-year jail term, ₹5 lakh fine for committing or attempting to commit unlawful activity of 'unlawful organisations'
Section 9 (2)	If declared unlawful, officials may take possession of the notified place and evict any person found within
Section 10 (1)	If declared unlawful, officials may take possession of all money, securities or assets found in the notified place
Section 16 (1)	All offences are cognisable and non-bailable

been enacted in States such as Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha to prevent 'unlawful activities', could have far-reaching consequences in Maharashtra.

'Anti-people Bill'

"This is an anti-people Bill. If the Opposition does not stop it, the Bill must be fought on the streets. It will turn Maharashtra into a police State and outlaw dissent and portray protesters as urban Naxals," Tushar Gandhi, great-grandson of

Mahatma Gandhi, said. Activist Teesta Setalvad said seven sections of the Bill either violate human rights or are vague in definition. "This is a draconian, anti-constitutional proposed law. Maharashtra follows Jammu & Kashmir, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha to table a third draconian law axed to tackle 'urban Naxals', not a legally defined but a politically stigmatising term used by proto-fascist forces to criminalise protest and dissent, and jail writers,

academics, activists, Opposition leaders," she said.

According to her, the Bill has vague and broad definitions of 'an unlawful activity'. "The interpretation of Section 2 (f) (i), which constitutes a danger or menace to public order, peace and tranquility, is problematic. The word 'menace' has been used anywhere. The dictionary meaning is 'dangerous act of a person'. So, anything can be dangerous and brought under the Act. This is loosening of definitions. The included words should be well-defined, not left to be interpreted loosely by the police," she said.

The activist said Section 9 provides draconian powers to the District Magistrate and the Commissioner of Police. "Under this, they can take possession of or seize any notified area and evict persons from that premises. If any women and children live there, 'reasonable time' is the only protection given to them," she said.

The journalistic fraternity has demanded the Bill's withdrawal as it "poses a serious threat" to freedom of expression and speech. It can "criminalise reportage" of existing socio-economic inequalities and pe-

ople's legitimate protests.

Indra Kumar Jain, general secretary of Brihanmumbai Union of Journalists, said, "The Bill's definition of 'unlawful' is broad and arbitrary, bringing into its net any 'action taken by an individual or organisation whether by committing an act or by words either spoken or written or by signs or by visible representation'."

'Repressive, arbitrary'

The Maharashtra unit of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCIL) in a statement on Saturday defined the Bill as repressive, unconstitutional, arbitrary, and allowing misuse.

"The draft of the Bill was not made available in the public domain nor made open to public scrutiny and objections; nor was it vetted by any body of legal experts and practitioners. The tabling of the Bill in haste in the last few days of the monsoon session, just two months before the State Assembly elections are to be held, is itself indicative of the opacity of the entire process and suspect motives behind its introduction," read a statement signed by advocates Mihir Desai, president, and Lara Jesani, general secretary, of PUCIL.

Amid internal tussle, BJP's Puducherry unit to hold executive committee meet

Rajesh B. Nair
PUDUCHERRY



Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy has been deputed to oversee the proceedings of the meeting.

Amid the internal tussle – a fallout of the electoral defeat in the Lok Sabha polls in the Puducherry Lok Sabha seat – the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will hold a crucial meeting of its executive committee at the party office in Puducherry on Sunday.

The BJP national leadership has deputed Union Minister of Coal and Mines G. Kishan Reddy to oversee the proceedings of the executive committee.

Party in-charge Nirmal Kumar Surana, Ministers, Legislators, and senior office-bearers would attend the meeting, a party leader told *The Hindu*.

The deputation of Mr. Reddy assumes impor-

tance as a section of BJP legislators and Independents backing the party in the Assembly have been demanding reshuffle of BJP Ministers in the National Democratic Alliance government in Puducherry.

Around seven legislators, including three BJP

MLAs, three Independents, and a nominated member belonging to the BJP, recently met party national president J.P. Nadda, Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal, and BJP organising secretary B.L. Santhosh in New Delhi demanding changes in the Ministry after Home Minister A. Namasivayam conceded defeat to Congress candidate V. Vaithilingam in the Lok Sabha polls.

Former BJP Puducherry president V. Saminathan has also demanded the resignation of incumbent president S. Selvaganabathy.

He blamed Mr. Selvaganabathy's "autocratic style of functioning", which "alienated genuine party workers", for the defeat of the party candidate.

Madras HC grants time till July 23 for Tamil Nadu govt. to finalise its dog breeding policy

Mohamed Idrarullah S.
CHENNAI

The Madras High Court has granted time till July 23 for the Tamil Nadu government to finalise its dog breeding policy aimed at ensuring ethical breeding, conserve native germplasm, prevent introduction of diseases from foreign countries, introduce licensing regime for breeders and monitor them.

Changes suggested

Justice Anita Sumanth granted the time after senior counsel R. Srinivas submitted a list of amendments suggested by Kennel Club of India (KCI) to the draft policy and Additional Government Pleader Vaidhyanathan said the government was open to considering suggestions.

"Let the parties liaise with one another, prior to the next date of hearing, in order that all items are discussed and what needs to be included be decided. A finalised version of the dog breeding policy shall be placed before this court on the next date of hearing," the judge ordered.

In his suggestions, the KCI said, the draft rules state that applicants for breeder licence from Tamil Nadu Animal Welfare Board (TNAWB) must sub-

mit a licence issued by the local body concerned and a no-objection certificate for the premises but do not prescribe qualifications of the licensing authority.

"This is not a job that can be entrusted to persons not qualified to evaluate breeding stock or facilities required to do so," the council said, objecting to random neutering of male dogs and spaying of bitches if their offspring were found to be suffering from genetic defects.

"It is important to ascertain by appropriate tests whether a particular trait is genetic in nature before arriving at conclusions. Random neutering and sterilizations without a scientific basis will not only be detrimental to the health of the animal but also amount to cruelty," KCI said.

Further, referring to the draft policy stating that karyotyping should be done before engaging a dog for breeding and that the animal should be sterilized if it shows any chromosomal abnormality or defect, the council said, it was not clear whether the TNAWB would provide facilities for such testing.

Breeding conditions

The council also objected to a condition imposed under the draft policy that

only normal, healthy and matured dogs of both gender and those that had reached eighteen months of age should be bred after being certified as healthy by a veterinary practitioner at least 10 days prior to breeding.

"Some breeds, especially toy breeds, reach sexual maturity earlier than 18 months so the condition related to breeding should be breed/species specific," the council said and added that there could also not be an absolute rule that no female dog should be exploited to produce litters in two consecutive breeding seasons.

"Females of certain breeds come into estrus only once a year. Therefore, this absolute rule for all breeds will cause injustice," the council said and opposed the other rule that no dog should be used for mating after the age of eight years. It said some breeds live for over 18 years and healthy males could be used even after eight years.

The council also objected for allowing tail docking and ear cropping for certain breeds since it caters to their well-being and also because technology had advanced now, making the process very easy and painless.

Employment dept. issues notice to firm in Gujarat for chaos at job interview site

Press Trust of India
BHARUCH

A notice has been issued to a private firm days after nearly 800 people turned up for walk-in interviews organised by it for 40 vacancies, triggering chaos at the venue in Gujarat's Bharuch district, an official said on Saturday.

A video had gone viral on social media on Thursday showing large queues, with people pushing and shoving as aspirants tried to get a toehold on a ramp leading to the entrance of a hotel where the interviews were being held.

On July 2, the private company at Jhagadia conducted a recruitment drive at a hotel where hundreds of aspirants turned up for 40 vacancies, District Employment Officer Sanjay Gohil said.

The incident, which took place on Tuesday, triggered a verbal duel between the Opposition Congress and the BJP. While

A stampede-like situation occurred at the venue and caused the collapse of a ramp's railing

and carried out an inspection on July 12," Mr. Gohil said.

The company had not informed the employment office in advance regarding the vacancies, he said.

"We checked the record and issued notice to the company. The district administration needs to be informed in advance so that such a situation does not arise," Mr. Gohil said.

The stampede-like situation occurred due to mismanagement at the venue which caused the collapse of the railing of the ramp, leading to several job-seekers falling off.

The incident, which took place on Tuesday, triggered a verbal duel between the Opposition Congress and the BJP. While

the Congress said it had exposed the 'Gujarat model' (of development the ruling party talks about), the BJP said the former was trying to defame the State through the video.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi shared the video on micro-blogging platform X. "The 'disease of unemployment' has taken the form of an epidemic in India, and BJP-ruled States have become the 'epicentre' of this disease. The 'future of India' jostling in queues for a common job is the reality of Narendra Modi's 'Amritkal'," he tweeted in Hindi.

As per the police, the company had arranged walk-in interviews for nearly 40 vacancies in five different roles. The company booked a hall in a hotel expecting some 150 candidates. However, 800 turned up and company officials had to shut the door to control the crowd, which led to the situation shown in the video, the SP of Bharuch had said.

CPI(M) leader killed in Tripura ahead of panchayat elections

Press Trust of India
AGARTALA

A Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader, Badal Shill, who was critically injured in an attack in south Tripura's Rajnagar, died while undergoing treatment at a hospital on Saturday, police said.

The party alleged that Shill, a Zila Parishad candidate in the upcoming panchayat elections, was murdered by goons backed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and called a 12-hour Statewide bandh on Sunday. Shill had on July 11 filed nomination papers for the panchayat polls.

FIR lodged

The police said the attackers are yet to be identified, and an investigation is underway. South Tripura SP Ashok Kumar Sinha said, "Police visited the spot immediately after coming to know about the incident. The victim was not in a condition to tell the police anything. However, we

Party accuses goons backed by BJP of committing crime, calls 12-hour bandh in State today

lodged a *suo motu* case." Shill was attacked by a group of men with a 'dao' or machete, sticks and other weapons at Rajnagar market, his family alleged.

AIG (Law and Order) Ananta Das said Shill died while undergoing treatment at the State-run GB Pant Hospital in Agartala. "His post-mortem has been completed and the body will be handed over to his family," he said.

'Murder of democracy'

CPI(M) State secretary Jitendra Choudhury, who is also the Leader of the Opposition, said Shill had received severe head injuries. "It is the murder of democracy by the BJP," Left Front convenor Narayan Kar said the Statewide bandh would begin at 6 a.m. and end at 6 p.m.

Timings
DELHI

SUNDAY, JUL. 14	RISE 05:34	SET 19:22
	RISE 12:52	SET 00:00
MONDAY, JUL. 15	RISE 05:34	SET 19:21
	RISE 13:48	SET 00:13
TUESDAY, JUL. 16	RISE 05:35	SET 19:21
	RISE 14:45	SET 00:45

Delhi Weather

max	min
Delhi City	36 25
Safdarjung	36 25
Palam	35 26

Delhi Palam Today
34°C The weather will be warm with cloudy sky. Short spell of light rain and thunder shower with gusty winds at few places is a chance.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
35°C A warm and uneasy weather with cloudy sky to continue. Spell of light rain and thunder shower with gusty winds may occur.

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• WAZIRPUR A-5, Near Bichi Rich Enclave (Opp. Shalimar Bagh)
• JANAKPURI B-1/2, Main Najafgarh Road, Opp. Metro Pillar 643
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IN BRIEF



Rajnath treated for back pain, discharged from AIIMS

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh was on Saturday discharged from AIIMS in Delhi, two days after he was admitted to the hospital with complaints of back pain, an official said on Saturday. According to AIIMS media cell in-charge Dr. Rima Dada, he was treated for his back pain and discharged around 2 p.m. on Saturday. **PH**

Jarange-Patil extends deadline for Mahayuti govt. by a week

Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange-Patil has extended the deadline for the Mahayuti government to meet his demands by a week to July 20. The one-month deadline agreed upon earlier ended on Saturday. If the government fails to provide the reservation given to the Kumbhi community for the blood relatives of Marathas, he has threatened to nominate candidates for all 288 seats in the upcoming Assembly election.

Bihar Police to probe youth for waving Palestinian flag

Bihar Police has launched an investigation after a video purportedly showing a youth waving a Palestinian flag at a Muharram procession in Darbhanga district went viral on social media, an officer said on Saturday. The flag was seized the moment it was noticed, said Munna Khan, head of the district Muharram committee. Police said appropriate action will be taken against those found guilty. **PH**

'BJP's situation bad in U.P., needs central intervention'

Mavank Kumar
LUCKNOW

BJP MLA from Badliapur constituency Ramesh Chandra Mishra on Saturday claimed the situation in Uttar Pradesh was "very bad", and that the party was presently in no condition to ensure a victory in the 2027 Assembly polls.

He said ideas spread by the Samajwadi Party (SP) were gaining traction with the masses.

"The SP's PDA [Pichada, Dalit, and Apsankhyak] plank has created a misleading situation. For our situation to be improved, central leadership needs to take some major decisions. Right now, we are in no position to form the government again," he said.

Rajasthan BJP leaders pledge to take public welfare schemes to the masses

The Hindu Bureau
JAIPUR

The working committee of BJP's Rajasthan unit, which met here on Saturday for the first time after the party came to power in the State in December 2023, took a pledge to take the public welfare schemes and policies of the "double-engine" government to the masses. Several Union Ministers and a large number of the party's office bearers and elected representatives attended the meeting.

While the participants discussed strategies for the upcoming byelections to five Assembly seats in the State, Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma said the BJP attached significance to each party worker and their contribution re-

H.P. bypoll: Cong. wrests 2 of 3 seats from Independents, returns to 40-MLA mark

People of Himachal have rejected politics of defection, our victory a lesson to all on outcome of toppling elected govt.: CM Sukhu; will look into shortcomings that led to poll defeat, says BJP

Press Trust of India
SHIMLA

Two of the three Independent legislators who had quit and joined the BJP lost to Congress candidates in the bypolls held to three Assembly constituencies in Himachal Pradesh on Saturday.

BJP's Hoshiyar Singh lost Dehra Assembly seat by a margin of 9,399 votes to Congress candidate Kamlesh Thakur, the wife of Chief Minister Sukhvir Singh Sukhu, who broke the jinx of three consecutive defeats in the seat. Congress's Hardeep Singh Bawa defeated K.L. Thakur of the BJP in Nalagarh Assembly seat by 8,990 votes.

Ashish Sharma of the BJP, however, managed to defeat Congress candidate Pushpinder Verma in Hamirpur by a margin of 1,571 votes.

With the conclusion of the bypolls, the Congress is back at the 40-MLA mark in the 68-member State Assembly — a number which had dropped to 34 after six legislators had quit and joined the BJP. It regained four seats in the Assembly bypolls held alongside the



Victorious: Congress candidate Kamlesh Thakur receiving her certificate after winning the Dehra Assembly seat. **PH**

Lok Sabha elections in June, and two more on Saturday.

The three Independent legislators — Mr. Singh, Mr. Thakur and Mr. Sharma — had resigned from the Assembly on March 22 after voting for BJP candidate Harsh Mahajan in the Rajya Sabha election. Their resignation was accepted by Assembly Speaker on June 3, thus necessitating the by-elections.

Six Congress MLAs had also crossed-voted for the BJP nominee, and later joined the BJP as well.

The BJP, meanwhile, now has 28 seats in the Vidhan Sabha. In a first, there

are no Independent MLAs in the Assembly.

Mr. Sukhu said the people of Himachal Pradesh had "rejected the politics of defection" and defeated the BJP.

"The voters have given a befitting reply to the Congress turncoats, and it is a lesson for the next fifty years for all parties that toppling elected governments with money power will not yield results," he said.

'Accept mandate'

The BJP said it "accepted the people's mandate" and would continue to fight for their welfare.

Former Chief Minister and current Leader of Opposition Jai Ram Thakur in a statement said the party would look into the shortcomings which led to its defeat in the bypolls. "We accept the people's mandate. Our fight for the welfare of the people of the State will continue," he said.

'Angry electorate'

Himachal Pradesh Congress president Pratibha Singh said the "anger" among the electorate against the Independents who vacated their seats to join the BJP was the reason behind her party's win in Dehra and Nalagarh Assembly seats.

"We were confident of winning the byelections as the anger among the electorate against the Independent MLAs was discernible after they resigned and joined the BJP. The general public was asking why they resigned when voters had elected them, defeating both the Congress and the BJP," Ms. Singh said.

The fielding of good candidates and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra in the State also played a big role in the party's victory, she added.

In major boost, AAP holds on to Jalandhar West

Press Trust of India
CHANDIGARH

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Saturday retained the Jalandhar West Assembly seat after Mohinder Bhagat defeated BJP's Sheetal Angural by 37,325 votes in the bypoll held on Saturday. The win was seen as a big boost for Punjab's ruling party following its drubbing in the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections.

Mr. Angural, originally an AAP legislator, had resigned from the Assembly and joined the BJP in March, thus necessitating the bypoll to the seat.

Mr. Bhagat polled 55,246 votes — 58.39% of the vote share — while Mr. Angural secured 18.94% of the vote share with 17,921 votes, according to officials. Congress nominee Surinder Kaur, who was in the third position, got 16,757 votes, taking up 17.17% of the vote share.

In the 117-member Punjab Assembly, AAP currently has 91 MLAs. The Congress has 15 MLAs, Shiromani Akali Dal three, BJP two, BSP one, and one Independent.

'All thanks to Mann'

Celebrations broke out at Mr. Bhagat's residence in Jalandhar with his family members and supporters ecstatic over the victory.



Mohinder Bhagat after winning from Jalandhar West. **PH**

"The voters gave their mandate in favour of AAP because of the good work done by the [Chief Minister] Bhagwant Mann-led government," the 66-year-old said, and thanked party leadership for his victory.

Mr. Bhagat, who is the son of former Minister and ex-BJP MLA Bhagat Chuni Lal, joined AAP after quitting the BJP last year. He had unsuccessfully contested the Jalandhar West Assembly seat in the 2017 and 2022 Assembly elections as a BJP nominee.

Mr. Mann said the victory in the bypoll showed that people of the State are "very happy" with the AAP government's work.

As many as fifteen candidates were in the fray for the bypoll. Polling took place on Wednesday, and a voter turnout of 54.98% was recorded — a sharp drop from the 67% turnout in 2022.

DMK deals big blow to NDA in Vikravandi, wins by huge margin

S. Prasad
VILLUPURAM

The DMK's Anniyur Siva secured a decisive win in the byelection to the Vikravandi assembly seat by a wide margin of 67,757 votes.

