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JULY WEEK 2

06-07-2026 TO 11-07-2026

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❖ Govt. issues notice to Meta on 'child sexual abuse' ads

- Instagram, owned by Meta, ordered to disable advertisements promoting explicit child content and provide explanation within seven days; 'further action' to be decided after reviewing reply.
- **The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has directed Meta, the parent body of several social media platforms, to disable advertisements and content promoting and facilitating access to child sexual exploitative and abuse material (CSEAM) on Instagram, according to government sources. It has also sought an explanation on the issue.**
- "The Ministry has ordered Instagram to disable such advertisements. The government has also demanded a detailed explanation on the action taken and other relevant information within seven days. A notice in this regard was issued on Saturday," said a source. It is learnt that the notice was sent following a directive from IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw to senior Ministry officials. Further course of action will be decided after reviewing the reply, said the source.
- The move came a day after the BBC Eye published its investigation revealing that Instagram had allegedly been running "paid adverts promoting child sexual abuse material in India" and that such advertisements linked users to channels on Telegram, where they could buy the material. **Meta's policy on advertisements, meanwhile, stipulate that their content must comply with community standards and must not have imagery depicting nudity and activities that are sexual or sexually suggestive**
- In response to a query on the notice, a Meta spokesperson pointed to an earlier statement shared after the **BBC report came out, where Meta said it had a "zero tolerance policy for soliciting or sharing CSEAM" and added that while Meta deployed technology to detect such advertisements, it was in a "constant battle with criminals who hide among 3.5 billion users and try to evade detection".**
- According to Meta's policy, advertisements must "comply with the community standards on adult nudity and sexual activity. Ads must not contain imagery depicting nudity, sexual activity, depictions of people in explicit or sexually suggestive positions, or activities that are sexually suggestive". The policy sets additional restrictions beyond the Community Standard on Adult Nudity and Sexual Activity, says its sub-site.
- **According to a written reply by Mr. Vaishnaw to the Lok Sabha last year, the IT Act, 2000** provides punishment for publishing or transmitting obscene material and material containing sexually explicit acts in electronic form. The Act also provides for stringent punishment for publishing or transmitting material depicting children in sexually explicit acts in electronic form.
- Besides, the **IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021** enforces obligations on the intermediaries, to observe due diligence. If they fail to observe it, they lose the exemption under law for third-party information or data or communication links hosted by them.

❖ Govt. releases ₹25,863 cr. for VB-G RAM G scheme

- U.P. receives highest allocation of ₹3,210.76 crore, followed by A.P., Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu; Kerala gets ₹925.33 crore; concerns over centralised planning and technological barriers persist
- Union Minister for Rural Development and Agriculture Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Sunday released the first instalment of ₹25,863 crore to the States for the rural employment programme under the **Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, or VB-G RAM G**, even as concerns remain over the centralised planning for the programme.
- **Uttar Pradesh** received the highest allocation at ₹3,210.76 crore, followed by Andhra Pradesh at ₹2,545.5 crore, and Rajasthan at ₹2,274.37 crore. Tamil Nadu received ₹2,176.84 crore, placing it just below Rajasthan in the fourth position, while Kerala received a considerably smaller allocation of ₹925.33 crore.
- The Minister released the funds through videoconferencing from Bhopal.
- “Today, I am overjoyed and pleased to congratulate all of you, our Rural Development Ministers and officials from both the Central and State governments, on the fact that there have been no complaints whatsoever so far. **This signifies that this policy has smoothly transitioned from MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) into the Viksit Bharat G-RAM G,**” he said.

Planning process

- The **VB-G RAM G Act came into effect on July 1. Work under the scheme will begin with the preparation of a Viksit Gram Panchayat Plan (VGPP).** According to a draft framework for the VGPP released by the Ministry, the planning process will begin with the preparation of a comprehensive inventory of all assets and facilities in a gram panchayat, including those created under various Central and State schemes.
- This inventory will be mapped using both geospatial and non-spatial data available on platforms, including **Yuktdhara and PM Gati Shakti. Yuktdhara is a geographic information system (GIS)-based planning portal developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation.**
- **PM Gati Shakti is a national master plan that brings together over 16 Ministries on a single digital platform for integrated planning and the timely execution of infrastructure projects.**
- Based on this database, development gaps are to be identified through a GIS-enabled assessment carried out primarily on the Yuktdhara planning portal.
- Taking into account “identified gaps, local priorities, demand for works and the recommendations of ward sabhas and the Gram Sabha”, the gram panchayat is to prepare a draft VGPP.

‘Impossible task’

- Nikhil Dey of the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan said that this was an “impossible task” and raised the technological barrier to access work.
- “They have converted what was a bottom up, demand driven scheme to a top down centrally designed infrastructure programme,” he said.

- He said that the States are now expected to foot 40% of the bill of centrally designed programmes which cater to Centre's priorities and not to the States — and even the responsibility of fulfilling the so called "guarantee of employment" is on the States.

❖ **Modi hails Syama Prasad Mookerjee as 'champion of national unity'**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the life of Syama Prasad Mookerjee, founder of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, exemplified unwavering nationalism, public service, and dedication to the country's unity and development, adding that his ideals remain relevant even today.
- Paying tribute to Mookerjee on his **125th birth anniversary** in an op-ed article titled "A life devoted to India's unity and progress", Mr. Modi lauded him as a leader who combined intellectual achievement and integrity.
- Quoting Mookerjee's call to the youth to do every task thoroughly and to the best of their ability, Mr. Modi said that as India moves towards the goal of Viksit Bharat, the greatest tribute to him would be to strive continuously to build a strong, united, self-confident, and compassionate India. "And knowing today's youth, I am certain they will rise to the occasion and do exactly that," he said.

A life of sacrifice

- Despite coming from a privileged background — his father was among the foremost educationists and intellectuals of his time — Mookerjee's conscience led him towards a life of sacrifice, public service, and national causes, Mr. Modi said. He could not remain a mute spectator to the turbulence of his times, be it **"fighting colonialism, communalism, humanitarian challenges and more"**.
- "Along this journey, he endured profound personal tragedies, including the loss of an infant child and, later, his wife... Yet, these tragedies only deepened his resolve and strengthened his unwavering commitment to serve," the Prime Minister said.
- A champion of national unity, Mookerjee stood firm during the Partition to ensure that West Bengal remained an integral part of India, Mr. Modi said. "A few years later, that very conviction drew him to Jammu and Kashmir. Imprisonment did not deter him and isolation did not diminish him. His life came to an abrupt end in detention, far from the countless people whose cause he had made his own," he added.
- "Acharya Vinoba Bhave said that Dr. Mookerjee sacrificed himself for a cause in which he had faith. **Years later, the revocation of Articles 370 and 35A in 2019 was the most fitting tribute to his martyrdom,**" the Prime Minister said.
- As the youngest Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta, Mookerjee brought a range of "patriotic and futuristic" changes, in the spirit of "India First".

'Alternative voice'

- At a time when the Congress was "omnipresent", Mr. Modi said, Mookerjee founded the Bharatiya Jana Sangh in 1951 as "an alternative voice to speak up for India's progress while staying attached to our cultural roots".
- His tenure as India's first Minister for Industry and Supply displayed his conception of comprehensive and humane development. He viewed industry as a means of restoring

dignity, opportunity, and confidence to a newly independent country, and respected wealth creation and value addition, Mr. Modi said.

- While laying the foundations of modern industrial India via initiatives such as the Damodar Valley Corporation and the Sindri Fertilizer Plant, he ensured that the country's traditional strengths such as handlooms, cottage industries, artisans, and textile workers were given equal importance.
- "The Sindri plant, which Dr. Mookerjee worked to establish with a clear vision of self-reliance, was ignored by those who ran the nation for several decades. I feel honoured that our government had the opportunity to contribute to its revival," he said.
- He said Mookerjee embodied India's civilizational tradition, the democratic spirit of dialogue and discussions.
- "He joined Pandit Nehru's Cabinet, believing that the task of nation-building in the early years transcended political differences... But when he felt that questions of national importance demanded a different course, he relinquished office with dignity and devoted himself wholeheartedly to the political work he believed the nation required," he said.

Staunch critic

- Terming the **First Amendment to the Constitution** brought by Nehru as a "direct assault on free speech", the Prime Minister said Mookerjee was among its "staunchest critics".
- "He understood fully what the Congress was capable of doing. And he was proven right. Those who brought the **First Amendment 75 years ago imposed the Emergency in 1975 and 50 years ago, brought in the 42nd Amendment Act, which again struck at the core of liberal democratic values,**" Mr. Modi said.

❖ India to host BRICS anti-drugs meet today

- India will host the two-day BRICS Heads of Anti-Drug Agencies meeting in Guwahati from Monday.
- Organised by the Narcotics Control Bureau, the meeting will focus on issues such as combating synthetic drugs, strengthening intelligence sharing and operational coordination, and capacity building and institutional cooperation.
- "India envisions this meeting as a pivotal step in transforming BRICS cooperation from dialogue-centric engagement to structured and action-oriented collaboration, with a focus on strengthening operational coordination, intelligence sharing, capacity building, and collective responses to emerging drug-related threats," the Union Home Ministry said in a statement.
- "As chair, New Delhi will seek to strengthen cooperation through information sharing on clandestine laboratories and emerging synthetic drug trends, enhanced monitoring of precursor chemicals and pharmaceuticals, intelligence exchange, sharing of best practices, joint training programmes and expert exchanges," it said.

❖ ISRO conducts test of key component for Gaganyaan mission

- The **solid motor-based platform SOLVE** will be used for parachute tests of the crew module; it has been derived from the PSLV strap-on motor
- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully carried out the first ground test of the solid motor-based Sub-Orbital Launch Vehicle for Experiments (SOLVE) at its Static Test Facility at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.
- The SOLVE solid motor is a key component for conducting Gaganyaan test missions and the first ground test was carried out on July 3.
- The ISRO is developing a solid motor-based SOLVE as a test platform to carry out Integrated Parachute Tests for validation of deceleration system of Gaganyaan's crew module under various test conditions.
- During these test missions, the crew module will be carried to an altitude of 10 km to 17 km and separated from the vehicle.
- A series of 10 parachutes will be deployed to reduce the velocity of the crew module before splashdown in the sea.
- The solid stage of SOLVE is derived from the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) Strap-on Motor with a few modifications to meet the Gaganyaan test requirements, including development of slow burn rate propellant and straight nozzle with secondary injection thrust vector control.
- The ISRO said that during the test motor performance parameters were as expected. "The development of the SOLVE vehicle provides flexibility in conducting Gaganyaan test missions simulating various conditions in the actual mission," the space agency said.
- Over the past few months, the ISRO has carried out key tests related to the Gaganyaan mission, which include the second **Integrated Air Drop Test (IADT-02)** and a **behavioural study Mission MITRA (Mapping of Interoperable Traits and Response Assessment) in Leh**, during which the four Indian astronauts selected for the mission along with scientists, engineers and medical teams were subjected to a week-long study.

❖ Cloud seeding begins in Haveri as six MLAs fund the exercise

- In view of the scanty rainfall in Haveri district so far, six MLAs from the district have come forward to fund a cloud seeding exercise. On Monday, it was launched from Hubballi Airport by Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi.

Three days

- The initiative is led by Prakash Koliwad, Ranebennur MLA, who is the chief mentor at Kyathi Climate Modification Consultants LLP (KCMC). This company will carry out cloud seeding for three days in the taluks of Ranebennur, Haveri, Hirekerur, Rattihalli, Hangal, Shiggaon, and Savanur.
- The company has obtained permission from the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) for the programme.

- Speaking to presspersons after launching the programme at Hubballi Airport, Minister Saitsh Jarkiholi lauded the Haveri MLAs for the initiative and said that as North Karnataka districts have received less than average rainfall, Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar will be urged to take up cloud seeding in the region.
- Mr. Koliwad said that he has initiated the exercise along with five other MLAs from the district.
- The designated aircraft will be stationed at Hubballi Airport till July-end. Further cloud seeding will be taken up based on the advice of scientists.
- Cloud seeding will cost ₹15 lakh per hour and it has been taken up to help farmers affected by scanty rainfall, he said.
- H.K. Patil, MLA, said that in view of the drought-like situation, cloud seeding has been taken up utilising advanced technology.
- He expressed confidence that cloud seeding will be successful and resolve the problems of the farmers.
- Mr. Patil said that the government should immediately resort to cloud seeding after assessing the rain scenario.

2001 and 2017

- “We will meet Mr. Shivakumar to apprise him of the situation in North Karnataka and impress upon him to take up cloud seeding in the region,” he said and recalled that similar exercises taken up in 2001 and 2017 were successful.
- N.H. Konaraddi, Navalgund MLA, said that although cloud seeding will be taken up in Haveri district, it is likely to benefit Dharwad district also. The Chief Minister will be urged to take up cloud seeding in Dharwad district also.
- During the launch of the exercise, MLAs Rudrappa Lamani and Yasir Ahmed Khan Pathan, MLC F.H. Jakkappanavar, HDUDA Chairman Shakeer Sanadi and others were present.

❖ Modi begins three-nation trip, starts with Indonesia to boost strategic ties

- Prime Minister set to hold discussions with Indonesian President Subianto to add ‘momentum to this partnership across diverse sectors’; he will travel to Australia and New Zealand next as part of efforts to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Indonesia on Monday, on the first leg of his three-nation tour, aimed at further strengthening **India’s Act East Policy, MAHASAGAR Vision and its commitment to a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific.**
- In a special gesture, Mr. Modi was received at the airport by Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto. In addition, four Ministers were also present to receive the Prime Minister, who was accorded a traditional ceremonial welcome and a Guard of Honour.
- “Landed in Jakarta. I’m touched by President Prabowo Subianto’s gesture of welcoming me at the airport,” Mr. Modi said in a social media post.
- This is Mr. Modi’s first bilateral visit to Indonesia since the elevation of ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2018.