As per the final results announced after 21 rounds of counting of votes on Saturday, Mr. Siva polled 1,24,053 votes, while his nearest rival C. Anbumani of the PMK, contesting as an NDA candidate, mustered only 56,296 votes.

There were 2,37,031 voters in the constituency, of whom 1,96,269 had exercised their franchise.

Early lead

Mr. Siva had established an early lead and polled 5,564 votes after the first round

of counting against 2,894 secured by Mr. Anbumani.

The DMK candidate never appeared to trail and extended his lead in subsequent rounds as well, though the margin varied.

At the end of the 5th round Mr. Siva had polled 31,151 votes, while Mr. Anbumani had secured 11,483 votes. But after the 9th round, Mr. Siva overtook him with a wide margin at 57,483 votes while Mr. Anbumani had secured only 24,130 votes.

Though the Naam Tamil Katchi (NTK) was also in the fray, the battleground in Vikravandi was perceived to be a direct fight between the DMK and the PMK. The AIADMK and the DMKD had boycotted the polls.

Cong. wins by slender margin of 422 votes in Manglaur seat

Press Trust of India
HARIDWAR

The Congress on Saturday won the Manglaur Assembly bypoll in Uttarakhand after Qazi Mohammad Nizamuddin defeated BJP's Kartar Singh Bhadana by a slender margin of 422 votes.

This was the fourth win for Mr. Nizamuddin from the seat. In the past, he had won the seat twice on a Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) ticket, and once as a Congress candidate. The BSP, which retained the seat in the 2022 Uttarakhand Assembly election, was relegated to the third position in the bypoll.

While Mr. Nizamuddin polled 31,727 votes, Mr. Bhadana got 31,305 votes.

Scheduled Caste voters hold the key as Haryana hurtles towards Assembly election

Ashok Kumar
GURUGRAM

After the Lok Sabha election in Haryana ended in a tie between the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) with both parties winning five seats each out of the 10, the agrarian State gears up for yet another round of political slugfest with the Assembly poll due in less than 100 days from now.

As the Congress and the BJP, the two major political forces in the State, get battle-ready banking largely on the Jat and Other Backward Class (OBC) vote banks respectively, the Scheduled Castes (SCs), who comprise around 20% of the State's population as per the 2011 Census, could be the deciding factor in the Assembly poll.

The voting pattern for

the SCs in Haryana over the past decade, going by the number of reserved Assembly seats held by different parties, suggests that the community voted overwhelmingly for the BJP in the 2014 Assembly poll, but remained evenly scattered in the previous election.

Quota factor

Political observers, however, attribute the Congress's performance in this Lok Sabha poll in Haryana to the SCs rallying behind it in a big way with the party successfully building a narrative suggesting that the BJP would amend the Constitution and scrap reservations if it wins 400 seats.

While a similar narrative is unlikely to work in the Assembly poll, Haryana-based lawyer Rajrang Indal, who quit the Aazad Samaj Party (Kanshi Ram) to join the

Congress ahead of the Lok Sabha poll this year, argued that the community was expected to vote on similar lines as in the Lok Sabha poll, especially with the two elections taking place within a short span of time and the mood being largely anti-BJP.

"Besides, Congress's Sirsa MP and former Union Minister Kumari Selja, an SC leader, is being seen as a strong contender for the Chief Minister's post if the party returns to power. This is another important reason for the community to rally behind the Congress," said Mr. Indal.

Ms. Selja, he added, not only has a clean image and is younger compared to Jat leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda, another contender for the top post, but has also made no secret of her ambition to be the Chief Mi-



Congress's Kumari Selja, an SC leader, is being seen as a contender for the CM's post if the party comes to power. This is believed to be a reason for the community rallying behind the Congress. **FILE PHOTO**

nister. "She has the support of prominent Congress leaders in the anti-Hooda camp and is considered close to the party's central leadership, brightening her prospects," he added.

Anti-incumbency

Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) worker and SC leader Ramesh Kumar said

there was also the anti-incumbency factor against the BJP due to the government's failure to deliver on various schemes for the community besides high inflation, poor implementation of e-initiatives such as the 'Parivar Pehchan Patra' and frequent paper leaks, which, he added, could work to the Opposition's

advantage.

The BJP — which provided a 'quota within quota' for the SCs in the State's higher educational institutions with the creation of a new group called the 'deprived Scheduled Castes' comprising 36 communities such as Valmiki, Bazar and Dhanak — has expedited the delivery of welfare schemes, aimed mostly at the SC community.

In June, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini gave away 7,500 allotment letters for 100-square-yard plots to BPL families at Sonapat and provided benefits amounting to ₹100.68 crore to 83,633 beneficiaries under three ambitious schemes, including Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Awas Navinikaran Yojna, in another programme at Panipat, accelerating the implementation

of various schemes for BPL families and the SC community.

BJP's SC leader Ashok Tanwar, who unsuccessfully contested from Sirsa Lok Sabha seat this year, said the political significance of SCs cannot be overemphasised with the community having a presence in all 90 Assembly constituencies. "Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the community has supported the BJP over the past decade, but was misled by the Congress's false campaign. Although the community has seen through the Congress's agenda and would return to the BJP's fold, the party would soon plan a special campaign to reach out to them," he said.

Digital news platform National Dastak editor Shambhu Singh told The

Hindu over the phone that the SC community, with improvement in its education status over the years, has become politically aware and voted for protection of its "Constitutional rights" and "growth", unlike the other communities, which, he claimed, voted mostly on caste lines. It was underscored by the fact that the community voted for the Congress, instead of the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Aazad Samaj Party, in Haryana and elsewhere during the Lok Sabha poll, he added.

INLD-BSP alliance

forging an alliance in Haryana and the entry of Chandra Shekhar Aazad's Aazad Samaj Party in State politics, the fight for the SC vote is likely to further heat up in the days to come.

IN BRIEF



Off-roaders on prohibited trail get stuck, police seize vehicles

Thirty-eight off-roading enthusiasts who went on an unauthorised off-road trip on Naalumala Hills in Idukki, had to return by foot as their vehicles got stuck in muddy terrain following heavy rain on Friday. According to the police, the people from Bengaluru drove up the Naalumala hills on Friday. Following heavy rain, the vehicles got stuck. The group sought assistance from locals. The trekkers were then shifted to resorts. Though the 22 off-road vehicles were brought down with the help of Revenue and police officials on Saturday, the police seized them and booked a case against the drivers for trespass and acting in violation of the Disaster Management Act.

Valmiki scam case: ex-Minister sent to ED custody for 6 days

Former Minister for Scheduled Tribes Welfare B. Nagendra, who was arrested by the Directorate of Enforcement on Friday, in connection with the Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation case, was remanded in ED custody for six dayson Saturday. Chandrashekhara, an employee of the corporation who ended his life, had claimed in his death note that the officials of the corporation pressured him to transfer the money, under the directions of the ex-Minister.

One more BRS MLA joins Congress in Telangana

Serilingampally MLA of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) Arekapudi Gandhi joined the Congress in the presence of Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy at his residence on Saturday. Mr. Gandhi is the ninth BRS MLA to join the Congress.

Congress and Opposition in Karnataka set to flex muscles during monsoon session

Nagesh Prabhu
BENGALURU

Members of the ruling Congress and the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Janata Dal (Secular) are set to flex the political muscles, over the alleged scams in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA), the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation, and the diversion of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes welfare funds for implementing the guarantees, during the monsoon session of the legislature starting on Monday.

During the 10-day session, the Opposition is also expected to flag the go-

vernment's alleged failure in containing the rise in dengue cases and oppose a proposal on renaming Ramangara district as Bengaluru South.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has been fiercely defending the allocation of MUDA residential sites to his wife, Parvathi, in lieu of the land acquired for developing a residential layout.

Demands CBI inquiry
However, the Opposition raised a maze of questions on the alleged irregularities in the allotment of multiple sites by the authority to land losers.

The BJP has claimed that the MUDA scam runs into over ₹4,000 crore and demanded a CBI inquiry.

High drama as CPI(M) expels leader accused of corruption

Pramod Kottooli, alleged to have taken bribe, calls it a conspiracy; he holds a sit-in along with his mother and son outside the house of the person who raised the charge, but later calls it off

The Hindu Bureau
KOZHIKODE

Disciplinary action against a local Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] functionary rarely ends up in dramatic scenes. The dismissal of K.V. Pramod, also known as Pramod Kottooli, a member of the party's Kozhikode Town Area Committee, on Saturday, however, led to developments that were unexpected.

Mr. Pramod's removal from the primary membership of the organisation comes a week after media reports emerged about a "youth leader from Kozhikode city" receiving bribe from a doctor by offering



K.V. Pramod, his mother Vishalakshi, and son Vishal Pramod, staging a sit-in at Kozhikode on Saturday. K. RAGESH

the plum post of a member in the Kerala Public Service Commission. It was claimed that the doctor was asked to pay ₹60 lakh for the purpose and the doctor's family paid ₹22 lakh to the youth leader.

Opposition parties raised the issue in the Assembly. Thereafter, media reports pointed their fingers at Mr. Pramod.

On Saturday, a note from the party's Kozhikode district secretariat said: "the party district committee decided to remove Mr.

Pramod from the primary membership after being convinced that he had engaged in anti-party activities that brought disrepute to the organisation."

Subsequently, Mr. Pramod addressed the media accompanied by his mother, Vishalakshi, and son, Vishal Pramod.

"I am now going to stage a sit-in, with my mother and my son, outside the house of the person who made the allegations against me. There seems to be a conspiracy behind this. I need to prove to my mother that my hands are clean," he said.

However, he later called off the sit-in, claiming that his mother and son had health issues.

Price cut of premium liquor in Karnataka put off by weeks as move hits roadblock

Sharath S. Srivatsa
BENGALURU

Tipplers in Karnataka, who are expecting a reduction in the cost of premium brands of liquor, will have to wait for a few weeks more. This follows the State government's move to rationalise rates of liquor, to bring it closer to the prevailing rates in neighbouring States, meeting opposition from stakeholders.

After rationalising the Excise slabs from the earlier 18 to 16 that was expected to bring down the cost of premium liquor, the new rates were expected to come into effect on July 1. Under the new slabs notified, the cost of some low-cost liquor at the bottom of the slab are expected to see minor correction.

Official estimates peg the drop in top-end liquor prices by as much as 25%, while mid-segment liquor

prices could see a drop by up to 20%. In some slabs, liquor rates could come down by ₹2,000 to ₹1,000 per bottle, according to government estimates.

However, the stakeholders have objected to the draft notification issued to suppliers/distillers. They have been asked to revise the rates and provide their revised declared prices, sources familiar with the current deliberations told *The Hindu*.

A rationalisation of prices was mooted as Karnataka's high Excise duty currently makes liquor most expensive in India.

"The idea is to bring liquor prices in Karnataka closer to other States. Once the new slabs come into force, the liquor price difference between Karnataka and other States would be so negligible that illegal transport becomes unremunerative for bootleggers," said a source.

Khedkar's mother told to remove 'illegal' structures

Press Trust of India
PUNE

The Pune civic body on Saturday issued a notice to Manorama Khedkar, mother of probationary IAS officer P. Dilip Khedkar, who is at the centre of a controversy, directing the removal of "unauthorised structures" adjacent to the boundary wall of their bungalow in seven days, officials said.

The police have also registered an FIR under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, including Section 323 (dishonest or fraudulent removal or concealment of property) against Ms. Manorama and her husband Dilip Khedkar beside five others, days after a video showing the former allegedly threatening some persons with a gun over a land dispute emerged. The two-minute video shows Ms. Manorama, accompanied by her security guards, engaged in a heated argument with some people with a pistol in her hand in Dhadwadi village in Pune's Mulshi tehsil.

The 34-year-old officer is in the eye of a storm for allegedly misusing the disability and Other Backward Classes quota to secure a position in the IAS. On Saturday evening, the Pune Municipal Corporation officials tried to hand over the notice to Ms. Manorama at their bungalow on Baner Road, but did not get a response. Subsequently, the officials stuck

FIR filed against probationary IAS officer's parents after viral video allegedly showed mother using gun amid land row

the notice on the main door of the bungalow.

An official said the incident was about a land parcel bought by Mr. Dilip, a retired State government officer. Locals had claimed that the Khedkars had encroached on the land of neighbouring farmers.

Use of beacon light
In another blow to Ms. Puja, the traffic police has issued a notice to a private firm over the unauthorised use of a beacon light on a private car with the "Maharashtra Government" sign the IAS probationer was found using. "An order was issued against Thermo Verita Engineering Pvt Ltd to produce the car at the nearest police station," an officer said on Saturday.

The Pune Regional Transport Office had issued a notice to a private company, which is the registered owner of the car used by Ms. Puja.

The Central government on Thursday had constituted a single-member committee for re-examining the documents submitted by Ms. Puja to secure her candidature in the civil services examination.

A 2023-batch IAS officer, Ms. Puja is currently under probation in Maharashtra.

Delayed process



Farm workers transplanting paddy seedlings at a field in Palakkad. Transplanting, which was supposed to be completed in June or early July, has been slowed down this year due to the weak monsoon during crucial days. K.K. MUSTAFAH

Sanitation worker goes missing in Kerala canal

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A temporary sanitation worker went missing in the Amayizhanjan canal in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday. Even nine hours after the rescue efforts began, the worker could not be traced, with the accumulated waste and rain hampering the rescue efforts. The missing worker has been identified as Joy, 42.

Mayor Arya Rajendran said the Corporation has over the past few months sent reminders to the Railways to clean the section of the Amayizhanjan canal that passes through the Railway premises. Railway officials said the work was stuck up following request from the Corporation.

Kerala set to use technology, tradition to end human-wildlife conflict

Sarath Babu George
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala Forest Department aims at integrating cutting-edge technologies with traditional knowledge to effectively manage human-wildlife conflict in the State. The State government has green-lit an elaborate master plan comprising projects to the tune of ₹645 crore to mitigate the crisis which was recently declared a State-specific disaster.

The blueprint outlines 17 strategies to be implemented over three years, funded through Central-State allocations and schemes, including the Ma-



Risk factor: The movement of elephants between Kottakkad and Madukkari poses a big challenge for the Palakkad Railway Division.

hatha Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). The initiative includes setting up Artificial Intelligence-based alert systems for real-time updates, thermal sensor-equipped drones, and camera traps to enhance surveillance along forest fringes.

The master plan also includes projects to erect barriers, both physical and

biological, to thwart animal incursions into human habitations.

Beehive fencing, which has proved effective in Africa and various Southeast Asian countries in repelling elephants, will be set up along 6.6 km of forest boundaries.

Research will evaluate traditional knowledge from tribal communities such as "bio-fences" using crops like chilli to prevent elephants from entering settlements. Habitat-management efforts will ensure adequate fodder in grasslands and interior forests, with new waterholes and check-dams to secure the water needs of the wildlife.

Citizens adopt injection borewells to meet growing water needs of Vizag

V. Kamalakara Rao
VISAKHAPATNAM

Residents of Visakhapatnam have initiated advanced infrastructural measures to tap rainwater to overcome water scarcity, given the potential demand due to rapid expansion and population growth in the city.

Apartments and commercial establishments alike have adopted the injection borewell method to recharge their borewells. Residents and owners of such commercial units have said that the groundwater level has risen significantly due to this method. The unique design of the



An injection borewell

borewells effectively capture rainwater from large open spaces and rooftops, filter and pump it into the deeper layers of the earth. Abdul Rajaac, president of an apartment, said: "A

typical borewell costs around ₹3 lakh, whereas an injection borewell costs around ₹4.5 lakh."

Speaking to *The Hindu*, D. Lakshmana Rao, an officer of the Ground Water Department, said: "An injection borewell would give the desired results if the borewell is productive and the borewell point is not in a rocky area. Rainwater harvesting is done in two ways: one is recharging and pumping water in to the ground like the injection borewells. Second, storing rainwater in sumps or tanks and reusing it for watering plants, surface cleaning, drinking and bathing."

Experts say that cities like Visakhapatnam require at least 2.5 crore litre of water every day for domestic purposes. As the population increases, and with it the number of apartments, the groundwater level drops. As natural water recharge conditions gradually decrease, injection borewells are useful.

Rainwater is diverted to these borewells through pipes, and depending on the location, the earth is dug up to depths ranging between 40 and 80 feet. Some advantages are that recharge is possible even after the rainy season, and it reduces soil erosion.

From Page One

INDIA bloc wins 10 seats in Assembly bypolls

The Trinamool also retained the Manikata seat. It was revenge time for the AAP in Punjab where it trounced Jalandhar West's sitting MLA Sheetal Angural, who had defected to the BJP. She was defeated by the AAP's Mohinder Bhagat, who had incidentally been her BJP rival in 2022. In the Rupaali seat in Bihar, Independent Shankar Singh pulled off an upset win over the Janata Dal (United) and Rashtriya Janata Dal candidates. The bypoll had been necessitated by the defection of JD(U) MLA Bima Bharti to the RJD.

BJP wins in M.P.
The BJP got some solace from the Amarwarra seat in Madhya Pradesh, where Kamlesh Pratap Shah, who had switched sides to the BJP, won a tough contest against Congress candidate Dheeran Sah Sukharam Das Inwati.

The victory in Amarwarra, which is part of the Chhindwara region, known as senior Congress leader Kamal Nath's pocket borough, is significant as it comes at a time when the party has been decimated in the Lok Sabha election in the State. In Tamil Nadu, the DMK sealed its dominance in the State with its candidate in the Vikravandi seat Annyur Siva emerging victorious against Patali Makkal Katchi candidate Anbumani C. by 67,757 votes. The bypoll was necessitated following the death of DMK MLA N. Pugazhenti.

Indian among 3 dead in Nepal twin bus tragedy

The first body from the buses was recovered in the morning 50 km away from the accident site. The deceased was identified as Rishi Pal Shahi from India, the police said.

The rescuers in the afternoon recovered two more bodies from the Gaidakot area in East Nawalparasi district, the police said. They were passengers of the bus heading towards Kathmandu from Birgunj, they said. Besides Shahi, the other missing Indian nationals were identified as Santosh Thakur, Surendra Sah, Aditi Miyaan, Sunil, Shah Nawaj Alam, and Anshari.

There were 24 people including seven Indian nationals onboard a bus heading towards Kathmandu from Birgunj and another bus heading to Gaur from Kathmandu was carrying 30 local people. The two buses fell into the river as the landslide accompanied by muddy water, triggered by heavy rain, swept them away.

More than 500 security personnel, including from the Nepali Army and Nepal Police, along with deep divers were mobilised for the search operation, the police said.

Chance treasure discovery sparks frenzy

Vijayakumar Nambodiri, a resident, said ancestral houses in the locality buried valuables in pots in ancient temple grounds. He noted that local myths about 'moola bhavari' or secreted assets were passed down generations and integral to local folklore.

K. Krishna Raj, the officer in-charge of the Pazzhassi Raja Archaeological Museum in Kozhikode, said the locality rarely yielded historical collections and the riches could be some individual or family's fortune.

Mr. Raja noted that the coins bore the hallmarks of the late 18th century, with some displaying Indo-French and Kannur Ali Raja markings. The bead necklaces appeared to be from the same era. He stressed that only a comprehensive study could unveil the historical context of the remarkable find.

2 J&K clerics booked over 'inflammatory speeches'

The Hindu Bureau
SRINAGAR

Two prominent Islamic scholars were booked on Saturday by the J&K Police for their "derogatory remarks".

"The clerics have been bound down to prevent any further inflammatory speeches," a police spokesperson said.

The police identified the preachers as Mushtaq Ahmad Veer and Abdul Rashid Dawoodi. Both are prominent religious scholars and hold sway among a sizeable section of followers. They had been arrested in the past too.

"We urge the public to report any such instances of hate speech to the authorities," the police said.

Stage set for opening of Jagannath temple's Ratna Bhandar today

Satysundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

The stage is set for the highly anticipated opening of Ratna Bhandar, the treasury of Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri, after 46 years, following the finalisation of the standard operating procedure on Sunday.

"We will meet at 10 a.m. on Sunday to address various issues that may arise during the opening. The managing committee of the temple will hold a meeting separately to plan their course of action," said former Orissa High Court Judge Biswanath Rath, chairman of the high-level committee set up to supervise the inventory of jewellery and other va-

More migrant workers assaulted in Meghalaya

Pressure groups demanding implementation of the ILP system are allegedly behind the attacks; labourers are refusing to work in Meghalaya after the assault, an official of NHIDCL says

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Members of pressure groups in Meghalaya demanding the implementation of the British-era Inner Line Permit (ILP) system continue to assault migrant workers, threatening to stall several development projects across the State.

Officials of National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd. (NHIDCL) said some youth wearing masks and helmets assaulted six labourers engaged in the maintenance of the Shillong-Umiam road at Mawlong near the State's capital, Shillong, on July 12.

A critically injured worker was rushed to a hospital in Guwahati for treatment, they said. "All the labourers are refusing to work in Meghalaya after the assault," an NHIDCL official involved with road projects in Meghalaya said.

The NHIDCL lodged a first information report at the local police station and wrote to the Deputy Commissioner of East Khasi Hills district seeking action against the assailants, and a safe environment for the



Some groups that are for the Inner Line Permit have set up a 'Check Gate' saying the government should take measures to stop the 'influx of outsiders' into Meghalaya. **FACEBOOK/KSU**

project workers to execute their assignments.

The police said some Khasi Students' Union (KSU) leaders were summoned to a police station in Shillong in connection with the organisation's drives to check the "work permits" of non-tribal people and migrant labourers.

Defiant note

The KSU leaders struck a defiant note, asserting that their members would continue to "do the government's job" if the ILP and the Meghalaya Residents

Safety and Security Act passed in 2020 were not implemented. The union claims these mechanisms would check the inflow of "illegal immigrants", and protect indigenous communities. Union members also set up a temporary "ILP check gate" on an arterial highway in the State's Ri-Bhoi district a few days ago to drive home their point.

The ILP is a temporary travel document currently needed for Indians to enter Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, and Naga-

land. It is based on the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873.

Members of the KSU and other organisations were earlier accused of assaulting migrant workers in the Laitumkhrah and Polo areas of Shillong. One of those assaulted in the Polo area was a technician brought from New Delhi for specialised work at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium ahead of the Durand Cup football in August.

Some non-tribal workers were also bludgeoned to death. There were at least three such cases in East Khasi Hills district between March and April.

Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma, criticised by rights organisations for going "soft" on the violent pressure groups, said the government has been dealing firmly with those creating law and order problems. "There is no such thing as a work permit and nobody is authorised to check the documents of labourers except for the appropriate authorities. There is a process for the Labour Department to register the workers for their safety and to maintain records," he said.

Opposition asks Mohan Majhi govt. to take action against Governor's son

The Hindu Bureau
BHUBANESWAR

The Opposition Biju Janata Dal and Congress on Saturday mounted pressure on the Mohan Majhi government to initiate action against Odisha Governor Raghunath Das's son Lalit Das, who was accused of assaulting an employee of the Raj Bhawan.

Baikunth Nath Pradhan, an assistant secretary officer of the State Parliamentary Affairs Department, deputised to the Raj Bhawan, had alleged that Mr. Lalit Das, on the night of July 7, slapped him and - accompanied by security officers - beat him up during President Droupadi Murmu's visit. Mr. Pradhan's wife told the media that her husband was forced to lick Mr. Lalit Das's boot.



Raghunath Das, PTI

the accused is yet to be arrested," said Yasir Nawaj, president of Chhatra Congress.

Calling out the studied silence of the Chief Secretary and Director-General of Police at a time when an Odia employee was beaten up inside the Raj Bhawan, Mr. Nawaj demanded that the accused be arrested immediately for the attack. BJD MLA Pratap Deb also came down heavily on the State government, questioning its silence on the incident. "Although the assault occurred on July 7, the police have neither registered a case nor taken any action. The government employee deserves justice," he said.

The Odisha Secretariat Service Association also urged Mr. Majhi to intervene and take proper action against the attacker.

2000 cricket match-fixing scandal: Delhi court names Chawla as main conspirator

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Twenty-four years after the cricket match-fixing scandal tainted the gentleman's game, a court here has framed charges of cheating and criminal conspiracy against four accused, including Sanjeev Chawla, a London-based bookie and the "main conspirator", and actor Krishan Kumar, brother of T-Series founder Gulshan Kumar.

The 68-page order by the Patiala House District Court, which has now paved the way for the start of the trial, noted the alleged role of the four - Mr. Chawla, Mr. Kumar, Delhi-based bookie Rajesh Kalra and Sunil Dara, alias Bittoo.

The Delhi Police had named them in a chargesheet filed in 2013 in connection

J&K parties decry ban on paying tributes at martyrs' graveyard

The Hindu Bureau
SRINAGAR

Political parties in Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday alleged the J&K Lieutenant-Governor's administration had denied them permission to pay tribute at the Mazar-e-Shuhada (martyrs' graveyard) in Srinagar. They termed it an attempt to "erase collective history".

A total of 22 civilians were killed in police firing outside the Central Jail in Srinagar in 1931 in an uprising against the then Dogra monarchy.

The J&K National Conference (NC), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), J&K Peoples Conference (JKPC), and All Parties Hurriyat Conference alleged that their leaders and supporters were denied permission to visit the old city in Srinagar, and pay tribute at the graveyard on the premises of the Naqshband Sahib shrine.

"Another 13th July, Martyr's Day, another round of locked gates and police excesses to stop people from paying homage to those who sacrificed their lives to establish a just, fair and democratic regime in J&K. Insha Allah next year we will mark 13th July with the solemnity and respect this day deserves," NC vice-pres-

ident Omar Abdullah posted on social media platform X.

Prior to August 5, 2019, when the Union government ended J&K's special status, the erstwhile State of Jammu & Kashmir observed July 13 as 'Martyrs' Day', an official holiday. Regional leaders, police and officials would organise a special ceremony to pay tribute at the Mazar-e-Shuhada.

"The courage and selfless sacrifices of the martyrs were unparalleled. They declared that 13th July 1931 was a pivotal moment in Kashmir's history, marking the beginning of a relentless struggle against tyranny, oppression, and despotism," NC president Farooq Abdullah and Mr. Omar Abdullah said in a joint message.

Former J&K Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti claimed the gates to her house had been "locked up". "Mazar-e-Shuhada is an enduring symbol of Kashmir's resistance against authoritarianism, oppression and injustice. The sacrifices of our martyrs are a testament that the spirit of Kashmiris cannot be crushed. Today, even observing it in remembrance has been criminalised," Ms. Mufti said.

London-based bookie had acted as a conduit and worked with Hansie Cronje to fix matches

and each other and conspired to fix the matches," it said. The King's Commission was appointed by the South African government to look into the allegations of match-fixing against the country's players. Cronje confessed to his role.

During the proceedings, Mr. Chawla's advocate argued there was no *prima facie* evidence that the person appearing before the court as Sanjeev Chawla was the same as the person named in the chargesheet.

Trashing the argument, the court said, "Accused no. 4 Sanjeev Chawla was absconding for nearly 20 years and could be apprehended only after painstakingly long extradition proceedings. To say he is not the same person as test identification parade was not conducted is absurd."

"All other accused persons remained in constant touch with Sanjeev Chawla

The Hindu Bureau
SRINAGAR

Two prominent Islamic scholars were booked on Saturday by the J&K Police for their "derogatory remarks".

"The clerics have been bound down to prevent any further inflammatory speeches," a police spokesperson said.

The police identified the preachers as Mushtaq Ahmad Veer and Abdul Rashid Dawoodi. Both are prominent religious scholars and hold sway among a sizeable section of followers. They had been arrested in the past too.

"We urge the public to report any such instances of hate speech to the authorities," the police said.

Police register FIR on lewd remarks made about wife of Kirti Chakra awardee

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Five days after the National Commission for Women took cognisance of the lewd remarks made about Smriti Singh, the widow of Kirti Chakra awardee Captain Anshuman Singh on a social media platform, the Delhi Police's Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operations (IFSO) cell has registered an FIR, officials said on Saturday.

The National Commission for Women (NCW) on Monday took suo motu cognisance and filed a complaint before the Delhi Police regarding the matter.

According to a senior officer, the FIR has been re-

National Commission of Women seeks fair investigation and detailed report on action taken

gistered at the IFSO unit under Section 79 (outraging a woman's modesty) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Section 67 (distribution of sexually explicit matter) of the IT Act. "We have contacted the social media platform to provide details about the handle that allegedly posted the lewd comments about Ms. Singh," the officer said.

The NCW, on Monday, had written to the Delhi Police to take appropriate

action against the profile that posted the lewd comment.

In a letter issued on Monday, the NCW specified that the comment violated several Sections of the criminal and IT laws, including Section 79 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, which penalises acts intended to insult the modesty of a woman, and Section 67 of the IT Act, 2000, which deals with the punishment for publishing or transmitting obscene material in electronic form.

The commission also demanded a fair and timely investigation into the matter and requested timely and fair investigation and a detailed action taken report within three days.

SC seeks report on gram nyayalayas from States, HCs

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has sought a full report from the States and High Courts on the establishment and functioning of gram nyayalayas, meant to provide affordable and quick justice to rural India and de-clog local courts.

The top court was informed that gram nyayalayas were far and few between even 16 years after they were introduced through a parliamentary law.

"Gram nyayalayas were supposed to provide speedy and easy access to the justice system for the last citizens of the country. Every citizen has a right to affordable justice at an affor-

able price," Justice B.R. Gawai said during a hearing on Friday.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, who appeared for petitioner NGO National Federation of Societies for Fast Justice, informed the court that 16,000 gram nyayalayas were required, but only a little over 450 were set up with about 300 actually functional.

The court said the last time it had taken the issue was on January 29, 2020.

The Bench directed the States and High Courts to file fresh affidavits in six weeks giving details of the establishment and functioning of gram nyayalayas. The court scheduled the case for hearing on September 11.

Bypoll results an indication of BJP's decline: Congress leaders

The INDIA bloc won 10 of 13 seats in the byelections held on June 10, while the BJP could win only two; Congress celebrates its win in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand; results show that Narendra Modi's credibility is eroding, say leaders

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

With the INDIA bloc winning 10 of the 13 seats in the June 10 Assembly byelections, the Congress on Saturday said the results once again indicated that the ruling party was on a severe decline and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's credibility was eroding.

The BJP could win only two seats as the Congress four — two each in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand — bagged by the Congress. By winning two of the three seats in Himachal Pradesh, the Congress has reclaimed its original tally



Joyful triumph: Congress workers celebrate after the party's victory in the byelection in Chamoli in Uttarakhand on Saturday. PTI

of 40 seats in the 68-member Assembly. This has lifted the cloud of uncertainty looming over the government after a series of defections during the Rajya Sabha elections.

The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, said the results of the byelections in seven States made it clear that the "web of fear and confusion woven by the BJP has

been broken". "Every class, including farmers, youth, labourers, businessmen and employed people, want to completely destroy dictatorship and establish the rule of justice. The public is now completely standing with INDIA for the betterment of their lives and protection of the Constitution," he said in a post on X.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the victory showed that the people have completely rejected the arrogance, misgovernance and negative politics of the BJP.

Party general secretary K.C. Venugopal said the results "stand as a resound-

ing victory for democracy and a strong rebuke to the BJP's divisive politics".

On Himachal Pradesh results, which brought relief to the party, Mr. Venugopal said, "This triumph is a testament to the unwavering faith of the people of Himachal who have rejected the BJP's politics of horse trading and defections".

He branded the results as "the public's strong disapproval of their [BJP's] pro-rich, dictatorial politics".

Equally, he said, it was also a rejection of "opportunism" since none of the Congress turncoats who fought on BJP ticket won in Himachal or Uttarakhand.

Congress's K.C. Venugopal receives spyware attack alert

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



K.C. Venugopal

Congress general secretary K.C. Venugopal on Saturday put out a notice from Apple informing him that a "targeted mercenary spyware attack" had been detected on his iPhone. Earlier this week, Iltija Mufti, daughter of former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti, had also gone public with a similar notice.

In a post on X, Mr. Venugopal, while putting out the notice, said the Opposition would "oppose this blatantly unconstitutional act and breach of our privacy tooth and nail".

"Thank You PM Modi ji for sending your favourite malicious spyware on my phone also! Apple has been kind enough to intimate me about this special present of yours!" he

agenda," Mr. Venugopal said.

Similar notification
Besides Ms. Mufti, Samruddha Bharat Foundation founder Pushparaj Deshpande also posted a similar notification from Apple on July 10. The foundation works closely with the Congress.

In October 2023, such notifications were sent to multiple members of the Opposition, including Shashi Tharoor, Pawan Khera and Supriya Shrinat of the Congress; Priyanka Chaturvedi of the Shiv Sena; Mahua Moitra of the Trinamool Congress; Raghu Chadha of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP); and Sitaram Yechuru from the Communist Party of India (Marxist). Aasuddin Owaisi of the All India Majlis-Itehadul Muslimeen was also notified last year.

Let's be clear, the Modi government is acting in a criminal and unconstitutional manner, going after political opponents and invading their privacy in this manner. The message of the Lok Sabha elections was that the people reject any attack on the Constitution and the BJP's fascist

Independent candidate wins Rupauli Assembly seat

The Hindu Bureau
PATNA

Independent candidate and former MLA Shankar Singh defeated Janata Dal (United) candidate Kaladhar Prasad Mandal and Rashtriya Janata Dal (BJD) candidate Bima Bharti in the byelection to the Rupauli Assembly seat in Bihar's Purnia district.

Mr. Singh received 68,070 votes whereas Mr. Mandal got 59,824. Ms. Bharti, who had also contested the Lok Sabha election, came in third with 30,619 votes. Mr. Singh not only won the election with a good margin but also defeated Ms. Bharti, a five-term MLA.

BJP loses in its Matua strongholds in Bengal as Trinamool sweeps all four seats in bypolls

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress on Saturday won byelections to all four Assembly seats in West Bengal which were held on July 10. The results, which come almost five weeks after the Lok Sabha election, have emerged as a shot in the arm for the State's ruling party.

Trinamool candidate Supti Pandey defeated Kalyan Chaudhey of the BJP by a margin of over 62,312 votes from the Manikata Assembly constituency in Kolkata. The seat had fallen vacant in February 2022 after the death of State Minister Sadhan Pandey. Ms. Supti Pandey is



Trinamool Congress supporters celebrate after Supti Pandey's win in the Manikata Assembly constituency in Kolkata, on Saturday. PTI

the widow of Sadhan Pandey, while Mr. Chaudhey is the president of the All India Football Federation.

In the Bagda constituency in North 24 Parganas district, Madhuparna Thakur defeated Binay Kumar Biswas of the BJP by a mar-

gin of 33,455 votes. In the Ranaghat Dakshin Assembly constituency located in Nadia district Mukut Manoj Adhikari defeated Manoj Kumar Biswas of the BJP by a margin of 39,048 votes.

Ranaghat Dakshin and Bagda have a significant population of the Matua community and were considered strongholds of the BJP.

In the Raiganj constituency in Uttar Dinajpur district of north Bengal, the Trinamool candidate Krishna Kalyani defeated the BJP's Manas Kumar Ghosh by a margin of 50,077 votes.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee congratulated the people of the State for the victory and said that everyone will work for the betterment of the society. The Chief Minister particularly extended her congratulations to 25-year-old Ms. Thakur, the daughter of Mamabata Thakur, a Matua leader and Rajya Sabha member. "Madhu-

parna has given a tough fight. People over there supported us and she has won," Ms. Banerjee said.

'Electoral malpractices'
While the BJP leadership, especially the candidates who were in the fray, had alleged that there were electoral malpractices on the day of voting, party spokesperson Shamik Bhattacharya called for an introspection of the party's performance.

The defeat is an embarrassment for the West Bengal BJP which suffered a setback in the Lok Sabha election and won only 12 Lok Sabha seats whereas the Trinamool Congress increased its tally to 29 Lok Sabha seats.

BJP wins Amarwara bypolls; Cong. alleges 'misuse' of power

Mehul Malpani
BHOPAL

Kamlesh Pratap Shah of the BJP on Saturday won the byelection to the Amarwara (Scheduled Tribe reserved) Assembly seat in Chhindwara of Madhya Pradesh, defeating the Congress candidate Dheeransha Inwati in a closely fought contest.

The counting of votes polled on July 10 witnessed a seesaw-like situation between the two parties, with Mr. Shah finally emerging victorious by 3,027 votes.

While Mr. Shah secured 83,105 votes, Mr. Inwati bagged 80,078. Devarvan Bhalavi of the Gondwana Ganatantra Party re-

mained in the third position with 28,723 votes.