- Mr. Modi said he will hold discussions with Mr. Subianto “aimed at adding even more momentum to this partnership across diverse sectors.”
- “President Prabowo and I will visit the Prambanan Temple complex in Yogyakarta. This will ensure closer cultural linkages between our nations. While in Indonesia, I also look forward to interacting with the Indian community,” he added. The centuries-old temple, located approximately 17 km northeast of Yogyakarta city, is considered Indonesia’s largest Hindu temple.
- Mr. Modi witnessed a performance of Wayang Kulit, Indonesia’s treasured shadow puppetry tradition, bringing the timeless story of the Ramayana to life. “It was a moving reminder of how our shared civilisational heritage has travelled across seas and generations, taking on beautiful local expressions while preserving its eternal values.,” he said.

• **Ahead of his departure from New Delhi, Mr. Modi said his visit to Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand would further strengthen India’s Act East Policy, MAHASAGAR Vision as well as “our outlook towards a free and open Indo-Pacific.” MAHASAGAR, or Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security Across the Regions, is India’s vision of security and growth for all regions.**

- Mr. Modi’s visit comes after Mr. Prabowo’s State visit to India as the chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations in January 2025.
- From Indonesia, Mr. Modi will travel to Melbourne at the invitation of Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. The final leg of the tour will take him to Auckland at the invitation of New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon.

❖ **Jaishankar gearing up to lead India’s campaign for non-permanent UNSC seat**

- India on July 13 will launch the official campaign for a non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council during 2028-29. According to a press note by the Ministry of External Affairs, the launch will be made by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar who is currently travelling in the Gulf region and will reach New York city on July 10 for the official ceremony that will be crucial from the point of view of India’s leadership position in the Global South.
- The bid will also require substantial diplomatic mobilisation by India as Tajikistan will be the other candidate for the seat meant for the Asia-Pacific region. While India has received support from countries such as **Fiji, United States, Austria and Sri Lanka**, it will have to do considerable diplomatic heavy lifting as Tajikistan has already secured the support of the OIC bloc that consists of 57 member-states of the United Nations. **That apart, both countries are members of the SCO that will hold the next summit meeting in Kyrgyzstan, adding a special significance to the summit from the point of view of UNSC ambitions of India and Tajikistan.**

Evolving equation

- Mr. Jaishankar has been to various countries over the past months with an eye to the evolving equation at the **United Nations because of India’s plans for the 2028-29 UNSC non-permanent membership.**

- He will reach New York city for extensive consultations with India's partners at the UN. While India has been advocating a reform at the UNSC and also has been championing the needs of the Global South, recent trends however have not gone according to the plans. **Earlier in May, India postponed the India-Africa Forum Summit that was to be held during May 28-31 citing the Ebola outbreak in Africa.**

❖ **Complainants must follow standard legal procedure: SC**

- The Supreme Court declined to "short-circuit" standard legal procedures on Monday, refusing to entertain an oral plea to take direct cognisance of derogatory remarks allegedly made by BJP Minority Morcha leader and social media influencer Nazia Elahi Khan against Prophet Muhammed.
- Addressing counsel who made the oral mentioning, a Vacation Bench of Justices Ahsanuddin Amanullah and Sheel Nagu said it would not risk the hierarchical "system" for filing complaints go "haywire".
- Justice Amanullah said the issue raised in the plea was "very grave", but the procedure of filing a complaint with the police first, followed by due investigation must be strictly followed. Parties cannot rush to the Supreme Court as the first port of call. The Bench criticised the rising tendency to bypass due procedure laid out by the law.
- It said if every litigant or prospective complainant chose to sideline the police and the courts below, and approach the top court, the entire system would turn out chaotic.

❖ **'El Niño set to dent India's wind, hydropower output'**

- Study projects rise in coal-fired power; it says weaker wind and hydropower output, combined with rising demand for air conditioning, could lead to a generation shortfall of nearly 18 TWh
- **India's power system stands to be strained more by the developing El Niño than that of any other country, according to an analysis by the think tank Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA). It projects that weaker wind and hydropower output, combined with rising demand for air conditioning, could open a generation gap of nearly 18 TWh (terawatt hour) over a period of one year, till June 2027.**
- Set against India's total electricity generation of about 1,846 billion units in 2025-26, the shortfall CREA models is small or under 1% of annual output. Non-fossil sources supplied 29.2% of that generation.
- The group's concern is less the size of the gap than how it is filled. The projected median output puts it at 17.7 TWh and its most severe at 24 TWh — one TWh is a billion units of electricity — and says the likeliest outcome is a surge in coal-fired power, which will release an estimated 17 million tonne of carbon dioxide. It stresses that these are scenario projections, not forecasts.
- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) confirmed last month that El Niño conditions had emerged over the equatorial Pacific and were expected to strengthen through the monsoon.
- It has forecast below-normal southwest monsoon rainfall at 90% of the long-period average, with a 60% chance of a deficient season.

- June rainfall closed with an all-India rainfall deficit of about 40%, the fifth-lowest for June since 1901, and the cumulative shortfall stood at 20% below normal by July 6. IMD Director-General Mrutyunjay Mohapatra has said rainfall in July is likely to stay below normal across most of the country.

Record generation

- **India entered the season with record electric generation capacity. As on March 31, non-fossil installed capacity reached 283.46 GW — 150.26 GW of solar, 56.09 GW of wind, 51.41 GW of large hydro and 8.78 GW of nuclear — after a record 44.6 GW of solar and 6 GW of wind were added in 2025-26. Coal remains the largest single source of power, at about 42% of installed capacity, though coal generation fell 3.69% over the year. Peak demand touched 270.82 GW on May 21, according to official data.**
- CREA, which reports that solar now meets 24% of daytime demand, argues that storage could have absorbed more of it. Grid operators curtailed about 2.1 TWh of solar and wind last year to keep coal plants running — waste that CREA, citing energy analytics firm Ember, says roughly 10 GWh of battery storage could have averted.
- India must “move much faster on batteries and grid upgrades”, said Nandikesh Sivalingam, CREA’s director, so that clean energy can meet future demand surges. The country is lining up around **130 GW** of new coal capacity that provides on-demand power and helps buffer against record peaks such as in May.

❖ BRICS nations seek stronger cooperation against drugs

- Representatives of member countries, who converged in Guwahati for the two-day BRICS Heads of Anti-Drug Agencies’ Meeting, 2026, on Monday emphasised the need for stronger international cooperation to combat drug trafficking.
- Lucas Barbosa of Brazil’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs lauded India for hosting the event. “The BRICS anti-drug working group has a long history of cooperation, and we intend to strengthen collaboration in law enforcement and intelligence sharing further. Drug trafficking is a transnational threat that requires coordinated action by all member countries,” he told journalists.
- Anurag Garg, Director-General of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), said the impact of drug abuse was a factor behind India hosting the heads of anti-drug agencies from the BRICS nations for the first time.
- “Drugs have become an international scourge. Our youth is getting involved in drugs, and it is a problem that different nations have to fight together,” he said.

❖ Stealth frigate Mahendragiri set to join Indian Navy

- The Indian Navy will commission its sixth indigenous Project 17A stealth frigate, Mahendragiri (F38), in Visakhapatnam on July 11, marking another major milestone in India’s indigenous warship-building programme.

- The stealth frigate was designed by the Navy's Warship Design Bureau and built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd., Mumbai. Mahendragiri is equipped with advanced stealth features, reduced radar signature, enhanced survivability, and a high degree of automation, the Navy said. The stealth frigate has more than 75% indigenous content, it added.

❖ **Diamond jewellery among payloads to be launched by Vikram-1 rocket**

- A diamond jewellery creation mounted on an aluminium base plate and a miniaturised artwork cast in the shape of a rocket using 18K gold are among the payloads which will be launched by India's first privately developed orbital-class rocket, Vikram-1. It is expected to be launched some time between July 12 and August 4.
- Skyroot Aerospace on Monday announced that the orbital launch vehicle will carry six payloads.
- The rocket will carry technology demonstration payloads from Graaha Space, Dcubed, and Skyroot's own SCOPE. Also aboard will be the Embrace payload, developed by Cosmoserve Space.
- During the mission, the robotic arm will remain attached to Vikram-1's payload deck while carrying out its planned demonstration.

Tribute to visionaries

- In addition to the technology demonstration payloads, Vikram-1 will carry two payloads celebrating creativity and India's scientific heritage. These include Cosmic Bloom, developed by Cosmos Diamonds, featuring a diamond jewellery creation mounted on an aluminium base plate, and Microart by Ajay Kumar Mattewada, an 18K gold rocket holding micro-sculptures of Sir C.V. Raman, Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, and Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam — each smaller than a grain of rice.
- The artwork pays tribute to three visionaries whose pioneering contributions continue to inspire India's scientific and space journey.
- There will be one international payload developed by Dcubed GmbH, Germany.
- "India's space sector is witnessing a remarkable phase of innovation and entrepreneurship. Missions like Vikram-1 are helping expand opportunities for emerging space companies to demonstrate and scale their technologies," said Ramesh Kumar V., co-founder and CEO, Grahaa Space, whose nano-satellite, SOLARAS, will be a part of the mission.
- "Mission Aagaman gave us a platform to rapidly send our systems to space and test them. Through this mission with Skyroot, we accelerated our soft-robotic capture technology from concept to flight-ready in just four months, advancing the space debris removal capabilities being developed at Cosmoserve Space," said Chiranjeevi Phanindra, founder and CEO of Cosmoserve Space.

❖ Modi bats for 2-state solution to iron out Israel-Palestine issue

- Highlighting the role of dialogue and diplomacy in the “period of global turbulence”, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday reiterated the importance of the two-state solution to end the Israel-Palestine conflict.
- “In this period of global turbulence, India believes that the role of dialogue and diplomacy has become more important than ever before. On the issue of Palestine, we continue to support a two-state solution and the pursuit of lasting peace,” Mr. Modi said in Jakarta, Indonesia, the first leg of his three-nation tour. Mr. Modi also focused on commonalities between India and Indonesia in dealing with globally-important issues and said that the two countries are going to deepen cooperation on such areas.
- A joint statement issued at the end of the official dialogue between Mr. Modi and Indonesia’s President Prabowo Subianto said the leaders expressed “deep concern” over the war in West Asia and “its global effects”.
- Mr. Modi and Mr. Subianto also presided over the signing of 14 agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoUs), including ones that will allow India to deliver the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile system and Astra Mk-1 beyond-visual-range air-to-air missiles to Indonesia.
- **Indonesia bestowed the Prime Minister with its highest civilian honour ‘Bintang Adipurna of the Republic of Indonesia’. Mr. Modi is the second Indian Prime Minister to receive this award. India’s first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru received the same award posthumously on December 12, 1995.** “It reflects the goodwill of the people of Indonesia and stands as a tribute to the historic and enduring bonds of friendship between India and Indonesia,” said Mr. Modi in his press statement.
- The two leaders “welcomed the memorandum of understanding signed on 17 June 2026,” mentioned the joint statement in reference to the agreement signed between the U.S. and Iran to end the war in West Asia, while adding that “transit passage through the Strait of Hormuz” has to be in “accordance with international law”.
- It further mentioned that the Indonesian President welcomed “India’s interest in partnering on the development of the Sabang Port”.
- The two sides signed 14 agreements including two on **BrahMos missile system and air-to-air missiles.**

❖ IIMB to set up campus in Indonesia

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced on Tuesday that an Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (IIMB) will be established in Indonesia, during a joint press statement with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto in Jakarta.
- Mr. Modi, said, “We are going to establish a campus of India’s prestigious management institute, **IIM Bangalore, in Indonesia, which will greatly benefit the youth across the entire ASEAN region.**”
- The Prime Minister noted that the two countries had signed an important agreement to strengthen technological cooperation among their youth in areas such as Artificial Intelligence, telecommunications and **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)**, along with stronger collaboration between their startup ecosystems.

- The IIMB campus in Indonesia will be located in **Singhasari Special Economic Zone** as per the MoU signed on July 6.

❖ **SC refuses DMK plea against TVK remarks**

- The Supreme Court on Tuesday said imposing a judicial bar on Tamil Nadu's ruling Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) leaders from making public statements linking political rivals with the Karur stampede may amount to an injunction on "free speech".
- The court advised the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) to make its own counter speeches, and battle **"free speech" with "more speech"**, rather than try for a judicial gag.
- The remarks by a Bench headed by Justice K.V. Viswanathan came during the hearing of a plea alleging that TVK Ministers were making false accusations and "threats" against political opponents in connection with the stampede.
- The Karur tragedy had left 41 dead and 142 injured during a TVK rally on September 27 last year. The top court had ordered a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation into the stampede. The probe is continuing and some TVK leaders have been named as accused.
- Senior advocate Ranjit Kumar, appearing for the DMK's organising secretary R.S. Bharathi, said TVK Ministers like Mr. Arjuna, who is also among the accused, must be restrained from making any such public statements during the pendency of the investigation.
- "That may amount to an injunction on free speech, Mr. Kumar. Which law sanctions it? You also make your speeches, you counter free speech with more speech," Justice Viswanathan remarked. The Bench questioned the propriety of entertaining a DMK plea for impleadment in a case in which it had ordered a CBI investigation and was monitoring progress.
- Further, Mr. Kumar objected to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay's likely travel to Karur on July 10 to meet the families of the stampede victims and to hand out compassionate appointments to them. "I am not against the compensation, I am against compensation being given by the accused to the families, who are also witnesses in the case," the senior advocate said.
- The court said Mr. Vijay was arraigned as an 'accused' neither in the FIRs nor in the DMK's own application.