Mr. Shah, a three-term MLA and former associate of Kamal Nath, had moved from the Congress to the BJP and resigned from his legislative membership just weeks ahead of the Lok Sabha election in Chhindwara on April 19, mandating the bypolls in Amarwara.

Mr. Kamal Nath had termed the byelection an "election of betrayal" and made an emotional appeal to voters for Mr. Inwati. The Congress alleged "misuse of administration by the BJP", and said that the demand for a recount had been turned down by the authorities.

Congress and J&K parties oppose expanding administrative role of L-G

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

A day after *The Hindu* reported that the Union Home Ministry has widened the ambit of the administrative role of the Lieutenant-Governor of Jammu and Kashmir by amending the Transaction of Business Rules, sources clarified that the J&K Legislative Assembly may make laws on any of the matters on the State List, except "Police" and "Public Order". The Concurrent List in the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution is excluded.

The Concurrent List includes education, marriages, taxes, property transfer, forests, trade unions, labour welfare, charitable organisations, and trade



The Opposition parties attacked the government for the "unabated betrayal" of J&K.

and commerce, which effectively means that the Assembly as and when it is constituted will have no say in such matters.

The Opposition parties attacked the government for the unabated betrayal of J&K, saying the notification was yet another example of an attack on the Constitution.

"Another indicator that elections are around the corner in J&K. This is why a firm commitment laying out the timeline for restoration of full, undiluted statehood for J&K is a prerequisite for these elections. The people of J&K deserve better than powerless, rubber stamp CM who will have to beg the Lieutenant Governor to get his/her peon appointed," former J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah posted on X.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the notification meant that the Modi government "wants to delay the restoration of full Statehood to J&K" and even if full Statehood is restored, it wants to keep the newly elected State government at the mercy of

the Lieutenant-Governor, by clamping its executive power.

Ministry sources asserted, "The notification dated July 13, 2024, does not in any sense alter the balance of powers as enshrined in the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019. The said Act has been passed by the Parliament of India in August 2019 and the same has been upheld by the Supreme Court of India."

The functions of the Lieutenant-Governor have been clearly defined and delineated in the Act and same has been reflected in the amended Rules which were notified in 2020. "The current notification is to provide better clarity on the processes so as to enable smooth administration of UT of J&K," sources said.

Soren, wife Kalpana meet Sonia Gandhi

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Days after taking charge as the Chief Minister of Jharkhand, Hemant Soren and his wife Kalpana Soren met Congress Parliamentary Party chief Sonia Gandhi and Sunita Kejriwal, the wife of Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal, in New Delhi on Saturday.

Parody account's post on X lands YouTuber in legal trouble

Press Trust of India
MUMBAI

Maharashtra's cyber police have registered a case against popular YouTuber Dhruv Rathee after a parody account allegedly posted a fake message on X about Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla's daughter, a senior official said on Saturday.

According to the State cyber department, the account with the handle @dhruvrathee had alleged on social media that Mr. Birla's daughter had cleared the Union Public Service Commission exam without appearing for it.

Acting on a complaint by a relative of Mr. Birla, the police booked the YouTuber under Bharatiya

Nyaya Sanhita sections for defamation, intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace, and statement leading to mischief, and the IT Act, the official said.

When pointed out that the alleged fake message was posted by a parody account, the official said, "We are investigating the matter."

APPOINTMENTS

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
BHABHA ATOMIC RESEARCH CENTRE
RECRUITMENT SECTION - I
Advertisement No. 01/2024 (R-I)

(Website for submission of online application: <https://recruit.barc.gov.in>)
GOVERNMENT STRIVES TO HAVE A WORKFORCE THAT REFLECTS GENDER BALANCE AND WOMEN CANDIDATES ARE ENCOURAGED TO APPLY

Online applications are invited from eligible candidates for appointment to the following posts in Low Level Radiation Research Laboratory (LLRRL), BARC, Kollam, Kerala:

Opening date and time for submission of online application	15/07/2024 (10.00 hrs)
Closing date and time for receipt of online application	12/08/2024 (23.59 hrs)

Post No.	Name of the Post	No of Post	Educational / Technical Qualification
DR/01	Scientific Assistant/C (Group-B)	UR-02	B.Sc. (Zoology/Biochemistry/ Microbiology) with minimum 60% marks from a recognized university and 4 years experience in human cytogenetics/molecular cytogenetics/cell culture techniques/molecular laboratory techniques and also familiar in biological research methods. Knowledge of Bio-Statistics is desirable.

For further details please visit BARC website : <https://www.barc.gov.in> & <https://recruit.barc.gov.in>

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR EMPOWERMENT OF PERSONS WITH MULTIPLE DISABILITIES (Divyangjan)
(Dept. of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India)
Muttukud, East Coast Road, Kovalam (P.O), Chennai - 603 112, Tamil Nadu - India.
Phone: 044 - 2747 2046, 2747 2104, 2747 2113, 2747 2423. Mobile: 94443 14716
- Accredited by IAAC - ISO 9001:2015 -
Toll Free No: 18004505345. www.niepdmd.in. Email: niepdmd@nic.in

Employment Notice No.03 (R)/2024
NIEPDMD (Invites applications from Indian Nationals, who fulfill the prescribed qualification, experience, age and other conditions for filling up the following sanctioned regular posts, as per the details given:-

- Associate Professor in Speech Pathology & Audiology ** - 1 post
- Associate Professor (Medical Science) ** (Reserved for OBC in case of Direct recruitment) - 1 post
- Deputy Registrar (Admin) ** - 1 post

** All the previous advertisements for the above posts stands cancelled.

For detailed advertisement, essential/desirable qualifications, age limit, form of application and the recruitment fee details etc., please visit our website: www.niepdmd.in

Manpower Engagement Notification (Temporary) No.09/2024 (ONLINE APPLICATION ONLY)
NIEPDMD invites Applications from the eligible candidates for the following contractual engagement at NIEPDMD (O), Chennai

1. Assistant Professor (Consultant)
2. Lecturer (Consultant)
3. Rehabilitation Officer (Consultant)
4. Clinical Assistant (Consultant)
5. Tutor - Clinical Assistant (Consultant)
6. Prosthetist & Orthotist - Demonstrator (Consultant)
7. Special Educator (Consultant)
8. Vocational Instructor (Consultant)
9. Assistant (Consultant)
10. Workshop Supervisor (Consultant)

* Maximum age limit for all post is 56 years
The aspiring applicants fulfilling the eligibility criteria in all respect can submit their application through online mode. The online registration of application will be made available on NIEPDMD, Chennai official website i.e. <https://www.niepdmd.in> For all other details, terms and conditions, please log on to the website www.niepdmd.in

Sd/-
DIRECTOR

कार्यालय राजस्थान कर्मचारी चयन बोर्ड
www.rmsnb.rajasthan.gov.in, Email ID: secy@rmsnb.rajasthan.gov.in
फ़ोन: प. 2 (143) /RSSB/राजस्थान चयन बोर्ड-25/513 फ़ैकस: 0141-265796
दिनांक: 08.07.2024

निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना (12/2024-25)
राजस्थान चयन बोर्ड का निविदा नं. 12/2024-25 के अधीन जो 29/07/2024 यान 06.00 बजे तक निविदा आमंत्रित की जाये। बोर्ड के अन्त विवरण एवं के पत्र (<https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>) और <https://www.rajasthan.gov.in> पर देखे जा सकते हैं। निविदा चयन हेतु का अनुसूचित नम्बर 19158 प्रयोग करें।
LBN No: SMB2425SI/OB00020
DPR/C/5805/2024

सरिवर

SBI STATE BANK OF INDIA
LOCAL HEAD OFFICE
Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala-685012

TENDER NOTICE FOR PREQUALIFICATION AND SELECTION OF PROJECT ARCHITECT FOR CONSTRUCTION OF ADDITIONAL FLOOR IN THE EXISTING ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE BUILDING AT KOLLAM.

State Bank of India invites tenders in two cover system (Technical and Price bid) for prequalification and selection of Principal Project Architect cum Project Management Consultant (PPA/Cum P/MC) for the proposed construction of additional floors in the existing Administrative Office building at Kollam, Kerala.

The prequalification criteria, scope of the services to be offered, terms and conditions of appointment and the detailed proforma etc. for submission of tenders (Technical and Price bid) for the purpose can be downloaded from our website <https://sbi.co.in/invites-in-the-pre-qualification> and also from the pre-bidder format at the office will be up to 3.00 p.m. on 14-08-2024.
Price: Thiruvananthapuram SBI Assistant General Manager (P&E)
Date: 12-07-2024 SBI, Thiruvananthapuram.

IN BRIEF



Yogi Adityanath inaugurates Uttar Pradesh Mango Festival

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Friday in Lucknow that the State would be exporting 40 tonnes of mangoes to Japan and Malaysia. He was inaugurating the Uttar Pradesh Mango Festival at Awadh Shilp Gram. "Uttar Pradesh will export 40 tonnes of mangoes to Japan and Malaysia this year. For the first time in 160 years, the famous Dussehri mangoes from Lucknow are also being exported to the United States," Mr. Adityanath said. "While the price of Dussehri mangoes in India ranges between ₹60 and ₹100 per kilogram, their price in the U.S. market has risen to ₹900 per kilogram," the Chief Minister added.

Navi Mumbai airport to be operational by March 2025

The new international airport in Navi Mumbai will be operational from March 2025, Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol said on Saturday. The airport, which is currently under construction, has been named after the Peasants and Workers Party of India leader Dinkar Balu Patil, for which the Maharashtra government gave its nod in July 2022. Union Civil Aviation Minister K. Ram Mohan Naidu and Mr. Mohol reviewed the progress on July 13 by visiting the site in Navi Mumbai. Speaking to presspersons, Mr. Mohol said, "The airport will be operational in March 2025. The construction progress is as per schedule."

India to host a summit for entertainment sector in Nov.

India will host the first World Audiovisual and Entertainment Summit in November alongside the International Film Festival of India in Goa, with Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnav promising to strengthen the ecosystem for the protection of intellectual property rights in the media and entertainment sector. Mr. Vaishnav and Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Saturday made the announcement of the first World Audiovisual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES) in Goa from November 20 to 24. "IP rights hold huge value in the media and entertainment sector. We will be strengthening the ecosystem for protecting IP rights," Mr. Vaishnav said in his address.

Cybercrimes can derail development, says Dhankhar

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday cautioned that cybercrimes can derail a nation's development, and called for a convergence of efforts and institutions to deal with the threat. He called for a need to further educate people to protect data to prevent them from falling victims of cybercrimes. Addressing a conference on cybersecurity, Mr. Dhankhar felt that there was a need to extend legal aid to victims of cyberfraud as they could have lost all their finances to cybercriminals. Referring to the growth of the country's economy, he said "derailment can take place when we are not prepared for such kind of crimes, such kind of incursions."

SUDOKU

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	2							8
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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

9	6	4	7	3	2	1	8	5
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8	2	6	3	7	9	5	1	4
4	9	1	6	5	8	7	2	3
3	8	2	5	9	6	4	7	1
1	5	7	8	4	3	2	9	6
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Mumbai will be made global fintech capital, Maharashtra economic powerhouse: PM

In his maiden visit to the State after Lok Sabha polls, Modi calls Opposition parties 'enemies' of development; he says efforts are on to improve Mumbai's connectivity with neighbouring areas

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI



Narendra Modi with Maharashtra Governor Ramesh Bais, CM Eknath Shinde and Deputy CM Devendra Fadnis during the inauguration of development projects in Mumbai on Saturday.

In his maiden visit to Maharashtra after the Lok Sabha election, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday laid foundation stones and inaugurated multiple public projects estimated at ₹29,396 crore, and said he aimed to make Mumbai the world's capital in financial technology and Maharashtra the leading State in tourism.

Later in the evening, he inaugurated the Indian Newspaper Society Towers in the Bandra Kurla Complex area.

"I aim to use Maharashtra's power to transform it into an economic powerhouse of the world. Want to make Mumbai [the] global fintech capital," Mr. Modi said, adding that he also wants Maharashtra to scale the top of the tourism charts. "There are so many magnificent forts of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, a rich Konkani coastline and the entire Sahyadri mountain range. There is immense potential to explore medical and conference tourism."

Emphasising the tourism sector while addressing media owners and senior management at another event, he asked

the media industry to have coordinated efforts to promote tourism in every State to boost the economy.

He took a jibe at the Opposition parties by calling them "enemies" of development, and reiterated the National Democratic Alliance's resolve for Viksit Bharat in the next 25 years. "It is our goal that the quality of life improves for all. We are attempting to improve connectivity of Mumbai with the neighbouring areas... A decade ago, the metro line was limited to 8 km, which now is a network of 80 km and work is going on to create another 200 km," he said. A decade ago, the Mum-

bai Metro was a single line of 11.4 km. Now, a metro rail network of 46.5 km is operational and 166.97 km is under various stages of construction.

'Media plays vital role'

At the Indian Newspaper Society Towers inauguration, Mr. Modi said, "Media plays a crucial role in showing the correct path to the nation. It will play a crucial role in making India 'Viksit' in the next 25 years. Media also makes people aware of their strength and their rights... and its natural role is to create discourse... The media is not just a mute spectator of the conditions of the country, all of you peo-

ple of the media play an important role in changing the conditions and giving direction to the country. Today India is in such a period when its journey of the next 25 years is very important. For India to become developed in these 25 years, the role of newspapers and magazines is equally big."

He laid the foundation stones for the Thane-Borivli (₹16,600 crore) and the Goregaon-Mulund (₹6,300 crore) twin tunnels to be executed by the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) and Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (BMC), respectively.

Bangladesh team explores Kolkata port for transshipment

Mourrie Som
KOLKATA

A 13-member delegation from Bangladesh visited the Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port here between Tuesday and Friday to explore possibilities of transshipment of Bangladesh's export-import cargo through ports located on India's east coast. The team also visited the Haldia Dock Complex in Purba Medinipur district on July 10.

The delegation was led by S.M. Mostafa Kamal, Joint Secretary, Bangladesh Shipping Ministry, and was accompanied by private stakeholders and representatives from other key Ministries and ports of Bangladesh. The visit was in accordance with what was discussed at the India-Bangladesh Shipping Secretaries-level talks in Dhaka last December.

The port authorities said the focal point of the discussions was the various trade facility advantages that Bangladeshi exporters could gain from the transshipment of export-bound cargo to third countries through the port. They highlighted its strategic proximity to Bangladesh and the advantages of the Indo-Bangladesh Protocol (IBP) route in strengthening trade relations between the two countries and boosting export-import trade.

The delegation was given a demonstration of the

The team discussed trade facility advantages for Bangladeshi exporters

infrastructure of the Kolkata Dock System and the Haldia Dock Complex and was told about the scope for handling containerised cargo for third-country export from Bangladesh. In the discussions, port authorities spoke about the future plans for development of the dock and a public-private partnership model.

Discussions held

Talks were also held on matters such as introducing direct voyage services between the port and China, planned vessel movement between it and the Chittagong and Yangon ports, introduction of a night-savitation system, presence of extended allied services, strong presence of leading shipping lines, integrated road and rail transportation network and established customs facilities.

The head of the Bangladesh team said a meeting would be conducted with stakeholders on their return to Bangladesh, with the data, analysis and comparison they had obtained from their visit. The committee will submit a report to the Ministry, and the report will be communicated to India through diplomatic channels.

Villages along China border to get 4G, tourist circuits, all-weather roads, says Home Ministry

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Union Home Minister Amit Shah reviews the implementation of 'Vibrant Villages Programme' at a meeting in New Delhi.

At a high-level meeting here on Saturday, Union Home Minister Amit Shah reviewed the implementation of the "Vibrant Villages Programme", which aims to develop infrastructure and open up villages to tourists along the China border.

Mr. Shah said that the Union government was committed to the all-round development of the border villages, and stressed the need to provide employment opportunities to the local people and increase connectivity with villages to prevent migration.

Under the programme, 136 border villages are being provided connectivity

through 113 all-weather road projects at a cost of ₹2,420 crore, a Home Ministry statement said. By December, all villages under the programme will be covered by the 4G network, for which work was on at a rapid pace. Appropriate steps are being ta-

ken to ensure financial inclusion in all these villages and the India Post Payments Bank branches are being facilitated there.

Work is being done to develop tourist circuits to bring vibrancy to these villages and promote tourism. In this endeavour, capacity building and tourism-related infrastructure was being developed in coordination with the Tourism Ministry. The programme is in the process of being integrated with the Prime Minister's Gat Shakti Portal for better monitoring.

Senior Home Ministry officers, including the Union Home Secretary, the Secretary, Border Management and Director-General, Indo Tibetan Border Police, attended the meeting.

6,000 events have been organised in these border villages, which include 4,000 service delivery and awareness camps. More than 600 projects have been sanctioned by the government for employment generation. During the meeting, Mr. Shah laid emphasis on review at the highest level at regular intervals to dispose of pending issues.

He said the Central Armed Police Forces and the Army should encourage purchase of local agricultural and handicraft products through cooperatives. He said the health-care facilities of these forces should be regularly made available to benefit the residents of nearby villages.

Chandipura virus: four children die in Gujarat

The Hindu Bureau
AHMEDABAD

Four children died and two are under treatment for suspected infection by Chandipura virus, which causes encephalitis, in Sabarkantha district of Gujarat. The two children are being treated at the civil hospital in the district.

The authorities have sent the samples of the children who are undergoing the treatment, to the National Institute of Virology for confirmation. Chandipura virus is a rare and potentially deadly pathogen that causes fever, flu-like symptoms, and acute encephalitis (inflammation of the brain).

6 lakh fake pollution-trading certificates unearthed in 3 States

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) in 2023 had unearthed more than six lakh fake pollution-trading certificates during audits at four plastic-recycling companies in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka, documents show. Multiple sources from the Environment Ministry and from the plastic waste recycling industry confirmed to *The Hindu* that the potential number of fake certificates could be manifold as these were only four of the 2,348 plastic waste recyclers registered with the CPCB.

Only a small fraction of these recyclers has been physically verified for recycling the claimed quantity, sources said.

Between 2022 and 2023, the latest year for which in-



According to a report by the CPCB this May, nearly 3.7 million tonnes worth of certificates were generated. FILE PHOTO

formation is available, there were about 18,000 companies that use plastic packaging and were registered with the CPCB, which manages the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme, as either producers, importers or 'brand-owners'. They had a collective target of recycling about 3.3 million tonnes, with the Ministry data suggesting that on average, more than 85% of the target was met.