❖ **Tiptur coconut, Hoysala-style stone art and two more products set to get GI tag**

- The **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)** has extended support for securing Geographical Indication (GI) registration for four more traditional products from Karnataka that are likely to get a GI tag.
- The products identified for GI registration are **Tiptur coconut, Hoysala-style stone art, Sanikatte salt, and Kunbi Mudli, a climate-resilient tuber belonging to the taro (Colocasia) family. India has 822 registered GI products, of which 51 are from Karnataka.**

- The NABARD officials said the initiative builds on the regional office's **earlier support in facilitating the GI registration for Kari Ishad mangoes**. The focus has now shifted from merely obtaining GI tags to strengthening the entire value chain through branding, marketing, capacity building, enterprise development and market linkages, the officials said.
- As part of its post-registration initiatives, the **NABARD Karnataka has supported the development of a dedicated website for GI-tagged Udupi sarees, facilitated the registration of authorised GI users, and organised exposure visits and capacity-building programmes for artisans and weavers associated with Guledagudda Khana in the Bagalkot district**.
- To improve market access for GI products, the NABARD has also supported the **establishment of a dedicated GI store for Ilkal sarees at the Aihole Heritage Site in Bagalkot**. The outlet, to be inaugurated shortly, is expected to provide a platform for marketing authentic GI products to domestic and international tourists.
- According to the NABARD, the initiatives are aimed at creating a robust ecosystem for Karnataka's GI products by integrating registration, branding, marketing and enterprise development, while preserving the State's traditional crafts and agricultural heritage and generating sustainable livelihood opportunities for rural producers.

❖ **Hampi, Lakkundi and Mysuru selected under development project**

- The State government has decided to recommend three important historical and cultural destinations of the State, including **Hampi, Mysuru and Lakkundi**, to the Union Tourism Ministry under the **Union government's ambitious 'Global Destination Development' project**, said Minister for Energy and Tourism K.J. George.
- Addressing the press after a State-level consultation meeting in Hampi on Tuesday, Mr. George said, "The Union Tourism Ministry will select the final destinations to be developed under the project after examining the comprehensive proposal submitted by the State government. **The selected tourist destinations are expected to receive a total of ₹800 crore central assistance, including ₹500 crore in the first phase and ₹300 crore in the second phase.**" The Minister said that their aim is to attract additional investment through partnership between the State government and the private sector and develop the selected destinations into world-class tourism centres.
- "Based on the historical, cultural and tourism potential of Hampi, Mysuru and Lakkundi, a comprehensive action plan will be prepared and submitted to the Union government, giving priority to world-class infrastructure, tourist experience, connectivity, heritage conservation, sustainable development and private investment," Mr. George said.
- The government is committed to organising the Hampi festival on the model of Mysuru Dasara in a grand manner at the national and international level.
- Mr. George said that a final decision would be taken soon after consulting the Chief Minister regarding the date and programmes of the utsava.

❖ 'Bridge Man of India' Girish Bharadwaj passes away

- Girish Bharadwaj, who built over 140 hanging footbridges across India, passed away at a hospital at Sullia in Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka on Tuesday.
- He was 76. An engineering graduate, he was known for his low-cost bridges.
- **Nearly 120 of the footbridges provided connectivity in rural areas and the rest served the interests of tourists.**



- **Popularly called the 'Bridge Man of India', the Union Government honoured him with the Padma Shri in 2017.**

❖ Four States reach a pact on Narmada project payments

- Union Home Minister says that issue of pending payments had remained unresolved for a long time and it had been settled amicably; water and electricity have reached all four States, he adds
- The States of **Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh reached an agreement on Tuesday on the settlement of pending payment issues among the Narmada Award beneficiary States.**
- The agreement was signed in the presence of **Home Minister Amit Shah and Union Minister of Jal Shakti C.R. Patil. Chief Ministers Devendra Fadnavis (Maharashtra), Bhupendra Patel (Gujarat), Bhajan Lal Sharma (Rajasthan) and Mohan Yadav (Madhya Pradesh) signed the agreement, which relates to the cost-sharing arrangements for the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Project.**
- Under the agreement, the payments to be made towards the final settlement of pending dues have been resolved through a one-time settlement. Mr. Shah said that the issue of pending payments under the Narmada Award had remained unresolved among the four States for a long time, and that it had been resolved amicably on Tuesday. He said that with the completion of the dam, water and electricity have reached every part of the four States.
- He added that while the benefits accruing to Rajasthan may appear modest at first glance, the areas that have received Narmada waters have witnessed a transformation in both the value of the land and the fortunes of the farmers.
- The Union Home Minister said that let it be Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana or Maharashtra, the water ultimately served the people of the country, especially the farmers. Regardless of which part of the country the water is utilised in, the ultimate beneficiary will be an Indian, he said.

Water-sharing issues

- Recently, significant progress has also been made in resolving long-standing water-sharing issues between States, such as those concerning the **Kishau Dam project in Himachal Pradesh and the water dispute between Rajasthan and Haryana**, officials said. On June 29, Rajasthan and Haryana signed an agreement for the construction

and implementation of the Yamuna Water Project, resolving a nearly three-decade-old issue.

- Additionally, on June 16, **Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Rajasthan** agreed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the implementation of the **Kishau Multipurpose Project to rejuvenate the Yamuna River**.

❖ **Plea claims 'silent compulsion' in E20 petrol roll-out**

- A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court claiming an element of “silent compulsion” in the E20 petrol roll-out, while seeking full disclosure on chemical composition and safeguards that may be in place in the case of legacy vehicles.
- The petition, filed by Supreme Court advocate and petitioner-in-person Narendra Kumar Goswami, **besides invoking the fundamental freedoms of equal treatment by the law, and the right to earn a livelihood and lead a dignified life, raised Article 300A (right to property) and the Consumer Protection Act of 2019 to contend that the right to know the composition, quality, standard, and compatibility consequences of a product was not a “decorative consumer slogan but a constitutional requirement when the state itself creates a nationwide compulsory market”.**
- Mr. Goswami said ethanol was not an inert additive. **“Ethanol is hygroscopic, may affect certain fuel-system materials, has lower energy density than petrol, and may have implications for fuel efficiency, engine performance, maintenance, warranty and long-term vehicle health,” the petitioner contended.**
- The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) had issued a separate E20 specification and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways had created a staggered compatibility schedule, showing that E20 compatibility was “not universal but vehicle-specific”, the lawyer said.
- “The petition does not seek to roll back India’s ethanol-blending policy. The contention in the petition is that a welfare policy cannot be implemented by keeping citizens in the dark about what they are buying, whether their vehicles can safely use it, and whether they have any meaningful alternative,” Mr. Goswami said.
- The petition has sought the constitution of an independent expert committee to examine “real-world E20 compatibility”.

❖ **CPI(M) seeks withdrawal of proposed NFSA amendment**

- Describing the proposed amendment to the National Food Security Act (NFSA), which seeks to change the entitlement criteria under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) from a household-based system to a per capita system, as “anti-poor”, the CPI(M) on Tuesday accused the Union government of attempting to gradually dilute and weaken the legislation. The party demanded that the proposed amendment be withdrawn immediately.
- **The government has proposed increasing the foodgrain entitlement to 7 kg per person from the present 5 kg per person.**

- This change does not help larger households either, the CPI(M) Polit Bureau said in a statement, pointing out that the entitlement would continue to remain capped at 35 kg per month, regardless of family size. At the same time, the party said it would substantially reduce the foodgrain entitlement of smaller households, which are guaranteed the full 35 kg under the existing scheme.
- The amendment would, the Left party said, “disproportionately affect the poorest and most vulnerable sections of society” including elderly couples, widows, persons with disabilities, tribal families, landless agricultural labourers, and daily wage workers.
- “The amendment will adversely impact States, particularly the southern States that have successfully implemented family planning programmes and consequently have smaller average household sizes,” the Polit Bureau said.
- “This anti-poor amendment exposes the Centre’s attempt to gradually dilute and weaken the National Food Security Act,” the Polit Bureau said.

❖ **HC upholds uniform legal marriage age for all religions**

- The **Allahabad High Court** has held that the **minimum age of marriage prescribed under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006, applies to all citizens irrespective of religion, observing that the Muslim personal law principle recognising puberty as the age of marriage cannot override the provisions of the Central law.**
- The observations were made in a judgment pronounced on July 1 by a Division Bench of **Justice J.J. Munir and Justice Achal Sachdev** while hearing a writ petition seeking to quash an FIR registered against 19 people in connection with the alleged attempt to solemnise the marriage of a 16-year-old girl in Bulandshahr district of Uttar Pradesh in February.
- The petitioners argued that **under the Muslim personal law, a girl who has attained puberty is competent to marry, and that the PCMA does not override the Shariat. They also relied on provisions of the Indian Majority Act, 1875, and the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937.**
- The Bench acknowledged that High Courts across the country have taken divergent views on whether marriages involving Muslim minors are governed by Muslim personal law or by the PCMA, and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012. However, it agreed with the reasoning adopted by the **Kerala High Court in Moidutty Musliyar v. Sub Inspector, Vadakkencherry Police Station, which held that personal law cannot override the statutory prohibition on child marriage or dilute the operation of the POCSO Act.**
- “The age of marriage, in our considered opinion, for every citizen of the country, irrespective of religion, is that which is spelt out by the PCMA,” the court said. **It added that permitting the marriage of a person below 18 years would be inconsistent with the POCSO Act, which criminalises sexual relations with a child.**

❖ WhatsApp username debate brings informational privacy to the fore

- What is perhaps sui generis (unique) about the WhatsApp “username” debate is that both the instant messaging platform and the Centre, in different ways, ultimately seek the same objective: protecting the informational privacy of users.
- The Supreme Court, in its August 2017 judgment delivered by a nine-judge Bench, held that “informational privacy” is a facet of the fundamental right to privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution. The court recognised that threats to privacy in the information age could arise not only from the state but also from non-state actors.
- WhatsApp claims that its optional “username” feature, publicly announced on June 29 but yet to be rolled out in India, enhances user privacy. A username would prevent a user’s phone number from being accessed by someone who does not already have it.
- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), however, is apprehensive that the feature could lead to an increase in cybercrime. In its communication to WhatsApp, the Ministry listed an array of online crimes that could compromise informational privacy. These included online fraud, phishing, digital arrest scams, impersonation and identity spoofing, including impersonation of individuals, public authorities, financial institutions and government agencies, by permitting the adoption of usernames closely resembling those of genuine persons or institutions.
- Critics argue that the government cannot intervene in a company’s launch of a lawful feature without a clear statutory basis. The government, however, may contend that its communication seeking clarification from WhatsApp on the feature is consistent with the legitimate aims of the state to protect national security and safeguard public welfare.
- The 2017 judgment in the Justice K.S. Puttaswamy case observed that while the “web is a source of lawful activity”, concerns of national security also arise because “the seamless structure of the web can be exploited by terrorists to wreak havoc on societies. Cyber attacks can threaten financial systems”.
- However, the Constitution Bench also held that any encroachment on privacy must be justified by a fair law, backed by a legitimate aim, and must satisfy the test of proportionality.
- While observing that “law and technology seldom mix like oil and water”, the top court, in the Anuradha Bhasin case, posed a pertinent question: “What do we need more, liberty or security?”
- “Although the choice is seemingly challenging, we need to clear ourselves from the platitude of rhetoric and provide a meaningful answer so that every citizen has adequate security and sufficient liberty. The pendulum of preference should not swing in either extreme direction so that one preference compromises the other,” the court had said.

❖ Panel unlikely to finish report on simultaneous polls by Monsoon Session

- The Parliamentary Joint Committee reviewing the Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024, which aims to introduce simultaneous elections, is unlikely to meet its deadline and submit a report during the Monsoon Session of Parliament.

- The panel, headed by Lok Sabha member and senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader P.P. Chaudhary, is going to Uttar Pradesh on July 9 for consultations. Speaking to The Hindu, Mr. Chaudhary said, “We will be visiting more States and speaking to a wider base of stakeholders. This is going to be one of the defining reforms in our post-Independent history. We have some more work remaining.” In Uttar Pradesh, he said, the panel would meet government representatives and Opposition leaders.

Committee’s deadline

- The panel’s deadline had been fixed for the first day of the last week of the upcoming Parliament session. It is likely to seek an extension again.
- The panel, formed in December 2024, has held 18 meetings in Delhi. So far, six former Chief Justices of India have spoken to the panel. Among them, Justice U.U. Lalit and Justice Sanjiv Khanna have argued that the Bill runs afoul of the Basic Structure of the Constitution as protected by the Kesavananda Bharati judgment.
- But four former CJIs, Justice B.R. Gavai, Justice Ranjan Gogoi, Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, and Justice J. S. Khehar, told the panel that the Bill does not violate the Basic Structure.
- The committee has to address several tricky questions to enable synchronisation of the election cycles.
- It is considering a provision that would bar the introduction of a no-confidence motion against an incumbent government if only one year of its term remains.