The Plastic Waste Management Rules mandate all companies that use plastic packaging to register with the CPCB. Not complying with these targets can invite fines. These certificates, or EPR certificates, are used by thousands of companies that use plastic packaging in some form for business operations and are legally obliged to either ensure that a prescribed percentage of the plastic used annually is collected and recycled, or that they buy enough certificates to make good on their targets. The mandated targets change every year.

In 2022-23, for instance, companies were expected to recycle 70% of the packaging used in the previous two financial years. For

6,000 events organised

The statement said the important and ambitious scheme was launched on February 14 last year, with an allocation of ₹4,800 crore. So far, more than

2023-24, it is 100%.

Certificates are generated by registered plastic waste recyclers, who collect plastic waste and recycle them. Every tonne of plastic recycled by them generates a certificate. As per a report by the CPCB this May, nearly 3.7 million tonnes worth of certificates were generated but given that companies have

differing obligations, the exact number of certificates they buy from recyclers is not clear.

While 6,000 fake EPRs were bought by packaging companies as part of meeting their obligations, it is unclear who bought these certificates as the break-up is not publicly available.

The details vary, but the basic pattern in how recyclers produced fake certificates is similar. The four recycling companies, Enviro Recycle Pvt. Ltd (Karnataka), Shakti Plastics Industries (Maharashtra), Technova Recycling India Pvt. Ltd and Asha Recycle Pvt. Ltd, were hauled up for claiming to have generated many more EPR certificates than the installed capacity of their plants. The malpractice came to light after the CPCB conducted physical checks on

their premises. Certificates generated by recycling companies are considered legitimate only if the recyclers are actually able to sell the recycled plastic. In the case of these companies, they were unable to establish proof of these sales to the visiting CPCB officials.

The Maharashtra Pollution Control Board has, as on March 2024, ordered Technova to shut down following violations. *The Hindu* could not confirm if the other companies have got similar orders.

A typical notice, for instance to Technova, says: "The Unit has generated EPR certificates of the order of 97,200 tonnes and transferred certificates of 95,200... quantities mentioned in the invoices are fallacious and very high compared to the declared production capacity..."

IN BRIEF



'Govt. mulls handing over MTNL operations to BSNL'

The Centre is considering to handover operations of Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd. (MTNL) to BSNL through an agreement, instead of pursuing a merger route, a source privy to the development said. A final call on this is likely to be taken in a month's time. The source said that the option of handing over MTNL's operations to BSNL through an agreement is being looked into and given MTNL's high debt, a merger with BSNL was not a favourable option. **PH**

Centre denies extension to BSNL Chairman Purwar

The government has denied extension to BSNL Chairman and Managing Director P.K. Purwar and is likely to give the charge to a senior department of telecom officer, official sources said. Mr. Purwar, who took charge as CMD in July 2019 for five years, had applied for an extension. "DoT is mulling to hand over additional charge of BSNL CMD post to DDG Robert J. Ravi. There is no decision on extension sought by the present CMD," an official source said. **PH**

'Domestic investors infused \$638 mn in realty in Apr.-June'

Domestic investors pumped \$637.9 million in the Indian real estate during April-June, a fivefold jump on annual basis, expecting better returns amid strong demand, according to Vestian. The real estate consultant on Saturday released data for institutional investments in real estate during Q2 of FY24. As per the data, institutional investments in the Indian real estate rose 96% in April-June to \$3.1 billion from \$1.6 billion in the corresponding period of the previous year. **PH**

ITC's Fortune to add hotel rooms in TN

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

ITC's Fortune Park Hotels plans to expand its portfolio with the addition of 8-10 new hotels with 1,000 keys over the next two to three years mostly in tier 2 and 3 cities, the unit's CEO said.

"We are an asset light company, and we open hotels through alliances," Fortune Park Hotels Ltd. CEO M. Samir told *The Hindu*. "We are always open for alliances," he added.

Fortune Hotels, which has 55 operating hotels with 67 alliances and 4,000 keys of which 30% are in the South, announced the opening of its Fortune Beach Resort ECR Chennai on Friday.

"Our plan is to open 8-



10 properties with 1,000 keys in 2-3 years. This year, we announced opening of eight hotels, of which five have been opened. We are on track," he said.

Fortune's portfolio consists of business and leisure hotels in a 70:30 ratio and the goal is to make it 50:50, he said. Already in Tamil Nadu the ratio is 50:50 across Ooty, Madurai, Chennai, Vellore, Tiruppur and Hosur.

'Tech advances likely to pose challenges to firms'

A Canadian court ruling upholding use of an emoji as valid acceptance of a contract flags the risks Indian corporates can face from a lack of preparedness; need awareness of AI tools, emoticons

Lalendu Mishra
MUMBAI

Advances in technology and AI tools are likely to pose challenges for corporates in safely running their businesses according to two legal experts. To guard against these challenges, several companies and their boards are scrambling to embrace some of these advances and tools.

The recent decision of a Canadian court accepting the use of an emoji in a communication as acceptance of a contract has raised alarm bells in boardrooms worldwide, including in India. Given the rapidly expanding use of messaging platforms to hold discussions, and even arrive at decisions, the Canadian court's ruling is seen as an eye opener, the legal experts said.

'Thumbs-up emoji'

The case pertains to a Canadian farmer who was sued by a grain buyer for failing to deliver 86 tons of flax. The buyer alleged that he had discussed the potential purchase with the farmer over phone and sent a message with a draft contract, requesting the farmer to confirm the contract. In reply, the farmer sent a "thumbs-up" emoji but did not meet the specified deadline for delivery of the flax.

While the grain buyer claimed that the emoji in-

Emojis and AI

Firms need to raise awareness about use of emoticons in business conversations on messaging platforms and risks from AI

- A Canadian court ruled against a farmer for failure to deliver flax after using a thumbs-up emoji in a chat with a buyer
- Experts flag risks including voice replication, impersonation on a WhatsApp group via identity theft
- Boards must invest in training, safeguard measures; adopt liability insulation

dedicated their deal was sealed, the farmer argued that the emoji was only meant to confirm receipt of the contract and not to signify acceptance of the agreement or its terms.

The court ruled in favour of the grain buyer and ordered the farmer to pay Canadian \$82,000 (about ₹50 lakh) for failure to fulfil the contract.

Deals via messaging

According to the legal experts, such cases may come up in India because contracts are now increasingly being discussed over messaging platforms.

While only e-mails were considered as having evidentiary value till recently, the Canadian court's ruling, the experts opine, could result in WhatsApp emoticons making their way to courts here as well.

Abhijit Joshi, founding and managing partner, Veritas Legal, a new age law firm, said most organisations today embrace technological advances,

which are complex and cannot always function within a tacit framework of rules.

"Since there is no comparable body of knowledge or best practices, boards at times may not adequately consider the governance of technology, which can be dangerous. For this reason, more and more organisations are forming separate IT / AI Boards to address the complexities and challenges of advances in technology," he said.

"For this, boards must regularly review their security and reliability measures to prevent any glitch in services or attack on technology. Additionally, investments can be made in back-up systems as well as project management systems, including entering into service level agreements," he added.

'Voice replication'

Voice replication using AI, or impersonation of a person on a WhatsApp group following identity theft,

can also emerge as major challenges for corporates, given the risks to business integrity.

The legal experts see a lot of legal propositions being tested in the wake of technological advances. Companies need to take measures to safeguard themselves, while making optimal use of these advances, they add.

Several companies and their boards have been seeking the services of tech experts and law firms to pre-empt risks and suggest ways to mitigate them.

"Regular training and awareness programs should be conducted, and proper policies and procedures be framed and put into place," says Rahul Dwarkadas, co-founding partner, Veritas Legal.

"For example, educating the board and employees that the use of technology, which apart from providing alternative options that differ from the traditional manner in doing things, such as executing a contract, can nonetheless convey an affirmation even if made informally or with the use of signage," Mr. Dwarkadas observed.

The solution to safeguard boardrooms from tech risks lies in four steps: awareness and education, anticipation of the problems a corporate could face, investment in training and safeguard measures, and liability insulation, the legal experts said.

TVS Motor to invest in new products, technologies to drive topline growth: MD

N. Anand
CHENNAI



Sudarshan Venu

TVS Motor Company (TVSM) aims to drive topline growth by investing in new products and various technologies to strengthen its EV and ICE capabilities, said Managing Director Sudarshan Venu.

"We aim to drive growth by investing in new products and premiumisation," he said in the MD's message to shareholders.

"Our investments in digital connectivity strengthen our EV and ICE capabilities, and we anticipate elevating customer satisfaction with customer-centric investments in software, electronics, and digital connectivity," Mr. Venu said.

While expecting a greater demand surge in the two- and three-wheeler industry in the future due to improvements in road infrastructure and increasing mobility demands, TVSM aims to capitalise on the opportunities by deepening its international presence in the African, Latin American, European, Southeast Asian, and West Asia markets, he said.

On its international presence, TVSM said it was now a global brand company operating in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe. The company is strategically expanding its international presence by fortifying its EV offerings and strengthening its distribution network across

the world. TVSM will initially introduce its premium EV and ICE range in France and Italy, a move that will pave the way for further expansion into select EU markets.

In FY24, TVSM reported a slight decline in two- and three-wheeler exports. The two-wheeler business is expected to rebound in FY25.

African market

The African market is expected to show improvement in recovering from the global slowdown, inflation moderation, currency devaluation, and effects of maritime disruption.

The company said it had put adequate countermeasures in place to address the challenges and expects strong recovery in the international markets in FY25. Asserting that the premium and super-premium markets were expected to grow consistently, the company said its Singapore subsidiary Norton Motorcycle Co. Ltd., UK, was preparing its portfolio to become a strong player with a series of products getting closer to market readiness.

'Chola making strides towards becoming a financial powerhouse'

N. Anand
CHENNAI

Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Co. Ltd. (Chola) continues to make significant progress towards its long-term vision of becoming a financial powerhouse, said the firm's top official.

"Chola has achieved record-breaking disbursements, collections, and profitability in FY24. Alongside this growth of our established businesses, our new ventures are making substantial contributions to both volume and value," Chairman Velayuth Subbiah said in the annual report.

Vehicle finance grew

CV finance could rise in single digits, while two-wheeler loan growth would be 'moderate' in FY25

22%, property loans 46%, while home loans grew by 66%. Small and medium enterprises loans rose 27%, consumer and small enterprise loans by 64% and secured business and personal loans by 138%, he said.

On growth prospects, he said, commercial vehicle segment is expected to rise in single digits in FY25, while two-wheeler finance is expected to grow at a moderate pace this fiscal.

'There's traction in subscription model among transit professionals in tier 1 cities'

Mini Tejaswini
BENGALURU

Maruti Suzuki India Ltd. (MSIL) witnessed significant traction in its car subscription model in FY24, said Partho Banerjee, a senior company official.

There were more than 10,000 cars across India of all MSIL brands put together since subscriptions were introduced in July 2020 till the close of FY24.

Post-pandemic recovery While the COVID-19 pandemic hit uptake severely, growth has been steep in the past couple of years.

Subscribers are mainly those who are in India on short-term projects or engagements for under two



Hassle free: Those in India on short-term projects and young professionals who prefer not to own assets are subscribing, REUTERS

years. But young professionals who increasingly believe in shared services and do not prefer to own assets are also opting for the subscription model, Mr. Banerjee said.

"We saw good traction for the subscription model last year. The growth in the subscription model was

some time to find greater acceptance in India, because people still consider owning a car as an investment, he added.

"But subscription is certainly an option we offer to our customers. Generally, in mature markets people tend to go for the subscription model. In India, we are seeing interest among young customers," Mr. Banerjee observed.

This model is hassle free, without requiring a loan and customers could return the car, or upgrade after the tenure period.

He said the trend was evident in Hyderabad, Delhi and Bengaluru and other metro cities where there were large numbers of transit professionals.

This model may take

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STEP

Air pollution harms pollinators more than pests, study finds

The Hindu Bureau

Bees and other beneficial bugs are disproportionately harmed by air pollution compared to crop-destroying pests, according to a new study. Researchers from the University of Reading analysed data from 120 scientific papers to understand how 40 types of insects in 19 countries respond to air pollutants like ozone, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide and

particulate matter. The study published in the journal *Nature Communications* found that pollinators – including bees and some moths and butterflies – experienced a 39% decline in foraging efficiency after being exposed to elevated air pollution levels. In contrast, plant-eating aphids and other pests were not significantly impacted.

The researchers suggest that beneficial insects – such as bees and wasps –

are more affected by air pollution due to their reliance on scent-based communication. Many beneficial insects use airborne chemical signals to locate flowers, find mates, or hunt their prey.

Air pollutants can chemically alter these scent trails or interfere with insects' ability to detect them, essentially disrupting their sensory landscape. In contrast, many pests rely less on long-dis-

tance scent cues and more on direct contact or visual cues, making them less vulnerable to air pollution's effects on airborne chemical signals.

The study focused on how air pollution impacts various insect behaviour and biological aspects, including feeding, growth, survival, reproduction, and ability to locate food sources. Of all these factors, insects' ability to find food was most severely im-

paired by air pollution, declining by about one-third on average.

Among air pollutants, ozone emerged as particularly harmful to beneficial insects, reducing their ability to thrive and carry out their roles in the ecosystem by 35%. Ozone pollution has the most detrimental impacts and even low ozone levels below current air quality standards can cause significant damage. Nitrogen oxides

also substantially impaired beneficial insects.

"Changes in invertebrate performance are not dependent on air pollutant concentrations, indicating that even low levels of pollution are damaging. Predicted increases in tropospheric ozone could result in unintended consequences to global invertebrate populations and their valuable ecological services," the researchers write.

SNAPSHOTS



Experiment reveals barley's climate-driven adaptation

Leveraging one of the world's oldest biological experiments – which began in 1929 – researchers have uncovered how barley was shaped by both agricultural pressures and the natural environment. Although the experiment began with thousands of genotypes, scientists show that natural selection has reduced this diversity, leading to the dominance of a clonal lineage constituting most of the population. The results underscore the power of long-term studies in understanding adaptive evolution.



New atmospheric particles form in upper troposphere

New atmospheric particles form when stratospheric air intrudes into the troposphere below, revealing a previously unrecognised mechanism for new particle formation (NPF) in the upper troposphere. The finding suggests that NPF aloft occurs frequently and over large geographic regions. Aerosol particles smaller than one micron in diameter are abundant in the troposphere. They serve as condensation sites for water vapor, contributing to cloud formation, and play a role in Earth's radiative balance.



Island vertebrates are at risk of human-driven extinction

A study involving 2,813 species of tetrapod vertebrates shows that island-dwelling species have slower relative metabolic rates than their mainland counterparts. Moreover, this slow pace of life puts insular species at a higher risk of anthropogenic extinction. Island evolution is a balancing act. Species must adapt to a limited space with finite resources, leading to unique characteristics, such as dwarfism or gigantism. This phenomenon is called 'island syndrome'.

Nobel laureate supports India's pursuit for a neutrino lab

Nobel laureate Takaaki Kajita opens up about the parallels and contrasts between Japan and India's quests to further research on enigmatic elementary particles called neutrinos

Nandita Jayaraj

If the obstacle-ridden India-based Neutrino Observatory (INO) ever becomes a reality, it will be one of the largest basic science projects in the country. Nobel laureate and neutrino researcher Takaaki Kajita is convinced that the proposed underground laboratory is still worth fighting for.

Neutrinos are abundant particles that may be relevant to our understanding of the origin of matter in the universe. About 60 years ago, historic science experiments inside a goldmine in Kolar, Karnataka, would lead to the 1965 discovery of atmospheric neutrinos. This was a collaboration between Indian, Japanese and British scientists.

Awakened to the potential of neutrino research, Japan continued with experiments on – or rather, under – their soil, in the underground Kamioka Observatory situated under Mount Ikeno. This was where Masatoshi Koshiba's team would discover cosmic neutrinos in the late 1980s. Subsequently, Japan decided to establish a dedicated neutrino observatory, Super-Kamiokande, which began operation in 1996. In 2002, Koshiba won a Nobel Prize for his contributions.

Indian scientists had no intention of being left behind. Though the original experiments had to end in 1992 due to the closure of the goldmines in Kolar, plans to build our own observatory were already un-

India's INO dream is worth salvaging

Over a decade after a proposal was drawn, the fate of INO is still uncertain

- About 60 years ago, historic science experiments inside a goldmine in Kolar, Karnataka, led to the 1965 discovery of atmospheric neutrinos
- This was a collaboration between Indian, Japanese and British scientists
- Japan continued with experiments in the underground Kamioka Observatory situated under Mount Ikeno
- Japan established a dedicated underground observatory, Super-Kamiokande, which began operation in 1996
- The INO would be located a kilometre underground, and hence would have minimal impact on wildlife and the ecosystem

- The experiments to be will neither produce any radioactivity nor can it function well where there is radiation
- In fact, the main reason for locating the laboratory underground is to create an environment free of the radiation that abounds on the Earth's surface

Nobel laureate Takaaki Kajita is convinced that the proposed underground laboratory is still worth fighting for.

PHOTO: NANDITA JAYARAJ



derway. After extensive deliberations, a proposal was drawn and in 2011, the Indian government announced its intention to set aside about Rs.1,350 crores for an India-based Neutrino Observatory, which would be situated 1.3 km underground in Tamil Nadu. Over a decade later, there has been no progress. Today, the fate of INO is uncertain.

Meanwhile, Japanese researchers received the first evidence for a phenomenon called neutrino oscillation within a year of the Super-Kamiokande. This discovery would go on to (jointly) win Koshiba's student Takaaki Kajita, another Nobel in 2015.

Having spent his entire research career in Japan, Takaaki Kajita is a living example of how much is to be gained by having a neutrino laboratory close to home. "We can easily ac-

cess the laboratory and the detector is nearby," he said, in an interview with this reporter during the 73rd Lindau Nobel Laureate Meeting which concluded on July 5.

Two of the main reasons for opposition to INO are adverse environmental impacts and the fear of radioactivity. This is despite INO scientists repeatedly stating that the observatory would be located a kilometre underground and hence would have minimal impact on wildlife and the ecosystem. What about radioactivity? "The experiment will neither produce any radioactivity nor can it function well where there is radiation," they point out on INO's website. The whole point of housing the detector underground is to protect it from the natural radiation that hits the surface of Earth.

According to Kajita, the

Japanese project did not face as much opposition. "We decided to construct the detector in an active mine, so there was no need for additional excavation," he pointed out. Besides, the original experiment was designed to search not for neutrinos but for a hypothetical phenomenon called proton decay. "That was nothing to do with radiation," he said. The biggest stroke of luck for the Japanese neutrino scientists was the timing of a supernova that was observed in February 1987. The Supernova 1987A happened while the Kamiokande-II detector was online, leading to the discovery of cosmic neutrinos by the team led by Koshiba. "This had a great impact. People suddenly knew neutrinos, and had only a good image about them," said Kajita, who was Koshiba's PhD student.

Nipah monoclonal antibody trials may begin in India in 2025

R. Prasad

If the Indian drug regulator greenlights it, a human clinical trial to test the safety and efficacy of a novel Nipah monoclonal antibody MBPIF5, which might offer immediate protection to people at risk of infection against the deadly disease, might begin next year. A similar trial will be carried out in Bangladesh as well. Though trials on many vaccines are currently under way, there is no approved vaccine anywhere in the world. The Nipah virus has a 40% to 75% mortality rate in people who are infected.

India and Bangladesh have been chosen for the trial as Nipah virus outbreaks have been reported in these two countries in recent years. Nipah outbreaks have occurred in Kerala in 2018, 2019, 2021 and 2023. In the case of

Bangladesh, Nipah outbreaks have been occurring since 2001; the virus has been reported from 34 of 64 districts in Bangladesh with 341 cases detected so far and 242 deaths.

The novel Nipah monoclonal antibody is currently undergoing a phase-I clinical trial in the U.S., which is carried out by the U.S. Department of Defence.

A spokesperson of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), which is funding the human trials, told *The Hindu* that the trial led by Servareddy GMP (a non-profit biotechnology organisation based in California) and supported by Mapp Biopharmaceutical, which is also located in California, will work with local clinical research networks to carry out the trial in India and Bangladesh.

The trial in India and Bangladesh will begin



Fruit bats are natural reservoirs of Nipah virus. VELANKANNI RAJ B

"upon completion of the U.S. Department of Defence Phase-I trial in the U.S." "Servareddy GMP, Mapp and CEPI have already initiated discussions with public health and regulatory authorities in India and Bangladesh about the desire to conduct this trial," he says.

According to the CEPI spokesperson, the trial in India is planned to begin in 2025, pending regulatory review. The assessment made by the Indian drug

regulator will determine "whether the Phase-I trial data carried out by the U.S. Department of Defence will be sufficient to continue onwards with Phase-2 trials in India, or whether Phase-I data should also be collected from the Indian population."

The number of participants who will be recruited for the clinical trial will depend on whether the clinical trial begins as a phase-I or phase-2 trial in India. "But the intention is to re-

cruit at least 200 participants," says the spokesperson.

While the trial will be conducted in multiple sites in both countries, the decision on the location and number of sites appropriate to generate data that demonstrate the safety and tolerability of the monoclonal antibody will be taken based upon consultation with public health and regulatory authorities, he says.

"Preclinical studies for pre-exposure prophylaxis have been completed. In these studies, conducted in animal models, the monoclonal antibody has demonstrated high potency against the Nipah virus, proving it effective at preventing the virus from entering the host cell and causing Nipah virus disease. In preclinical studies, this Nipah monoclonal antibody has been shown to be safe at all dose levels

tested," he says.

The monoclonal antibody is designed to bind to the Nipah virus F protein, preventing the virus from entering a host cell and causing infection in people. "This mechanism will offer protection against both known strains of Nipah virus (Bangladesh and Malaysia) and its closely related viral cousin, Hendra virus, for at least six months – enough time for vaccine immunity to build," says a CEPI release.

In response to a question about equitable access to monoclonal antibodies, once the trial results are positive, he says: "Alongside ensuring pricing commitments for Global South countries, a reserve of monoclonal antibody doses will be stored in a Nipah-affected country, helping to enable rapid availability in the event of an outbreak and accessibility for those most in need."



Question Corner

Heart rate

What is the maximum heart rate of male noctule bats?

To record the heart rate of male common noctule bats during flight, the scientists attached heart rate transmitters weighing less than one gram to the animals, which they then accompanied in an airplane while the bats flew, sometimes for more than an hour, in search of food. The researchers found that the heart rate of bats reaches around 900 beats per minute within only a few minutes during flight. Using the unique recordings of heart beats, the scientists discovered fascinating strategies that bats use to budget their

energy consumption in different seasons. They found that male common noctule bats consume up to 42% more energy in summer compared to spring. This is mainly due to the fact that the bats in spring go into a kind of short day-time hibernation known as "torpor" – an energy-saving state in which heart rate can be reduced to six beats per minute. Male bats did not use torpor in summer at all. In summer, food is plentiful and so males stay awake during the day to invest energy in sperm production.

Readers may send their questions / answers to questioncorner@thehindu.co.in

The SC ruling on portrayal of disability in films

Are the laws governing rights of differently abled persons being implemented properly?

Sreeparna Chakrabarty

The story so far:

In July 8, while hearing a plea to ban the film *Aaanikh Micholi* for derogatory portrayal of people with disabilities, the Supreme Court in a landmark ruling laid down comprehensive guidelines to prevent stereotyping and discrimination of persons with disabilities (PwDs) in visual media, including films and documentaries.

What is the framework?

The Supreme Court's framework focuses on the prevention of stigmatisation and discrimination, recognising their profound impact on the dignity and identity of persons with disabilities. Among the guidelines is a call to avoid words that cultivate institutional discrimination, such as "cripple" and "spastic," as they contribute to negative self-image and perpetuate discriminatory attitudes. A Bench headed by the Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud said stereotyping differently abled persons in visual media and films must end, asking creators to provide an accurate representation of disabilities rather than mocking them. Language that individualises the impairment and overlooks disabling social barriers, for example, words like "afflicted," "suffering" and "victim," should be avoided, it said. The court also asked creators to practice the principle of "nothing about us, without us," and involve persons with disabilities in the creation and assessment of visual media content.

What are laws which grant disability rights?

The law which comprehensively deals with disability rights is the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act which came into force from April 19, 2017. It replaced the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995. The National Trust Act (1999), Rehabilitation Council of India Act (1992), Mental Health Care Act (2017) are the other laws that govern disability rights.

According to Shashank Pandey, a lawyer based out of Delhi and a founder of the Politics and Disability Forum, there are broadly two models under which disability rights are looked at, namely medical and social models. The human rights model, which is a recent one, is an evolution of the social model which says that people with disability are a part of society and have the same rights as everyone else. The Supreme Court's emphasis on the human rights model is significant as it makes the government and private parties obliged to facilitate full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society. The advantage is that it places individuals in a sphere where all human rights principles which are applicable to anyone can be claimed by the disabled populace. The disadvantage is that it is an abstract idea and difficult to implement, says Mr. Pandey. The framework is also limited, as it is only for visual media, he adds, pointing out that the guidelines could have been sent by the SC to all departments for sensitisation.

V. Muralidharan of the National Platform for the Rights of the Disabled welcomed the ruling, adding that the framework has stressed on the guidelines which were in place in the 2016 legislation. He rues the fact that the law is not being implemented properly. "However, we cannot lose sight of the conditions prevailing in the country. Disabled people are still considered objects of charity. Even the government's coinage of 'Divyang' looks at disability through the lens of charity. It is regressive and reinforces a patronising mindset. Also, the usage of words like 'pappu' and 'balak budhi' by the ruling party to paint its opponents in a poor light only shows how big the battle is," he points out.

What about creative freedom?

Cinematic expression doesn't have absolute power when it operates in the context of marginalised communities. It has to be looked at from the overall context of the expression and intent behind the expression. The Supreme Court said "the creative freedom of the filmmaker cannot include the freedom to lampoon, stereotype, misrepresent or disparage those already marginalised". In determining these aspects, the "intention" and "overall message" of the film have to be considered.

What is the way forward?

The court emphasised on collaboration with disability advocacy groups to gain invaluable insights and guidance on respectful and accurate portrayals, ensuring the content aligns with the lived experiences of persons with disabilities. It has also said that implementing training programmes for writers, directors, producers, and actors to emphasise the impact of portrayals on public perceptions and the lived experiences of persons with disabilities is a necessity.

Why is militancy on the rise in Jammu?

Are acts of terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir shifting to the Rajouri-Poonch-Kathua sector after being quiet for two decades? What are the reasons for the new trend? What are the challenges of monitoring this sector? Are more troops needed? What is the situation on the ground?

Vijaita Singh

The story so far:

In July 8, five Army soldiers were killed and five injured as two Army vehicles were ambushed by militants on a hilly tract in the Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir. This was not an isolated incident. From June 9, five terror strikes have occurred in the Jammu division of the Union Territory, in which eight security personnel and 10 civilians have been killed.

Is a new pattern emerging?

The attacks follow a pattern which suggest concerted attempts to revive militancy in the Jammu region since the past three years – in the Chenab Valley comprising Doda, Kishtwar, Ramban, Kathua, Udhampur and Reasi districts and south of the Pir Panjal comprising Rajouri and Poonch districts. While terror incidents have been common in the Kashmir Valley, the resurgence of militant activity in the Jammu belt, that has remained free of such incidents in the past two decades, has sent alarm bells ringing among the security establishment. This region was a hotbed of militancy in the late 1990s and the early 2000s.

What does the data show?

Since 2021, the Jammu region has witnessed 31 terror incidents in which 47 security forces and 19 civilians have been killed other than 48 terrorists who were killed in various encounters. The Kashmir Valley, meanwhile, reported 263 terror incidents in which 68 security forces and 75 civilians were killed. As many as 417 alleged terrorists have also been killed in the Valley since 2021. A plain reading of numbers shows

After the Galwan clash, a large contingent of the Army was pulled out of Jammu and deployed along the China border

that incidents in Jammu remain far fewer than the Valley, yet it is the frequency and the nature of attacks, targeting pilgrims and security forces that is worrying.

What could be the possible reasons?

The Hindu spoke with multiple officials who offered various reasons for the recurring ambush of security forces and other incidents of violence. After the 2020 Galwan clashes in eastern Ladakh, in which 20 soldiers were killed, a large contingent of the Army was pulled out of Jammu and deployed along the China border. This led to the thinning of the security grid, making the area vulnerable, pointed out security experts. "Inimical elements in the neighbourhood want to engage and exhaust us at both the fronts – the western (Pakistan) and northern (China) borders as part of a design," a top security official said. As there is a heightened state of alert in the Kashmir Valley and little leg room for state-sponsored terrorists, it is convenient to launch terror attacks in Jammu where the guard is relatively down. Post-reading down of Article 370 in J&K in August 2019, and based on indicators such as zero stone-throwing events, no strikes, and a boom in tourism, the government has claimed huge success in the Kashmir Valley in terms of the overall security scenario. "Reviving terrorism in Jammu upsets this narrative. Another possibility is that [militants are trying] to stabilise cadres in the Kashmir Valley while they take up insecurities in Jammu," said another official. The demography of the area is such that the attacks could flare up communal tensions too, leading to social unrest.

Is there an estimate of the number of terrorists active in the region?

According to various estimates, there are around 20-25 hardened militants who are likely to have infiltrated from Pakistan. Their activity has been noticed around 40-50 km from the border. There are likely two groups, one of them is active in the Poonch-Rajouri axis in the west, and the other in the Kathua-Doda-Basantgarh belt in the east. In the Kathua belt, they are operating in a grid of 30-40 sq km, the investigation suggests. Difficult terrain, forested tracts, poor quality of roads and patchy mobile connectivity are some of the challenges.

How is the infiltration happening?

The 192-km international border (IB) along Jammu is secured by the Border Security Force (BSF) while the 740-km Line of Control (LOC), the effective border in the Kashmir Valley and parts of Jammu, is under the operational control

of the Army. Officials said though measures are in place, tough terrain and forested areas along the LOC and vulnerable patches along the IB may have been used for fresh infiltration. An official pointed out that the attacks in the Kathua belt including the July 8 ambush falls on an old infiltration route used by militants two decades ago. "As terrorism ebbed, this route became defunct, it appears to have been revived," said the official.

What about local support to terrorists?

On June 19, the J&K Police arrested a local, Hakam Din (45), for allegedly harbouring the terrorists who attacked the bus carrying pilgrims in Reasi on June 9. Ten pilgrims lost their lives in the attack. However, the evidence of a larger support is not conclusive. "Earlier, the security forces deployed here had direct communication with the locals which led to quick flow of information regarding any suspicious movement. A whole generation that fought the terrorists are in their 60s and 70s now. There is no such connect with the younger generation, it will take time to build that trust with the civilians," the official said. The Village Defence Guards (Committees) (VDGs) are also being revived since December 2022. The training has gathered pace after seven Hindus, including two children, were killed on January 12, 2023 in Dargri in a targeted attack at their homes by unidentified terrorists. Around 30,000 weapons are estimated to be with civilians in Poonch, Rajouri, Samba, Doda and Kishtwar districts. They were distributed to civilians by the local administrations in various phases since 1995 when militancy was at its peak in J&K. The VDGs had to be discontinued amid allegations of crimes such as abduction and rape committed by the members. In 2003, the Army had launched Operation Sarp Vanaash near Hilkaka in the Poonch sector. In the aerial attacks, more than 60 terrorists, who had entrenched themselves in bunkers and trenches in the forest, were killed.

What is the status of the investigation?

Not much headway seems to have been made in apprehending the terrorists involved in the recent attacks. The terrorists who ambushed Army vehicles and killed four soldiers on December 21, 2023 at Bafiaz in Poonch-Rajouri are yet to be identified or caught. The attack was claimed by the People's Anti-Fascist Front (PAFF), a proxy outfit of the Jaish-e-Mohammed that was banned by the Centre in 2023. The terrorist group posted photos of the ambush on social media. After the incident, the Army was accused of custodial torture and death of three locals, which led to a huge outcry. The PAFF also claimed the October 2021 attack after nine soldiers were killed in an ambush in the forested areas of Poonch. Officials said additional security forces were being deployed in the region and loopholes were being plugged.



High alert: Security personnel conduct a search operation after three suspects were seen by locals in the Akhnoor area in Jammu on July 12. ANI

How is India's hunt for critical minerals going?

Why are lithium, copper, cobalt, graphite and others essential for the economy's green transition? In which States have reserves been found? Why have there been hiccups in the auction process? What lies ahead? Which country dominates global supplies?

Vikas Dhoot

The story so far:

In late June, the Centre declared the winning bidders for mining rights in six blocks of critical minerals, including graphite, phosphorite and lithium, for which India largely relies on imports. These are the first private players awarded such rights under the revamped Mines and Minerals law.

Why are critical minerals important?

Minerals such as copper, lithium, nickel, cobalt are known as critical minerals, as they along with some rare earth elements, are essential for the world's ongoing efforts to switch to greener and cleaner energy. As per the International Energy Agency (IEA), lithium demand rose by 30% in 2023, followed by nickel, cobalt, graphite and rare earth elements which saw an 8% to 15% growth, with the aggregate value of such minerals pegged at \$325 billion. In its Global Critical Minerals Outlook 2024 report, the agency has flagged that the world's goal to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius in the net zero emissions scenario, would translate into very rapid growth in demand for these minerals. By 2040, the demand for copper is expected to rise 50%, double for nickel, cobalt and rare earth elements, quadruple for graphite and

India has natural reserves of some of these minerals, but they haven't been explored or tapped fully

eightfold for lithium, which is crucial for batteries. The development of sustainable supply chains for such minerals is, therefore, an unavoidable task. In India, the lack of ready reserves of critical minerals has resulted in 100% import dependence for minerals like lithium, cobalt, and nickel. Late last month, Union Mines Minister G. Kishan Reddy highlighted that 95% of India's copper requirements are met through imports. China is a key supplier or processor of many of these items.

What is being done to spur production?

While India has natural reserves of some of these minerals, they haven't been explored or tapped fully. For instance, India holds 1% of the world's deposits of ilmenite, the main source of titanium dioxide used in many applications, but still imports a billion dollars of titanium dioxide a year, former Mines Secretary Vivek Bhargava once pointed out. Then there is the "lucky" discovery of lithium reserves in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) while the Geological Survey of India (GSI) was exploring the State's terrain for limestone, which triggered hope of some self-sufficiency in the mineral. Announced as the first discovery of lithium in the country last February, these reserves were pegged at 5.9 million tonnes, enthusing the government to expedite its tapping.

Acknowledging that reliance on a few nations for the ores and processing of these minerals could pose significant vulnerabilities for Indian supply chains, the central government amended the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 in August 2023 to enable it to grant mining concessions for 24 critical and strategic minerals. By November, the first auctions of 20 critical mineral blocks, with the lithium block identified in J&K's Reasi district on the list, were launched, followed by two more tranches with 18 more blocks offered this February and March. However, investor interest has been tepid – the auction of most of the first 20 blocks was scrapped for lack of adequate bidders. After a delayed process, the Mines Ministry on June 24, announced six winners from the maiden auction tranche for three blocks in Odisha, and one each in Tamil Nadu,

U.P. and Chhattisgarh. The outcomes of the second and third round of auctions are still awaited, while the Ministry has initiated a fourth tranche, which includes 10 blocks that are being offered for the second time.

Why are some blocks not finding takers?

Among the first attempt blocks offered in the latest auction, two phosphorite blocks along with a glauconite block are in Chhattisgarh, while two blocks each are up for grabs in U.P. (phosphorite and rare earth elements), Karnataka (phosphate and nickel), and Rajasthan (potash and halite). A graphite block is being auctioned in Jharkhand and Arunachal Pradesh, with five additional blocks of graphite, tungsten and vanadium offered in the northeastern State for the second time. The "second attempt" blocks also include a tungsten reserve in Tamil Nadu's Madurai district, a cobalt and manganese block in Karnataka's Shimoga, and a chromium and nickel block in Sindhudurg, Maharashtra. As per industry experts, the reasons for low interest among miners for some of these blocks include the lack of adequate data on the potential reserves buried within them. Technology challenges also affect outcomes. For instance, the lithium block in J&K has clay deposits, and the technology for the mineral's extraction from clay remains untested globally, pointed out Girishkumar Kadam, senior vice-president and group head for corporate sector ratings at ICRA.