❖ Eight wildlife sanctuaries, 281 forests encroached in Assam

- Eight wildlife sanctuaries and 281 reserve forests are under encroachment in Assam, the State’s Forest and Environment Minister, Jayanta Mallabaruah, told the 126-member Assembly on Tuesday.
- Presenting data on encroachment and human-elephant conflict in the House, he said 3,15,996.1251 hectares of land in these protected areas and reserve forests was under illegal occupation on February 12, 2016.
- The State government has so far evicted squatters from 25,588.7675 hectares, including 16,937.2466 hectares during the past five years.
- The BJP-led NDA formed the government in Assam in 2016, ending the Congress’s 15-year rule.

❖ School dropout rate falls across key stages: report

- More schools get Internet; learner progression across stages grows stronger; teacher strength up by 8.3% compared with 2022-23; 55% women teachers bring ‘gender balance’ in sector, says govt.
- The Union Education Ministry on Tuesday released the comprehensive report on the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) for the academic year 2025-26, which reflected a downward trend in dropouts.
- The preparatory level (Classes 3 to 5) dropout rate fell from 2.3% (2024-25) to 1.8% this year. More notably, secondary level (Classes 9 to 12) dropouts dipped from 8.2% to 7.0%. Dropout rate tracks the rate at which students quit school. “The consistent

decrease across all levels suggests that schools are becoming more supportive and responsive to students' needs," the Ministry said.

- Women now form the majority of the nation's teaching force, accounting for 54.9% of total teachers, up from 54.2% in 2024-25. The government said this "marks a positive shift towards gender balance in the education sector".
- Enrolment of girls across the country has seen a marginal increase to 48.4%, from 48.3% last year.
- Student retention at the middle level (Classes 6 to 8) climbed to 83.7% (from 82.8%), while secondary level retention increased to 51.9%, up from 47.2% last year. Student retention is an educational metric that measures the percentage of students who continue their education at the same school or within the school system from one academic year to the next.
- **The Gross Enrolment Level Ratio (GER) at the secondary level surged to 71.7% from last year's 68.5%. GER is a statistical measure used in education to determine the percentage of students enrolled in a specific level of education (such as primary, middle, or secondary school), regardless of their age, relative to the total population of official school-age children for that same level.**
- Learner progression across transitional stages grew stronger, the report noted. Notably, the transition from middle to secondary school jumped from 86.6% to 88.3%.
- Also, the total number of teachers in India has risen by 8.3% compared with 2022-23. Additionally, the Ministry's strategic rationalisation of teacher placement has resulted in a 3% reduction in single-teacher schools and a 29% drop in schools reporting zero enrolment, the Ministry said.
- One of the most notable improvements is the increase in the number of schools with computer access, increasing from 64.7% in 2024-25 to 69.9% in 2025-26. Access to Internet facilities in schools has seen a considerable increase in the academic year 2025-26. The percentage of schools with internet connectivity increased from 63.5% in 2024-25 to 67.4% in 2025-26.
- The report said that 95% of schools are powered with electricity, 98.5% have girls' toilets, and 97.2% have boys' toilets – ensuring dignity and hygiene for all students.

❖ **Contact lost with Drishti, world's first OptoSAR satellite**

- The Bengaluru-based space start-up GalaxEye has lost contact with **Mission Drishti, the world's first OptoSAR satellite**, as it encountered an anomaly following a geomagnetic solar storm, the company said on Tuesday.
- Mission Drishti, which was launched in May, is also **India's largest privately developed earth observation satellite**.
- "In the final stage of LEOP (Launch and Early Orbit Phase), the maiden spacecraft encountered an anomaly following a **geomagnetic solar storm**. Initial root cause analysis indicates that radiation effects associated with the event likely impacted a critical onboard system," the company said.
- It said subsequently, communication with the spacecraft became intermittent and was eventually lost. "While recovery efforts are ongoing, the likelihood of recovery currently appears low," it added.

- Mission Drishti was launched on May 3 aboard a Falcon 9 by SpaceX from Vandenberg, California. The satellite integrated electro-optical (EO) and synthetic aperture radar (SAR) sensors into a single operational platform.

❖ **Taking efforts to curb child sexual abuse content: Meta**

- Meta on Tuesday published a blog detailing its efforts to curb child sexual abuse content across its apps, citing AI-powered detection and large-scale enforcement actions, days after the government issued a notice over reports of such content being promoted via Instagram ads.
- Calling child exploitation a horrific crime, Meta said it works aggressively to fight this kind of abuse on and off its platforms. “We’re aware of recent reports about Instagram ads in India that violated our policies against child exploitation. And we want to be clear: we take these concerns seriously, we never want this content on our platforms, and we’re committed to improving our efforts to combat it,” it noted.

❖ **BRICS nations call for timely exchange of information on drugs**

- The BRICS nations on Tuesday adopted the Guwahati Declaration, reaffirming their commitment to strengthen cooperation to prevent and combat illicit drug trafficking and related organised transnational crime.
- BRICS, an intergovernmental organisation of major emerging markets and developing countries, is an acronym for Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. It expanded to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Indonesia.
- The joint declaration by the heads of anti-drug agencies of the participating nations brought the curtains down on a two-day meeting at a resort on the outskirts of Guwahati.
- The BRICS nations underscored the need to boost the timely exchange of information, intelligence and best practices, consistent with national laws and international obligations. They expressed concern over the evolving nature of drug trafficking, the proliferation of synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances, the diversion of precursor chemicals and the misuse of emerging technologies and virtual assets.
- Anurag Garg, Director-General of the Narcotics Control Bureau, said India has adopted a zero-tolerance policy against drugs, and a three-year road map (2026-29) based on a network-centric approach. “The strategy focuses on dismantling entire criminal networks, preventing drug abuse through mass awareness campaigns, and strengthening treatment, de-addiction, and rehabilitation measures,” he said.

❖ **Independence of the Bar is crucial for preservation of rule of law: Supreme Court**

- The Supreme Court on Tuesday said independence of lawyers is just as important as independence of the judiciary. In fact, the court said the legal profession’s independence from the Executive and Legislature formed the foundation of the rule of law and democracy in the country.
- The court’s observation is of significance as appointments to the Bench is made from the legal profession. “Independence of the Bar constitutes an indispensable condition for preservation of the rule of law,” a Bench headed by Justice P.S. Narasimha observed in a judgment.

- “The principle of self-regulation has historically been regarded as the defining feature of independence of the legal profession. The idea underlying such autonomy is that advocates, as officers of the court and participants in the administration of justice, must remain insulated from external pressures,” Justice Narasimha wrote.
- The court said pendency mounting up across courts was “one of the greatest challenges to the justice delivery system”, but the judgment queried why backlog continued to be seen almost exclusively as a judicial responsibility.
- “Despite frequent references to the Bar and Bench as the ‘two wheels of the chariot of justice’, the Bar is seldom called upon to share responsibility for reducing delays and improving efficiency. A paradigm shift is necessary. Tackling pendency must become a collaborative mission of the Bench and the Bar,” the top court said.
- Justice Narasimha proposed the establishment of a full-time “National Legal Academy” along the lines of the National Judicial Academy.
- He highlighted the need for the “continuing legal education” of advocates, noting that there was a “glaring dearth in institutionalised learning for advocates after enrolment”. The court directed the Bar Council of India to undertake a “comprehensive performance audit” of the disciplinary mechanisms administered by it and the State Bar Councils and submit a report.
- It gave relief to a lawyer who was included in the “caution list” by the Indian Banks Association on the ground that he gave negligent legal advice to a bank, exposing it to financial risk.

❖ **Upcoming Index of Services Production is expected to rely heavily on GST figures**

- The upcoming Index of Services Production (ISP) will rely heavily on Goods and Services Tax (GST) data to arrive at its estimates of services sector production, the report of the technical committee tasked with designing the index framework has said.
- Where GST data is not available, the index will use a combination of administrative data and the Annual Survey of Incorporated Services Sector Enterprises (ASISSE), which would make the index a “unique blend” of multiple data sources and methodologies, according to the report.
- The first data release of the index, which is the first such attempt at consistently and periodically quantifying the formal services sector, will be on July 29.
- “The major source of data for compilation of ISP is GST,” the report noted. It did, however, acknowledge this approach would leave out some sectors.
- “Coverage under GST by definition is restricted to the entities registered with the GST,” the report noted. “In India, in case of services or mixed supplies, registration under the GST Act is not mandatorily required for small businesses having all-India aggregate turnover below ₹20 lakh (₹10 lakh if the business is in the States of Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura).”
- It further said the sample drawn for the ASISSE is also based on the framework set out by the GST Network.

Only formal sector

- “Thus, these two sources cover the formal sector enterprises registered under GST Act/Companies Act only,” the report said.
- “Based upon these considerations, the Technical Advisory Committee of the ISP recommended the coverage of the ISP may be treated as covering the formal sector.”
- In other words, the ISP should not be treated as a measure of the informal services sector in India.
- The committee recommended the ASISSE be used to provide data on health residential care and the education sector.

❖ Rural demand to face pressure as El Niño impacts rains

- Scant monsoons have added to higher farm input prices after geopolitical events and are expected to trump rural demand and push prices further up, according to expert analyses.
- “Prospects for FY27 look precarious: a severe El Niño effect has produced a 41% rainfall deficiency in the first month of the southwest monsoon, with most States across north, south, east, and central India recording deficient or severely deficient rainfall in June 2026.
- “With roughly 43% of employment dependent on agriculture (PLFS 2025), a deficient monsoon implies weaker demand for farm labour and falling farm incomes, further pressuring rural demand,” according to a report from Systematix Group.
- The rural inflation already hastened to 4.25% on a year over year basis as of May 2026. The CFPI climbed faster at 4.85% in the same month. This is expected to rise in the coming months as farmers expect lower yields.
- The overall retail inflation came it at 3.93% in May 2026.

Inflation in focus

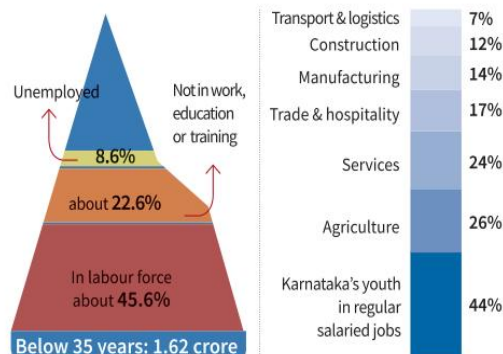
- “In our view, higher food and energy prices will push inflation to 5.1% for fiscal 2027. We anticipate the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will maintain a moderately tight policy stance, dampening activity,” wrote S&P Global Ratings analysts in a note.
- The RBI’s tolerance level for retail inflation ranges between 2% to 6%. The central bank held repo rate at 5.25% in the recently- concluded monetary policy review keeping stance at ‘neutral.’ Experts expect that the regulator may raise the repo rate by 50 basis points in 2027. A basis point is 1/100th of a percentage point.

❖ '23% of youth neither working nor studying': Nearly 23% of State's youth force under 35 is neither working nor studying: Report



The report has recommended preparing young people for work, supporting enterprises, creating local jobs and prioritising youth in district governance. FILE PHOTO

Unproductive prime



- Nearly 23% of Karnataka's youth force under 35 years is neither working nor studying even with the State's unemployment rate at 8.6%, says a report on the state of young workers in Karnataka.
- Nearly 23% of Karnataka's youth force under 35 years of age are neither working nor studying even as the State's unemployment rate stands at 8.6%. **A lack of or inadequate training with fewer opportunities for work is pushing the youth force to leave their homes and migrate to Bengaluru, straining the State capital, says a report on the state of young workers in Karnataka.**
- About 42% of the youth are in the workforce and about 35% are studying or in training, the report notes, adding that 44% are in regular salaried jobs.

Multiple parameters

- Ranking districts against five parameters, namely education, readiness/skilling, opportunities, work and participation in workforce across sectors, Future of India Foundation on Wednesday released 'Karnataka State Handbook on Youth Opportunity' with a YouthPOWER score card for districts. The report has brought together 180 indicators from 27 government databases, presenting a comparable score across the five parameters.

Wide disparity

- Concentration of opportunities within formal work in and around Bengaluru and relatively limited opportunities elsewhere in the State are pushing youth out of their homes in search of work and livelihood to the city.
- While Karnataka's score at 48.5 is only marginally lower than the national score of 50, it exposes the stark difference in infrastructure and opportunities within the State; Yadgir district, among the most backward districts, scored 42 against the highest score of 65 by Bengaluru Urban.

Ground realities

Range of salary (based on 2017-18 prices) is **₹8,741** in manufacturing to **₹16,977** in services

24% of women and **17%** of men working on land or an enterprise the family owns do not get paid

34% of young working women and **23%** of young working men are involved in agriculture

33% of Karnataka's small businesses are women-owned and about **37%** of factory workers are women

12.33 lakh people working at **14,984** registered factories in 2023-24

39.09 lakh enterprises are unincorporated and in informal economy

56.9% of young workers have no social security, no provident fund, gratuity or health cover from employers

Youth (age 15 to 29) in labour force has increased from **40%** in 2017-18 to **45.6%** in 2025

Unemployment has reduced from **15.8%** in 2017-18 to **8.6%** in 2025

However, unemployment increased from **8.5%** in 2022-23 to **8.6%** in 2025

The number of those in regular wage jobs has increased from **37.3%** to **44.4%**

Real monthly wages have increased from **₹12,517** in 2017-18 to **₹15,508**, an approx. **24%** increase

Source: Karnataka State Handbook on Youth Opportunity

- The report also finds that the share of youth in the State's labour force has moved up from 40% in 2017-18 to 45.6% in 2025, while unemployment has fallen from 15.8% to 8.6%, and real monthly wages have increased by about 23%. In the same period, training reach in terms of any vocational or technical training has increased from 6.5% to 28.5%.
- Pointing out that Karnataka is among India's most prosperous States, with the country's deepest base of technology and industry, the report notes that the task was to turn the prosperity into opportunity for all its young people — not only in and around Bengaluru, but across the State. The task was to bring women fully into the workforce, convert education and skilling capacity into real skills and jobs, and ensure that the technology shift empowers young people rather than bypassing them.
- The report has also recommended preparing young people for work, supporting enterprises, creating local jobs and prioritising youth in district governance.
- "Ensuring that all youth succeed concerns all of us. The YouthPOWER score card gives elected representatives, administrators and citizens non-partisan language to act on it," said Ruchi Gupta, executive director, Future of India Foundation.

Poor state of ITIs

- Karnataka may boast of a large network of Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) that prepare youth with skills to join the workforce, but in many districts, a large number are leaving without the credentials the course is meant to deliver, according to the report. In Bagalkot, Bidar, Chikkamagaluru, Davangere, Kalaburagi, Kodagu, Raichur, Vijayanagar and Vijayapura, such cases have been reported. The report points out that though the State has one of India's largest networks of ITIs, about half of the trainer positions are vacant and only one in four registered enterprises take apprentices.

Personal loans

- Mysuru and Udupi districts show a different character in lending. While most bank credit funds the productive economy of agriculture, industry and trade rather than personal consumption, which can channel capital towards job-creating businesses, in Mysuru and Udupi, bank credit leans towards personal loans. This could result in local lending not reaching the forms that generate work.
- Otherwise, most districts have bank credit that runs high relative to local deposits, pointing to active local demand for loans towards employment-generating purposes.

Gender barriers play their part too

- Despite implementation of the Shakti scheme, which offers free travel for women in Karnataka to participate in the workforce, the report states that more number of women are not allowed to travel alone to the market, clinic or beyond the community in 20 out of 31 districts.
- In a dozen districts, most women do not have a say in household decisions that shape their lives.

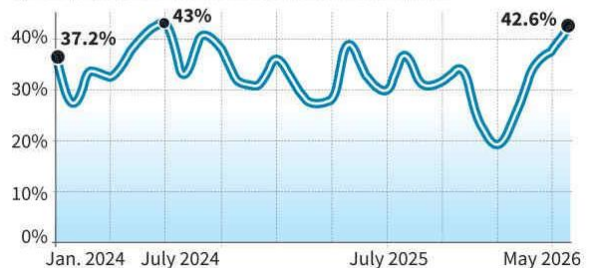
- Despite dealing with problems of early marriage, common in Koppal, more women have autonomy to travel on their own in the district. In nine districts, women widely read newspapers and magazines, pointing towards engagement with news and public affairs. But this does not mean liberty for most women in Belagavi, Chitradurga, Hassan and Dharwad, where they are not allowed to travel on their own.
- The report says 24% of graduate unemployment is among women.
- Only one in four young women is in the workforce and only a third can travel to a market or clinic on their own.'

❖ Russian oil share in India's imports rises

- Russia's share in India's oil imports rose above 40% in May 2026, the highest in nearly two years, according to official government data.
- Further, the data shows that Russia charged India a premium for its oil, while other sources such as the U.S. and even the UAE sold India oil at lower-than-average prices.
- Russia had been providing India a discount on its oil as recently as February.
- Notably, an analysis by The Hindu of the data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry shows that India is trying to diversify its sources of oil, including once again importing oil from Iran and Venezuela in April and continuing to do so in May 2026.
- The U.S. had, in February, started allowing Venezuela to export oil.
- India's total oil imports stood at 21.82 million tonnes in May 2026, the highest since January and about 12% higher than what it imported in April. This was, however, about 2.6% lower than what it imported in May last year.
- Despite this, the higher oil prices meant that India's oil import bill still rose significantly in May 2026 — by 23.5% compared to April, and by a sizable 66% over May of last year. This is because the price of oil that India imported stood at \$106 per barrel in May 2026 as compared to \$64 a barrel in May 2025, according to data from the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.
- This price effect is visible in India's oil imports from Russia as well. While the value of oil imports from Russia grew 83% in May 2026 over its level in May last year, the actual volume of oil imported from Russia fell by 2% over this period.
- That said, the share of Russian oil in India's total oil imports stood at 40.5% in terms of volume and 42.6% in terms of value in May 2026.
- A simple calculation based on the volume and value of oil imports from Russia shows that the total price paid by Indian importers stood at \$916 per tonne of Russian oil in May 2026, as compared to the average price of \$870 per tonne that India paid for all its oil imports. This works out to a premium of about \$46 per tonne.
- The Commerce Ministry data also shows that India has been sourcing some of its oil from countries that were previously restricted from selling their oil. Notably, the data shows that India imported \$430.5 million worth of oil from Iran in April 2026, which fell to \$277 million in May.

Russian dependence

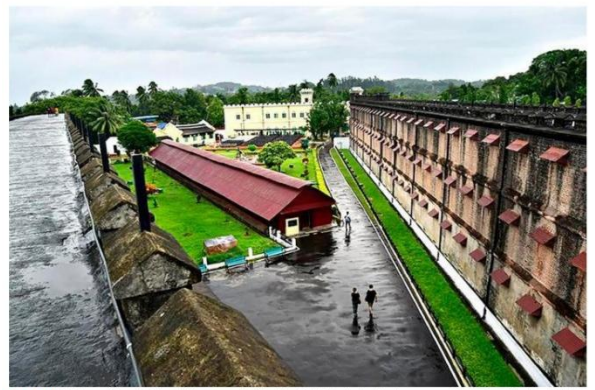
Moscow's share in New Delhi's oil import bill has continued to grow as India's other sources remain constrained



SOURCE: MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

❖ Lives of 59 Karnataka freedom fighters jailed in Andamans to be chronicled

- “Fifty-nine persons from Karnataka, who were part of the 1857 rebellion, were imprisoned in the Cellular Jail in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. We don’t want their names to be erased from the chronicles of India’s freedom struggle,” says L.N. Mukundraj, president of the Karnataka Sahitya Academy.
- Aiming to study the lives of these incarcerated people, the Academy has formed a committee comprising academicians and researchers.
- Soon, they will be publishing a book on their lives titled Yaaroo Ariyada Veeraru.
- The Cellular Jail in Port Blair in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands was used by the British to exile freedom fighters and political prisoners who had to endure brutal and inhumane conditions. Mr. Mukundraj explained, “We formed a committee led by writers and historians K.P. Suresh and Vijay Poonacha to study those from Karnataka who died in ‘Kala Pani’, as the punishment was called.” In the State Budget 2026-27, former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had announced the publication of such a book. The committee comprises 15 persons, of which eight will collect documents, and seven will do the fieldwork. The documentation team will search for documents in places that were earlier part of the Bombay Presidency. “Dharwad district is one place where we might find the details of many of these freedom fighters in government archives and libraries. The majority of them hailed from Nargund town in Gadag district.”
- Mr. Suresh added that those from southern India rarely figure in the annals of the freedom struggle. “These 59 persons incarcerated in Cellular Jail were mostly from north Karnataka and Uttara Kannada district,” he said, adding that often only big names like Hindutva ideologue V.D. Savarkar are highlighted while talking of those who suffered in Cellular Jail. Some of these individuals were part of the rebellion of Halagali Bedas in 1857-58, from the village of Halagali near Mudhol.
- Writer Latha Guthi has published a book on the theme, called Kari Neeru. “This book is a source for us. Our field team and documentation team will head to different places in Karnataka to find such sources. We have decided to put up banners in the villages of these freedom fighters urging people to come forward, and tell us if they know anything, or have documents,” said Mr. Suresh.
- Among the 59 persons from Karnataka imprisoned in Cellular Jail were Balakrishna from Bidar, Gopal Bhandari from Karwar, Faras Khan from Nargund, Bikaji Ganesh Gokhale from Nargund, Vitu Gawli from Karwar, and Abdulla Moiuddin from Nargund.



Booked: A view of the National Monument of India - Cellular Jail, also known as 'Kala Pani', in Port Blair, where 59 persons from Karnataka, who were part of the 1857 rebellion, were imprisoned. A book will soon be published on their lives. K. MURALI KUMAR

❖ India and Indonesia launch joint restoration project at iconic Prambanan Temple

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi, along with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, on Wednesday visited the centuries-old iconic Prambanan Temple complex in Yogyakarta, marking the inauguration of a joint conservation project for this UNESCO World Heritage Site.

- Mr. Modi described the initiative as a “shining example of the enduring civilisational bonds” between India and Indonesia, rooted in a shared heritage that has connected the people of the two countries for centuries.
- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) will be the lead agency from the Indian side for the joint restoration project.
- Later in the day, Mr. Modi reached Australia on the second leg of his three-nation tour during which he will hold talks with his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese. “Landed in Melbourne, Australia. This visit will add vigour to the India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership,” Mr. Modi said in a post on X.

❖ **Calcutta HC seeks affidavit on midday meal contract**

- The Calcutta High Court on Wednesday directed the West Bengal government to file an affidavit after the State said that no decision had yet been taken on entrusting the PM-POSHAN (midday meal) scheme in Kolkata schools to ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness).
- The direction was passed by a Division Bench of Acting Chief Justice Tapabrata Chakraborty and Justice Partha Sarathi Chatterjee while hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by advocate Sirsanya Bandopadhyay challenging the proposal to hand over the responsibility of food preparation to ISKCON.

❖ **Tihar to respond to U.S. national's plea for 'American-style diet'**

- The Tihar prison authorities submitted before a Delhi court on Wednesday that they will file a response to a plea by U.S. national Matthew Aaron VanDyke, an accused in a terror conspiracy case being investigated by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), seeking permission to receive “American-style diet’ while in judicial custody.
- Special Judge Prashant Sharma of Patiala House Court posted the matter for July 21, before which the prison authorities are expected to respond.
- In his plea filed through advocates Rohit Dandriyal and Rohit Gour, Mr. VanDyke submitted before the court that he had been on an apparent hunger strike for nearly 50 days and had survived largely on liquids, including soy milk, because of his inability to eat the food available in prison.
- “He has lost 13 kg weight in the duration of his hunger strike,” advocate Dandriyal told The Hindu.
- In his petition, it has been contended that the prolonged nutritional deficiency has adversely affected the accused’s health, including a decline in his eyesight, which is attributed to the lack of an adequate and suitable nutritional diet during his continued incarceration.
- Emphasising that the request is made purely on humanitarian considerations and is intended solely to safeguard the health of their client while in judicial custody, counsel has submitted that Mr. VanDyke’s family is willing to bear the entire cost of the proposed dietary arrangement and all related expenses.

❖ DRDO conducts successful flight test of Pinaka rocket

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Wednesday successfully conducted a flight test of the Pinaka long range guided rocket from the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur, validating its user-defined minimum strike range of 60 km. The rocket executed all planned in-flight manoeuvres and hit the designated target with high precision, following the predicted trajectory, the Defence Ministry said. Range instrumentation deployed during the trial tracked the rocket throughout its flight.
- The rocket was launched from an in-service Pinaka launcher, demonstrating the system's ability to fire different variants of the Pinaka rocket family with varying ranges from the same launcher, enhancing operational flexibility.

❖ Lonavala, parts of Maharashtra report 'exceptional' rain

- The Western Ghats saw exceptional rainfall, with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) reporting that Lonavala, a popular tourist destination, recorded 1,300 mm of rainfall from Sunday to Wednesday morning. On Tuesday alone, 525 mm of rainfall was recorded. In the IMD's scheme of categorisation, rainfall over 200 mm is considered "extremely high" rainfall.
- Palghar station in coastal Maharashtra reported 304 mm on Tuesday, against a normal of mere 26.7 mm — a 1,000% rise. Raigad saw 115 mm against a normal of 33 mm.
- Mahabaleshwar in Satara district received 513 mm of rainfall on Monday, which, according to the IMD's historical records, is the highest 24-hour rainfall ever recorded in the area. The hill station recorded nearly one-tenth of its average annual rainfall (5,710 mm) in a single day.
- The rain comes on the back of a "depression", a pre-cyclonic collection of clouds that originated in the Bay of Bengal and monsoon winds from the Arabian Sea. The heavy rain has so far wiped out the monsoon deficits of several coastal regions in Maharashtra and triggered landslides, tunnel collapse, and disruptions.
- This is an El Niño year, meaning that rainfall over India is expected to be "below normal", according to the IMD's forecasts. However, experts say that pockets and periods of heavy rain can occur even during rain-deficient years. "The current monsoon activity we are witnessing is expected to last until July 10. After this, no other significant 'low-pressure' systems [pre-cyclonic storms] are expected to form on the near horizon," said O.P. Sreejith, senior meteorologist at the IMD in Pune. "The outlook for rain in July overall is expected to be 'below normal,'" he added.

❖ Over 42% rise in female enrolment in higher education since 2014: report

- India's higher education sector has recorded significant growth over the past decade, with total student enrolment rising to 4.5 crore in the 2023-24 academic year.
- According to the latest reports of the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) for 2022-23 and 2023-24, released by the Education Ministry, this marks a 31.5% rise from 3.42 crore recorded in 2014-15. The multi-year survey data reflect an institutional participation rate of over 90%, drawing metrics from 59,533 higher education institutions across the country to outline major strides in inclusivity, female

participation, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) adoption.