When is domestic production likely to begin?

Given the preliminary stage of exploration for most of the domestic blocks being auctioned, their commercialisation and associated benefits are unlikely to fully accrue in the current decade ending 2030, ICRA said. "India's manufacturing is thus likely to remain exposed to potential future supply shocks of these minerals till then," it concluded. Apart from spurring exploration and attracting more miners, the Centre is looking to acquire overseas assets from key resource-rich regions as a parallel measure to bolster mineral security. The first such mine, for lithium brine, was acquired in Argentina this year by Khanji Bidesh India Limited, a joint venture of NALCO, Hindustan Copper, and Mineral Exploration Company. While it scouts for more assets, India has also joined the U.S.-led Mineral Security Partnership, a block consisting of large buyers and sellers of critical minerals.



Big discovery: The lithium stones found in Reasi, Jammu in 2023. PTI

PROFILES

France's 'republican dam'

New Popular Front

The leftwing alliance, cobbled together just weeks before France's legislative elections, stopped the far-right juggernaut of Marine Le Pen in its tracks and emerged as the largest bloc in parliament, but political uncertainty prevails as no group has a majority

G. Sampath

In a development that has stunned most political observers, the New Popular Front (Nouveau Front Populaire, or NFP), a leftwing coalition, has won the most number of seats in France's legislative elections that concluded on July 7. It secured 182 seats, defeating both President Emmanuel Macron's centrist alliance Ensemble (168), and the far-right National Rally (RN), which performed way below poll predictions, mustering only 143. With 289 needed for absolute majority in the 577-member National Assembly, and none of the three major political blocs close to this figure, France has been plunged into political uncertainty. But the country wasn't even due for elections this year.

The whole chain of events began with the European Parliament elections in June. Marine Le Pen's RN finished at the top with 31.37% of the votes, handing a crushing defeat to Mr. Macron's Ensemble, which came a distant second with 14.60% votes. Mr. Macron responded to this setback by dissolving the National Assembly and calling snap polls. He justified his decision as intended to save France from being taken over by a resurgence far-right, ostensibly by forcing the French to choose between the moderates and those on the political extremes.

Many analysts, however, criticised his move as an impetuous gamble. The first round of the elections on June 30 seemed to vindicate the criticism. The RN won 33% of the votes, while the Macronists got just 21% — even less than what they secured in the first round in 2022. The NFP came second with 28%. Ahead of the run-off on July 7, exit polls predicted a comfortable win for the RN. But to everyone's surprise, the leftwing bloc came first.

The NFP is a last-minute, hastily cobbled together coalition of four left-of-centre elements — the Socialists, the Greens, the Communists, and the hard-left France Unbowed of Jean-Luc Melançon. The same four had come together to form the New Ecological and Social Popular Union (NUPES) ahead of the 2022 legislative elections,



Raphael Glucksmann (Place Publique), Laurent Berger (trade unionist), Jean-Luc Melançon (France Unbowed) and Marine Tondelier (Green).

where they won 142 seats and denied Mr. Macron a majority. But NUPES broke up last October following Hamas's surprise attack and Israel's retaliatory invasion of Gaza. The fragmentation was triggered by Mr. Melançon's stand against describing the Hamas attack as "terrorist", prompting the Socialists to quit the alliance.

Pressure from the ground

No one expected the perennially squabbling left parties to reunite so swiftly. But this time, the pressure for left unity was immense, and came from the ground up — from trade unions, citizens' collectives, and civil society organisations. In the aftermath of the RN's dominant performance in the European elections, and pollsters predicting a far-right victory in the election to come, thousands took to the streets, pressuring different sections of the French left to, in the words of Mr. Melançon, "throw their resentments in the river" and stand together as a "republican dam" against the destructive flood of fascism.

The very name 'New Popular Front' is a throwback to the Popular Front of 1936, the historic leftwing alliance led by socialist Prime Minister Leon Blum, which pushed back against fascism even as the rest of Europe crumbled before it. It is considered customary for the French Left to unite whenever the Republic is threatened by fascist forces. With victory for the RN a near certainty, the ex-NUPES parties worked overtime to negotiate a common platform, which became the NFP.

The results of the first round were encouraging for the alliance, as they finished second. But it wasn't going to be enough to stop the RN from forming the government. Had it done so, it would have been the first time a far-right party came to power in France since the Vichy regime of the Second World War. But the NFP managed to avert this eventuality, thanks in large measure to the tactical understanding it reached with Macronists for the second round.

Invoking the notion of the 'Republican dam', both the NFP and

Mr. Macron's party withdrew more than 200 candidates from three-way contests to avoid splitting the anti-RN vote. While the NFP withdrew more than 130 candidates, about 80 Macronists stepped back, so that the run-offs became a two-way contest between the far-right and the rest. The strategy worked. Both Ensemble and the NFP did well while the RN's performance slumped. The RN's president, Jordan Bardella, complained bitterly about this tactic, calling it a "dishonourable alliance" that has "deprived the French people" of an RN victory.

When the results came out, Mr. Melançon described them as a victory for the NFP and proclaimed that Mr. Macron should invite his alliance to form the new government. A minority government that forms issue-based coalitions is not unthinkable in France. There are constitutional provisions under which laws can be passed by decree. But Mr. Macron seems reluctant to work with a Prime Minister from the NFP, whose political programme is directly at odds

with his own. Despite the sharp erosion in his party's numbers, he has refused to accept Prime Minister Gabriel Attali's resignation, asking him to temporarily continue in office. According to the Constitution, Mr. Macron, whose own term extends till 2027, cannot dissolve the Assembly and call for fresh elections at least for one year, or until June 2025.

'Acts of rupture'

But the French Left are projecting the election results as both a defeat of the far-right and a mandate for an NFP government. The core of the NFP's policy agenda is what they call "acts of rupture", or a break from the status quo of Mr. Macron's neoliberal economics. Weighted heavily by the priorities of its largest constituent, France Unbowed, the NFP's 'rupture' programme tries to capture the spirit of the original Popular Front, which pioneered landmark pro-labour legislation such as paid vacations and 40-hour work weeks.

As per its policy programme, the NFP, if it comes to power, would immediately freeze the prices of essentials like food and gas, hike the minimum wage, and reverse Mr. Macron's pension reform that increased the retirement age to 64. Subsequently, they would repeal Mr. Macron's immigration law and reintroduce the wealth tax. On the foreign policy front, they will recognise Palestinian statehood and replace the idea of "unconditional support" for any nation with support for international rule of law.

As things stand, however, in order to form the government, the NFP may have to make several compromises, including junking the idea of Mr. Melançon as Prime Minister.

With Mr. Macron under no deadline to name a new Prime Minister, the messy political scenario may not resolve itself before the Olympics, the nation's top priority at the moment, are over. For now, the French Left are basking in their unforeseen success in halting the far-right juggernaut in its tracks — an achievement that continues to elude mainstream political parties across much of Europe.

THE GIST

The very name 'New Popular Front' is a throwback to the Popular Front of 1936, the leftwing alliance led by socialist Prime Minister Leon Blum, which pushed back against fascism

The NFP secured 182 seats in the June-July elections, defeating both President Emmanuel Macron's centrist alliance Ensemble (168), and the far-right National Rally (RN), which mustered 143

As per NFP's policy programme, it would freeze the prices of essentials like food and gas, hike the minimum wage, and reverse Macron's pension reform

Engineer of victory

Sheikh Abdul Rashid

The founder of the Awami Ittehad Party, in jail from 2019, took a resounding victory from Baramulla beating bigwigs such as Omar Abdullah and Sajjad Lone

Peerzada Ashiq

Sheikh Abdul Rashid, widely known as Engineer Rashid, on July 5, took oath as the Member of Parliament of the Baramulla constituency, in a closed chamber in New Delhi, away from the media gaze. Hailing from a small town of Langate, close to the Line of Control (LoC), in north Kashmir's Kupwara district, the 56-year-old founder of the Awami Ittehad Party became the first jailed Kashmiri leader to have elected to Parliament.

The story of Mr. Rashid's rise as a politician is like a script lifted straight out of Bollywood.

Long before he completed his diploma in civil engineering, Mr. Rashid, in his early 20s, was forced to work as a porter for the Army. He cleared live mines to ensure the Army had a safe passage in the volatile and militancy-dominated Kupwara district.

Cut to 2005: Mr. Rashid, then a junior engineer in the Roads and Buildings Department, was kidnapped by militants in Sopore for refusing to hand over construction material to them. The militants would accuse him of "indulging in anti-militancy activities". A year later, security forces detained him on the charges of supporting militancy. He paid



₹35,000 and three mobile phones as bribe to avoid Public Safety Act (PSA), a law pertaining to preventive detention up to two years without a trial, he later said. "My father sold land to pay the bribe," Mr. Rashid told this reporter after his release, five months after he was jailed. But he lost the government job in the course.

Political entry

Mr. Rashid plunged into politics in 2008 with the sole aim of "getting a security cover and a vehicle". However, destiny had other plans. He won the 2008 Assembly elections from Langate and as an MLA, he addressed the public issues that other leaders hardly touched. He got areas of Langate free from Army camps and checkpoints for easy movement of locals. He would hit streets against alleged human rights abuses.

Wearing nylon slippers or plastic shoes or donning a Khan suit or a phe-

ran, a long woollen robe for winters, Mr. Rashid stood out for his rustic look in the Assembly with most MLAs neatly dressed. He brought in resolutions on including the United Jihad Council, an amalgam of militant outfits, into talks over Kashmir, and sought clemency for Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru. He also made 3,000 youth to take pledge against stone pelting in 2010.

There was an incident which his followers cite to explain how he managed to establish a strong connect with the locals. In 2011, Mr. Rashid heard a knock on the door at around 1 O'clock. It was a man who left home to commit suicide but decided to share his problem with the MLA. The man wanted to marry a girl from a different caste but faced opposition. Mr. Rashid drove in the night to the girl's home and managed to fix the date and marriage with the family.

It's this goodwill that re-

flected in his election battles. Though he lost the 2019 Parliament elections, he got 1.2 lakh votes against the J&K National Conference's (JKNC) 1.33 lakh votes. A few months later, he was arrested under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, just as the Centre revoked J&K's special status on August 5, 2019. The NIA, in its chargesheet, said, "The role of Engineer Rashid, in the conspiracy to destabilise Kashmir and cause unrest, has been revealed".

Imprisonment did not weaken Mr. Rashid's fighting spirit. In the 2024 election, he defeated former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, and J&K Peoples Conference's Sajjad Lone in Baramulla. Rashid won 4.72 lakh votes against Abdullah's 2.68 lakh.

"The argument that Rashid won because separatists voted for him is a fallacy. Data suggests he took a lead in areas where Pahar and Gujars communities live and won maximum Shia votes in several areas," Mr. Rashid's campaigner and son Abrar Rashid told *The Hindu*.

"The electoral 'victory' is for the voiceless," his son said. "People of Kashmir deserve an honourable resolution of all issues and if they have chosen Rashid to speak for them in Parliament, he should be allowed," Mr. Abrar added.

Rebel with a cause

Jeremy Corbyn

The former Labour leader, known for his left-wing activism and strong support for the Palestine cause, has won his Islington North constituency as an independent

ILLUSTRATIONS: SREEJITH R. KUMAR

Privali Prakash

Leftwing leader Jeremy Corbyn, who has represented Islington North in the U.K. Parliament since 1983, won the constituency for a historic 11th time in the July 4 election. Mr. Corbyn, who led the Labour Party from 2015 to 2020, is one of the six independent MPs currently sitting in the U.K. Parliament, out of a total of 650 members.

Over the years, Mr. Corbyn has emerged as a tall figure of the British Left. Even though he was unceremoniously suspended from Labour in 2020, Mr. Corbyn has spent most of his life as a Labour leader, as a socialist on the political left. His tenure as the party leader was marred by complaints of antisemitism from within the ranks.

In July 2018, three Jewish newspapers in the U.K. printed the same headline — "United We Stand" — to draw attention to alleged antisemitism under Mr. Corbyn's leadership. The Labour Party responded by saying there was no threat to the Jewish people, after concerns were raised regarding the party's "failure" to completely adopt the definition of 'antisemitism' as given by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

A 2013 video of Mr. Corbyn speaking at a meeting



convened by the Palestinian Return Centre also later became a focal point of criticism from Zionists. In his speech, he called Zionists out for two problems: "One is that they don't want to study history and, secondly, having lived in this country for a very long time, probably all their lives, they don't understand English irony either." Mr. Corbyn had dismissed allegations of antisemitism as "political". He said he supported "a zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of racism".

Mr. Corbyn has never shied away from supporting the Palestinian cause, which forms a cornerstone of his politics even today. He has showed up at multiple protests demanding a ceasefire in Gaza following Israel's invasion of the strip after Hamas's attacks on October 7, 2023. Mr. Corbyn also questioned former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's refusal to support calls for a ceasefire in Gaza.

Mr. Corbyn's position as

a backbench MP over the years has also allowed him to freely express his views, even if those are against the party's official policies. He has often been called the "most rebellious Labour MP of recent times". By 2015, he had voted against the party leadership over 500 times since when former Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair came to power in 1997. He voted against the Blair government's decision to join the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. As the Labour leader in 2016, he called the war a "catastrophe" after the Chilcot Report found that Mr. Blair knowingly exaggerated the threat posed by Iraq's Saddam Hussein.

LBGTQ rights

The Independent MP has also been a long-time ally of LBGTQ rights in the U.K. He famously spoke in favour of the community in 1983, although a statement in 2017 where he said people should not be persec-

ed if they "chose" to be gay or lesbian drew criticism from some sections of society. The U.K. allowed same-sex marriage in 2013. Mr. Corbyn's connect with the voters of his Islington North constituency is no surprise — he has been their candidate of choice to Parliament for over 40 years now. Islington is a diverse area in North London. According to the 2021 Census, 7.1% of Islington residents identified their ethnic group within the "other" category ("Arab" or "any other ethnic group").

"Corbyn always showed up to the protests and gatherings (in Islington North) which the local community appreciated immensely," Annapurna Menon, a Sheffield University teaching associate who lived in Islington North while pursuing her PhD, told *The Hindu*. Ms. Menon reminisced about talking to Mr. Corbyn during a Black Lives Matter protest in the constituency, and how he stood as "a symbol against oppression and for resistance" for the local Islington community. In his last monthly update before the elections, Mr. Corbyn said the issues related to housing, refugees, and environment will continue to be of prime importance to him. He also added that he was "determined to ensure Gaza stays at the forefront of our politicians' minds".

BUENOS AIRES

Argentina President declares Hamas a 'terrorist organisation'



REUTERS

Argentina has declared the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas an "international terrorist organization" over its October 7 assault on Israel and an "extensive history" of attacks, the presidency announced. President Javier Milei had visited Israel in February, where he likened Hamas's attack to the Holocaust. AFP

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan says its \$7 billion relief package will be last deal from IMF



AFP

The International Monetary Fund agreed to loan Pakistan \$7 billion to bolster its economy, with Islamabad pledging it would be the last time it relied on relief from the lender. Pakistan agreed to the deal—its 24th IMF payout since 1958—in exchange for unpopular reforms, including widening its chronically low tax base. AFP

KYIV

Five civilians, two officials killed by Russian attacks in Ukraine



REUTERS

Five civilians were killed by Russian fire on Saturday in Ukraine, with one missile attack carried out after emergency services had arrived at the scene of an earlier attack. A police officer and an emergency rescue officer were killed by that second strike in the village of Budy in Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region. AFP

SEOUL

N. Korea threatens to boost nuclear arsenal after U.S.-South Korea deal



AFP

North Korea threatened to boost its nuclear fighting capability and make the U.S. and South Korea pay "an unimaginably harsh price" as it slammed its rivals' new defence guidelines. North Korea said the U.S.-South Korea guidelines betrayed "their sinister intention to step up preparations for a nuclear war against" North Korea. AP

Massive Israeli strike in Gaza leaves 90 dead, 300 injured

Israel claims to have targeted Mohammed Deif, the shadowy chief of Hamas's military wing and an architect of the Oct. 7 attack; the strike lands inside the Israeli-designated safe zone of Muwasi

Associated Press
JERUSALEM

Israel said it targeted Hamas's shadowy military commander in a massive strike in the southern Gaza Strip that killed at least 90 people, half of them women and children.

It was not immediately known whether Mohammed Deif was among the dead. But Israeli officials confirmed that he and a second Hamas commander, Rafa Salama, were the targets.

Talks may derail

Deif is believed by many to be the chief architect of the October 7 attack that killed some 1,200 people in



Tall cost: The debris following an Israeli military strike on the al-Mawasi camp near the city of Khan Younis on Saturday. AFP

southern Israel and triggered the Israel-Hamas war. He has topped Israel's most-wanted list for years and is believed to have escaped multiple Israeli assassinations attempts in the

claim. "This is not the first time that the occupation has claimed to target Palestinian leaders, and their lies were later proven to be false," the group said in a post on X.

The Gaza Health Ministry said at least 300 others were injured in the attack and that many of the injured and dead were taken to nearby Nasser Hospital.

Witnesses said the strike landed inside Muwasi, the Israeli designated safe zone that stretches from northern Rafah to Khan Younis. The coastal strip is where hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians have fled in search of safety, sheltering mostly in makeshift tents.

Hamas rejected the

Imran, wife acquitted in marriage case; jail release more likely

Associated Press
ISLAMABAD

A Pakistani court on July 13 overturned the conviction and seven-year prison sentence of former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his wife in the case of the couple's alleged 2018 unlawful marriage case, removing the last known hurdle in the way of his release nearly a year after he was jailed.

The acquittal comes two weeks after another appeals court upheld the February 5 conviction and sentence of Mr. Khan and

his wife, Bushra Bibi. The court said if the couple is not wanted in any other case, they should be released.

Ms. Bibi was previously married to a man who claimed that they divorced in November 2017, less than three months before she married Mr. Khan. Islamic law requires a three-month waiting period before a new marriage.

Ms. Bibi has said they divorced in August 2017 and the couple insisted during the trial that they did not violate the waiting period.