- The data are self-reported voluntarily by registered institutions via a web-based portal utilising a data capture format. While the Education Ministry executes built-in validations and scrutiny checks, primary data quality remains the responsibility of the respective institutions.
- The enrolment of female students in higher educational institutions rose from 1.57 crore in 2014-15 to 2.18 crore in 2022-23 and 2.24 crore in 2023-24, marking a 42.2% increase since 2014-15.
- The Gender Parity Index (GPI) stands at 1.08 for 2023-24, remaining consistently above 1.0 for seven consecutive years. This underlines a trend where female participation systematically outpaces male participation.
- Also, India's gross enrolment ratio (calculated for the 18-23 age bracket) reached 30 in 2023-24. Notably, the female GER scaled to 31.2, distinctly higher than the national baseline. For the Scheduled Castes, the enrolment jumped 51.4% since 2014-15, reaching 69.72 lakh. The GER for SC students grew from 18.9 to 27.8. For the Scheduled Tribes, enrolment witnessed a 75.7% rise, climbing to 28.83 lakh, with the GER up from 13.5 to 22.8. With regard to the Other Backward Classes, student numbers grew 60.2%, from 1.13 crore to 1.80 crore over 10 years.
- Enrolment in STEM fields climbed to 1.02 crore in 2023-24. "Mirroring the overall demographic shift, the female share in STEM programmes climbed steadily to 44%, up from 38.4% a decade ago," the report said.

❖ WHO flags growing inequities in access to cancer treatment

- With an estimated 20.6 million new cases and close to 10 million deaths annually, cancer remains the second leading cause of death globally after cardiovascular disease, the World Health Organization's (WHO) first ever survey of people affected by cancer, released on Wednesday, said.
- Beyond its impact on health, cancer remains one of the most financially and socially devastating challenges a household can face, the report said. The WHO survey found that at least 45% of affected people experience financial hardship, more than half report mental health challenges, and nearly all caregivers report strain, including unpaid services and social isolation.
- The Global Status Report on Cancer, 2026, released by the WHO and the International Agency for Research on Cancer, warns that, without action, annual cases of cancer are projected to rise to nearly 35 million by 2050.
- The report also indicates persistent and widening inequities in access to prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and supportive care, leaving millions of people without the services they need. Its analysis shows that while 87% of women with breast cancer survive at five years after their diagnosis in high-income countries, only about 42% do so in low-income countries. Fewer than one in three countries currently include cancer care in their universal health coverage packages.

- “Cancer is a deeply personal disease that touches nearly all of us. But whether a person survives cancer should never depend on where they were born or what they earn,” WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said, adding, “The inequities documented in this report are not inevitable; they are the consequence of choices, and they can be reversed through stronger and unified action.”
- The burden of cancer varies across regions. In 2024, Asia accounted for the largest share, with more than half of all cancer cases (50.7%) and deaths (56.5%) reflecting its large population. Europe carried a disproportionately high burden, contributing 21% of global cases and 20% of deaths despite having only about 9% of the world’s population. In contrast, many countries in Africa and parts of Asia experience lower incidence but disproportionately high mortality.

❖ **India added 52.5 mtpa regasification capacity in 2025: IGU World LNG Report**

- India added 52.5 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) of regasification capacity across eight terminals, as it surpassed Spain to become the fourth largest market for regasification capacity in 2025, according to the International Gas Union’s (IGU) World LNG Report.
- Rising demand for fertilizer, city gas and utilities as well as the government’s push for enhanced share of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in the energy mix was seen helping the country
- Among operational LNG regasification terminals in India, Dahej LNG (17.5 mtpa) stands out as the only ultra-large facility and ranks as the sixth largest globally.

Large-scale category

- The remaining seven terminals fall into the large-scale category, each with a regasification capacity of 5 mtpa.
- In 2025, India commissioned two LNG regasification projects, including one new onshore terminal, Chhara LNG, with a regasification capacity of 5 mtpa, and one expansion project at the Dabhol LNG terminal through the completion of its breakwater infrastructure.
- The project has effectively enhanced the terminal’s operational efficiency and has increased its capacity to 5 mtpa from 2.9 mtpa. Previously idle during the monsoon season, the Dabhol LNG terminal now enables uninterrupted, year-round operations after commissioning of the breakwater.
- India currently has four LNG projects under construction, including one new terminal and three expansion projects at existing facilities, including the expansion of India’s largest terminal, Dahej LNG.
- Once commissioned, these projects are expected to add a combined 11.3 mtpa of regasification capacity by 2028.
- According to the International Energy Agency, India’s natural gas consumption is forecast to increase by nearly 60% by 2030, driven by robust growth in city gas distribution, industrial demand, and power generation.
- India’s LNG regasification utilisation fell to about 47% in 2025, down from 58% in 2024, reflecting a combination of weaker LNG imports during the summer months and an increase in regasification capacity following recent infrastructure additions.

- Asia led the global LNG regasification capacity additions in 2025, with all new capacity coming from China and India, contributing 15.1 mtpa and 7.1 mtpa, representing 24% and 11.3% of global additions, respectively.
- Although the Asia Pacific remained the largest LNG-importing region, IGU found imports into Asia fell by 9.2 MT to 108.7 MT, driven mainly by lower intake in China and India.

❖ **SEBI amends registration fee rule for FPIs**

- Markets regulator SEBI has replaced the existing U.S. dollar-denominated registration fee for Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) with a rupee-based fee structure and has amended the rules governing FPIs.
- SEBI has revised the registration fee for Category-I FPIs from \$2,500 to ₹2.3 lakh. Similarly, registration fee for FPIs belonging to Category II has been revised from \$250 to ₹23,000. Application fee for general relaxations or exemptions from strict enforcement of regulations is revised from \$1,000 to ₹90,000 in eligible foreign exchange equivalent.

❖ India, Australia move to deepen cooperation in the Indo-Pacific

- Amid geostrategic uncertainties, Prime Minister Modi, his Australian counterpart, **Albanese, adopt declaration to expand maritime security ties and defence collaboration; the countries also seal pacts on civil nuclear energy and critical minerals.**
- India and Australia on Thursday adopted a Joint Declaration on Defence and Security Cooperation, committing to significantly deepen military engagement, strengthen defence industrial collaboration, and expand maritime security cooperation amid growing geostrategic uncertainty in the Indo-Pacific region. The two countries also sealed pacts on civil nuclear energy and critical minerals sectors.
- The declaration, adopted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Australian counterpart, Anthony Albanese, **outlines an ambitious road map to elevate defence ties through closer strategic consultations, enhanced interoperability between the armed forces, expanded military exercises, and greater collaboration in defence science, technology, and industrial supply chains.**
- A statement released by the office of the Australian Prime Minister mentioned that, under the declaration, the two sides agreed to hold regular consultations on defence-related developments in the Indo-Pacific affecting their shared interests, increase the complexity of bilateral and multilateral military exercises, accelerate efforts to improve interoperability and information sharing between their armed forces, and expand aircraft deployments from each other's territories.
- The **agreement also envisages deeper personnel exchanges through education, training, and liaison appointments, while exploring opportunities to cooperate in recruiting skilled personnel for their respective defence workforces.**
- Mr. Modi emphasised the importance of a free and stable Indo-Pacific and highlighted the growing engagement between the two countries in the defence domain. "The Indo-Pacific is not just the confluence of two oceans. It also symbolises the shared aspirations of like-minded democracies like India and Australia," he said.
- **The agreement on civil nuclear energy to facilitate the commercial supply of uranium from Australia to India to fuel nuclear power projects came nearly 12 years after the two countries inked a historic civil nuclear cooperation pact.**
- "Today, we have signed an important agreement in the field of nuclear energy. This will open the way for uranium supplies from Australia to India and give new impetus to our clean energy objectives," Mr. Modi said.
- He also announced the launch of the Australia-India Partnership on Cyber, Critical Technologies, and Supply Chains and said both sides will also work together on a critical minerals corridor.
- Under the provisions of the energy security framework, India and Australia vowed to strengthen energy security by maintaining a stable, secure and reliable supply of coal, diesel, other liquid fuels and natural gas.
- The two countries will implement an **India-Australia Maritime Security Collaboration Road Map** to strengthen coordination across the Indian Ocean and the wider Indo-Pacific.

- Both sides committed to encouraging greater integration between their defence industries, building resilient supply chains and expanding collaboration in defence innovation, advanced science and technology.
- The leaders noted that the **new declaration builds upon the India-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation signed in 2009 and complements existing institutional mechanisms, including the Foreign Ministers' Framework Dialogue, the 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Dialogue, and the Defence Ministers' Dialogue.**
- They also reiterated support for regional institutions, including the **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), ASEAN-led regional architecture and the Pacific Islands Forum, describing them as key platforms for addressing regional challenges.**

❖ **Modi, Albanese call for dialogue to end West Asia conflict**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese on Thursday made a joint call for a de-escalation of tension and hostilities in West Asia.
- “The Prime Ministers expressed concern over renewed escalation of tensions in the Middle East and called upon all parties to exercise restraint, de-escalate tensions, and ensure protection of civilians as well as the uninterrupted flow of energy supplies and commerce. They reiterated the importance of dialogue and diplomacy, and adherence to international law to achieve a peaceful and lasting solution,” a joint statement said.
- The two leaders also emphasised the importance of the Quadrilateral grouping, comprising the U.S., India, Japan, and Australia, as a unit that will deliver “practical and concrete” outcomes in the Indo-Pacific region.

Cultural connect

- Mr. Albanese welcomed the repatriation of artefacts of cultural significance to India. “Australia and India share a deep history, and we are building strong people to people links between our two countries,” he said.
- Attending an Indian diaspora event with Mr. Modi, the Australian PM said, “Our Indian community has contributed so much to the story of modern Australia. And it’s made our country a better place... Together, we can be a force for peace and prosperity in our region.”
- The two leaders expressed concern about the conflict in Ukraine, and said that they “remained concerned” about the conflict in Myanmar as well.

❖ **Modi hails Australia’s social media ban on minors, signals curbs**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday praised Australia’s ban on social media access for teenagers, in the clearest indication so far that the Union government is mulling similar curbs. “I have followed you closely, and the way you have legislated and worked to protect society in **IT and social media** is inspiring the world,” Mr. Modi told Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in remarks open to the press.

Digital control

Several countries are following Australia's footsteps to curb social media use by children

Malaysia: under-16s barred from owning social accounts

Indonesia: minors blocked from 'high-risk' platforms

France: Bill passed to ban social media use by under-15s



- **Australia's Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act, 2024, requires social media platforms to detect and block access to children below the age of 16.** Union Minister of Electronics and Information Technology, Ashwini Vaishnaw, had confirmed discussions for similar curbs in India during the AI Impact Summit earlier in February.

'Right way to go'

- "Certainly there is a need for protecting our children, protecting our society... we are in a conversation regarding age-based restrictions with the various social media platforms... the right way to go about this," he said.
- In conversations and public remarks, officials at the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) have said that India is exploring a "graded" set of restrictions that would allow some social media access while blocking some categories of content depending on the age cohort of a minor.
- It is not yet clear if the government is planning to bring this into action with a law in Parliament or with amendments to the **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021**, which have been the main legal way for the government to introduce rules for requirements like labelling AI-generated images.
- In April, State governments moved to announce their own respective social media bans. Andhra Pradesh announced that it would pursue a law regulating children's social media use, as did Karnataka. "Officials have been tasked with studying best practices from countries such as Singapore, Australia, and Denmark to build a robust legal and technological framework [to enforce the law] tailored to India's needs," the A.P. government said in a statement.

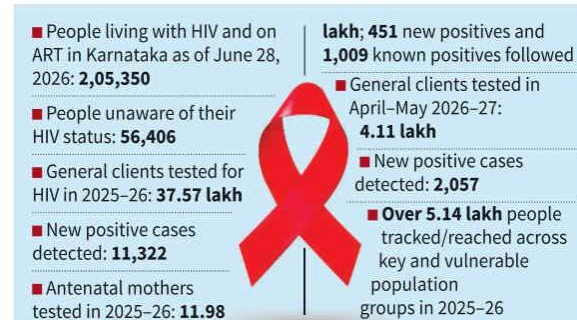
❖ Australia's Flinders University to open Bengaluru campus

- The University Grants Commission (UGC) has granted a Letter of Intent to Flinders University to establish its international campus in Bengaluru in early 2027.
- According to a release from the university, the decision to establish a campus in India was finalised during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Australia. "Flinders officially received a Letter of Intent from India's University Grants Commission (UGC). The announcement was made by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese as part of the agreements struck during the visit," the release said.
- Flinders University, based in Adelaide, South Australia, will be the second Australian university to open a campus in Bengaluru, after the University of New South Wales (UNSW), which is set to begin operations in August 2026. Two other international universities — the University of Liverpool and Lancaster University — are also scheduled to open campuses in Bengaluru in 2026.
- Set to open in early 2027, the Flinders University campus in Bengaluru will welcome its first batch of undergraduate and postgraduate students in business and high-tech disciplines.

❖ Over 56,000 in State unaware of HIV status; dating apps pose challenge to tracing cases

- More than 56,000 people in Karnataka are estimated to be living with HIV without knowing their status, the highest such number among States in the country. This is posing a major challenge to the State's HIV control programme despite free testing and treatment services being widely available, with the changing nature of sexual networks adding to the complexity. v

Karnataka's HIV fact sheet



- As per estimates from the **Karnataka State AIDS Prevention Society (KSAPS)**, 56,406 people are unaware of their HIV-positive status, making early diagnosis and linkage to treatment a key public health priority. While over two lakh people are already receiving treatment, officials said the focus is now on identifying those who remain outside the healthcare system.
- KSAPS Project Director Padma Basavanthappa told The Hindu that one of the biggest hurdles is the changing nature of sexual networks, with increasing numbers of people meeting partners through dating apps.

Dating apps

- “Earlier, when a person tested HIV positive, we could counsel them and identify their sexual partners for testing. Today, many people meet through dating apps or casual encounters and often do not know each other’s identities. This makes contact tracing extremely difficult,” she said.
- She said the challenge was particularly acute in Bengaluru because of its highly mobile population and the anonymity offered by digital platforms.

No voluntary testing

- Ms. Basavanthappa said the problem was compounded by the reluctance of people to voluntarily undergo HIV testing.
- “People still do not walk into testing centres on their own. Many believe they are not at risk, while others avoid testing because they fear stigma and discrimination,” she said, pointing out that awareness about HIV transmission also remained inadequate, particularly among young people.
- “Many young men are still unaware that unprotected sex between men also carries the risk of HIV transmission. Safe sex messages have to reach everyone irrespective of sexual orientation,” she said, stressing that prevention messages should focus on all forms of unprotected sex.
- To address the gap, KSAPS has launched the Mobilisation for AIDS Suraksha (MAS) campaign, centred around the message “Know Your Status.” As part of the campaign, initiated by the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO), KSAPS has introduced a BreakFree QR code that links users to a confidential self-risk assessment, nearby HIV testing centres and counsellors.

- The self-assessment tool on <https://breakfreeindia.org> asks users a series of questions to determine whether they may be at risk and guides them to appropriate services while protecting their identity under the provisions of the **HIV and AIDS (Prevention and Control) Act, 2017**, which mandates confidentiality.
- The campaign is also expanding beyond hospitals into engineering and medical colleges, workplaces, industries and transport hubs. Red Ribbon Clubs in colleges are being used to conduct debates, skits and awareness activities, while integrated health camps are being organised to encourage people to seek HIV testing alongside other health services.
- KSAPS is also adapting its outreach strategies to the digital era by engaging peer educators to connect with vulnerable groups through online platforms and dating applications. However, building trust in such spaces is a slow process, said Ms. Basavanthappa.
- According to KSAPS data, Karnataka has 2,05,350 people receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART) as of June 28, 2026. During 2025-26, over 37.57 lakh people underwent HIV testing in the general population, leading to the detection of 11,322 new HIV-positive cases. In the first two months of 2026-27, another 4.11 lakh people were tested, with 2,057 testing positive.

❖ **Monsoon has covered the entire country, a day later than normal, announces IMD**

- The southwest monsoon covered the entire country on Thursday, a day later than its normal date, after advancing into the remaining parts of the north Arabian Sea, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Punjab, India Meteorological Department (IMD) officials said.
- The nationwide coverage came 35 days after the monsoon reached Kerala on June 5. While the advance was slower than in recent years, the July 9 date is not unusual historically.
- **Since 1971, the monsoon has covered the country on dates ranging from June 16 in 2013 to August 15 in 2002, according to IMD data.**
- The monsoon's progress has accelerated over the past week, accompanied by widespread heavy rain across several parts of the country. Delhi and the National Capital Region received significant rainfall overnight and on Thursday, causing waterlogging and traffic disruptions in several areas.
- The recent wet spell, however, does not necessarily indicate how rainfall will evolve through the rest of the month.
- The IMD has forecast below-normal rainfall for the country as a whole in July, defined as less than 94% of the long-period average, even as some parts of northwest and northeast India, east-central India, and the eastern peninsula may receive normal to above-normal rainfall. July receives the highest rainfall among the monsoon months and is critical for agriculture.
- India's current monsoon rainfall deficit stands at 15%, a sharp improvement from 38% on June 30.

- Historical data show no simple relationship between the date of nationwide monsoon coverage and the eventual June-September rainfall. However, some prominent El Niño years associated with deficient monsoons also saw delayed coverage. In 2002, one of India's most severe monsoon drought years, the monsoon covered the country only on August 15, the latest date in the 1971-2025 record. In 2009, another major drought year, coverage was completed on July 3, while in 2015 it occurred relatively early, on June 26.
- The contrasting dates underline that the speed of the monsoon's geographical advance is not, by itself, a reliable indicator of seasonal rainfall. El Niño can weaken monsoon circulation and affect the amount and distribution of rainfall even after the monsoon has formally covered the entire country.

❖ 90 govt. colleges closed in State in 2023-24: AISHE

- **Gross Enrolment Ratio in Karnataka increased by 3.7%, 2.3% in 2022-23 and 2023-24 respectively.**
- As many as 90 government colleges closed down in 2023-24 across Karnataka. In 2022-23, there were 701 government colleges in the State, which decreased to 611 in 2023-24, according to the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) report.
- The Union Ministry of Education has released the AISHE report for 2022-23 and 2023-24 recently. According to the report, in 2022-23, there were 4,220 colleges, including 3,035 private, 484 aided, and 701 government colleges. In 2023-24, there were 4,280 colleges, including 3,175 private colleges, 494 aided, and 611 government colleges.
- The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Karnataka increased by 3.7% and 2.3% in 2022-23 and 2023-24 respectively – from 36.2% to 39.6% in 2022-23 and to 41.9% in 2023-24.
- The GER was 28.4% in 2021-22, 27.3% in 2020-21, 24.6% in the year 2017-18% and in 2014-15, it was 23.7%.
- **The female GER increased in Karnataka from 28.5% to 39.9% in 2023-24 and to 42.8% in 2023-24.**
- **The GER of Schedule Caste (SC) and Schedule Tribe (ST) students in higher educational institutions also increased by 4% and 4.7% respectively for the years 2022-23 and 2023-24.** In 2021-22, the SC/ST students GER was 31.2% and 30.5% and in 2023-24, it was 32.5% and 33.3% respectively.
- **In terms of student enrolment, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Karnataka are in the top.** They constitute 52.8% of the total student enrolment in the year 2022-23. The **top seven States in terms of student enrolment are Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Bihar and Rajasthan.** They constitute 59.0% of the total student enrolment in the year 2023-24.
- **Karnataka ranked third in the country in terms of the number of colleges**, with 4,524 colleges in 2022-23 and 4,529 in 2023-24. Uttar Pradesh had the highest number of colleges, followed by Maharashtra. Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Telangana, and West Bengal also figured among the top States in both years.

- Since 2017-18, Karnataka has reported the highest college density in the country. In the latest survey, it recorded 66 colleges per lakh population. The figure was 51 in 2017-18, 53 in 2018-19, 59 in 2019-20, 62 colleges in 2020-21, 68 in 2022-23, and 69 in 2023-24.
- Speaking to The Hindu, K.R. Venugopal, former Vice-Chancellor of Bangalore University, said, "If the GER increases, the number of colleges should also increase. However, the closure of government colleges is a serious issue. The State government is not providing adequate financial assistance to higher education.
- The lack of permanent faculty and basic facilities is making students hesitant to join government colleges. Most students in government colleges come from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds."
- Bengaluru Urban district has maximum number of colleges across the country. The district had 1,107 colleges in 2022-23, followed by Jaipur 664, Pune 505, Hyderabad 485, Prayagraj 387, Nagpur 374, Rangareddi 354, and Ghazipur 339.

❖ **Gehlot completes five years as Governor**

- Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot is set to complete five years in office on Friday.
- Mr. Gehlot assumed office as the 19th Governor of Karnataka on July 11, 2021, during the BJP government. A native of Ujjain district in Madhya Pradesh, he has served multiple terms as a Member of the Legislative Assembly and as a Member of Parliament in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.
- Before his appointment as Governor, Mr. Gehlot was Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment from 2014 to 2021. He has also been associated with social work and labour movements and has represented India at various international forums.
- Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar called on the Governor at Raj Bhavan on July 8 and extended greetings.

❖ **State to revive Information Disorder Tackling Unit**

- The unit, championed by Minister Priyank Kharge to curb the spread of fake news, had a trial run in 2024 but was later put on the back burner; it is all set to become a full-fledged wing now.
- The Karnataka government is all set to revive the Information Disorder Tackling Unit (IDTU) to curb the spread of fake news.
- The unit, championed by Minister Priyank Kharge, had a trial run in 2024 but was later put on the back burner. Now, with Mr. Kharge taking charge as Home Minister, the unit is all set to become a full-fledged wing under the State's Cyber Command Unit, headed by a Director-General of Police (DGP) rank officer.
- Speaking in Belagavi on Thursday, Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar said fake news was causing several problems in society, including law and order disturbances. "Several social media outlets are engaged in peddling fake news. We will take steps to stop it," he said.

- The IDTU initiative had earlier raised concerns over whether the government should label news reports as fake news and conduct fact checks, prompting it to onboard independent fact-checking websites for the task. Despite this, the initiative was discontinued after the pilot phase.
- “Information disorder can pose serious law and order challenges as well, apart from crimes, especially cybercrimes. It is time Karnataka Police had such a unit that proactively tackles information disorder in real time,” said a senior police official.
- Apart from the spurious links used to lure netizens into cyberfrauds, digitally altered media and communally provocative fake news have triggered riot-like situations in at least three instances in Bengaluru, Hubballi and Mysuru since 2020.

How IDTU works

- In due course, all districts in the State will be equipped with IDTUs. These units will monitor social media and news articles daily, identify potential threats, and have them fact-checked before publication on IDTU’s flagship portal, satya.karnataka.gov.in. Independent fact-checking websites are likely to be engaged for this purpose, sources said.
- The **units will also focus on deepfakes, fraudulent misinformation, and posts that could potentially trigger communal incidents. Each IDTU will conduct link analysis of posts spreading fake news and provocative content, monitor related social media chatter for over a week, and submit a social sentiment report. In such cases, it will also work with social media platforms to introduce warning labels and curb the virality of such content, sources added.** A legal team will be consulted whenever required.
- The government also plans to deploy predictive data analytics models supported by a structured historical data repository and develop customised AI tools for deepfake detection, video threat identification, and the detection of bot-driven and coordinated attacks.

Citizen component

- In a new component, citizens will be able to request fact checks on specific content flagged to the IDTU. Any citizen can write to the unit, flagging content on social media or elsewhere and seeking a fact check. The applicant will receive the findings by email, and the fact check will also be published on the IDTU portal.
- **“Fact-checking is a citizen service that the IDTU will provide. This will ensure transparency. As long as it remains open to citizens, they can also hold it accountable,”** a senior police official said.

❖ NDA-ruled States, universities object to centralisation provisions in VBSA

- Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya among States to raise concerns over the Centre’s powers; universities seek safeguards, parliamentary monitoring; BHU warns that Bill could turn an independent regulator into arm of the Union govt.

- NDA-ruled States, including Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Meghalaya, have raised concerns over provisions in the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025, warning a parliamentary panel that the proposed legislation would centralise powers over higher education regulation.
- The Bill proposes a structural overhaul of higher education in the country, by repealing the statutory Acts governing the University Grants Commission (UGC), the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), and the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and replacing them with a single apex body called the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (VBSA).
- The Bill is currently under review by a joint parliamentary committee headed by BJP MP D. Purandeswari. The Hindu accessed submissions made to the parliamentary panel, which is in the final stages of preparing its report.
- Apart from State governments, Central and State universities and institutes have also criticised the Bill, raising concerns over the Centre's expanded powers, the absence of State representation in the proposed regulatory structure, ambiguities in its scope, and the transition process following the winding up of the UGC, AICTE, and NCTE.

Bypassing States

- Some of the strongest objections came from Andhra Pradesh, which is ruled by the Telugu Desam Party, a BJP ally. The State argued that several provisions of the Bill could render its legislative authority over higher education “a dead letter” and sought mandatory consultation before decisions affecting State universities are taken. The State also cautioned against Clause 11 that allows the Regulatory Council to bypass State universities in granting degrees, saying it could lead to “constitutional friction”.
- The State government further suggested a clause explicitly preventing the Centre from taking action prejudicial to the autonomy, functioning, and governance of State institutes and universities.
- BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh has also raised concerns over what it described as limited State representation in the proposed regulatory council.
- The Meghalaya government — led by the National People's Party, which is a BJP ally — recommended an explicit provision defining the respective powers of the Centre and the States. It proposed that the Centre be responsible for coordination, standards, accreditation, and quality assurance, while States retain authority over the establishment, governance, administration, staffing, financing, and overall functioning of State universities.

Key vulnerability

- Central universities and institutes such as the Banaras Hindu University (BHU), the Central University of Rajasthan and the Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), Chittoor, as well as State universities in Assam, Maharashtra, and Jammu and Kashmir, have objected to provisions that they say could increase centralisation.
- Several institutions told the panel that clauses requiring the new regulatory structure to follow directions from the Centre represented the Bill's “most critical vulnerability”.