Exiled Tibetan leadership welcomes Biden's assent to the Resolve Tibet Act

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

The leadership of the Central Tibetan Administration in exile has welcomed Presidential assent to the Resolve Tibet Act in the U.S. Welcoming President Joe Biden's signature on the Act, Skiyong Penpa Tsering has vowed to campaign for the Tibetan issue through "non-violent means". The approval of the Resolve Tibet Act by the U.S. President drew a strong response from Beijing, which argued that the law "grossly interfered in China's domestic affairs". "Please accept heartfelt



The Act enhances U.S. support for Tibet and promotes dialogue between China and the Dalai Lama for a peaceful solution. REUTERS

prayers of gratitude from the Tibetan people, especially those inside occupied Tibet, who will rejoice in the renewed hope and

inspiration that today's victory brings to their hearts. May the just cause of Tibet prevail. May non-violence and truth prevail," said Si-

kyong Tsering, after President Biden signed the text of the Resolve Tibet Act on July 12.

The Act, which was passed by the House in February and the Senate in May, enhances U.S. support for Tibet and promotes dialogue between China and the Dalai Lama for a peaceful solution.

Commenting on the development, the CTA observed that the U.S. law declares the officials of the Chinese government as well as the Communist Party of China are often "historically inaccurate" while arguing about China's claims over Tibet.

Russian warships arrive in China for joint naval exercises

Agence France-Presse
MOSCOW

Two Russian warships have arrived in the southern Chinese port city of Zhanjiang to take part in joint naval exercises, the Russian Defence Ministry said on Saturday. China and Russia have greatly reinforced ties since the start of the Russian offensive in Ukraine that began in 2022.

Their common goal is also to reduce the role of the U.S. and the West on the international stage.

"A detachment of vessels from the Pacific fleet will take part in the joint naval exercise — Interaction Maritime 2024," the Ministry announced on Telegram.

First phase

The first phase will take place from Monday-Wednesday and involve anti-air and anti-submarine attacks along with Chinese planes specialised in anti-submarine manoeuvres, it said.

Last year, a similar naval exercise took place off Alaska.

Sport

Argentina seeks 'triple crown' but Colombia will aim for an upset

COPA AMERICA

Agence France-Presse
MIAMI

Argentina can become the first South American team to win the 'triple crown' of three straight major tournament titles if it can overcome a formidable Colombia in Sunday's Copa America final.

Inspired by Lionel Messi, Argentina followed up its 2021 Copa America title with the World Cup triumph a year later and has advanced with little drama to this weekend's showpiece with the Colombians.

Spain is the only other team in international football to have won a World Cup in between two straight continental titles when it clinched Euro wins in 2008 and 2012 either



One last dance? With time catching up on them, it remains to be seen if Messi joins Di Maria and Otamendi on the retirees list. AFP

side of the 2010 World Cup.

As well as achieving that landmark for the squad coached by Lionel Scaloni, a win would also give the 'Albiceleste' a record 16th

Copa America title — it is currently tied with Uruguay on 15 Copa wins.

But Colombia has an impressive streak of its own — it is unbeaten in 28 matches, a record for the team,

and has arguably had the tougher route to the final.

Argentina, ranked number one in the world by FIFA and with a team that has been together for several years, is favourite, but



On a roll: Unbeaten in 28 games, the Colombians will look to extend that run and add a second continental title. AFP

few expect a one-sided game. Rodriguez, who grabbed global attention with his performances in the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, has never truly lived up to expectations at club level but at 34 is producing some of his best football in the yellow jersey of his country.

Colombia's sole Copa America title came in 2001.

There is an emotional factor for Argentina with Sunday's game also a farewell to the national team for 36-year-old winger Angel Di Maria.

While defender Nicolas Otamendi may also depart, it remains to be seen if this will be the last tournament for Messi, who will turn 39 during the 2026 World Cup.

Anahat progresses to the third round

WORLD JR. SQUASH

Sports Bureau

India's Anahat Singh moved into the girls' third round of the World junior squash championships in Houston on Friday.

The 16-year-old women's National champion, seeded 5/8, eased past South African Dene Van Zyl 11-3, 11-2, 11-6 in the second round following a first-round bye, and will next meet Samantha Jaffe (17/32) of the USA.

Compatriot Tiiana Parasrampura (17/32) also advanced with a 14-12, 11-5, 11-5 win over Emma Merion (NZ), while five Indian boys recorded first-round victories.

Other Indian results: Boys: First round: Anahat Singh bt Md. Alinasfan (KSA) 12-10, 11-6, 11-5; Shaurya Bawa (17/32) bt Md. Ammad (Pak) 12-10, 11-3, 11-9; K.S. Arinhat bt Jonathan Reyes (Phi) 11-5, 11-3, 11-6.

Harith Daniel Jaffri (9/16) (Mas) bt Tanveer Singh Mundra 11-4, 11-7, 11-7; Yuvraj Wadhvani (17/32) bt Shu Takahashi (Jpn) 11-3, 11-3, 11-9; Avlokitt Singh bt Kasper Cheung (Aus) 11-9, 11-9, 11-2.

Girls: Second round: Malika Elkarasy (17/32) (Egy) bt Shameena Riaz 11-3, 11-6, 11-2; Dixon Hill (17/32) (USA) bt Nirupama Dubey 11-4, 11-4, 11-5; Helen Tang (17/32) (HK) bt Unnati Tripathi 11-4, 11-5, 11-8.

First round: Shameena bt Maiden-Lee Coe (NZ) 11-4, 13-11, 11-1; Nirupama bt Maria Gomez (Col) 11-4, 11-6, 7-11, 11-6; Savannah Moxham (Bel) bt Shehar Nayyar 11-8, 11-7, 11-5; Unnati bt Mariam Ayad (Ger) 12-10, 11-2, 11-2; Tiiana — bye.

Sport

ONE AND TWO

Krejcikova joins the elite list of French-Wimbledon champions



Krejcikova, the 2021 Roland-Garros champion, is one of six women in the Open era (post 1968) to secure their first two singles Majors at the French Open and Wimbledon. The others are Evonne Goolagong (1971), Chris Evert (1974), Garbine Murguzza (2016 and '17), Simona Halep (2018 and '19) and Ash Barty (2019 and '21).

CHIN UP

I have to remember today is still a good day, says Paolini



Jasmine Paolini has now lost two Grand Slam finals back to back after coming off second best to Iga Swiatek at the French Open last month. "I'm a little bit sad but I try to keep smiling, I have to remember today is still a good day," said Paolini, who had never won a grass-court match in her career until last month.

BRIGHT FUTURE

Alcaraz will win many more Slams, hopefully not on Sunday: Djokovic



Novak Djokovic has backed Carlos Alcaraz to rack up more Grand Slam titles, but the Serb hopes that run doesn't start when they clash in a blockbuster Wimbledon final on Sunday. "He is going to win many more Grand Slams, but hopefully in two days not this one," Djokovic said.

ROYAL TOUCH

Princess of Wales set to watch the Wimbledon men's final



The Princess of Wales is set to attend the Wimbledon men's final on Sunday in a rare public appearance after her cancer diagnosis. Kensington Palace confirmed on Saturday that Kate, wife of her to be the throne Prince William, will be in the Royal Box on Centre Court to watch defending champion Carlos Alcaraz play Novak Djokovic.

Ice-cool Krejcikova aces Paolini test to win tennis' holy grail

The Czech defeats the Italian at the same Centre Court where her late mentor Novotna hoisted the Venus Rosewater Dish 26 summers ago



Towards tennis nirvana: Krejcikova let two match-points slip before a huge serve into the ad-court sealed the tie. GETTY IMAGES

N. Sudarshan LONDON

Heading into the Wimbledon final, Barbora Krejcikova was a seven-time Major doubles champion, the 2021 French Open singles winner and an Olympic gold medalist. She had even completed the career Slam in doubles, winning each of the four big titles at least once.

But tennis nirvana, it appears, doesn't quite touch those who are yet to triumph in singles at the historic All England Club. On Saturday, Krejcikova achieved this crowning glory by defeating Italy's Jasmine Paolini in the very first game. She landed 90% of her first serves, won 80% of all service points and a majority on the return.

Management gurus will say that luck arises when preparation meets opportunity and on the day Krejcikova was a tad better at this. The 28-year-old played a superb first set, disappeared in the second before cracking open the contest at 3-3 in the third and holding her nerve during the tense home stretch. Paolini was in form, having reached the French Open final a month ago, and someone whom the SW19 populace had instinctively warmed up to as they would with a striking piece of art.

But Krejcikova hushed them into silence by breaking Paolini in the very first game. She landed 90% of her first serves, won 80% of all service points and a majority on the return.

Virtuoso artist
The 31st seed hit with power and precision, changed direction at will and painted the lines like a virtuoso artist.

In the second, however, Paolini came out swinging.

Four errors into the net from Krejcikova in the second game handed the 28-year-old a crucial break and a toehold. Another break in the eighth game levelled matters and gave Paolini a chance to serve ahead in the third.

The first six games were quiet, but the match turned in the seventh when Krejcikova pressured Paolini and the latter served a double fault on break-point. A love hold to 5-3 seemed to signal the end only for the irrepressible Paolini to attempt one last roll of the dice.

From 5-4, 30-0 up, Krejcikova was forced to face break-point twice. But she saved them with a drop volley and a terrific cross-court forehand. Krejcikova also let two match-points slip before a huge serve into the ad-court ushered the end.

The capacity crowd burst into spontaneous appreciation and would have gone home celebrating Krejcikova but also remembering Paolini.

'Novotna told me that I had the potential to be a champion'

N. Sudarshan LONDON

Wimbledon and the Czech Republic seem to have a special relationship. Four women representing the country have won Grand Slam singles titles and all four have triumphed at SW19, with Barbora Krejcikova joining Jana Novotna (1998), Petra Kvitova (2011 and 2014) and Marketa Vondrousova (2023).

"Nobody is going to believe that I won Wimbledon... I still can't believe it," insisted Krejcikova. "The first match here was three hours and 15 minutes and I won 7-5 in the third. I didn't have a good season and it is unbelievable that I am standing here with this trophy."

The 28-year-old said none of her dreams would have materialised if not for the mentorship of Novotna. "After I finished juniors, I didn't know whether to go professional or into education. She told me that I had potential to be a champion.

"Before she passed away (2017) she asked me

to win a Slam and I achieved that (French Open 2021). I never thought I would also win the same trophy as Jana did. It is very emotional to see me in [the honours] board next to her."

Krejcikova, who is set to re-enter the WTA top-10 on Monday, said it was Novotna who kindled in her the love for Wimbledon.

"When I was 12, I wrote that would like to win the French Open. Things shifted when I actually met Jana and when she was telling me all the stories about Wimbledon, the grass, how difficult it was for her to win and how emotional she was when she made it.

"Since then, I saw Wimbledon as the biggest tournament in the world. I think she will be proud." For Jasmine Paolini, Saturday's finalist, there was a silver lining even in defeat. "As a kid, looking at Wimbledon on TV, I remember cheering for [Roger] Federer. To now be here is great and it has been a beautiful two weeks."



Win-Win: Krejcikova and Paolini made it an exciting finale with a memorable battle. AP



Titanic clash: Alcaraz will do everything he can to deny Djokovic a record-extending 25th Major. GETTY IMAGES

Zestful Alcaraz stands in the way of a resilient Djokovic

N. Sudarshan LONDON

On June 5, when Novak Djokovic had a surgery on his right knee to mend a torn meniscus, Wimbledon seemed as distant as the moon. The Olympic Games, which starts on July 26 in Paris, seemed a realistic target, for he has long coveted singles gold, which his famed rivals Rafael Nadal and Andy Murray both have.

Less than six weeks since going under the surgeon's scalpel, the 37-year-old is in the Wimbledon final for a 10th time – a record 37th in Slams overall – with the opportunity to equal Roger Federer's eight singles crowns at the All England Club and secure a record-extending 25th Major.

In his way is Spain's Carlos Alcaraz, who beat the Serb over five fantastic sets in the 2023 final and has since added 2024 Roland-Garros – his third Grand

Slam title – to establish himself as the next generation's *numero uno*. Djokovic, after defeating Lorenzo Musetti in the semifinals, even called Alcaraz "one of the greatest 21-year-olds ever."

Cat-and-mouse final
Djokovic is humility personified and mostly liberal in his praise. On court, though, he is a ruthless machine. His form has improved through the tournament and such is his confidence that he is back sliding with ease and swiftly changing direction on the slippery lawn. The fact that Alcaraz has not been at his best points to a cat-and-mouse final.

"I try not to think that I'm the defending champion," Alcaraz insisted. "I go into every match thinking I have chances to lose. I know how it is playing Djokovic and I know what I have to do. I'm sure he knows what he has to do. I'm ready to take that

challenge." For Djokovic, the match comes at a crucial time. He has lost his last three matches against top-10 players, twice to Jannik Sinner and Casper Ruud. And he has not won a title since beating Sinner last November at the ATP Tour Finals.

"History is on the line," Djokovic said. "Roger holds eight Wimbledon [and] I hold seven. Also, a potential 25th Grand Slam. It serves as great motivation, but it's also a lot of pressure. [But] every time I step on the court, even though I'm 37 and competing with the 21-year-olds, I expect myself to win."

In 2021, when the summit clashes of Euro and Wimbledon were on the same day, it was bitter-sweet for the Italians as Djokovic beat Matteo Bertrettini before the footballers salvaged the day. Come Sunday, the Spaniards will want the cake and eat it too.

Jaiswal and Gill's masterclass secures Men in Blue a series victory

INDIA IN ZIMBABWE

Agence France-Presse HARARE

Yashasvi Jaiswal and captain Shubman Gill thrashed Zimbabwe's bowlers to all parts of the Harare Sports Club on Saturday to secure a 10-wicket win in the fourth T20I and with it claim the series.

Chasing Zimbabwe's 152 for seven, India cruised home with 28 balls to spare to take a 3-1 lead in the five-match series.

The left-handed Jaiswal hammered 93 not out off 53 balls and was named

Player-of-the-Match while Gill made 58 not out off 39 deliveries. "Chasing was something we talked about," Gill said at the post-match presentation. "We couldn't do it in the first game so it was good to get it done."

Zimbabwe captain Sikandar Raza said he had thought after his team's innings that 160 was a par score but admitted: "The way they batted, 180 would not have been enough."

Domination
Zimbabwe won the first match by 13 runs last Saturday but India has taken charge since then, dominating the next three matches. Although Raza hit 46 off 28 balls, Zimbabwe was unable to capitalise fully on its first good start of the series.

Wesley Madhevere (25) and Tadiwanashe Marumani (32) put on 63 for the first wicket after Zimbabwe was sent in to bat.

But the openers fell in successive overs to part-time bowlers Abhishek Sharma and Shivam Dube.

India again opted to field only four specialist bowlers, including new cap Tushar Deshpande, who claimed the wicket of Raza while conceding 30 runs in three overs.

SCOREBOARD

ZIMBABWE

Wesley Madhevere c Rinku b Dube 25 (24); 4x4; Tadiwanashe Marumani c Rinku b Abhishek 32 (31); 3x4; Brian Bennett c Jaiswal b Washington 9 (14b); Sikandar Raza c Gill b Deshpande 46 (28); 2x4, 3x6; Johnathan Campbell run out 3 (3b); Dion Myers c b Khaleel 12 (13b); Clive Madande c Rinku b Khaleel 7 (5b); 1x4; Faraz Akram (not out) 4 (3b); Extras (lb-5, w-8, nb-1); 14; Total (for seven wks. in 20 overs): 152.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-63 (Marumani, 8.4 overs), 2-67 (Madhevere, 9.6), 3-92 (Bennett, 13.4), 4-98 (Campbell, 14.4), 5-141 (Raza, 18.3), 6-147 (Myers, 19.1), 7-152 (Madande, 19.6)

INDIA BOWLING

Khaleel 4-0-32-2, Deshpande

3-0-30-1, Bishnoi 4-0-22-0, Washington 4-0-32-1, Abhishek 3-0-20-1, Dube 2-0-11-1.

INDIA

Yashasvi Jaiswal (not out) 93 (53); 13x4, 2x6; Shubman Gill (not out) 58 (39b, 6x4, 2x6); Extras (w-5); 5; Total (for no loss in 15.2 overs): 156.

ZIMBABWE BOWLING

Ngarava 3-0-27-0, Muzarabani 3-2-0-25-0, Chatara 2-0-23-0, Akram 4-0-41-0, Raza 2-0-24-0, Bennett 1-0-16-0.

Toss: India; **Poll:** Jaiswal.

India won by 10 wickets with 28 balls remaining to take an unassailable 3-1 lead in five-match series.

Fifth and final T20I: July 14 (Sunday), Harare, 4.30 p.m. IST.



Unstoppable: Jaiswal's knock left the bowlers clueless. X@CCCI



Freshly picked: A woman harvests pineapples at a farm in Kamrup district of Assam.



Taking stock: A couple at their farm in Kamrup, where family members undertake the work together.



Irresistibly sweet: Young men working on a pineapple farm help themselves to the fruit at Gamerimura village in Kamrup district of Assam.

Sweet slice of Assam

Pineapple is grown widely in the northeastern States such as Assam where they ripen and gain the best taste and flavour under the right amount of sunlight and rain



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Assam is blessed with diverse natural resources. The wide-ranging topography and congenial agro-climates offer immense potential for growing various kinds of fruit, vegetables, spices, flowers, and aromatic and medicinal crops.

Pineapple is widely grown in northeastern States, including Assam. The fruit is popular and their availability in the form of juice or slices round the year enable people to enjoy them whenever they want. Kew and Queen are the most popular varieties of pineapple among the growers in Assam. The Queen variety is widely grown.

Pineapple has recently gained much prominence for its health-promoting properties. Fresh pineapple is loaded with many essential vitamins and minerals.

Grown in the sunny fields of Assam, pineapples receive the right amount of sunshine and tropical rain to bring them to the peak of

their flavour. The pineapple is a humid tropical plant. It grows well, both in the plains and also at elevations. Pineapple usually flowers from February to April and the fruits are ripe to harvest from July to September.

Two years ago, the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority organised a promotional event in Dubai to promote Assam's pineapples there. Processed pineapples are also popular as they can last longer in the export market. A fully ripe pineapple is considered highly perishable, and cannot be kept for more than a few days after harvesting.

The major importers of pineapples from India are Nepal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Maldives.

Recently, Meghalaya has started a scheme to promote fruit wine, including that of pineapples which have high sugar content. Pineapple wine can be processed from culled pineapple, pineapple peel, and the core.



Ready for sale: Farmers carry pineapples to be sold in a weekly market.