- While some universities cautioned that dismantling the UGC, AICTE, and NCTE simultaneously could cause “significant institutional disruption”, others argued that the Bill concentrated regulatory powers and created the possibility of “arbitrary interventions”. Institutions called for phased implementation, parliamentary oversight of powers exercised by the Centre under the Bill, and mandatory notice and consultation with States before such powers are invoked.
- BHU noted that Clause 45 gives finality to the Centre’s policy directions and binds the VBSA to them, “effectively subordinating the regulator to the executive”, while Clause 47 empowers the Centre to supersede the VBSA and dissolve it. The university told the panel that these provisions risked turning an independent regulator into “an arm of the government of the day”.
- Clause 45 empowers the Centre to issue binding policy directions to the Commission, gives it the final say on what constitutes a policy matter, and allows it to assign additional functions. Clause 47 allows the Centre to suspend or supersede the Commission or its councils for up to a year. IIIT Chittoor said a possible implication of Clause 45 was the expansion of Centre’s influence across the three councils proposed under the structure, which could end up shaping institutional academic operations. SNDT Women’s University, Pune, said that without checks and balances, consultation and parliamentary oversight, the provisions could lead to “excessive centralisation”.

Fee escalation

- Congress-ruled Telangana said the Bill’s structure does not adequately recognise the role of State governments. It sought the deletion of Clause 11, which empowers the Union government-backed Regulatory Council to authorise independent accredited colleges to grant degrees directly, bypassing the State governments. It also argued that the Bill neither empowers the Regulatory Council to regulate fees nor preserves the existing framework, potentially allowing fee escalation.
- Telangana’s Higher Education Department described Clause 45 as the “single most centralising clause” in the Bill, calling it a “self-judging clause” that gives the Centre the final authority in disputes with councils under the VBSA framework.
- The department argued that the provision expanded Central authority over the structure without granting States corresponding powers over matters relating to their own universities.

❖ No tax exemption for same-sex couple, says IT Department

- The Income Tax Department has filed an affidavit before the Bombay High Court opposing a plea by a same-sex couple challenging Section 56(2)(x) of the Income Tax Act, which grants exemption from tax on gifts between spouses, and seeking to extend the benefit to their relationship.
- The affidavit, dated October 14, 2025, was filed before a Division Bench of Justices Burgess Colabawalla and Firdosh Pooniwalla by Sandeep Dahiya, Principal Commissioner of Income Tax (Judicial). The department has urged the Bench to dismiss the petition as “misconceived”. According to the department, the petitioners are attempting to use the Income Tax Act to alter the meaning of “spouse” under the

Act, a term that is not recognised for same-sex relationships under any marriage law in India.

- The department stated that the petitioners have not cited any law recognising their relationship as a marriage or recognising them as spouses and are instead asking the Income Tax Act to provide a definition of marriage or spouse that is contrary to the definitions under various marriage laws.
- The department has contended that the writ petition constitutes an abuse of the legal process, as the relief sought does not pertain to the provisions of the Income Tax Act. The affidavit further stated that since marriage or spousal relationships between same-sex couples are not recognised under any marriage law in India, **the exemption under Section 56(2)(x) cannot be extended to them.** The department has maintained that the Income Tax Act cannot define the term contrary to those laws.
- The court is yet to pronounce its order on the matter.

❖ AI poses a relatively lower risk to India's GCC jobs: CEA

- Nageswaran says most of India's Global Capability Centres are engaged in cutting-edge work rather than providing low-cost support, which is what AI can easily and cheaply replace
- India's Global Capability Centres (GCCs) are not just low-cost support in a new form, but are areas where cutting edge work is taking place, Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) V. Anantha Nageswaran said on Thursday. As such, these GCC jobs are also at a relatively lower risk of being replaced by Artificial Intelligence (AI), he added.
- However, the CEA did warn against the dangers of complacency, saying that other countries are already copying India's model.
- "It is cutting edge and increasingly so," Mr. Nageswaran said while speaking at a session during the Confederation of Indian Industry's (CII) GCC Business Summit. "Global banks run their risk systems and trading platforms in Mumbai and Bangalore and elsewhere as well, car makers design their vehicles' embedded systems from Chennai and Pune, semiconductor firms carry out chip design, pharmaceutical companies run clinical analytics here, and consumer firms build and own entire digital products here in India," he added.
- Mr. Nageswaran said that the intellectual property created in these centers is real, with the patents being filed here, the products shipped from India and global roles increasingly held by people sitting in India.
- The CEA also sought to answer whether these GCCs would be under threat from the rise of AI and would these GCC jobs be automated soon.
- "Part of the model is indeed exposed," Mr. Nageswaran conceded. "The work that was routine, repetitive and rule bound is exactly the work that AI does most easily and most cheaply as well. If a centre's value rests only on doing simple tasks at low cost, then the value is under real threat. We should not pretend otherwise."
- However, he also said that this is not where most Indian centres are today, and that this was not the direction in which they are headed.

- “Artificial intelligence does not build, deploy or govern itself,” Mr. Nageswaran explained. “Someone has to design these systems, train them, test them, correct them and hold them to account. Someone has to decide where they should be used and where they must not be used.”
- “Someone has to carry the responsibility when they fail,” he added. “And that work is expanding and not shrinking. And a large and growing share of this kind of work is being done in India.”

Complacency matters

- The CEA, however, cautioned against complacency, saying that standing still meant allowing others to catch up. “Other countries are watching us and copying us,” he asserted. “Our costs are rising. In some skills, our talent is already scarce, so indispensability is not a title that India can hold on to forever.”
- He added that the move from cost centres to capability centres, and from execution to innovation has to be made by firms and by people, with the government acting as a support.
- “Skilling is the clearest case,” Mr. Nageswaran said. “We produce a very large number of graduates each year. We do not yet produce enough of those who are ready on day one. By some estimates, fewer than half of them are ready for the job on the day they arrive.”
- “Closing that gap means universities, industry and the government working together, not one after the other, but at the same time,” he said.
- He further said that the position India currently holds in the global capability centre market was one that it has to keep earning, over and over.
- “The moment we believe we have arrived is the moment others begin to catch up,” he said. “So let us not celebrate too early. Let us treat this success not as a finishing line, but as a foundation or a milestone.”

❖ Centre defends E20, admits fuel economy may reduce by 3%-5%

- While admitting that E20- blended fuel could result in a 3%-5% reduction in the fuel economy of “some vehicles”, the government has sought to explain why the blended fuel is not currently cheaper than pure petrol or fuel with lower ethanol levels.
- The core reason, it said, was that the government is seeking to compensate farmers adequately, and so E20 fuel becomes relatively more expensive to produce than pure petrol whenever oil prices fall to around \$70 a barrel.
- This statement, issued on Friday as an FAQ document by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, comes at a time when critics are questioning why fuel with 20% ethanol is not cheaper than pure petrol or fuel with 10% ethanol.
- “It is true that in some vehicles there may be a 3-5% reduction in fuel economy,” the Ministry said. “But mileage is only one parameter. E20 offers a significantly higher-octane rating, superior anti-knock characteristics, faster combustion, better pickup, smoother acceleration and cleaner engine operation.”
- “It substantially reduces lifecycle carbon emissions by around 40%,” it added.
- The government also sought to explain why E20 fuel is not cheaper than pure petrol or fuel that has lower ethanol levels.
- “Today, the government purchases ethanol at remunerative prices so that Indian farmers are fairly compensated,” it said. “Take maize-based ethanol. We have progressively increased its procurement price and today it is around ₹71.86 per litre, even before GST, transportation, storage and depot handling costs.” “Therefore, if international crude oil is trading at around \$70 per barrel, E20 is actually costlier to produce than pure petrol,” the government explained.
- However, it added that the price advantage of ethanol kicks in when crude oil prices reach \$120–130 per barrel, as the economics naturally reverse and ethanol becomes even cheaper.
- The fact that 20% of the fuel sold in India is ethanol has also insulated the Indian market against global oil price volatility and allowed the Indian government to pass on much lower fuel price hikes than in comparable nations.
- Overall, the government also sought to assure the public that the decision to move to ethanol-blended fuel was not a “rushed” one.
- “This has been a journey spanning over two decades from pilot projects in 2001, policy notification in 2013, institutional reforms after 2018, massive investments beginning in 2021, and then a carefully calibrated, phased increase in blending levels,” the document said.
- It added that all stakeholders, including automobile manufacturing companies, oil marketing companies, and the Department of Food and Public Distribution, were consulted before rollout.

❖ Expert panel against approving Sharavathi Pumped Storage Project

- The panel highlights that the project area supports the 'largest known contiguous population' of the endangered lion-tailed macaque and functions as a critical tiger corridor
- In a major setback to the Karnataka government, an expert committee, appointed by the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) has not only recommended against approving the proposed ₹10,000 crore Sharavathi Pumped Storage Project in Shivamogga and Uttara Kannada districts but also questioned the very rationale of the project proposed by the Karnataka Power Corporation Limited (KPCL).
- "...the proposed project activities are likely to result in habitat fragmentation, disturbance to wildlife, cumulative stress on forest and riverine ecosystems, and long-term degradation of ecological integrity in an area already under pressure from existing hydropower infrastructure. The present proposal lacks compelling technical merit, environmental sustainability, or alignment with public interest. Accordingly, in adherence to statutory conservation mandates, the committee does not recommend its approval," it has been stated in the report of the site-appraisal committee. The report was submitted before a Division Bench of the High Court of Karnataka comprising Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice K.S. Hemalekha during the hearing of a PIL petition filed by Akhilesh Chipili and two others from Shivamogga.
- The petitioners have challenged the project, situated within the Sharavathi Valley Lion-Tailed Macaque Wildlife Sanctuary and its Eco-Sensitive Zone, while contending that such a project is barred in a sanctuary area under Section 29 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- The committee, comprising NBWL members H.S. Singh, Raman Sukumar and Shivakumar C.M, Inspector-General, National Tiger Conservation Authority, had submitted its report to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change after inspecting the project area between December 27 and 30, 2025, and submitting its report to the NBWL's Standing Committee.
- The panel highlighted that the project area supports the "largest known contiguous population" of the endangered lion-tailed macaque and functions as a critical tiger corridor connecting the Anshi-Dandeli and Bhadra-Kudremukh landscapes. The committee warned that the project would cause "habitat fragmentation, disturbance to wildlife, cumulative stress on forest and riverine ecosystems, and long-term degradation of ecological integrity" in an area already under pressure from existing hydropower infrastructure.
- Interestingly, the panel found that the project "primarily involves temporal shifting of electricity generation rather than contributing to any net increase in power generation" while pointing out that the project merely shifts power availability to night-time hours without creating any additional energy.
- The project "generates 2,000 MW of electricity in the night by consuming over 2,500 MW of electricity in the day time. There is no additional generation of electricity but a loss of over 500 MW due to the project as has been proposed", it has been stated in the report.

Disjointed, concealed

- “The proposed project is disjointed and incomplete, as several major impact-inducing components have either not been mentioned or have been underplayed in the project document. Additionally, some of the proposed components are likely to undergo significant revision prior to implementation, which further underscores the inadequacy of the current proposal for comprehensive assessment,” the panel observed.
- When assessed holistically, “the limited operational benefit offered by the project seems outweighed by the irreversible ecological, environmental, and social costs involved”, the report stated.

❖ PM’s New Zealand visit will unlock new avenues of cooperation: govt.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday arrived in New Zealand on the final leg of his three-nation visit.
- He will hold talks with his counterpart Christopher Luxon and address the Indian diaspora in New Zealand.
- Mr. Luxon received Mr. Modi at the airport. “This visit is historic, being the first Prime Ministerial visit to New Zealand in four decades. I look forward to holding talks with Prime Minister Luxon and discussing the complete range of the India-NZ friendship,” Mr. Modi said in a post on X.

Boosting trade ties

- During his two-day visit, he will hold talks with Mr. Luxon on ways to enhance economic, trade and commercial engagements.
- In a post on X, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said: “This historic visit is set to strengthen bilateral ties and unlock new avenues of cooperation across several areas especially trade, defence, sports, culture, education, and people-to-people exchanges.”
- Mr. Modi arrived in New Zealand after concluding a three-day visit to Australia, where he held summit talks with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. Both leaders reinforced the vital role of the bilateral partnership in ensuring a peaceful Indo-Pacific.
- A major highlight of the summit talks between the two leaders was their focus on significantly ramping up defence ties, especially in the maritime domain. An agreement on civil nuclear energy to facilitate the commercial supply of uranium from Australia to India to fuel New Delhi’s nuclear power projects was sealed after over two years of negotiations.
- He also met Australia’s Leader of the Opposition Angus Taylor on Friday and discussed bilateral ties.
- Mr. Modi was in Indonesia before that, where 14 agreements were inked to boost cooperation in critical minerals, maritime security, and other key sectors.

❖ India lays out tariffs and quotas for U.K. vehicles under trade deal

- The Indian government has released the list of quotas and tariffs for automobile imports from the United Kingdom under the trade deal between the two countries.
- The India-U.K. Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) will come into force on July 15. As per the Directorate General of Foreign Trade's notification, a total of 20,000 completely built units (CBUs) of petrol and diesel passenger vehicles will be allowed for import from the U.K. at concessional rates of 30-50%, depending on the size of the car, down from the normal import duty of between 66-110%.
- This quota will increase to 37,000 cars by year five of the deal, which is also when the concessional tariff will settle at 10% and remain there.
- However, after this, the size of the quota will gradually decrease, settling at 15,000 passenger vehicles in year 15.
- Similarly, the notification also lays out the quotas and tariffs for electric vehicles (EVs), hybrids, and hydrogen-based passenger vehicles.

Basis for gradations

- While the gradations for the conventional fuel passenger vehicles are made on the basis of engine size, the gradations for these alternate fuel vehicles are on the basis of cost.
- The concessions for these vehicles will kick in only from year six of the deal, providing domestic manufacturers a buffer before they will have to start competing with U.K. brands.

-----All the best-----